

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Political Education Review

WEDNESDAY, 5th MAY 2010

Panel:

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman)
Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Mr. H. Legg (President and Founder of SiDes (Sixth Form Debating Society))
Ms. F. Guarino (Deputy Treasurer of SiDes)
Mr. J. Mayes (Member of SiDes)

Present:

Mrs. E. Liddiard (Scrutiny Officer)

[15:37]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour (Chairman):

I would like to welcome you to this session of the Political Education Review Sub-Panel of Education and Home Affairs. I am Roy Le Hérissier, Chairman, St. Saviour Deputy.

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

I am Carolyn Labey, Deputy of Grouville.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Montfort Tadier, I am one of the Deputies in St. Brelade.

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Shona Pitman of St. Helier.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

This is obviously who you have obviously been in touch with; Elizabeth Liddiard our Scrutiny Officer. Thank you for very much for coming. You have read the statement so we will go into the questions. They are fairly open-ended so ... my apologies, if you would be so kind as to introduce yourselves and where you are from.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

My name is Francesca Guarino and I am currently at Hautlieu School.

Member of SiDes:

My name is Joe Mayes. I am in year 12 at De La Salle College.

President and Founder of SiDes:

My name is Henry Legg and I am also in year 12 at De La Salle College.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Before we start the questions, may I ask just a couple of questions about how the group was formed? Well any of you can answer the question: can you tell us how your group was formed?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Well essentially it was my idea; there was not much insofar as debating within any of the educational system, so I decided to create ... because I found out there used to be a debating society so I decided to create one.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Were your teachers involved? Did they support you in ...?

President and Founder of SiDes:

To an extent they were but it was mostly students that set it up.

Deputy S. Pitman:

You are from different schools, how did you get together to form the group?

President and Founder of SiDes:

At the start it was through Facebook that we made a group on there to announce that we were being created and then we just booked the halls and whoever came along, came along and I organised who was going to debate.

Deputy S. Pitman:

When did you start?

President and Founder of SiDes:

We started September last year.

The Deputy of Grouville:

How often do you meet?

President and Founder of SiDes:

It is fortnightly but we have only met during the winter term and the start of the Easter term. We have not met since because there is quite a lot of commitment in terms of exams.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Did you come up against any kind of resistance when you first wanted to get the group up and running?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Not really but there was not a great helping hand from any of the teachers or anything like that.

The Deputy of Grouville:

So which schools are involved?

President and Founder of SiDes:

All the sixth forms, so De La Salle, Beaulieu, Victoria and J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) and Hautlieu

Deputy S. Pitman:

How many people are involved now? Or a member of the society?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Well, I think on Facebook we have got about 70 to 80 but then regular attendance probably only 20 and then at each meeting was probably 10 to 15; at every meeting.

The Deputy of Grouville:

How do you pick your subjects for debate?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Just what we feel like at the time. Once I have organised who is going to debate, I ask each team if they have got any preference for something to debate and then propose something to either side and if they want to they accept and if not, we come up with something different.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay. Good. Very useful. I will just kick off and, as I said, they are very open-ended questions and they will trigger other questions. Plus, if you feel we have not covered areas of ... you will just have to contribute and tell us. So to all 3 of you, what should be the aims of political education?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

In my opinion it should just be to give people our age a broader idea of what happens in the world of politics because I took this list with me to school, the list of questions, and asked people at school and people said ... a lot of them do not really have a clue what is going on. They do not know how the system works in Jersey and in the U.K. (United Kingdom) so I think political education should be exciting; it should make politics interesting and exciting because for a lot of people our age it can be a bit of a ... not the most exciting subject in some people's view. So, I think just to give a broader idea and then as people get more into it just a kind of in depth of how it works, what is involved and things like that.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Do you have any tuition in that respect at all at the moment?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No. Well, personally, I am at Hautlieu at the moment and I was at Beaulieu and recently now that the voting age has been lowered we have had something but not really anything substantial. Still, a lot of people do not really know what is going on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is that one teacher who would take it upon himself or herself to teach that?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Because we have our year assemblies every week and at the moment it is just kind of any teacher who happens to be running the year assemblies, really, to do something on ... we have had something on voting now that the voting age has been lowered and also recently we had assembly about the healthcare; what was happening with funding healthcare. But, no, it just kind of ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

In Jersey, yes?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes.

Deputy S. Pitman:

As sixth formers do you have a specific subject like citizenship or ...?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No. I suppose the closest thing we used to have was P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social and Health Education) but in sixth form we do not have anything like that.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Or general studies or ...?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No, we have nothing like that. I do not know about the others. I do not know about De La Salle.

