

AN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE STATES (P.19/2000): REPORT

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by the Policy and Resources Committee**



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Report

Senator Syvret's report and proposition asks States members to agree in principle that the Bailiff and Deputy Bailiff should cease to be President and Vice-President, respectively, of the States, and that the offices of President and Vice-President should be filled by elected persons. The Committee's view on this when Senator Syvret lodged a similar proposition a year ago was that it did not believe that States members could debate this matter without much more information to enable them to make an informed judgement on such an important issue. Any alteration of current arrangements would be an historic and fundamental change to what is a centuries old constitutional arrangement.

The Committee agrees with Senator Syvret that at some stage the House should have the opportunity to debate this important constitutional matter. However, it cannot be good government for such a debate to be undertaken on the basis of such limited information as to the consequences of a decision one way or another.

The position of the Bailiff in relation to the overall machinery of government is currently being reviewed by an independent panel chaired by Sir Cecil Clothier. The States will in due course have before them a comprehensive report upon which an informed decision can be based. It is right and proper that a matter of such moment as the functions and role of the Bailiff should, as in the past, be considered on the basis of a thorough review. Not least it would be important that before the States considered the change proposed by Senator Syvret, they should take soundings of the community at large. It is, in fact, not unlikely that Sir Cecil Clothier's report will facilitate just that, depending, of course, upon its recommendations. We expect to receive the report towards the later part of the year, and it will be important for the States then to consider it, in the round, as soon as possible.

The Committee is therefore firmly of the view that it would not be appropriate for the States to seek to make a decision on the matter to which the proposition of Senator Syvret refers in the absence of the information that can be expected to be made available through Sir Cecil Clothier's review of the machinery of government. In the light of the foregoing, the Committee would hope that Senator Syvret would withdraw his proposition. Failing that, the Committee recommends that the States reject the proposition.