



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Family Friendly Employment Rights

Witness: Mr. N. Beddoe

Tuesday, 9th April 2019

Panel:

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary

Senator Kristina Moore

Witnesses:

Mr. N. Beddoe

[14:01]

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you, Mr Beddoe, for coming in.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is a pleasure.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

We are here obviously as a result of the letter that you sent to the Minister for Social Security raising concerns about the new family friendly legislation that is about to come in. So we would like to take time today just to explore those concerns and to understand them more fully. Before we get started officially I will just get everyone, including yourself, just to state your name for the record. We will start here.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:

Deputy Scott Wickenden, I am a panel member on the committee and I am Deputy of St. Helier District 1.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Deputy Kirsten Morel, I am Chairman of the Panel.

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary:

David Johnson, Deputy Chairman, and Deputy of St. Mary.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I am Senator Kristina Moore and I am a member of the Panel.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I am Nathan Beddoe, a small business owner.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Brilliant, thank you. Do you mind if I call you Nathan?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Please do.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you. Thank you so much for writing in, and thank you for getting involved. That is exactly what scrutiny needs, it is what all the States need is just for people to get involved and bring their concerns. Just an overall thing, can I ask, when did you first become aware of the changes to the law that has been proposed.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It was through the media actually. Through the *Jersey Evening Post* and then social media as well, which was sort of regurgitation of the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* really, so that was the first that I heard of it. I had ... the 50-odd small businesses that I am representing here today, the main chap that supported me with this is going through the exercise at the moment. He runs a small business at St. Peter, he has 2 full-time employees, an extremely busy business and he has got one of the guys off on paternity leave in blocks at the moment and he is really struggling with it. It came about ... I was up there in a professional level and we started talking and I just said: "What is going on here, you have a queue out the door. That is really bad for business." He said: "I have got a guy who has taken paternity leave and it is crippling us." We just started the ball rolling, we just talked about it and we both decided that, you know, it was crippling for a small business. I think the really

important thing to say here is, and I have said in my letter, I am not sure you have read the letter. We have all been through it, we all have children and we all understand the pressures that people are up against and in no way are we trying to dilute those at all but we also face great pressures to small business owners and it is keeping the place spinning basically. It is not all about the financial burden, it is about the actual burden of not having people to take on the work, not being able to fulfil our contracts that we have promised people. We have insurances in place if, I, for example, break a leg and cannot go to work, I have insurance in place that will cover me financially, which is great, but when you take someone out of the equation for something like this for a long period of time and for 2 or 3 separate occasions, it puts an unreasonable stress on us. Now, for someone like the Royal Bank of Canada, for example, I know are probably the largest employer apart from the States of Jersey in Jersey, so we get maybe 1,000 employees, now if I lose an employee, I lose 50 per cent of my workforce straight away. It just got us wondering that if the Royal Bank of Canada had to lose 50 per cent of their workforce overnight, what would the outcome of that be? It would be unacceptable to the whole Island, so why is it acceptable for a small business to be able to absorb this? It just seemed grossly unfair. The legislation has been brought in, last year, I believe, and now we are changing it already. We are already toughening it up, we are already saying that is not enough, we have to do more. We have no idea yet how the current legislation is going to manifest itself. It really is early.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Were you aware when the first changes were implemented that it has been stated that these changes would be brought in the following year?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

No, I was not.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Talking about the first stages, can I just take you back to that conversation with your friend in St. Peter? Can you clarify, did he lose that person on to parental leave under the current law which came in in 2018, so that person has the right to take 26 weeks in 3 blocks and so that is what is hurting? I know you are not the employer in this case, but do you know if that person has taken different blocks and if that was what was hurting? Do you know, what is the problem with those blocks?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I think it is really the fact that he does not have to give an awful lot of notice. I think that was quite a concern. Really I know that most employees out there are very diligent and want to be in their work but we all have the odd employee that might not be as keen as the others. In busy times of

year that employee potentially could say: "You know, in this shop we are really busy at Christmas, I do not really fancy it so I am going to take my blocks over Christmas for the next 3 years. I just do not think that that has been considered from a very small perspective, a very small business perspective. We really try to highlight this - or I tried to highlight this - in the letter that I sent to Judy. I will be honest with you, I am not a particularly bright man it was really from the heart and it was from the heart of 50-odd small businessmen and we expected a heartfelt response. We expected a response from someone that we had elected that would put our mind at rest that she was at least considering the implications.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

"I understand your concerns" and then from there is that the kind of response you were looking for. "We understand what you are trying to say and what we have taken into consideration is that and this is what we think has affected it" rather than what you got?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes, you are probably right there. What I would say, it would probably be a bit stronger, what I received is a load of political rhetoric and I was really upset about it because I read this, I am reasonably well-educated, and it is just claptrap. It really is. Sorry, it is just claptrap. The 50-odd people that have now seen this, the reaction has been all the way from frustration to rage that an elected official can treat a large amount of people with contempt really. The questions are clear and they have not been addressed. I cannot help thinking that this department or certainly this Minister is failing. She is failing to answer our questions, she is failing to deal with our concerns, she has not asked to meet with us, she has not asked for us to be more specific with our questions. All we have met with is facts and figures which do not apply to the small business in the real world. I think it is really frustrating. I think it is a shame.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you for that, it really important to state these things. You talk that it does not apply to small business in the real world. Of course one way that Government tries to make sure the laws it brings in apply to as many people as possible is through consultation. We understand that the consultation for these laws happened back in 2017. I just wanted to ask whether you were aware of that consultation process, whether that was something that had been brought to your attention back in 2017?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

No, it was not.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Or any of the 50, to your knowledge?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I am aware of it now.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

No, no, but back before the law was written?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

No, and I have spoken to a lot of people on this. An awful lot of people and an awful lot of small businesses, and no one has been approached. I have spoken to ... there are 50 people who have put their names to the letter, from that 50 people it spiderwebs out and nobody has been able to tell me: "Yes, we have been approached for this." So it does beg the question: what sort of businesses are they approaching? Are they approaching ... so let us get down to the bare bones of it. Everyone wants to be seen to be doing the right thing. I know medium-sized business owners that I approached for this and they said: "Nathan, I cannot get involved with this because if the press get hold of this, that I am suggesting that we are against this, they will have a field day. All of a sudden I am against workers' rights, I am against families." So big businesses and medium businesses will not get involved. I think - I am not 100 per cent sure - the sort of businesses they may have been consulting may have been the larger businesses and the medium-sized businesses. It is ironic really because they are the ones it is going to have little impact on and they are the ones that have to be seen to be doing the right thing.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Absolutely.