Member of SiDes:

No.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Were you taught that before? You said up until fourth and fifth year ...

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, P.S.H.E. but at Beaulieu and Hautlieu that did not involve politics either which I think is where it should be taught definitely because we do a lot of things that we do the same year and people just get repeatedly bored with it. I think if we introduced it into P.S.H.E. lessons so people are learning about it and they could be taught about - especially the U.K. Government now there is a general election - because a lot of my friends said they do not really have a clue.

Deputy S. Pitman:

So what are you taught as sixth formers? You said there are some teachers doing this and that.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes. Well, recently it has just been about how the voting system has changed; us being able to vote at 16 and about the healthcare system and that has been it. I do not know what ...

Member of SiDes:

As far as I am aware there has been not even that at De La Salle College. I think bar the Youth Assembly where we went to the States that was encouraged to an extent, but in terms of actual tuition on anything relating to politics in Jersey it has not been present at De La Salle. Fran was saying at assemblies they have had talks about the voting system, healthcare ...

The Deputy of Grouville:

Have you had any?

Member of SiDes:

We did not have any assemblies with that, so as far as De La Salle is concerned there has not been anything on political education.

[15:45]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Do you do anything in history, Joe?

Member of SiDes:

Yes, and we study political systems in, say, Britain; how they develop and we are studying, say, Vietnam because we have learnt about the U.S. (United States) presidency and the separation of powers there but nothing to do with the Jersey system which is quite different when you think about it compared to the U.K. and the United States.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is there a reason for that, do you think?

Member of SiDes:

I think it is just the exam boards, they set exams and the history exams tend to be on the U.K. and the United States. It is just kind of a happy coincidence that we learn about politics in that way because it is what is on the history exam whereas there are always no exams on Jersey politics, not that there should be, but it is kind of a coincidence that we learn about other politics through history but not Jersey politics.

The Deputy of Grouville:

So out of your entire school lives, how many lessons would you say you have had in local politics?

President and Founder of SiDes:

None at all. I was trying to remember when I had been taught anything about the Jersey system and it would probably be mentioned a couple of times scathingly in a lesson. Other than that, none at all.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, we have only had our assemblies just because I think they felt obliged because we could vote to tell us something about it. But apart from that ... and that has been this year so ...

Deputy S. Pitman:

That was in Beaulieu?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

That was at Hautlieu at the moment, so this latest year; quite recently. But before that nothing.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Have you had any politicians come to visit you in school?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, we had that. Yes, that was probably a couple of years ago actually. I can't remember what it was based on but we had the opportunity because we have core days as a way of doing P.S.H.E. and we have the opportunity to question them. But I think because people did not have the prior knowledge as to what it was all about it ... no, it was useful but a lot of people did not quite get the full grasp of what was happening.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Was it on an issue or ... when was it? Was it near the elections or ...?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

It was a couple of years ago. It was on ... I think it was just various problems that youth faced in Jersey. We just got a chance ... I remember talking about things such as cinema prices and discounting cinema prices for students and I think it is related to drugs and alcohol as well, but I cannot really remember.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You cannot remember who you had in?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No. It was quite a while ago.

President and Founder of SiDes:

I have never seen a politician in school. Politics is really only mentioned in History and every so often in my RS class but never Jersey politics, it is always about the U.K. mainly.

Deputy S. Pitman:

You said that you had little bits of political education, what was ... you 2 from De La Salle, what was that education? What have you learnt from school about politics in Jersey and politics globally? Can you sum it up?

Member of SiDes:

It would be through the Youth Assembly and that was not direct tuition from a teacher, that was just students getting together, realising we had to debate some topics

concerning Jersey politics, just doing the research among ourselves and then discussing it, and that way, I think, some of us probably learnt quite a lot about Jersey politics, just with the Youth Assembly. But in terms of direct tuition, there has not been anything but through History, what we have learned about politics, yes, we have learned how the U.S. Government elects their President, like primaries and secondaries and things like that. So, we have learnt quite a lot about the makeup of other political systems through History, for example, but in terms of actual Jersey politics, I would say the most we have done is in preparation for the Youth Assembly when we had to prepare speeches and ask questions of the Chief Minister. That was probably the occasion we most focused on Jersey politics.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Did you enjoy it?

Member of SiDes:

Yes, it was great. It was really good.

Deputy S. Pitman:

So you did not learn about the system per se, in Jersey?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I would not say so.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Do you have any lessons to teach you about general sort of life type things, politics with a small “p”; sort of how pensions work, Social Security cards, Health cards?

President and Founder of SiDes:

At the beginning of the year we had talks from a couple of people coming in to talk careers, that sort of thing, but I presume you are referring to something like P.S.H.E. which ...

