

62ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JERSEY

The Bailiff:

On this special sitting of the States, when we remember the Island's liberation by the armed forces of the Crown some 62 years ago, it is a particular privilege to welcome to the Chamber the Queen's personal representative, His Excellency The Lieutenant Governor, and Mrs. Ridgway who is in the gallery above. **[Members: Approbation]** It is also a very great honour to acknowledge the presence on the floor of the Chamber of His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent. All members are delighted, Sir, that you have expressed the wish to take part in these celebrations and I welcome you most warmly. **[Members: Approbation]** It is now my privilege to call upon the Chief Minister to address the Assembly.

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

Sir, it is now an established tradition for this Assembly to be specially convened to commemorate the most significant day in the history of our Island. This year Sir, may I echo your words in saying that we are particularly privileged to have His Royal Highness with us and we are most grateful to him for participating in our acts of celebration and remembrance. May 9th, 1945 was the day when the inhabitants of Jersey were at last liberated. The day which, after 5 long years of deprivation, fear and occasionally despair, heralded the return of freedom and with it the return once again of hope and optimism. The day when Jersey people could see that there was, after all, still a place for us in the wider world and when we were able to begin to emerge, battered but not broken, to begin all over again to find our feet and to create a new future for ourselves. A future which had for so long seemed beyond reach. It is easy to look back at those years with the benefit of hindsight, knowing - as we do now - that the Occupation did eventually come to an end. But when the German forces set foot on Jersey, there was no light at the end of the tunnel - no idea of how long this invasion would last or what horrors it would bring; the prospects for Islanders who remained in their native home were at best uncertain and at worst terrifying. It is impossible for those of us who were not there in person during the Occupation, or who were too young to remember, to imagine what it must have been like to see families deported, not knowing if they would ever see them again; to see family members imprisoned, not knowing if they would ever be released; to watch or learn of young men trying to escape the Island, all too often to be caught and punished - and in some cases killed; to be deliberately cut-off from the rest of the world and to be brought right to the brink of starvation. Those who came through it showed in full measure that Jerseymen and Jerseywomen are tenacious, stubborn, caring and proud - qualities that have characterised generations of Jersey people and exactly the qualities they needed for survival. It is similarly impossible to fully appreciate the depth of joy and sense of relief that those who had endured the Occupation must have felt when it at last came to an end. Today we remember not only that day - May 9th, the day their wildest dreams came true - but also the never to be forgotten experiences and hardships they endured throughout the 5 long years that preceded it. Pride in their endurance and joy in their Liberation is however inevitably accompanied by sadness. Sadness because so many Islanders and people with connections with our Island were lost. But forgiveness as well - so vividly illustrated by the active steps we have taken to heal any remaining wounds with the German community. And last but not least determination - because we will not forget. Some of the people in this Chamber today, and throughout the Island, were there and they will be able to feel those emotions much more vividly than the rest of us. We salute them and thank them for showing us all what courage and determination can achieve. And, Sir, may I at this point make reference to the Constable of St. Saviour who was one of those people who were present during the Occupation and say that I know I speak on behalf of all Members of this House when I say how delighted we are that he has been able to join us today. **[Members: Approbation]** For myself, while I was born during the Occupation, I was too small to have any memories of it. All

I do know - and I make no apology for referring to it again - was that I was there when the liberating forces landed. I was there waving my Union Jack and clad proudly - or so my parents tell me - in my hastily tailored Union Jack romper suit. I am intensely proud of the fact that I was there but I do so wish I could recall and still feel the emotions felt by my parents and all those around us - and I do so wish I knew where my romper suit was today. It would be a family heirloom worth a great deal; of value to me, but I no longer know where it is. In this now prosperous and uniquely successful Island, as we again recall the dark days of occupation we should never cease - never cease - to be grateful for the comforts and the safety we now enjoy. We should never take our present good fortune for granted. And when we feel hard done by or disgruntled we should always remember what might have been. My hope on Liberation Day 2007 is that we can reflect on the experiences of those who lived through the Occupation years and use the example they set us as a stimulus to support and enhance a new spirit of togetherness, caring, and pride in our remarkable Island. Above all we need to remember that of all the gifts we now enjoy in this very special place there is one we came perilously close to losing; one we must always fight to protect and one for which we should never stop being grateful. That is the gift for Jersey and for Jersey people which is beyond price - the gift of freedom. **[Members: Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

I thank the Chief Minister, on behalf of Members, for those words and you move the adjournment Chief Minister?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes please, Sir, I do.