Senator K.L. Moore:

How would you like to be approached when there is a major consultation going on like this? What would be an effective way of engaging with people like yourself?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

A really effective thing would be to never send a letter like this out again, instead perhaps send a letter out saying that she has read my concerns and she has not whitewashed it, and then perhaps she can send someone to come and meet us, spend a day with us. Spend a day with my friend in St. Peter who is up to his neck in it because a guy keeps going off for extended periods on parental leave, and understand the pressure we are under. I think it is also really important to not fall back, as some of the other Ministers have said: "Perhaps we can soften the blow with Social Security, perhaps Social Security can add to it." Well, we are faced with an ageing population and we are in

dire straits now. We are going to be paying a lot more social care and the like. I think something like this is unnecessary to get social involved.

Senator K.L. Moore:

May I just park that, because I would like to talk to you about your ideas and potential ways of going forward. Just to go back to the consultation process in 2017 when the Employment Forum started asking people about this. Obviously you did not become aware of the consultation at that time so what would be an effective way of getting you involved at that early stage prior to you being at the point of writing a letter to the Minister? Would it be, say, a notice on your Social Security bill when it arrives, for example?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Before I answer that question, are you able to tell me how they do it right now?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, absolutely.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

That would give me a little bit more to work with ...

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I will just pick that up quickly. We had the Employment Forum in yesterday so they told us yesterday, which is handy, but basically they did it through adverts in the *J.E.P.*, kind of articles in the *J.E.P.*; social media, so advertising through social media; J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory Conciliation Service) got involved, J.A.C.S helped promote it by sending ... putting it on their newsletter that they send to their database; Chamber of Commerce were made aware of it and so they also were able to filter it through their communications to their members. So those were the main ways, with various advertising in *J.E.P.*, social media and also through the Chamber of Commerce.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I guess as members of the public we all hear a lot of things and consultations going on all the time, and at what point does the person say: "Do you know that consultation, that might affect me or my business at some point, so I am going to have my say." That is what really interests me.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The Employment Trust will say what Kirsten just said, what they did. They will not say: "What else could we have done?" So, you know, what else could they have done?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I think there is a real healthy dollop of apathy going on in Jersey, is there not? You see some of that and you think: "Somebody else will deal with that." The very nature of a small business is we are juggling all the time and do I have time to read the paper? No, not really. Do I have time to flick around on social media? Probably not, I am in the office most evenings. Am I on one of these databases? Probably not because I am such a small business. I do not know the answer to that question but I will have a think about it and email you if you like.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you, that would be really helpful. One thing we had thought about jointly and put this to the Employment Forum yesterday, was perhaps they could have asked Social Security to attach a letter to every employer when they sent out their quarterly returns.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Given that Social Security have the details of every employer in the Island we thought maybe Social Security could have played a role in just bringing it to your attention, because they write to you every quarter.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Part of me thinks that we have an elected official who is in charge of Social Security and we have a government full of ex-business leaders, why was it not picked up at that level? I do not understand why nobody has gone: "Hold on a minute, guys", I know yourself you have been involved in a small business in the past and you are obviously running with it now, but anyone who read that, and I have spoken to a lot of people on it, and anyone who has read it will say: "That is crazy." Only 10 per cent will come forward and say: "That is crazy" because it is not the politically correct thing to say, is it?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

No, I appreciate what you are saying and, sadly, I was not here in 2107 to pick it up. I am sure ... I hope I would have.

[14:15]

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I will get back to you on that one, if that is okay?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Please do, yes.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

If I can come up with any ideas.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We would be really interested to hear because it would help formulate the way we work in the future.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Definitely, yes. That would be great.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thought the best way to go through it was just to go through some of your concerns and try and pick them out on here. You are saying that you are concerned that the proposed amendment would force small businesses into liquidation because of the unreasonable financial burden upon having to pay an absent member of staff a full wage for an extended length of time such as this. Is your concern there the 6 weeks paid leave that obviously goes to fathers and mothers, and also that kind of 52 week split into possibly up to 4 periods?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I guess they go hand in hand really, do they not? There are 2 problems here: there is the fact that they are going to be paid and there is the fact they are not bringing any money in for the business.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

They are paid for that 6 weeks, they are not paid for the further 4 to 6 weeks period.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Understood. The first 6 weeks we are talking about, which they are paid for. So let us say I am a reasonably small business and things are tight. I employ someone because I have to, because I have the work for them. If somebody is off for 6 weeks and I am paying them it is 2-fold. I am not getting any work in and I am having to pay them for not doing any work. It is as simple as that. It really is a very simple equation for a small business.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That is a really interesting point. You are saying you are not getting the work in so you have to potentially cut down the amount of work your business does because you are a person down ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

You are losing a profit element now, are you not?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is all about selling hours and that is what we are doing. I have a guy, I am charging him out at X and I pay him X. I do not mind, that is great, he is going to make money, I am going to make money.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

You know if you pay him £10 and let us say the work he does is worth £15 so you have made that £5 profit.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Exactly, he has the security of working for me, he gets paid a bit of sick pay, he does not have the hassle of customers screaming at him at 11 o'clock at night on the cell phone. I will take all that from you but all I want is £5 an hour off you, it is not too much to ask. My problem is when that guy is not doing that, so I am not selling his hours but I am still having to pay him his hours, that puts me in a very difficult position for 6 weeks.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Also Social Security.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Social security, I think I brought that up, would we still have to pay his or her Social Security while they are off. This is all ... it just all seems very fluffy and there are no real answers and they are voting on this and it is really scary for a small business.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The reason I bring up that idea of selling the hours, as you said quite rightly, is in the actual proposition, in the report that accompanies it, they have broken down the cost to the Government and so it is clear ... and this is one of the flags that came up at my end. It is clear that they see it as, you know, the cost is only in the paying of the benefit. As in, they have to pay the wage for that person for 6 weeks, that is the cost of what ... it does not seem as they understand the lost work as a cost as well, and that ...

