

### **3.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding Members' attendance at States meetings:**

Given that, unlike our counterparts in Guernsey, the Assembly regularly becomes inquorate despite Members being required to attend (unless ill or otherwise excused) under the States of Jersey Law, the Code of Conduct and, most importantly of all, being paid by the taxpayer to do so, will the Committee agree to look into the possibility of withholding the salaries of Members who leave sittings for many hours for unofficial reasons

#### **Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):**

I would refer Deputy Pitman to my written answer of today which deals with the sanctions that are available to address the matter of absence from the States Chamber. As per the written answer, the committee has given considerable thought to the way in which absence from the Chamber could be monitored and would welcome Deputy Pitman to attend a committee meeting should he wish to discuss any ideas that he might have in this regard.

#### **3.6.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

We are only this past week hearing of additional obscene cuts that will tear the fabric of society apart. In such a climate, does the Chairman not agree that it needs strong action to stop Members slipping off to a day job during sittings, effectively earning money for themselves while being paid for by the taxpayer?

#### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

My understanding, bearing in mind the best use of time of the Assembly, is that questions were to be dealt with on matters that were not already within the public domain. I have answered this question previously at length and I can refer ... this bundle of papers represents the questions that I have answered on this. I wonder if it might be more practical for me simply to remind the Deputy of previous answers.

#### **The Bailiff:**

It is a matter for you entirely how you wish to deal with it, Chairman. Deputy Pitman, do you wish a further question.

#### **3.6.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Absolutely, Sir. I appreciate the Chairman's response but it is a subject that concerns the public, so it should be a concern for us. What I would ask now is, will the Chairman support the introduction of a register that will identify who is leaving for *bona fide* reasons, as probably Ministers might have to, to see to their departments or perhaps a Constable has to for his Parish, some urgent incident, or people who are going to work. That is all I am asking for. It is an issue that concerns the public.

#### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

As I have said, I have answered at length on this. This is a matter that has concerned P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee). There are great difficulties. No monitoring could be set up without intensive staffing. For example, as I mentioned previously, it has not been P.P.C.'s remit to monitor tightly what States Members are doing. There may well be a case where we would be intruding in something confidential a Member was doing on behalf of a constituent that might be very urgent

at that time. There are a whole host of reasons why people might not be temporarily in the Chamber, and it is very difficult to see how an efficient monitoring system could be undertaken. Members are expected to deal with attendance at States sittings as a matter of honour, in accordance with their oath, and I think it is a very sorry state if we are moving away from a system of honour.

### **3.6.3 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:**

Does the Chairman agree with me that pursuing personal vendettas between Members is an inappropriate use of question time? [**Approbation**]

### **Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Is the Senator impugning my reputation, because I think he should withdraw that if he is?

### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

I would simply say that if that were the case it may well not be appropriate, but I am not alluding any kind of vendetta to the question the questioner has asked.

### **3.6.4 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:**

Just an observation really, it is normal in buildings where there are a lot of people working to have some sort of register of those who are in and out, purely for safety and fire records. Would it not be a consideration that P.P.C. would care to consider? Perhaps the Chairman would consider looking into that.

### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

The actual mechanics of whether people are in the building or in the Chamber are quite simple. We are in the Chamber, we are seen to be here. We are in the building because we swiped-in or swiped-out. That is not really the crux of the matter. The crux of the matter is determining why people are not here at any one time. That is where my concerns about intrusion and also the level of detail that would be required rest. The actual physical presence in the building is something quite easy to ascertain.

### **3.6.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

I think every year the P.P.C. produces an annual report of the work done in the Chamber, the number of hours used for debating, the number of propositions lodged, *et cetera*, has the P.P.C. given consideration maybe of showing the number of States sittings that each individual Member attends, also the number of votes each Member is present for, because no doubt that may be quite illuminating to members of the public.

### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

This information is available on the website generally, especially where electronic votes are taken, but as has been pointed out in the past, when this kind of analysis had been undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis, there are many reasons why the results were skewed. For example, there might be a whole host of minor votes taken within a half hour period and a Member who was out for just half an hour could miss, say, 8 votes, whereas on another day there might be one piece of business taking the whole day, and Members could be in and out and that not even be recorded by votes. While these ideas are very nice to put forward - and, as I say, P.P.C. is not dismissing them - P.P.C. has given considerable thought... It is actually a very complex matter and not as easily identifiable as the Deputy would think.

### **3.6.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Does the Chairman not consider that it really is of importance to the public that when we have Members bringing perhaps a proposition to freeze Members' salary that a member of the public can then look up at see that person is hardly ever in the Chamber and goes to his day job?

#### **The Bailiff:**

Deputy, sorry, what was the final bit?

#### **Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

Does the Chairman not think it is important if a person is bringing a proposition linked perhaps to States Members' remuneration that that person should be able to be checked out to see if the person bringing that is even in the Chamber and earning his money? It is quite clear, I think. Certainly a concern to the public who I talk to.

#### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

That question, of course, does relate specifically to another Member, and I would simply refer to answers given previously. There is no impediment in the States of Jersey Law or in our Standing Orders, apart from certain restricted categories of public employee, of a Member having a second place of employment. It is a matter for the electorate to judge how they view that. We are responsible ultimately at the ballot box. I would also reiterate what I have said previously, the people of the Island of Jersey are not fools.