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, it would be that kind of ...

The Deputy of Grouville:

Yes.

President and Founder of SiDes:

There was ... I remember in year 8 there was an attempt to teach that sort of thing but it never really achieved much and just ended up being one of those lessons where we sat there and got bored.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think maybe in some cases they try and teach us a bit too early because I think with politics in kind of key stage 3(?) a lot of people are not mature enough to really have that much interest in it and really understand it. So, as you said, in P.S.H.E. we got an attempt at learning a bit about careers but it seemed to have fizzled out by - I do not know what you think - it seems to have fizzled out at Hautlieu, so like in years 10, 11, 12, 13 which I think is really when we could get the most use out of it. Especially at

the moment with the general election and we just ... they do not seem to be making enough use of the fact that we are more mature and, I think, would take some interest in it at the moment.

Deputy S. Pitman:

So what do you think then should be brought in? What do you think you should be taught? What would make you excited, if you like, because you have mentioned there is not enough excitement in the education at the moment.

President and Founder of SiDes:

I know in Ireland they have got a citizenship, I cannot remember what they are called their exams over there, but they have a got a citizenship course which involves a lot of politics and politics with a big “P” and a small “p”, and that seemingly works quite well because they know how it all works. But whether that is feasible in Jersey, Ireland being 6 million, Jersey 100,000, I am not sure. I think if you can just at least start teaching people in some form, that is not force it down their throat but any sort of education about politics is going to be better than what we have.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Or just at least give people the option. So that ... because a lot of people here they might not be interested so they wouldn't get anything out of it, but for people who would be interested I think at least give them option to have a timetable lesson or something like that, just once a week, to give them an idea of what is going on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you get the impression that most people in government, most politicians do or do not want you to vote? Or are they just not bothered do you think?

Member of SiDes:

They would like you to vote. I never get the impression they do not want you to vote, maybe I am a bit always kind of too optimistic about the world, but I never get the impression they do not want you to vote but I think there is this kind of gap where a student just does not understand the politician and therefore just does not want to vote. If that gap can be bridged then I think that is where ...

The Deputy of Grouville:

How would you suggest that bridge is ... that gap is bridged?

Member of SiDeS

I think in terms of some ... discuss some form of timetable lesson, maybe once or twice a week whereby perhaps just an introduction as to what is a Senator, what is a Constable and maybe even devote part of the lesson just to debating a certain issue, just for, say, 15 minutes: “Okay, let us have a debate. Should we have G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax) whatever” sort of like that and then ... and just let the students have a go at it and then that way they will be able to learn, probably quite fun as well.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, because you need to get people involved. If it is just someone talking at you for an hour that is when people drift off and if we could get involved with various things

so it is relevant to us as well. Lots of people said because obviously politics is so relevant in everyday life but a lot of people do not understand how.

Deputy S. Pitman:

How could you make politics relevant to your lives, people of your age?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think by if you have a debate but if we debate something along the lines of, I do not know, what is ...?

The Deputy of Grouville:

The price of Jersey Live tickets.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes. Issues like that.

Member of SiDes:

Something topical that students ...

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, and the price of cinema tickets and ... because a lot of people do have a lot of, like, feelings about issues like that and that would be a way of letting those feelings known and being able to debate but you are incorporating politics into it as well without maybe them necessarily realising.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Do you think that you have enough access to politicians?

President and Founder of SiDes:

No. Personally, to come back to the question that prompted us. I think perhaps it is politicians ... you get this feeling of isolation that they do not want to come to schools and that. I, as I have just said, have never seen a politician in the school and whether or not that is because they do not want us to vote, I am not sure, but I think it ... you start to get this feeling that politicians do not care about you so why should you care about what they are doing and therefore you are not going to vote if you do not feel that they are going to do anything for you.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Do you think it could be the school?

President and Founder of SiDes:

What do you mean?

The Deputy of Grouville:

Well, for example, I was the politician who brought the proposition for 16, 17 year-olds to vote, and I wrote to all the secondary schools to ask them if they wanted me to come in with ... on my own or other politicians to speak to students to see how relevant it was and I got a response from probably half, maybe less than half, of the secondary schools.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think the schools do have quite a lot to do with it because they ... even now like at Hautlieu we are having assemblies, it feels like they are being forced to do it and they do not really enjoy it themselves. So I think if ... but saying that, now today actually at Hautlieu there has been a big display board put up all about the general election, all about what the contenders stand for, which various parties stand for, and people are quite interested in it. Like we were having a discussion today about it. So there does seem to be some effort but it feels like it is a bit ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think that is down to ... I know at Hautlieu certainly in my day they did teach politics, but is it part of the problem that there is no one person or no more than one person with specific responsibility for politics?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think so, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So they are being fobbed off?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

It is kind of ... seems to be whoever does not really have anything else to do at the time.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Because you would not do that for any other subject, would you?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I know.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You would not say: "Can someone teach Geography today?" even if you have never studied it.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Can I go back, because I wanted to ask that question about access to all 3 of you. So can I ask you, do you think you have got enough access to ...