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Or recruitment costs.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

There is no mention of recruitment costs, there is no mention of advertising. From your perspective, are recruitment costs significant if you have to find somebody else.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is not the cost, we have a labour shortage, we just cannot find people.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Excluding the labour shortage, we will come to that bit in a sec, but excluding that, if you just recruit somebody, is that a cost to you?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is the biggest cost. Okay, so I do boiler maintenance, so we have boilers all around the Island and we turn up once a year and we maintain that boiler. It is a very specialist thing. So when I get someone new I have to train them up to so it takes me probably 6 months to get them to making me any money and then from there they make me fairly small amounts of money, until they are really experienced and I can leave them to it. So what we are faced with, if someone goes off for 3 months in December, what I am faced with then is I am faced with probably 6 customers a day that cannot be dealt with. So I have to get someone in and I have to say: "Right, what I want you go do for 3 months is to go and service all those boilers." He is going to look at me blankly. The best plumber in the world is going to look at me blankly because it is not a plumbing issue, it is a boiler maintenance issue, it is a boiler engineer. I need a fully trained boiler engineer and I need him straight away because that person has just told me: "By the way, I only have to give you 2 weeks' notice, I am going."

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

You are not allowed to touch a boiler unless you have the qualification to do it, either.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

You have to go away and qualify to become OFTEC registered.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Would you ordinarily foot that cost for somebody if you were to hire them?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Do you hire apprentices and build them up in ...

Mr. N. Beddoe:

That is a different subject really. We would love to hire apprentices if they could have a shave and turn up on site.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Going back to your example, your guy being away, for whatever weeks, you ... I expect the most common result is they get another firm and the customer might not come back to you?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes, it is a really interesting point. What will happen is first of all we always try and accommodate a customer and we will go them if they are broken down and they are freezing. The fact is, when you have one guy off, he is probably dealing with 6 of those a day and all of a sudden we cannot deal with those 6. Those customers just want their heating on. They do not care who does it. They have used us in the past, they will go somewhere else and their exact attitude will be, and we have seen in the past: "I am sorry but last year I needed you and you let me down, I have gone to another company and we have lost faith in you." That is exactly what on a person level I know is going to happen to us, without a shadow of a doubt. If you service their boiler every year, they will stay with you, as long you do not let them down when they need you. If you let them down when they need you, you have lost that customer for ever and that is my concern. I need to find someone to come and service boilers, I need them to know what they are doing so they turn up and know what is wrong with it, and I need them to be fully qualified to OFTEC standards. It is impossible. My hands are absolutely tied. I cannot fulfil that need so where do I go. I have got at least 6 people a day now for 6 weeks to start with. That is an awful lot of customers I am losing. If they go off in the summer it is not such a burden, but we go back to the shopkeepers, do we not, at Christmas, we go back to people like this who know they are going to be ultra-busy at that time of the year. It is going to be crippling for a small business and I am not exaggerating, it will be crippling.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Seventy per cent of boiler breakdowns happen in the winter because that is when they are used at their highest levels. In the summer they tend not to be used at the same level so the work is lower than those periods where it is most needed.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

You are quite right there, which is why in my letter to Judy I asked the question, I said is there any way that the employer could have some sort of input as to when they could have this time off. Throw me a bone here, you know. Let us try and work together because, as some of other Ministers have said to me: "Nathan, this is coming through whether you like it or not." I do not necessarily agree with that. If it is coming through, can we work together to make it a little bit easier for the employer. If my guys or ladies said to me: "I need to go off, I need some time with my child" can I say to them:

“Look, it’s Christmas, it is January, it is February, snow is outside would you mind looking at April, May, June, July, August?” I am sure a shopkeeper would say: “Look, it is Christmas, can you just defer it to January when we are absolutely dead?’ Is there no flexibility in this at all? There does not seem to be any to me.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

In her response to you the Minister said ... so you asked the question, would the employer have any say as to when the leave is to be taken over 3 years? The Minister’s response is no.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Quite direct that, is it not?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It is quite direct, yes. The employment law already provides that an employee has a right to decide when they take their maternity, adoption or parental leave. So she is referring to the fact that the law that is currently in, and came in in 2018, has that in. What she is saying to some extent is this law does not change what is already in place. How do you respond to that?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I would say: “Could we have a little bit of damage limitation” because, okay, fine, that law is in, there is not much we can do about that now but she is looking at doubling it. Fine, but can we bring in some negotiation here? Can we bring in some sort of compromise between the employer and the employee. I know it is not going to be easy, it is going to be complicated but surely this has to work for both parties.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

What we have been told in evidence was that you can ask as an employer ... if I am your employee and I come and say: “Right, I am going to take my first chunk of, let us say 10 weeks, 10 weeks off starting 1st December through to the middle of February” what we have been told is that you can ask for a conversation about that. So you can ask for a conversation with your employee about that. But at the end of that conversation, you might, let us say, say: “Look, do you do it over Easter because that will be less demand than over the winter” is that you then have ... you can ask for that but obviously the employee can turn around and say: “No, I am sticking to 1st December for 10 weeks.” From your perspective, is having a conversation enough?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

What they are trying ... reading between the lines, what they are trying to say is that you have permission to ask them to reconsider. In other words, that would not be considered bullying them or putting pressure on them. You are allowed to ask them?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

You are allowed to have a conversation, yes, that is it. But that conversation does not have to be taken forward by the employee.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I just do not really think it is enough. I do not think it is enough to ask to have a conversation with somebody. We employ people, we look after them, you know. If they are good at their job we need them as much as they need us, you know, it is a 2-way street. Should we be resorting to asking someone to reconsider if they would shift it along a bit or should we not have some sort of sway to say really: "We understand what this is all about and if your child is sick or your child is in hospital or you have some other crisis, we are flexible, can you not afford the flexibility the other way? Can we not do something here?"

