

## **STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. MARTIN ON SUNDAY 9th MAY 2010**

### **Liberation Day Address**

As each year goes by there are fewer people living in Jersey, who were either evacuated, left Jersey to serve in the war effort, were deported or were Occupied until Liberation Day now some 65 years ago. No doubt in 1945 every Member who sat on the very seats we now sit on was in the Island during the Occupation. However age has taken its toll and I am now one of only eight States Members who was in Jersey during the Occupation. It is with pride that I wear my Liberation medal which was given to children who were in Jersey during the Occupation. I also feel very honoured to be afforded the privilege of making the annual States Members Liberation Address.

Liberation Day has a special meaning for many people for various reasons and may I make a plea to the many Island residents who because they have been born since 1945 did not experience those grim war years, Today is also very much your day because we should remind ourselves of what can happen when we turn a blind eye to tyrants who have no respect for the very values which we take for granted.

I ask that we take ourselves back some 70 years and consider the terrible decision our forefathers had to make as to whether to evacuate or stay. What would we have done for there was no crystal ball to look into? Along with thousands of fellow Islanders my parents had to make that decision. For better or worse they decided to stay and as a result, along with my sister Margaret who is in the public gallery today we survived the Occupation, and were taken to witness the arrival of the liberating troops. Apart from the flag waving, the one thing we both remember most about that day was being given dark brown and extremely hard and sugar less bars of chocolate.

But before that day we lived through almost 5 years of Occupation. Our father had come to Jersey from Devon before the war to dig potatoes and later married our Jersey born mother. As a consequence in September 1942 our family was one of hundreds of other families who were selected for deportation. Fortunately as our father was a herdsman for the late Eugene Pérrédes he was considered essentially employed so was excused the September shipments of Deportees to Germany. However that was not the case the following February because we were ordered to the harbour for further shipments. Fortunately there was insufficient room on the boat for those further down the queue, therefore our family along with many others were told to report the following day. Somehow fate was to play its part for although my family did report later, the boat never arrived so we were not deported.

I was really too young to understand the hardship my parents and fellow Islanders had to endure but there are a few experiences that I would like to share today. For the greater part of the Occupation we lived at 12 Poplar Avenue in Maufant which in those days was tree lined. We seemed to walk everywhere and I remember how conscious my parents were of leaving in good time to get home before the curfew. I can still remember my hand being squeezed by either of my parents every time we passed the German Sentry posts and my parents whispering "Germans."

It also seemed that every time we went anywhere we brought home twigs or anything else that burnt. This was very important because wood was required as fuel for heating and cooking. The winter before our Liberation was particularly harsh with an ever increasing shortage of fuel supplies. This necessitated burning what ever was available and coal dust which sometimes included foreign bodies such as cartridges was mixed with tar. Although Islanders were warned to check the dust, accidents did happen and our mother was a victim. Both my sister and I were in the room when a cartridge exploded and wounded our mother who had just fed the fire. We both can recall our mother's screams and loss of blood and our Auntie Yvonne who lived next door coming to look after us. Fortunately our mother survived the ordeal but we shall never forget the experience. I might add that in those days our parent's friends were always called uncle and auntie

Gleaning was much a way of life and with other children we gleaned for potatoes and wheat, but can assure Members that at no time did we glean before the potato crop was dug or the wheat was harvested. On certain days we used to take some food to be cooked at the communal centre at Three Mile Farm. Not only was the room warm but the smell of the cooking made the trip a real pleasure.

There were a number of children living in Poplar Avenue and I remember the German soldiers marching up and down the Avenue singing Heidi Heido Heida. I can still remember the chastising I received from my mother who did not take kindly to me joining the bigger boys marching behind the soldiers with a stick replicating a rifle. By coincidence only last month the lady I still call Auntie Yvonne reminded me of the incident and how worried my mother was about my actions because it might have got our family into trouble.

I still remember my parents talking about gleaning, curfew, black market, Tommies, Jerries and the unfortunate words Jerry bags because in that respect it was not until many years later that I realised that Jerry bags were not German carrier bags.

There is something endearing about childhood innocence because we were protected from the harsh realities of life. We were not aware of the war machine which not only cast a shadow over Jersey, but worldwide. We were not aware of the brutality of war and the oppression the occupying troops not only imposed on our families, but also those from foreign fields who were transported to Jersey to be no better than slaves. We were not aware of the massive loss of life suffered by innocent civilians and the armed forces in defeating evil so that we may celebrate Liberation Days.

Very soon we shall leave this Chamber and make our way to what is now our Liberation Square. We will see a re-enactment of the liberation and hopefully if my sister and I are given chocolate it will be a lot sweeter and softer than we received 65 years ago. The hymn "Oh God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come" is often associated with our Liberation as it is fitting that we never forget what has happened in the past. However we should also look forward to the future with optimism and hope for years to come.

I have taken a short journey into the past and reminded us of some of the hardship and suffering endured by so many to allow us to make that short journey to Liberation Square. However, as we make our way we should reflect and be thankful for those who gave their today for our tomorrow so we are able to enjoy one of God's greatest gifts, that of freedom which for 5 long years was denied to so many Islanders.