Roy Travert

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Ref: Publicising the States and Scrutiny

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to submit my views and comments on the States of Jersey and how its work is conveyed to the public of Jersey. And the way in which I perceive the operational efficiency and value of Scrutiny.

If I might answer each of your questions one at a time.

1. **How do you find out about the work of the States Assembly.**

I think that the general consensus is that the "main" subjects that are to be made public knowledge are conveyed primarily through press releases to the media. However a feeling that "we" the public only get to find out about issues and deals once they have been committed too is a factor in these press releases. An example would be the incinerator financing fiasco.

I also use the States website to research material that I feel needs to be made public knowledge but is not readily available. I do not feel that the States website is very user friendly and is very difficult to find the information that is available online, and in many cases is "hidden" behind a façade of webpage's.

2. **Is enough information available about meetings of the States and Scrutiny.**

I do believe that there is enough information available about the sitting of the States. Scrutiny however appears to be the least advertised and would benefit from a more public profile and information of the work it is doing. Although it would appear that the time and effort put in by States members is being rendered useless if the States are not prepared to listen to its views on many of the subjects being covered.

3. **Do the proceedings receive enough coverage.**

Yes I believe the States do get enough media coverage through the local radio stations and press.

4. **What are your views on having audio and/or visual recordings of meetings.**

We are now living in an age where "you tube" is now the norm in communicating information on the web. It is an extremely useful tool in conveying to people in an attractive and visual way information that would otherwise be unavailable. The States should be doing the same thing in the States chamber and in Scrutiny so that people can have a reference to the proceedings and decision's that our government make on our behalf. Although for many people politics is a boring subject to discuss at the best of times it would help to give a more "human" face to our machinery of government.

5. **Should these be available to view on the internet.**

As stated in the above question yes these should be made available online. Although I am aware that this would have a cost implication, it is very important for the public of Jersey to access to this information. People are more inclined to want to watch a video than to read a book for example. We are used to watching TV so the video is an easy option to take to view information.

6. **Do you have an opinion on the use of blog sites.**

I am a little disturbed by the fact that this question has been asked. I feel this has everything to do with a particular on going court case regarding a present States Member and the desire to have his blog closed down. Blog sites have a place on the internet where people are allowed to have freedom of speech. I neither agree nor disagree with any content that these types of sites contain. That is for individuals to decide for themselves.

I would certainly resist any attempt to curtail that right to freedom of speech and would view any attempt to prevent robust comment in any form as a breach of those rights. I also believe that this question was asked in the States of Jersey recently with regards the content of some people's blogs.

I also believe that blogs or website's for that matter, should not contain material that is slanderous in nature miss informing are have any undertones of racist comments. If a blog/website is found to have such information a request should be made in writing to either provide evidence of accusations, correct any information that is not factual or misleading and a retraction put on the site to confirm its removal. If after negotiation and no alternative can be found through mutual agreement legal proceeding should be considered and only implemented as a last resort.

However, no attempt should be made by the States to intervene in people's personal freedom in viewing blogs websites or owning them. It is the public's choice if they view such sites and read the material they contain. We the public must be able to make our own minds up as to the right's or wrong's of any material posted online with a view that our human rights would be breached if we were not allowed to do so.

7. **Who do you believe the media to be.**

This is an interesting question to have asked. Most people would answer this by saying that the newspapers TV and radio were your obvious choices. This I would agree with but would also like to add the internet as a main source of media information. There are numerous sites dedicate to daily news updates and offer a wealth of information online.

I would also like to add into this debate the PR companies and advertising agencies that work along side our government. They are used extensively to put across government policy that would otherwise be unacceptable and unpalatable to the public of Jersey. Political spin is now the norm across the political landscape which is something that the public are fed up with.

My perception of the use of this type of "media" is that information can be viewed in any format and way that they chose. This could mean putting forward a particular subject in a certain way to achieve a certain result. Certain subjects have the possibility of being manipulated that would otherwise never be accepted by the public. Failed government policies and the manipulation of them are seen as the driving force behind this along with the perceived hidden agendas which subsequently come to the public's attention later on.

In conclusion:

Your heading statement **"could the States be more open"** is a very inviting question. The States stated policy of open and transparent government has been seen to fail and fall down on numerous occasions. Scrutiny has been working hard to bring about meaningful balance to our new Ministerial government with very limited results.

Simply put I don't think our government wants to be anymore "open" about the decisions it takes now or how it has taken them in the past 20 years. Not only should the States should be open about the decisions it takes, but individual members should also be accountable for their actions as part of that government.

Political spin using the States Communications unit is now an accepted part of Jersey life, with the result that people have the perception that information released to the public has in some way been manipulated for its own ends and does not give a true reflection on actual figures or events.

Accusations by present States members of departments and States Members "massaging Statistics" are now common place. With the resultant loss of public confidence.

This must surly be viewed as a symptom of media manipulation in trying to pass failing States Policy over to the general public in an acceptable common purpose way. I do not in anyway proportion blame to these media companies, they are only doing the job they are paid to do.

It's the employer who must take responsibility for its actions and in many cases it is individual Minister's in the States of Jersey that are implementing media policy with a common goal in place. I have no doubt that the public of Jersey should have access to an open and accountable government that puts public interest first and political spin second. Lead by example follow by choice.

Yours Faithfully

Roy Travert