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

So some guidance on when it is appropriate to ... well, how to accept ... like for an employee if there were like levels of guidance that says you still have the conversation but it needs to meet this criteria and if does not meet the criteria you do not have to accept it.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I have to be really careful here because I do not really know a lot about what you guys do. I know all about what I do, but if it was me making the laws perhaps I would say if both parties are unhappy then perhaps we can take it to some sort of arbitration and we can sit here ... I know it is long and it is drawn out but you could be the difference between a small business going under. So let us sit in front of a panel like you and say: "Right, guys, this is why I really do not want this member of staff to go off at this time of the year." The member of staff can go: "This is why I want to go off at this time of year." Either it is genuine, my mother is over and she wants to spend time with my child, or I love doing Christmas shopping and not going to work, and then you guys would have to make that decision. I think that would be a fair way of doing it. It would be time-consuming but it is time-consuming, is it not? It is a minefield.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

In case you thought otherwise, the ideas you come up with, it is great to hear them first hand from you. They are not news to us.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I want this to work. I really want happy staff. Nobody wants unhappy staff. Unhappy staff are really unproductive. We have all had them, it is a nightmare. Happy staff are really productive and they make me shine. What I do not want is for my business to be finished because I have potentially 2 members of staff off at the same time having babies or their wife having babies and them not have a job to come back to because that is the reality of it.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Can I ask, if you think about the periods, the 4 periods, that you can take in 3 years, so you have 52 weeks' leave, which you can take in 4 periods over 3 years, so in theory you could have 4 equal periods of 13 weeks just dotted over those 3 years or you could take a 6 month period and then a couple of 2 month periods, 3 month periods. You have already mentioned with regard to that business in St. Peter, the idea of trying to find someone to cover for those short periods. Is it very difficult for you, is that correct? Would it be easier for you to have someone take one 52 week period, fullstop? So birth of their child and they are gone for a year?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Would that be easier for you than dealing with these 4 periods?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is still a nightmare but, yes, easier. My friend in St. Peter he operates, he sells hardware and he has got a big warehouse, he has him and his 2 staff. It is probably 12 weeks before the new member of staff knows where most of the items are. So for 12 weeks we are carrying it, we are paying him for doing not much but learning. So it is an investment, we are investing in him or her. What we do then is if he goes off in these blocks, the same story, we have to find someone else to come, learn where all that stuff is, by the time they have learnt it the other person is back. If it is a year we can say: "Right, we have a year here, guys, let us pull together, we will get someone in, we will teach them quick and then at least we might have 9 months productivity out of the person." But it is the block system that is causing us major, major headaches. The year, I could kind of deal with that I reckon.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It is very similar to the Jersey Retail Association in their evidence that they gave us. Very similar thing, saying a year gives them the opportunity to get their return on investment.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is a really good way of looking at it. Yes, exactly.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

As in over the course of a year they are trained up ... I think the same sort of thing, 2 to 3 months to train them and then 9 months to earn back the money that you spent on training them essentially and make something of it.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Small businesses are funny. We are in it for the money. Do not think any different. We are in the selling hours but it is a co-operative. We are looking after people and they are happy with the arrangement as well but it seems that things are weighted against us at the moment as far as staff goes.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Talking about weighted against us. Another aspect brought up is being the cumulative effect of different laws that have been brought in over the past years. Can I ask how long have you been a small businessman? How long ...?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Twelve years.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

So in those 12 years is the legal landscape quite different to when you began, if you know what I mean?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Massively. Massively. It goes back against the letter, I had some quite serious questions about, you know, if we bring someone into the organisation for the year, let us say they change it to a year, let us say somehow that happened, how is that fair bringing someone in and then just ejecting them from the business after a year. It seems a really harsh way of doing things. I do not know if I would want to go into an association or a business, learn everything really quickly to know that a year later I was going to be out. I do not know, I just do not see it working very well for those guys either.

[14:30]

The Deputy of St. Mary:

No, they would not have a commitment on day 1, would they?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

The lovely romantic view is, well, it will be great because I will recognise that person and they will have been with me for a year and I will say: "You are brilliant, I do not know what to lose you but this guy is coming back, we have not made any more money because we spent 3 months training you ..." It does not work like that. We are all so tight on margins, so tight.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Interesting.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Just looking at potential ways forward. My follow-up question to that is: if you could give perhaps some context to the level of difficulty in terms of finding members of staff, particularly on a temporary basis. You have talked already about specialist skills in your own business. Do you find the employment market, when you go out to the market and when your colleagues who have joined with you in writing this letter go out to the market, how easy do you find it to find the right people?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is incredibly difficult to find good staff. Incredibly difficult. The cost of living in Jersey is pretty horrendous, as I am sure you all know. I have been looking for someone now for 3 years, someone else to join us for 3 years and I just cannot find anyone. All I want really, I am quite basic, is just someone to be able to get up in the morning, be able to have a shave and turn up on time and be able to have a conversation with a customer. The rest I can teach them. I can teach them anything technical, but I cannot teach someone how to hold a conversation and look presentable, and I just cannot find anyone, and everyone is saying the same. So what we find, and it is not so much in my industry, a little bit, but let us say the plumbing industry, is the wages are going up and up and we are trying to keep these people, because it is turning into a Dutch auction. People are saying: "Well, I will pay you £40,000 a year", "I will pay you £45,000 a year", "Well, I will pay you £50,000" and all of a sudden you guys are paying £3,000 to have your tap fixed, and you are wondering why.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

We know.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is not because we are greedy. It is because we have to pay people more than half the people in finance nowadays. There is just no one coming through, which is interesting, because it brings me on to another point in my letter, this will not happen with my company, but there are more unscrupulous people out there, that perhaps could look at a young person of 20 or 21 and say: "You

are a risk. You have got a girlfriend. You have just bought a flat.” I am not saying I would do this, I would never do this, because it is illegal, but there are people out there who will say: “Well, I have got a 40 year-old here, and I have got a 21 year-old here and he has got a girlfriend and they have just bought a flat. There is a very good chance they are going to want to have 3 children and it is going to cost me X amount” and you could probably work out how much it was going to cost you. Young people are finding it really hard to get a start, they tell us, and yet we are throwing another obstacle in their way. I do not think that is right. I think we should be encouraging people to employ young people. This is not encouraging them and however we dress it up we know that it is a big, bad world out there and people will think like that, and it is wrong, but it will happen.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

