

## **Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Minister for Economic Development**

### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

We now come on to questions without notice. The first question period is the Minister for Economic Development. I call on Deputy Lewis.

#### **3.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Further to my question this morning regarding the potential 80 redundancies at Jersey Telecom and the 20 potential redundancies at Jersey Water, if we add this to the present 908 people currently registered as unemployed in Jersey this takes us to over 1,000. Will the Minister for Economic Development agree to further reduce the non-local company employment licences to all but essential posts in order to give the local population a fighting chance?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):**

The Deputy makes a very good point and it is certainly a point that the Regulation of Undertakings team in Economic Development are very concerned about and very aware about. Certainly any applications that come in in the current economic climate are scrutinised, as Members would imagine, with greater attention than would have been the case previously. So I can assure him that applications in all cases will be looked at very closely.

#### **3.2 The Deputy of St. John:**

With crab at £8 per kilo and lobster at £9 per kilo is the Minister aware of a crisis in the crab and lobster industry and given that D.E.F.R.A. (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and M.A.F.F. (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) have failed to curb the relocation of wet fishing boats away from our shores and we are seeing them fishing in our local grounds, will the Minister investigate along with his department and have talks with D.E.F.R.A. and M.A.F.F. to review this at an early time?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I think it is clear that the Deputy has very much of a luxury taste with regard to his interest in such items. In all seriousness, the cost of items such as that from a fishery point of view is of concern to the department. We are aware of some of the issues that the Deputy has raised. I am certainly prepared and happy to give an undertaking that we will look more closely at these matters and, indeed, if he has an input I would welcome his opinion as well to allow us to consider it in further detail.

##### **3.2.1 The Deputy of St. John:**

Also the Italian authorities have closed their borders to brown crab because of some falls of crab having been found to contain heavy metals in the crustaceans. Will he also take this on board and see if between M.A.F.F. and D.E.F.R.A. and the E.U. (European Union) those border controls can be lifted?

#### **Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The Deputy is straying into cross-departmental responsibilities here. The points that he raised nevertheless are serious. They would be matters for, I suspect, possibly Home Affairs but also the Planning and Environment - the environment element of Planning and Environment - to consider. I suggest that all departments perhaps should have some more input on this and give further consideration to the points the Deputy has raised.

#### **3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Will the Minister undertake to come to the House with figures comparing the R.U.D.L. (Regulation of Undertakings Development Law) licences for non-locally qualified employees issued in 2008 when the economy was still fairly high and the year to date, let us say the first 9

months of this year, to show whether a tightening of R.U.D.L. regulations and rules have been effective in this year?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I am more than happy to supply the Deputy and Members with details on determinations and splits between qualified and non-qualified employees. In general that is not an issue. In fact, most of that information is available in the public domain in any event when it is published through the labour market statistics.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

By sector?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

Yes, I do not see that that would present a problem. I might also add I think the Deputy was inquiring earlier on about (j) categories in the telecom sector. He might be interested to know that (j) category licences within the telecom sector are about 3 per cent of the total workforce and, indeed, that currently Jersey Telecom has more (j) category licences than any of the other operators.

**3.4 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary:**

Given the importance placed on green tourism and the potential benefits to Jersey and, of course, the environment, will the Minister advise whether his department is able to consider grants to local businesses who are participating in this scheme to enable them to invest in research, equipment or technology to enhance their green compliance, perhaps in a similar way to the grants available on the Rural Initiative scheme?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The Constable is absolutely right in respect of the importance of green tourism. It is an area that my department recognises as having significant benefit for the Island. With regard to grants, through Jersey Enterprise there are a range of different grants available to businesses. It would simply be a question of an individual organisation if it wishes to avail themselves of the potential of such grants to make an application. Certainly in some of the areas that the Constable mentioned with regard to equipment there is a possibility that that would qualify for grant support.

**3.5 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Can the Minister inform the house as to who is on the board of directors of the Jayen (Jersey) Limited company and who is the chairman of that company? Also, is the Minister aware that 3 of the recent major civil projects that were carried out by this company were actually carried out for Jersey Water?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

In reverse order, I am not surprised because the company does have a contract; it won a contract with the Jersey Water Company to supply services. That was through a competitive tender process so I am not surprised that they have carried out work for Jersey New Waterworks Company. With regard to the directors of Jayen, I do not have those details to hand but I am sure that they will be a matter of public record, although I have a recollection that it may well be nominee companies, but certainly I am happy to supply further details to the Deputy in due course that I am allowed to supply.

