

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER 2003,
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT**

Question

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 23rd October 2003, state that Senator M.E. Vibert would not be attending the 'Commonwealth Education Ministers' meeting in Edinburgh because "*there are several matters on the agenda with which he disagreed, yet he would be required to show allegiance with the United Kingdom's view*". Will the President explain the rôle of Jersey representatives attending such meetings and whether they are required to show allegiance to the U.K.'s view?

Answer

Jersey is not a member of the Commonwealth in its own right and, in accordance with our constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom, is represented in Commonwealth Ministers' meetings by the U.K. delegation.

At the request of the Jersey authorities, the U.K. government has agreed with the Commonwealth Secretariat that our representatives may form part of the U.K. delegation and we, therefore, receive an invitation to all relevant Commonwealth meetings.

The protocol is that all views are expressed by the head of the U.K. delegation and there is no opportunity for dissent within the delegation to be registered at the meeting. So, if there were an item on which the U.K. position was likely to be at odds with Jersey's position it would be appropriate not to attend.

The Committee recently concluded that attendance at these meetings is a valuable opportunity to get the Island's voice heard unofficially in an important international arena. Jersey members of the U.K. delegation can listen to a debate and request the leader of the delegation to represent their views. Sometimes we may be successful, but if our views do not get heard in the meeting there are many other opportunities to raise issues with the U.K. and other countries' delegates during informal conversations, over dinner and in fringe meetings.

It is also important for Jersey to be seen to be present with the U.K. at these meetings; to demonstrate our support for the Commonwealth in tackling major international humanitarian, social and political issues.

The Committee is continuing to press for Jersey's own seat at the Commonwealth table, but to be recognised on the international scene Jersey needs to continue to assert its presence whenever possible. The Committee generally recommends that the relevant Committee President should attend Commonwealth Ministers' meetings. However, it remains a matter for the individual President to decide whether to attend and, if he or she is uncomfortable with the agenda, the President is free to decline the invitation without detracting from the overall policy of engagement with the Commonwealth.