Do you also find the fact that because you are having, in your previous point, to pay people more and almost fight for this, so you start having people with high levels of wages and income, but they are more likely to take the unpaid leave off, because they are earning at such a level that they can save up and then say: “Well, I could take the next 6 months off because we can afford it; we have built up the reserves” where because you are in an area where you need a specialist skill you are paying people at a level that are more likely to take the time off?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes. I would agree with that comment, definitely. I would say to you I know people who are running small businesses with 5 or 6 guys on board, especially in the plumbing industry, their guys are earning more than they are taking home running the business. That is frightening. There is something wrong, and these guys are hanging in there thinking: “Eventually I will build it up to a point where I will be earning more than my guys” but we get things thrown at us like this and it makes it harder and harder. It is not really growing small businesses, it is not really encouraging us to blossom and put the work in. Eventually what will happen, I guess, is if we keep putting restrictions like this in place small businesses will think: “Well, what is the point?” and you will have 3 plumbing firms in Jersey, all massive, all charging an absolute fortune. Your choice will be reduced and your costs will go up, because they will be able to charge what they like. I think while there is always a small businessman with one or 2 guys he is always keen for the work and he will always put the lowest price in.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I would have mentioned plumbers if you had not done it already, because I am aware there have been problems there, but among your group of 50 can you touch on what sort of businesses are going to be similarly affected to how you have just described in the various areas?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Honestly, out of the 50, I would say about 45 of them are going to be instantly affected by this. Of all of them that I have talked to, there were at least 45 of them who said: "Nathan, I have young ladies or men working for me who are of childbearing age", or: "Nathan, I was getting ready to take on my first employee. Is it worth it anymore? Is it really worth it, with everything that has been thrown at us, the Employment Law, that seems to be somehow, occasionally weighted in favour of the employee. Their Social Security is going up, it seems like we have to tread on eggshells asking for conversations when we are paying wages and we are reasonable people but it just seems everything is weighted towards the employee now, and we just feel like we are getting a bit of a rough deal." Yes, I would agree, I think it is going to affect a vast amount of small businesses.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am just trying to get a feel for what sort of businesses were involved in your examples.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Believe it or not there were only about 7 or 8 plumbers on there, because I did not want to have it all from my industry, I wanted it to be quite a broad spectrum, so we got some guys who are doing ground works, they have got a fleet of diggers. For example, I will give you an example, if one of their digger drivers goes off; if he or she goes off they have got to replace that digger driver. Show me a fully-trained digger driver that is willing to come in for 3 months. It is just not going to happen, so their business suffers, they have to turn down work. We have got people who fit garage doors, okay, not too bad as long as the boss knows how to fit a garage door, the other guy is going to hold something in place, not the end of the world, but again it is going to affect them, because they are jobs they can do while the boss should be in the office sending out invoices. Every small business it will have an effect on. Mine, massive, the digger driver fairly medium, the garage door guy, yes, not too bad, he can go in the office in the middle of the night, can he not, and get all the invoicing done then. So I think they are all going to be affected by it, but it is a scale. It is a scale, dare I say it, of skilled workers. So if you have got 15 labourers and one of your labourers goes off you can probably go down to the JobCentre and say: "I would like a labourer, please" and he can go and he can dig a hole and it is not going to be the end of the world. If one of mine goes, I go: "I need a fully qualified boiler engineer that is in-ticket", as we call it, so a qualification lasts for 5 years: "I need him to be in-ticket to OFTEC standards and also he needs to know his way around these boilers specifically in Jersey to fix them" so for me it is a massive deal.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am going to continue being devil's advocate, in a way, and I can see the disruption caused if someone does take this time off, but given that often for the initial 6 months they are not being paid for it, do you think the problem is as great as you suggest it might be? Are there going to be lots of people who can afford to take their 3 months off and go back?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I think there are quite a few people who can afford to take the 3 months. Yes, whether it is paid or unpaid really is academic, because at the end of the day I am paying for it. I am going to pay for it because I have got to find someone else, I have got to train them up, I have got to lose money.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I understand that. What I am really getting at is the argument that is important to us is that of course they are not getting paid when they are having this extra time off. Is there going to be a lot of momentum for these people to take their parental leave even if they are entitled to it?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Basically, will many people take it, especially the unpaid part of it?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

You are at the roll of the dice there, are you not? Roll the dice and find out.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I understand that.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is a big risk. I do not think that is a risk I would like to take.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

The truth is that at no point anywhere do they address that with any evidence as to why people will not. It is just something we are looking at.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes, I understand what you are saying. If none of them take it up then it is no problem. If they all take it up if the law is passed, it is the roll of the dice.

Senator K.L. Moore:

In the letter the Minister suggests that the Chief Minister will vary the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law in order: "In line with the proposed changes to parental leave to make it easier for businesses to employ staff to cover periods of parental leave for an appropriate period of time" so that I read as offering the ability to bring someone in from elsewhere with the appropriate skills on a short-term basis. Do you think that is a step in the right direction?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I think it is a great idea, but the fact of the matter is that they are trying to push this law through with no details. It is a lovely idea but how is it going to work? Am I going to have to pay for the person's accommodation? Are the States of Jersey going to have to pay for it? If the States of Jersey are paying for it then you can be sure I am going to be paying for it in my Social Security contributions, which are already going to have to go up.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I do not think you will find the States of Jersey are paying for it, so you will be paying for it.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

So what I have got to do is I have got to get someone here, I have got to pay for his accommodation, I have got to say to him: "Can you go up to Fauvic?" and he will say: "Where is Fauvic?" Yes, it is easier, but it is no easier, because I have got somebody who does not know where Bromwells is, he does not know where any of the customers are, he does not know his way around Jersey. I have got to pay for his accommodation. How easy is it going to be to say to someone: "Come over for 3 months and work in Jersey. Leave your wife and family" or: "Leave your husband and family, come over here and work just for 3 months"? You are going to have to pay them an extortionate amount of money to do that. Sorry, I am going to have to pay them an extortionate amount of money to do that. They are not going to get 6 jobs done in a day like we are, are they?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

No. Can I ask, how easy would it be to recruit someone from, whether it is Guernsey or the U.K. (United Kingdom), Australia, wherever? Is that easy for you and is that costly for you?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

What we do specifically, and I cannot really comment for other trades as such, is we do oil-fired boiler maintenance. Most of the U.K. is using gas. Oil is in the outlying areas where we cannot get piped gas to, so oil you will find around the areas of Cornwall and a lot of Ireland is in oil, so I would say your choices are limited there as well. You are not going to go to London and get an oil-fired engineer. It just does not happen. So yes, some of the outlying areas you might find someone. You might say to him: "Could you come and work in Jersey and we will pay for you to stay in a bed and breakfast? By the way, you have got to leave your business for 3 months and come and work for mine." Is someone going to leave their business?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