Member of SiDes:

To politicians?

Deputy S. Pitman:

If young people have, yes.

Member of SiDes:

I have to say probably not. Simply from experience that I have not had politicians in the school before and therefore they seem quite remote and the last few years I have always felt politicians kind of ... you see one in the street, like: "Oh wow. It is, like, so-and-so." You think I have never actually seen them in real life. And Jersey is such

a small place you probably should have seen them in real life because the proximity of the place, so for me I would say access to politicians has been relatively small.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I would say the same thing, I think. I mean even though we did a couple of years ago have the politicians that came in, it still feels like for such a small Island that you feel that you should see them on an everyday basis but they seem to be so far away that you never seem to actually get the gist of who the people are and what they stand for or anything. It is just ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Is there anything you pick up from your homes what politics is about?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you have heart and hail arguments and debates at home about politics?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I do not have arguments but I think that ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Pleasant interchanges. [Laughter]

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think actually that is ... the only reason I do know a bit about politics is through talking to my dad and my grandparents and if I had not done that I do not think I would really have a clue what was going on.

Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the feeling on the street though in school with your other student colleagues? Is there any political awareness? Do they know what is going on? Do they know who certain politicians are?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Having spoken ... yes, I took this sheet into school today and I was just having a read through it and just kind of brought it up in conversation and I got the response of: "I do not have a feeling" from a lot of people.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Not even to the point where they might just say: "They are all a bunch of clowns. They do not know what they are doing."

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No. You get a few people that do but the vast majority I would say do not really have any views on it or know anything about it.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Is there an opportunity for you through school councils or something like that to lobby the people that represent you on school councils to say we want more politics in school?

President and Founder of SiDes:

We do not have a school council.

The Deputy of Grouville:

That is the first problem.

[16:00]

President and Founder of SiDes:

So, I mean, obviously a school council in itself would help with politics but we do not have one. I guess we could ... our headmaster is quite understanding and I am sure we could just go up to him and talk to him about it, but whether any change would actually happen I am not sure.

Deputy M. Tadier:

So you have got no kind of committee? At Hautlieu have you got a sixth form committee?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

We have got a council but it is hardly a council like ... it is just ... it was formed ... well, it seemed to have formed a couple of years ago. We heard something about it then. Then ever since it has kind of fizzled off.

Deputy M. Tadier:

There used to be a sixth form committee, I know that, and you would elect people on to it.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

We used to have that for a couple ... but since sixth form started there has not been a kind of election for students going on to the council. Obviously there is head boy and head girl, which would have a lot of say in it but no specific council as such.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You might want to see about resurrecting that and set something up.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, definitely.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Your choice of course.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I just make a point and ask a question of this whole area of politicians coming to the school. Obviously like there is a big cross-section of politicians. I think part of the problem that we have as politicians is that we cannot really just go into schools willy-nilly. I think we have to be invited basically. There is the whole question of bias and undue influence especially around elections which certainly we, as politicians, are perhaps over sensitive to. Certainly as a Government we are. Is that an issue? Should we be worried about that kind of thing? Are we going to influence you if we come in?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think, is not the point of canvassing so that you can influence people? Why should it be that you can probably go into a workplace or stand outside a workplace and talk to the people there that can vote? Why would you treat us differently? If the politician wants to come in and talk to us and get people involved in politics, in my opinion, if that politician gets some votes for it then so much the better for them.

The Deputy of Grouville:

What would you think about the school if they said no?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think in that case the school is not performing its duty because it should be helping people to be educated by allowing a politician in if it is going to help with our education.

Member of SiDes:

There is a conflicting agenda sometimes where the schools want to do one thing and the States might want to do something else with education, there needs to be a way of almost getting rid of that, kind of working together to improve political education. Is it because the schools say we do not have time? That is all I can think of. That would be the only objection to politicians coming in, we would not have enough time to fit it in with our kind of school timetable. I think that should be an issue. I think there should be time for students to learn about politics.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you get other people ... in other walks of life do you get people come in and talk to you, like doctors or anything like that?

President and Founder of SiDes:

We get quite a lot of charities and that sort of thing. Lots of that, almost ... not quite every week but at least once a month we get that.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Sex education?

