

AN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE STATES

**Lodged au Greffe on 12th January 1999
by Senator S. Syvret**

STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

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 be filled by elected persons; and to refer this decision to the body to be appointed to undertake a review of the machinery of Government in Jersey for that body's recommendations as to how this decision may be best implemented.

SENATOR S. SYVRET

Report

My principal objective in bringing this proposition is to give the House the opportunity to debate this important constitutional matter. The role of the Bailiff and Deputy Bailiff in the States has been the subject of significant public interest in recent years, yet in spite of receiving a great deal of media coverage and being the dominant issue during the 1993 elections the States has not so far discussed the matter.

It is surely a reasonable expectation on the part of the electorate that the States, as their government, should be both willing and competent to give consideration to the method by which it is presided over. In that it is my objective to simply facilitate such consideration I have deliberately kept the proposition simple and the report brief.

The proposition seeks a simple “in principle” decision to replace the Bailiff and Deputy Bailiff in the States with an elected President and Vice-President and that detailed recommendations for implementing this decision be made by the independent review of the machinery of Government, which the States has agreed “in principle” to appoint. Given the imminent creation of this body I have not seen it as my task to produce a detailed proposal laying out the precise structure of any new arrangement.

It may be argued that the States should not debate the subject at all, and instead leave the matter entirely to the machinery of Government review body. This is not a view I would share. I do not consider it healthy for the States to get into the habit of entirely delegating the business of producing important and fundamental democratic proposals to non-States bodies. Whilst an analysis provided by an independent body, such as this one, can and will be most useful, we must not lose sight of the fact that the States is the voice of the people and that the States Assembly is the master of its own destiny. I believe that the principal issue of whether we have an elected President is one that the States must demonstrate itself willing and able to consider. This is one decision I believe should, and must, be made by the States.