In a perfect world where there was someone available would it be much of a cost to you to find that person to do the recruitment aspect?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I do not even know how I would go about it. Yes, there would be a cost and there would be an awful lot of hassle. We would have to interview them. We would have to show that we have got the best person for the job, otherwise we are opening ourselves up for all sorts, so we would have to bring them all over and interview them. Are we going to have to pay for them to come over? The second interview, do we have to pay for them to come over again? Accommodate them? A change of mind: "Oh, I really thought I was going to go for the job but my kids have just started at the school and the kids do not want to come anymore for 3 months"?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

So then I ask is the change that Kristina mentioned, the Chief Minister will change the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law to allow people to come over to cover maternity, paternity, parental leave, without licences, is that much of a practical solution?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Completely unworkable, in my opinion.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

We are here for your opinion, so please do tell us your opinion.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

My wife tells me I should keep it to myself most of the time.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

You prompted the obvious thought that depending on the normal age of replacement the very fact you are recruiting is going to cause disruption in other families, so contrary to the family-friendly title this legislation has got it could be deemed to be against social policy in other directions.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Someone is going to have to leave their family to come to Jersey, so we are gaining because the States of Jersey is showing how family-friendly they are and someone along the line is either going to want to do it because they do not want to be with their family or there is going to have to be a huge financial incentive, paid for by me.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Or from the family perspective, say one of your staff does go off for some period of time within this law, would you expect the other staff members left behind including yourself to work harder to pick up some of that slack if you were not able to recruit, or if recruitment was not an option?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Okay, let me give you a scenario, and this is one that was put to me this morning by a very concerned small business person. She was debating this in her office and 2 members of staff were in her office at the same time, both cabinetmakers. She said to the guys: "What do you think about this?" Now, one of them has 2 children and the other one does not want children. They both thought it was ridiculous. The one without children said: "I cannot believe you are going to give them all this time off. There is so much I want to do with my life that I would love to be able to take unpaid leave like this. Why am I being discriminated against?" Discrimination is a really strong word, and I do not necessarily agree with its use there but it did make me think and I thought it can create a really bad feeling in a working environment. We have all worked in offices and we know how office politics works. I think I would be a little bit aggrieved if somebody who had a child or somebody who was a father was able to nip off for 3 weeks down to the beach with their family and I had to sit in front of my computer. I do not think it is fair at all.

Senator K.L. Moore:

In your letter you make the point that in the United Kingdom the Government provide funding to cover parental leave and you have been told very clearly by the Minister that that is not a possibility or on the cards here, however given your description of the impact that this could have on particularly the small businesses like yourself and your letter co-writers, do you think there is a good enough reason for a special case to be made and if so at what size of business should that special case be made?

[14:45]

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Who is going to pay?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Well, if the States of Jersey were to pay ...

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Social Security?

Senator K.L. Moore:

Yes.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

So I am paying. Someone down the line has always got to pay, so someone is always going to have to pay for something. It is the first rule of small business, I know more than anyone, so you can do whatever you like here, you can make me pay for it out of my budget for my business or you can pay for it in Social Security and you are just going to up my contributions. Again, I am paying for it. In fact, it is even worse, because the poor person stuck in the office on a summer's day, whose colleague is having the paternity leave, has to pay for his colleague to go and spend time down at the beach in summer.

Senator K.L. Moore:

In that respect, then, would paying an additional, say, 1 per cent of contributions for example - and I do not know what the figures would be, but I do not disagree with your view - so 1 per cent in additional contributions in perpetuity be a reasonable way forward to assist with those instances when you did experience a period of leave to cover?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Are you saying you are going to reduce my contributions or is Social Security going to pay?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

If Social Security contributions went up by 1 per cent in order to pay for these sorts of things.

Senator K.L. Moore:

As you pointed out in the beginning of your letter you are all parents and you understand the importance of family life. Would the additional payment in terms of an additional contribution, say 1 per cent as an example, over the duration of the employee's time with you be enough to satisfy the smoothing out, the eradication of that experience of having to cope with somebody being on leave for that time in a small business?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is an interesting one because, yes, it takes some of the immediate financial pressure off, but I am still one man down or one lady down. I still cannot make any money up. I still cannot perform my duties and I still cannot fulfil the contracts that I have with my customers. So I have to be honest with you and say no, not really, plus the fact that if you are going to bump Social Security up by 1 per cent then I am going to be paying it anyway, and like I said just now, the poor guy or lady in the office who sits next to the other lady who is down at the beach for 6 weeks with her child, you are

going to have to pay. Everyone is going to have to pay. It is a lovely idea but it is a little bit socialist for me.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

That is fair enough. One of the things about Social Security is the idea that we all pay in a bit in order to cover everyone else's costs, if you know what I mean. The Minister does say, in her response to you, about where you say the U.K. Government covers the costs of certain leave, she says that basically contributions from employees in the U.K. are 30.8 per cent, more than double the rate in Jersey, so it is therefore implied that if we were to put up the costs of Social Security you could potentially then have the leave paid for by Government and you are right, somebody pays somewhere but you are spreading it throughout the population rather than just you as one business.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is a difficult road to go down when you start comparing Jersey to the U.K. as far as Social Security and general finances go, because I know I can go to England tomorrow and buy a loaf of bread and a pint of milk for £1. I am probably on the thick end of £3.50 here, so I think it is a bit of a dangerous road to go down to be comparing us directly with England.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, but it was you who made the ...

