

### **3.5 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the provision of information and voter registration forms in States-funded secondary schools:**

How many States-funded secondary schools, if any, have had voting registration forms and collection boxes put in them, and what information about voter registration, if any, has the Department provided to all students aged 16 years or over who will be leaving school in the next few weeks?

#### **Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):**

The responsibility for promoting the election and organisation of hustings for candidates rests with the Privileges and Procedures Committee with assistance from the States Greffe. The E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) Department liaises with the States Greffe and supports its work to raise awareness about the election. In this connection, E.S.C. has written to all secondary schools with copies of voter registration forms and has asked them to make these available to students aged 16 years and over. It is usually the voter's responsibility to return the registration form to their Parish Hall, but schools are free to make alternative arrangements, including collection boxes, and this has been made clear to head teachers. In addition, the States Greffe is currently preparing some information leaflets about voter registration and election day, and these will be circulated to students when these become available.

#### **3.5.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Sorry, I did not hear the Minister say how many schools, and does he realise that it is getting quite late in the year? The 16 year-olds are already leaving. Would the Minister undertake, as the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, to provide these registration forms and boxes when these 16 year-old students - who will all reach 16 by 31st August, eligible to vote this year - come and pick up their exam results? Will he do something, as the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture? He did agree with P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) and I take that one on the chin.

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

All schools have been written to, all secondary schools, so all children of 16 years, or young adults of 16 years and over. I hope that answers the Deputy's question in that way. I do appreciate that some 16 year-olds are leaving school but we to some degree have to work in a co-ordinated fashion with Privileges and Procedures and the States Greffe. So as soon as we have information, it goes to all schools. Following a meeting with Deputy Mézec about ...

#### **The Bailiff:**

I think you have answered that concisely, Minister.

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

Thank you, Sir.

#### **3.5.2 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

Could the Minister explain to the Assembly how many of these students have undergone the Citizenship Programme?

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

I would hope that all of them, because it is part of the Jersey curriculum; time is specifically set aside, either through assemblies or P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health Education) lessons, to inform all students of a particular age about the election system, their responsibilities as

citizens, *et cetera*, so I would hope that all have. In that vein, I know that the Director of Education has recently written - only in the last week - to all head teachers to ask them to ensure that time is put aside for that very purpose, either through assemblies specifically for that purpose or through P.S.H.E. lessons.

### **3.5.3 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John:**

I just wondered, maybe the Attorney General could help ...

#### **The Bailiff:**

These are questions to the Minister.

#### **The Connétable of St. John:**

Yes, to the Minister, but it may have to go via the Attorney General, because are the schools permitted, for want of a better word, to get involved in the electoral system by issuing forms and returning them on behalf of students?

#### **The Bailiff:**

It is a matter for the Minister, if he wants to answer that.

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

It is a balancing act, but I think it is true to say that as part of the P.S.H.E. curriculum teachers are required to teach ... I am trying to look for the exact words. It is a well-recognised principle that students should be able to learn about the democratic process in schools in a neutral environment. Teachers and lessons are expected to be unbiased and apolitical; they give students the background and context necessary for them to make informed decisions about political issues themselves. The responsibility - and I think this is where the Constable was getting to - for promoting the election and organisation of hustings for candidates rests with the Privileges and Procedures Committee with assistance from the States Greffe. I am just repeating: the E.S.C. Department liaises with the States Greffe and supports its work to raise awareness about the election. "Awareness" is the key word.

### **3.5.4 The Connétable of St. John:**

Returning the form that was mentioned earlier, if they are given to the students, via the Education Department, is that written in the law? Is that permissible? That is what I want to know.

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

It is not written in the law either way and it is not the department that returns these forms to the various Parish Halls, it is for the schools under delegated responsibility to head teachers. They have the policies and the guidelines very clearly articulated in various ways, so it is up to the schools and the head teachers if the pupils in the schools themselves request a collection box so that they are all taken in one go, then that is a decision for the head teacher to make.

#### **The Connétable of St. John:**

Sir, on the advice just being given by the Minister, can the Attorney General confirm that is correct?

#### **The Bailiff:**

I am sorry, not during question time, no. You can take that up separately, Connétable.

### **3.5.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

What is the policy of the department, if any, on politicians coming to schools to speak to students?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I think I have already covered that. It is the responsibility of the Privileges and Procedures Committee and also the candidates ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Sir, I think the Minister is misleading the House. I do not think it is the responsibility ...

**The Bailiff:**

No, he is not misleading the House. He may be ...

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I do not think he is correct, Sir. I think he is labouring under a false impression.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I was about to say: and the candidates themselves do collectively arrange for their hustings meetings.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I am not asking about election processes, I am asking about out of election time, what is the policy of sitting Members being invited or visiting schools?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

This is something that I will need to check on and get back to the Deputy to get the exact policy. I think I will have to just leave it there.

### **3.5.6 Connétable J.L.S. of Gallichan of Trinity:**

Very similar to the Connétable of St. John: if they are already placed in the box, will the Minister tell us how they will then be sent back to the Parishes? Is it down to the headmaster to do that or is it down to the individual children to register with their Parish?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The primary responsibility is with the person themselves to register with the Parish but if schools are arranging for collection boxes then it will be the school's responsibility to distribute them to the various Parishes.

### **3.5.7 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

It has already been agreed and the Minister should know that the boxes would go back to the Greffe and the Greffe would then send them out to the individual Parishes, and it is legal because P.P.C. has checked it. The final question - I would like to have had an answer - was about registration, not about politics. It was about getting 16 year-olds registered. I still do not know how many schools are doing it. Can the Minister answer me? They have all been written to. How many schools have collection boxes or even registration forms in them this minute when the 16 year-olds are leaving and most of them have already left this year.

[10:15]

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Every school with 16 year-olds or over has registration forms. It is a different matter as to whether the school itself has collection boxes. That is a matter for the head teacher.