Member of SiDes:

Yes. Mr. Whitehead from the police tends to come in quite a lot to talk about drugs and things like that. I cannot see why a politician could not come in for a role like that.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I just remember having about 5 years of the same drugs education and sex education and after a while you kind of think: "I did this last year." Then people get bored and start playing around. If we actually had some of the politicians come in and changed it a bit, and yes, I think if the politicians want to come in to ... they feel they would influence people then good on them because if they feel that they can take time out of their schedules to come and influence some of the people that could be voting for them then ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think there are 2 issues, obviously around an election you probably have to be more careful and I can understand that. But in general, I mean, people need to come in anyway because we need to tell you about what we do in an as apolitical way as possible I think in the same way that a policeman would come in and tell you, you know: "This is what we do." So I think there is a valid way to do it.

Deputy S. Pitman:

That method, do you think that would put a lot of young people in getting interested in politics as opposed to it being taught in the classroom?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think if done in the right way, again if you get someone come in and give the same talk eventually you are not going to have anyone interested at all but it is done in a way that gets people interested then, yes, I think it could work very well.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So how should it be done to get people interested?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Well, obviously get the politicians into school then if you have got something back from that through teaching, any form of teaching, would aid political education. It annoys me when I read some of these questions, for example, the third one you have put in there it said in the "current curriculum" , something like that, as if to say that there is some form of education but I genuinely have not ever been taught anything to do with politics in Jersey other than through the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* and what I have heard at home. That is quite frustrating. That should be part of your education in Jersey.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Do you think it is the same for your contemporaries in other schools?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I would say so. I have not heard of anything. I know Beaulieu I think have some kind of careers. I do not know if that involves politics or anything like that. I have not heard of ... I do not know if you guys have heard of anything that people seem to be doing, like any political events that are happening at school, any debates. I have not heard of anything. I think most people feel the same way.

Member of SiDes:

If there was that would show almost a flaw in the system. I think there should be an evenly spread thing across all the schools. Everyone is getting the same kind of fair treatment, fair education in politics.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think what is the problem in our system, we do go into schools but it is just that certain teachers have a link with a certain politician and often it is easy to go to them and say, like: "I know this person. He will come into our school. She will come into that school" and it is very difficult to break out from that.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Not just that perhaps. I think some teachers are more politically aware or know about local politics more than other teachers.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

You mentioned about the U.K. election. Has the U.K. election been a matter of some interest in De La Salle?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Yes, there has been quite a lot, some people surprisingly so, talking about some of the political parties and things but you never get that with a Jersey election. I suppose that is down to the media coverage and the elections debates were very well publicised...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Do you think it is ... well some people argue it is inherent ... it is down to inherent issues, in other words, that Jersey is predominantly a personality system and not a party system so it is very hard to distinguish what people really believe in and there is no clear link between casting your vote for an individual who then can use their power in the Assembly to change policy because you do not know how they are going to analyse themselves, whether they are going to change their mind when they get in, which was alleged, blah blah blah.

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think you are absolutely right with that. Without party politics you are never going to get people actually sticking to their word you cannot stand for anything and therefore no one is going to get involved with the issues because the issues will not be resolved if you vote for that one person, but to get lots of people in and you are not going to do that by voting for 6 people or how many it is.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Just touching on the media, do you think that the media has a responsibility to give out the right information to people like yourselves? Does it influence ...?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Yes, I think with local politics there is nothing compared to the U.K., in the U.K. you can get all of the parliamentary debates and Prime Minister's question time. Prime Minister's question time I watch every week that it is on and if we had something like that in Jersey politics ... I know we have Chief Minister's question time, apparently, and we have got it on BBC Radio Jersey medium wave, but just something that

people can actually see the politicians and get to know them then I think that might work in getting young people involved.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Do you think a good idea would be for schools to have a session down in the States Chamber where you come and watch ...

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

... the Chief Minister's questions or ...?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Do you know in the primary schools they actually do a debate in the States Chamber and the 11 to 16 schools, I was thinking as you were talking, they go through the Scrutiny process. Did you know that? They pick on topics ... they do, Carolyn.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Some.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I will continue this and then my friend can strike this at the end. The intention is to pick on topics that, like ... well, school bus service, legalisation of drugs, all this sort of stuff - drugs again - and they go through a process where the Minister comes in and then you break up in groups and then you put questions to Ministers and civil servants and then they answer, and then you come to your conclusion as to whether or not they have been effective in giving you answers. Rather like we are trying to do today. Do you think that would work in your setting, if it was to work well?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think it would be, yes, like topics on legalising drugs and things like that, a lot of people would ... it has got to be topics that people have considerable amount of views on, something like that which they would. Then it is kind of a way of people can just have a discussion about it without really realising that they are debating and it has a lot to do with politics.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Have any of you gone on the internet to have a look at the States Assembly website there, where you have got the propositions that are coming up for debate, the questions, written questions, oral questions that are coming up?

