

Deputy Bob Hill

Sir

A major part of a Centeniers duty has always been his role in Court.

This can very often be a daunting prospect for newly elected Centeniers but, with the help and guidance of senior and more experienced Centeniers, most manage to become more than competent and indeed end up enjoying and experiencing a great sense of satisfaction at being able to contribute, in no small way, to the smooth running of the society in which they live.

As in all walks of life, Advocates, Police Officers, Doctors, Carpenters, Politicians, there are good and bad and all shades in between. I have yet to hear of an instance when the conduct of, even one of the worst, Centeniers has resulted in a major miscarriage of justice.

A newly elected Centenier, certainly from my experience, attends Court with an experienced Centenier, on all occasions, until he is competent enough to handle it on his own and even then would only be involved in relatively minor cases. The time that this takes, of course, depends on the individual.

A Centenier that does not enjoy the work will generally leave it to his colleagues who do, so, for the most part, the Court ends up with a natural pool of reasonably competent Centeniers.

I have watched the system working, as a Centenier, for nine years and at no time have I felt ashamed to be a part of it or have I felt that it needs any major changes.

At one time, Centeniers used to undergo regular training sessions in the Court, with the invaluable help of the Legal Advisors and, on occasions, the Magistrate. This stopped when we moved into the new Court building. This, I believe, should be resumed. This would mean that the Centenier continues to receive the training appropriate to the positions uniqueness.

It is this uniqueness that we should be endeavouring to keep and strengthen. In my opinion, it is an amazing system that has worked well for hundreds of years. Just because something is old does not necessarily mean that it has to be changed.

Any change would NOT result in a vast financial saving to the Island. Justice would not be dispensed any quicker or more fairly. The fairness of the justice in Jersey is something that we can rightly be proud of and I think this is due in no small part to the role that the Centenier plays.

A Centenier knows his own Parish and Parishioners and can therefore answer any questions put to him by the Magistrate about people or areas in that Parish. He is an important part of Parish life and that Importance carries over into the Court system. Nothing would be added to the quality of life in Jersey by changing something that has been proven to work well for some considerable time.



Centenier Colin Foley. Chef de Police. St. Saviour.

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