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes. It is relative.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I think that was the point.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes, I am meeting you half way and saying it is a really difficult one. I have thought about it really carefully and the whole Social Security thing with the ageing population and the fact that we have tried attacking it by letting more people in the Island, by paying more tax and more Social, that does not seem to be working. We are going to have to be making some really difficult decisions on Social Security in the next 5 or 10 years, we all know that, and we are going to be paying a lot more, and it is just more, it is 1 per cent. It does not sound too much but when we look at other things that are happening throughout the years when do we say enough is enough? When do we say people come to work for a fair wage? There is legislation in place where they can have some time off for their family. When do we say enough is enough and where do we draw the line in the sand and say it has got to be fair for the employer and the employee? That is I think what we are getting at.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So what would you like to see that gave families the best start in life and gave also support to businesses, particularly small and medium-sized businesses?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It would be really easy for me to sit here and say: "Well, just do not implement the amendment." That is what I would like to see, if I am to be honest because there is already a law in place. It already deals with the issue. It already gives families time off and I know you have probably had people sitting here saying: "Well, I was back to work the next day. I went back to work the next day when I had a child and my husband went straight back to work and I went straight back to work" and I think the reality of it is there is a really good legislation in place and I think this potentially is weighted too far against the employer. I would like to see one of 2 things. I would like to see this refused, or at the very least I would like to see some sort of slack for a small business. Let us take, for example, health and safety. If you have got less than 5 employees you do not need a written health and safety policy. It is complete common sense. Some people would disagree with me, of course, but it just cuts down on the red tape so we can stay more fluid and we can deal with things that we have got to deal with in a small business. Why do we not say less than 15, 20 employees, stage 1 of the law takes precedence and then if you have more than that number of employees, companies who can afford to do it stage 2 takes place? What that would do is give people a choice, so that when they are going for a job they can say: "Right, if this is really important to me, if family time is really important to me, I am going to go to one of these larger companies who I know will give me this" but if they want to work for a smaller company or a smaller team they will know: "I am still getting benefits. I am still getting family benefits but I am not going to be entitled to quite as much" and it is no different to being entitled to more pay with a big company or more annual leave. I think that would be a really common sense approach to this.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

That was going to be my next question to you, do you think this opens up your ability or smaller businesses' ability to get employees to come and join them that are looking at the larger organisations and saying: "Well, I am not going to work for a small business because this place offers me 6 months' paid paternity leave, so I am not going to go and even look at those areas. I am going to go and work in finance because the package is better"? Do you not think in some ways, maybe not in your business but small businesses, this gives them a fairer chance of encouraging a level playing field, the rights that you will get for these kind of things?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I do agree with you, and it is a really good point and is well made, but it is still weighted too far. It is really interesting, and a good point, but it is not enough. A lot of people want to work for small businesses and they understand that small businesses will cut you a lot of slack where a big business will not. There are other benefits of working for a small business. I know our guys have whatever they want. They would not get away with it in a big business. So I think we can offer more. We can offer different things. It is never going to be the same working for H.S.B.C. (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation) as it is working for me. It is never going to be the same, but they choose, they make that choice. I am only going to pay them for a limited time when they are sick. They will probably get 6 months' sick pay somewhere else, but they still come to us. They still come to us.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

It is family-orientated. Small businesses you are a person and you have to know each other very well. When you work for a large organisation you are a salary number.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

If you did really well for me, which I am sure you would, you would know it. I would recognise you and you would shine. Sometimes that can get lost in a big business. I think small businesses will always have people that want to come and work for them and bring them along, so it is a really good point, but I do not think it is enough of a point to put people off coming to work for a small business.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Do you accept that some of the reasons behind, or the core reasons behind, the construction of the amendment, as it is, is to address some social issues that we have? Take for example the breastfeeding rates. One of the intended outcomes of this amendment is to improve breastfeeding rates so that both the health and well-being of babies is improved through enabling people to either breastfeed at work or to provide their child with breast milk during their working day. We could go on for ever, but also smoothing out the impact that has on a woman and the gender pay gap as a greater consequence, but if we just focus on the breastfeeding part of it you will have read in the law do you accept why the draft law has been constructed in the way that it has to achieve that outcome?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I was not breastfed, so it is really difficult. It is not a subject I know much about. I was not breastfed, and I do not think it is fair for me to go into the pros and cons of breastfeeding and why small businesses should pay extra to enable ladies to breastfeed.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Often as politicians we are accused of not having long-term vision, because it is easier for politicians to focus on short-term gains because that makes them more popular, whereas the outcome of improving the breastfeeding rate in the Island is based on long-term health consequences for the entire population. So it is a way of addressing the barriers that there are at the moment and what causes our breastfeeding rates to be low, and so it is that carrot and stick, and that is what legislators and policy makers sometimes have to look at in order to address social change when they feel that it is necessary.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Okay, so are we saying, in a roundabout way, that we have to give members of staff, male or female, protracted time off to encourage breastfeeding?

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is written into the legislation that upon returning to work there would be an agreement and some facilities provided so that breastfeeding or expressing of milk can take place during the working day.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Great, they are at work. Perfect. We are not only happy staff; we are productive staff. If a lady wants to breastfeed, brilliant, bring it on, we will move heaven and earth for her to breastfeed, because she is at work. I have not got a problem with that at all. I just want them at work.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Also 15(k) is the relevant provision and it does touch on your main point, that you should have a say in what happens and it refers to discussions and so on, which steps are reasonable, practical to provide, the extent of the resources available to you. All I am saying is that they look at your business as a whole in deciding what is reasonable.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

For the breastfeeding side.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

All I am suggesting is that although I have heard what you say if that mental template was adopted for the periods of absence you would be quite happy?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It is a really interesting choice of words that, is it not, that is in the legislation? It is almost saying: "Compromise with your career and talk to me and we will try and find a way through it together." That is all we want. In this, there is no compromise, there is no talking. I keep going back to it, we

want our staff to be happy. We want people to breastfeed. I do not mind, but if they want to breastfeed they will be happy, so let us just talk. We are running businesses, we are not daft people, we want to talk but this leaves us zero flexibility. That is really what upset most of the people. It almost felt like a whitewash, like a snub, nobody was taking our concerns seriously. We are all supportive of people's rights and we all want happy people, but being off for that long, it does not make me very happy, to be honest, as a business owner.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Can I ask you another aspect? I think you did bring it up in your letter, about the 14 days' notice, so sticking to the flexibility aspect, so one of your staff members 15 weeks before the birth they have to notify you, before their leave starts, they have to notify you they are going to take leave and notify you under this law how they will take that leave. It could be 4 blocks over 3 years. They then have the opportunity to change that, so they could say: "We are going to take summer 2020 off" if you know what I mean: "With my new baby, I want to take summer 2020 off" and then for whatever reason they decide that they want to take Christmas 2020 off instead. As long as they give you 14 days' notice before that summer 2020 they can move it and then again according to this law you have no say in the matter.