President and Founder of SiDes:

It is a good website, but it is not that clear I find. I think one of the ideas I came up with was Facebook because everyone our age is on Facebook, if you were to have a States channel on there or page, whatever they are called, and then that had something with what questions were being asked in the States or what proposition, every so often just put that on then people might start to take some notice but they are not going to go to a website which they probably do not even know exists.

Deputy M. Tadier:

They have done that with Scrutiny on Facebook.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Major limited interaction though, but, yes.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

You were talking about use of media earlier on, it is fair enough getting the media involved but if it was with the *J.E.P.* or the BBC Radio Jersey, which people our age are not really going to listen to or ... a lot of people do not read the *J.E.P.* that is why I think using leaders such as Facebook and Twitter and all these kind of things, I think would be a lot more accessible to people our age and people that actually ... the amount of time that a lot of people spend on Facebook is ridiculous.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Are you aware of any States Members who are on Facebook?

The Deputy of Grouville:

Oh ... [Laughter]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Are you aware of any who are committed to self publicity. [Laughter]

President and Founder of SiDes:

I know of one.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think that is an important way for people to interact.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Although apparently it has not made the big impact on the general election. Twitter and Facebook have not made the big impact on the general election that they thought it would.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, that generation do not ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

It has been more these defining issues like “Bigotgates” that have really energised the campaign.

Deputy M. Tadier:

All the O.A.P.s (old age pensioners) on Facebook hated that. [Laughter]

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Give your English environment and given that politics in Jersey sounds somewhat complex and complicated and so forth, how do you get your information about what is going on insofar as you do get information? Where does it come from?

Member of SiDes:

Simply the *J.E.P.*

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The *J.E.P.*, yes?

Member of SiDes:

Just the *J.E.P.*

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

And parents as well.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

And parents, yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You mentioned before, you said it seems like they are obsessed about teaching you about drugs and sex all the time. Surely some of that time could be used for politics or even just asking the questions, you know, why are people taking drugs? Should drugs be legal? Should some drugs be legal?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, definitely. Instead of doing the same thing which we seem to do for years and not really getting anywhere and people getting bored, I think definitely.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Following on from that then the little, as it seems, education that you have had on politics you have had local education, you have had national education, and global education, what do you think is more important for you? Is there one area of politics that should be taught more in schools?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think in Jersey it should definitely be local politics because everyone can just go and find something out about the U.K. or America. Jersey, we should be proud with the system we have got and you just hide it away from students as if it does not exist.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Are you getting too much of the other political education?

President and Founder of SiDes:

What little we get of the other, again in History that is where we learn about the global stuff, but I think it is not that we are getting too much of it. It's just that we are not even getting any the local stuff we just need to be taught it and we cannot keep hiding it away from our students like this building does not exist at all.

[16:15]

Deputy S. Pitman:
What about you 2?

Member of SiDes:

I certainly think we should readdress the balance in terms of how much we learn about politics, so globally, yes, I think we do get quite good exposure through History but there does need to be a greater effort selling local politics because obviously the decisions affect us and to not know about the decision makers and policies and laws and the taxes it seems like ... it is difficult, now we can vote as well, to not have an understanding of the system just seems ...

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

If you think about the adverts that say you cannot complain if you do not vote, kind of thing, well, we do not have the understanding. We complain but we do not have the understanding to why we are complaining and that is why we need that understanding to ... so we know what is going on and then we can vote and then we can complain because otherwise we are complaining about something that we do not really know much about.

The Deputy of Grouville:

And you do not have the understanding because you are not taught.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Because, yes, we are not taught anything.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Would you agree that you have ... you can agree or disagree that you are getting too much of other subjects and not enough ... there is too much time on those subjects and too little time on this subject?

Member of SiDes:

I would not say there was too much time. I think there is a gap where the political education could come in and that is what we were talking about before in terms of the P.S.H.E. stuff we get, kind of the drugs education, sex education, physical ... like we get so much of that there would be a gap, say, just to say cut out a third of that and replace it with some politics.

The Deputy of Grouville:

My son used to sit there doing his homework in P.S.H.E.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Can I just play Devil's Advocate ... sorry, Shona.

Deputy S. Pitman:

I just wanted ... if you could answer that.