**3.6 The Connétable of Grouville:**

Does the Minister agree that the J.C.R.A. have over-issued licences in the telecom sector and will he tell us under what criteria they were issued, what criteria were used, and will he impose a maximum?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The issue of licences dates back to 2003 and, in fact, it was Ofcom who decided that 4 was the number of licences that was probably most appropriate to Jersey and that was based on the population size of the Island. With regard to the J.C.R.A., the J.C.R.A. look at the mobile network and they issue licences based on the applications that are put forward. The criteria are clear as far as they are concerned but it is, in fact, constrained - and this is an important point for Members to consider - by the spectrum that is available, and indeed from a competitive point of view the spectrum also constrains the availability of further operators in terms of expanding their operations within the Island.

### **3.6.1 The Connétable of Grouville:**

In view of the fact that you have just told us that Ofcom agreed 4 licences being appropriate for Jersey, can you tell me why we now seem to have 7?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

There may well be some confusion with regard to the recent announcement, for example, of me:mo, the Jersey Post proposed network. That is not operating their own system. They are utilising spectrum and facilities operated by other companies and as such they do not require a licence. It is only the actual operator that requires the licence.

### **3.7 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:**

Recently Condor has put in an application for a winter subsidy to run its services. We have not heard anything more about that yet. I wonder if the Minister is able to enlighten us further as to how that is progressing and what is happening.

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I think in fact the Deputy is referring to a request that came in to support the fishermen from an export point of view. An application was made to my department from that company to provide support to the fishermen. We assessed the application when it came in. We could not justify the economic benefit to the request and I am delighted to say that the fishermen have since received the support anyway from Condor in providing extra winter services to support the export of their fish.

### **3.8 Deputy C.H. Egré of St. Peter:**

Would the Minister indicate when he expects closure on the agreement between Jersey Airport and the residents affected by the P-Phos contamination?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The Deputy will be well aware, as I have discussed this matter on numerous occasions with him, that it is almost impossible to give an exact date. Having said that, I am hopeful that all those involved in bringing this long saga to a satisfactory conclusion will reach that conclusion in the short term, but there are still a number of, I hope, minor hurdles that need to be overcome.

### **3.8.1 The Deputy of St. Peter:**

As this on-going saga has in fact been going on now for nearly 4 years and as we have for the last 2 years been given reassurances that it was about to happen could he be a little bit more definitive than: "It is going to happen soon"?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The Deputy may be aware that there is yet another meeting on the subject this very Friday and I would certainly ... and he is shaking his head so I can perhaps reassure him that there is a meeting this coming Friday to discuss the matter further. When lawyers are involved, with the greatest of respect to all concerned, legal matters are sometimes more complicated than us mere laymen perhaps appreciate, and unfortunately the matter has carried on and drawn on for much longer than all of us would have hoped. But hopefully we will have a speedy resolution.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

When lawyers use the expression “with the greatest respect” they never mean it, Minister, but I am sure that is not true of you. [Laughter]

**3.9 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

The Minister was able to reassure me only in general terms about the speed with which small business loan applications are dealt with. Could he now confirm that he has been back to the department and a properly structured, objective, targeted system is truly in place?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I am disappointed the Deputy was not satisfied with my answer of 2 weeks ago. I have certainly been back to the department and asked for clarification on the way in which such applications are dealt with. I am satisfied that the department deals with these matters in an appropriate timescale and in an appropriate fashion. There are of course always cases where perhaps a particular application is not progressed in the way that the applicant would have hoped both in terms of speed and outcome and we have an appropriate process in place to ensure that such complaints or dissatisfaction is dealt with as well.

**3.9.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Notwithstanding the excellent work done by both him and his department, could he confirm that he is now confident enough to ensure that applicants get a deadline by which their application will be dealt with or at least by which the major decision will be made?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

I would say that the excellent work is not done by the Minister. The excellent work is done by the officers in the department, just for clarity's sake. But with regard to a time process, any applicant or application coming in will be informed of the entire process and the expected timeframe that it will take for the individual application to be considered.

**3.10 Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John:**

Just in time by the look of it. Given the Minister was on the radio this morning extolling the virtues of competition in our Island, would he advise the Assembly as to what efforts his department is making in creating competition on both our southern and northern routes for passengers?

**Senator A.J.H. Maclean:**

The Constable will be well aware that there is just one operator now on the northern route, as has been the case for many years, and that the Jersey Competition and Regulatory Authority do take an interest in pricing and other matters in relation to that area. On the southern route there is competition with passenger-only services, specifically in the summer months. I believe that the services we have both north and south currently are providing Islanders with both reasonably good value and a decent frequency of service. However, in the current economic climate there is no interest coming forward from any other operators. In fact, ferry companies have been finding it more and more difficult to sustain operations in other parts of the world so I think it is unlikely that we will get any further interest in the short term.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

We have come to the end of the 15-minute period with the Minister for Economic Development.