[15:00]

What do you think of that? Secondly, would a greater amount of notice be useful to you? That notice at the moment is 14 days. The recommendation from the Employment Forum was 28 days' notice but the Minister cut that back to 14. Would 28 days have been easier for you? Looking at flexibility again there is no legal place for you to have dialogue in that. It is notified and also would limiting the number of times they can change be helpful if that was there?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Of course it would be helpful.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Yes, so what do you think about the 14 days?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

The 14 days is outrageous, is it not? Let us be honest. Say the Royal Yacht has a refit and we win the contract and we are starting on this date. Say a company is planning work to start there and 2 of their employees, potentially 3 or 4, however many there are that are in this situation can say: "With 2 weeks' notice I am off for my block." How is business supposed to prepare for those contingencies? It is impossible. A month would have been better, but it is a bit like saying: "Where

do you want to be stabbed with a pencil? In the eye or the ear?" "I do not know. I do not really want to be stabbed with a pencil."

Deputy K.F. Morel:

In half an hour or an hour, basically.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

We could switch that around. Say somebody had booked off that summer 2020 and you had got up to that point, you had gone through a recruitment period, you have found somebody amazingly in this climate to take on that period and then your employee turns around and says, 2 weeks' beforehand: "I am not taking that time off anymore."

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Yes, so I have brought people over from southern Ireland, flown 4 people over, because I have got to interview them properly, because I am not allowed to just go anymore: "Yes, you sound nice. You can have the job." I have to prove to each of them why the other one did not get it, fly them over, say: "Thanks very much. Brilliant. If you want to tell your wife and kids that you are coming over to Jersey for 3 months, go whip your kids out of school, bring them over. I have found you accommodation" goodness knows how, because normal people cannot find accommodation, but I will find them accommodation and then my employee says with 2 weeks' notice: "Nathan, I do not fancy it. The weather forecast is not looking very good. My wife has got to go back to work", whatever: "I am not going to do this now. I am going to do it at Christmas." How much time, effort, has that cost me and is it fair on the guy coming over from England that might have said to his boss: "I need to go over to Jersey"? It is almost farcical, in my opinion. It really is. The more you dive into it the more you can pick holes in this. It is frightening and I just do not understand why nobody has picked it apart from a small business perspective. I think even medium to large-sized businesses would struggle with that. Within a big business you have got smaller departments and so if you have got someone from that department and they are planning strategically, they are saying: "Right, guys. We have got this project going on. Are you going to be here?" "Yes, I am going to be here in 2 weeks." "No, I am not. I am off in 2 weeks." It is unworkable even for big business, but the difference is big business will not sit here and say this to you.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

In the evidence that we have received there has been a lot of while this was talking about consultation for the future everyone is busy, they are not really looking at it. The closer it gets to implementation is when people suddenly start to pay attention, which is where we have been very busy trying to get as much evidence as we possibly can very much like your submissions.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

The penny drops, does it not?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It crystallises the mind.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

You see a lot of crazy stuff. We are not going to build a bridge to France. I am not being funny, that was around the same time I saw this, and I thought: "Well, the bridge to France is not going to happen so surely this is not." All of a sudden I am sitting here in front of all of you guys thinking: "This can happen." It is quite frightening, really.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It is easier to bring in laws than build bridges.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Your reference to it not just being small business affected, we have taken the point that a team working in those support businesses is important. You might have an enormous amount of employees, 500 people, but they operate via departments so a loss of one or 2 people for them is going to be as great in their scheme of things as it would be to a small business.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Potentially their financial loss I am guessing might not be as apparent, but the loss of the productivity is going to be apparent. They are facing slightly different challenges to us. We are getting hit both ways. We are losing a whack of money and we are losing a member of staff and we cannot fulfil our contracts, but they can potentially absorb a few thousand, £10,000, £20,000 no problem. £20,000 is quite a lot for a small business to absorb.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Going back to the cost of the 6 weeks' paid leave, it is interesting that if you are employing a woman, so she is giving birth, that 6 weeks' paid leave you can get £216 a week back from Social Security in her Maternity Allowance, so that obviously reduces your liability in that sense. For anyone except a mother giving birth, so whether it is men or women but they are the partner in the situation and they are not giving birth, you do not get to claim that back because they do not receive the Maternity Allowance. Again, how do you see that?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

It just confirms to me that it is an ill-conceived policy. Nobody has really looked into it and the frightening part is when a layman like me asks quite a few questions and they get a response like rhetoric, then it frustrates me even more, because I could help. I do not want to be a pain. I want to help other people in my situation. I have taken hours and hours of meeting people, of writing emails, of letters, of lobbying politicians, of meeting with Constables. I am not doing that because I am worried about wasting £5,000. I am doing it because I really believe that this is a step too far. Every twist and turn when we examine this further seems more and more ill-conceived. It is almost as if they have picked something up, changed the words and dropped it into Jersey and thought: "You can have that." I do not know; is that what they have done?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

It is interesting. I do not know. We have not found that out.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Have you not found out who wrote this letter yet?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I could not say. It is signed by the Minister, so it was written by the Minister. That is all I have. Do you have anything else?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I have found this really helpful.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Thank you. It is really refreshing to hear.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

You would make a good court witness.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

Thank you. I am just a boiler man really.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr. N. Beddoe:

No, just thanks for meeting me and thanks for taking it seriously, because it would have been really easy ... with politics sometimes it is keeping people happy and seeing the easy way, and you guys

have really seized this. It is a really emotive subject. I have spoken to people and nearly fallen out with them on this, because they believe so strongly in family values and they cannot see my point of view. So if I have made you even think for 10 minutes from a small business perspective then it has really paid dividends from all those hours I have put in. Thanks, guys. I do appreciate it.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I hope from the questions we have asked you realise how much we have looked into it ourselves.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

I do. You challenged me on a couple of things there and it has really made me think. I will go back and think about that quite carefully because it is good that you are challenging me, because I have not got all the answers. I have hit you up on a few things there, and you have said: "Well, Nathan, it does not work both ways." It is really interesting and I have got to take this back to 54 people now. I am not quite sure how I am going to do that.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Just send them the link to this video. It is online. It is all videoed.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

No, I do not think so, but thank you. I appreciate your time.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Thank you so much for your time and in future encourage anyone you know in business, anything, to get involved in the consultations and the Scrutiny process, because that is genuinely why we are here, so that members of the public can come in and tell us their views. This is why we are here.

Mr. N. Beddoe:

We are all just so busy working on our Social Security contributions we have not really got time.

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I will relay that to the Minister. Thank you.

[15:08]