President and Founder of SiDes:

They make it sound as if we get P.S.H.E. as well. I have not had P.S.H.E. since year 8 and I know Joe has not, so yes we get a lot of ... we get talks about drugs and sex

and such but we do not have a lesson for it so perhaps we get probably enough of that but whether we can ... I suppose if you were going to incorporate in P.S.H.E. politics then you are going to have to have P.S.H.E. lessons.

Deputy M. Tadier:

You could always subvert your P.S.H.E. lessons for ... so if they are talking to you about drugs you could ask the teacher: “Now, why is that people take drugs? What are the underlying social issues?”

Member of SiDes:

Turn it into a political ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

“Tell me about that. Why is there this malaise that drives people to drugs?” But to make a more serious point though, I was very interested ... you mentioned something about the separation of powers from the U.S. Were you ever taught about the separation of powers in Jersey?

Member of SiDes:

No. I see what you are getting at. There could have been a comparative approach made at that point and: “Actually, in Jersey we do it like this.” There is almost a scope in lessons you need to say to teachers: “Have a bit of freedom just to mention Jersey politics” it then becomes relevant and it would have been very relevant there.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is crazy though, is it not, because you know what is going on in the U.S.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

And you do not know what it is going on ... yes.

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think one of the problems that it seems to me is that the teachers know about the U.S. system but they do not know about the Jersey system. If the teachers do not know it then you cannot be taught it.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Yes, as I said before there is not an allocated teacher for politics. It just kind of seems to be a bit willy-nilly.

Member of SiDes:

There is almost a scope for an independent person to be hired by the States like a school politics person who would go round giving like kind of one hour workshops maybe or just ... maybe not even a politician, someone who you would not have to vote for or anything like that. There would be no issue of kind of influencing people. It should be somebody who is an independent person. Their sole job is to educate people about Jersey politics employed by the States, that is one way you could do it, I suppose.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

There is one theory, has it, as you know there has been a declining interest in western democracies in politics. It is most pronounced among the young, sometimes among ethnic groups and most of the voting is increasingly carried out and Jersey, I suppose, is on trend in this regard by the older part of the population, which is the Jersey voting pattern, it is largely the traditional voters who do it. Do you think there is any validity in that? Because others would argue ... sorry, I will put the other view because terribly well balanced I am, others would argue that you need some dynamic or charismatic person to energise it like Obama in the U.S. or Clegg in Britain because this British campaign was going along the lines I described until it moved to the Prime Ministerial debates. Do you think basically it is unrealistic to expect 100 per cent of young people to be 100 per cent enthusiastic? In fact it would be a terrible world if everyone was like that. What do you think about that view?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I do not agree with the charismatic figure or that in fact Clegg is charismatic.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Well, I did start with Obama.

Deputy M. Tadier:

John Major.

President and Founder of SiDes:

There is certainly some validity in saying that there is a gap between what you have got in the older votes and the traditional ones and the younger ones that vote, but the cause for that, I think it could be down to the fact that the older people realise the importance of politics whereas the younger ones do not because they do not really know anything about it. I think that is the main issue.

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I do not think 100 per cent of people would be interested. In fact a lot of people would not. I think maybe that is why it does not necessarily need to be compulsory that you have to attend these lessons every week but if it is more of a, I do not know, we could rally up some kind of thing so the students actually ... because I think if students are trying to get other students involved it is more likely that they will than if teachers ... a lot of the time you kind of think: "Oh no, the teachers, cannot really be bothered" but if it is doing debating, if it is among the students within schools I think there would be a lot more interest.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Just sort of following on from that, do you think it is the sole responsibility of schools to educate to provide political education? If not, where else do you think it could be provided?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

I think there is a lot of scope for the students to get more involved. But I think the schools need to show that they are supporting the students getting involved in politics because I think ... we do not really think about it because we have got so much other things ... so many other things to think about but if the school kind of started it off, kind of got the ball rolling and said maybe: "Here we go, we will work with you to

have some kind of panel” and then we could get people involved that way and I think ... so it is not just the sole responsibility of the schools, but they would probably need to help get the ball rolling so that everyone else can get rolling.

Deputy S. Pitman:

What about for the general public, not specifically for the young people? How else do you think people could be educated in the subject?

Member of SiDes:

Perhaps more openness, maybe simplify things a bit more. I think the perception of the public is that it is quite complex and therefore difficult to get your head round and therefore we are not worth thinking about. As we have seen the Prime Ministerial debates almost kind of revolutionising the way the policies are presented that has had a big impact, so it might just be kind of modernising Jersey politics, so there is greater coverage, knowing who your politicians are, increasing the awareness once the people of who the politicians are, I think that would probably increase interest among the public but I know it is difficult.

President and Founder of SiDes:

I think we have sort of touched on it before, one of the main issues is not having party politics. You see how well it works in almost every other country that with a party you know what you are getting. With the Jersey political system you do not because it is one person, they can change their mind, they probably will not actually get anything they stand for passed through the States so there is not much point in voting. Most people see it that way. Whereas if you have got a party that ... either a minority government system or majority then you know that if they get in then you are going to get at least some of what they stand for passed, what you want is going to become law or become reality.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, yes. We are getting towards the end so I will ask the members here if you have got any sort of wrap up questions you wish to ask.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Yes, just at the last election 2008, what was done in your schools to promote interest?

President and Founder of SiDes:

At the time most of us, at least in my year, they were not old enough. I found that ... I remember I tried to register to vote but my birthday was a couple of days after ... no, you had to register ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

You could not pre-register.

President and Founder of SiDes:

Yes, so ... I was a month away. My birthday is a month away from the actual voting date, which is quite annoying because it is ... yes, okay, the system had changed that you could now vote at 16, but it was actually 16 and a quarter the actual voting age.

Deputy M. Tadier:

That is right.

President and Founder of SiDes:

In terms of what was done in schools, I cannot remember anything. I remember there was the hustings for the older years which 5 people turned up or something.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Apparently 300, officially.

President and Founder of SiDes:

There were some pictures that the *J.E.P.* ... if you look on the *J.E.P.* website there is a picture of everyone there and it is probably about 5.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Could that have been because it was after school at about 4.00 p.m.?

Member of SiDes:

From what I have heard, somebody has told me, that it was only because it was just poorly organised. We did not know about it. I do not think it was a reflection of, like, young voter apathy, I think it was just ... it was not particularly well organised and that was ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

This is the hustings we are talking about?

The Deputy of Grouville:

Yes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It was organised, it clashed with sports event. I went to the gym by accident because I thought it was there and there were people playing basketball, which is a lot more fun, you know, they are not going to give that up to go and watch a boring hustings.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Did you experience anything at the last election?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

Possibly I think one of the assemblies that we got, but nothing ... nothing really that major that I can remember.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Just as a wrap-up, there is obviously an issue with the schools getting the information politics being taught, as an interim measure have you thought about inviting politicians to your debating club?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

They have done it.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Have they?

President and Founder of SiDes:

Yes. [Laughter]

The Deputy of Grouville:

So we are all guilty.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

We lost.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Did we go?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Yes, we had a debate.

President and Founder of SiDes:

It was not a very big audience though.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just before Christmas.

President and Founder of SiDes:

It was at the wrong time. It was just before Christmas, so everyone was out shopping. We only had 10 people.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Well, you can reinvite us. Just put it in big writing.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It will not apply to you because I am sure your parents are very supportive politically, but have you ever come across any phenomenon whereby parents might try and influence or stop their children voting? Do you think that is likely to happen?

President and Founder of SiDes:

I cannot see why they would. I can see perhaps why they would want to influence but I think by the time you are our age you can make up your own mind and parents are not going to know who ... although if you have no idea anyway then I think the scope for influence is perhaps bigger.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Okay, what about you, have you got any final comments? Anything you want to say?

Deputy Treasurer of SiDes:

No, not that I can think of.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Speak now or for ever hold thy peace.

Member of SiDes:

What would be the next stage in this kind of process? As a Scrutiny Panel what would you do now? You go away and discuss what has been said and then what?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

A report will be written. It will be presented to the States. It has often been felt the weakness of the system, well among many weaknesses but we do not want to get too masochistic, the weakness is translating the recommendations into action. So we now try to put in tighter procedures and the Minister for Education will have to reply to our recommendations within a set time. If he replies in a not very enthusiastic way then we will look at moving propositions, because it has disturbed a lot of Members. I mean I do not wish to pre-empt our findings but obviously one of the reasons we are meeting is there was a lot of concern about what happened or, more to the point, what did not happen at the last hustings. I do not think Members will wish that to happen again.

Deputy S. Pitman:

They will get a copy of this transcription, will they not?

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Yes.

Deputy S. Pitman:

So if there is anything you think you ... I am not sure exactly ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just read through it and make sure you are happy with it. You also get a copy of the draft report, is that correct, before it gets published, just to make sure you are ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

You are happy with your section.

Deputy M. Tadier:

We have not misrepresented you or anything like that.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Okay, well thank you very much for coming and good luck with your ... with the debating society. It is fantastic initiative.

Member of SiDes:

Thank you for having us.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Our pleasure, thank you.

[16:30]