

The Bailiff:

I call upon His Excellency to respond.

His Excellency Air Chief Marshal Sir John Cheshire:

Mr. Bailiff, Chief Minister, Ministers, Members of the States, ladies and gentlemen upstairs. Mr. Bailiff, firstly may I thank Minister Syvret for his generous remarks about Sam and me. I am particularly grateful for those about Sam because, in military circles, wives very rarely get the credit and recognition that they justly deserve. Be assured we are both very touched by the goodwill and the gratitude that has been shown to us by so many members of this house. We have had a fabulous 5 years here and, from our point of view, it is us who should be displaying gratitude and not the other way around. And yet life is all about teamwork and we like to think that our small contribution to Jersey has benefited from the fact that we have operated as a team. Of course, we have not been the only players in our team. The whole of the Government House staff has worked exceptionally hard to ensure that our challenging programme always ran like clockwork and in the very best interests of Jersey. Since many of that team are in the gallery this morning, Mr. Bailiff, may I take this opportunity to thank them publicly for the exceptional support and service that they have provided for us and for the Island during our time here. **[Approbation]** When Sam and I attended the special sitting of the States on 25th January 2001, Senator Horsfall made mention of the very special Jersey welcome. That welcome (and the friendship that goes with it) has been the bedrock of our happiness here for the whole of our 5 years. Before coming here we were inveterate travellers, having moved 30 times in 35 years to all corners of the earth. And, at the risk of repeating myself - because I have said this in many other for a - Jersey is in a league of its own as the most friendly place in the world in which we have ever had the privilege of living. Nowhere else has come close to demonstrating the warmth of welcome, the depth of support and friendship, and the genuine help and kindness that we have found so evident here. For that unqualified support and friendship, we thank you Mr. Bailiff and Lady Bailhache and all the people of this beautiful Island - we shall never forget it. When I say all the people, I really do mean all. In our 5 years here we have endeavoured to get to know and to learn from every quarter of Jersey society. Of course, we would not claim to have met everyone - that would be a gross exaggeration. But what we have tried to do is to meet everyone who has wanted to meet us - for whatever reason - and to offer our help and support to those individuals and organisations that have sought it. Our particular emphasis has been on those charities and organisations whose fine work, for many reasons, receives little public profile or acknowledgement. But despite, and in some cases because of, their low profile, those same organisations provide an essential lifeline for many individuals who face serious challenges here. Why do I rehearse these thoughts in the States? For two reasons: first, because, I am concerned that our modest efforts may have helped the various organisations to treat the symptoms of some of the Island's more stigmatic and therefore obscure social problems. But, I fear, we have done little or nothing to overcome the root causes of those problems. I say that because considerable political backbone will be required even to acknowledge the existence of some of those root causes. And then the very difficult political decisions will be needed in this house to actually overcome them. I do, of course, fully recognise the complexity, the difficulty and the social implications of each of those issues. And I would not want anyone to believe that their resolution just requires the States to change or shed the mantle of the ostrich and replace it with that of the lion. Sound bite jingo of that sort is far, far too simplistic and merely demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the issues at stake. It would also misrepresent in my view the current attitude of the States which is very far from ostrich like. I said there were two reasons why I used this opportunity to focus on just one aspect of our support for Jersey charities. The second reason is actually even more fundamental than the first and it is this. Earlier, I quite appropriately characterised Jersey as a beautiful Island where the people are exceptionally welcoming, supportive, friendly and helpful and kind. To those qualities I would also add that the social conscience, the community spirit and the voluntary endeavour of this population is

also without parallel anywhere else in the world. The combination of a beautiful place occupied by an inherently honourable, honest and friendly population, suggests to me that Jersey comes close to being the theoretical utopia - and indeed it does. But, for good or ill, we actually live in a real rather than a theoretical world. And, in the real world, Jersey is inevitably exposed to and suffers from many of the ills experienced by other nations. And it is those ills that are the root cause of some of the problems that I mentioned earlier. Ills that are here, are inescapable and will keep utopia at bay for as long as they remain untackled, but I am sure that until they are tackled, many dedicated Islanders will doubtless continue to treat the symptoms of those problems with the great dedication and humanity that they always have. My next point is that on 25th January 2001, I confirmed, in this house, that I had a duty to represent, with balance and precision, the views and attitudes of this Chamber. As a consequence, I had an obligation to become a good listener at as many States sittings as possible. I do regret not actually attending all sessions of every sitting, but, it was a simple question of priorities. A balance had to be struck between attendance in the States (in a mute role) or on the other hand, supporting myriad organisations around the Island – but, in an active capacity. The compromise I struck was to attend every day of all major debates (Clothier, the budget and so on), and to attend at least the mornings of all your routine Tuesday sessions. With that sort of limited attendance, you could reasonably comment that I missed the tail-end of a number of significant debates. And you would be right. But that was the inevitable consequence of compromise. That said, I do hope that, throughout my 5 years, I have reflected the political views of this house with balance and with precision whenever I have been asked for them. Be assured I have tried to do so. This may be an appropriate moment to re-emphasise that the Lieutenant-Governor is required to be apolitical. That is an obligation which pensioned-off military pilots like me are only too happy to honour. Paddling in the political pond is best left to those who feel comfortable in that world - and I, for one, do not. But, after listening to your debates for 5 years, I believe you would expect me to express some (apolitical) and balanced comments about what I have seen and heard in this Chamber. In fact, there is only one observation that I feel compelled to make - and I make it with the very best of intentions, albeit with some trepidation. As I was attempting to commit it to paper, I became very aware that it could be regarded merely as a reflection of my political naivety. With that in mind, I should perhaps admit that my previous attendance at political debates has been limited to London, Moscow, Oslo and HQ NATO in Brussels. And, with the exception of Brussels, the frequency of attendance was, by comparison with Jersey, even more limited. So, what I offer actually to you now is the apolitical observation of someone who has attended States sittings (albeit in a mute role) for longer than 29 of the current States Members. Mr. Bailiff, you might also be wondering why I have ducked the easy option: and that would be to pretend that all has been sweetness and light and just disappear into the sunset, saying nothing. The answer to that is very simple - my conscience tells me that I owe it to you, to this Assembly and to the people of the lovely Island of Jersey to give an honest view of the only aspect of States activity which has caused me serious concern during the last 5 years. The start point of that concern is to refer back to my earlier assessment of the inherent qualities of the people of this Island. That is to say they are a uniquely friendly, tolerant, harmonious, disciplined as a society with an enormous social conscience and unparalleled community spirit. In short they are team Jersey at its very best. That being so, I reasonably expected the elected members of that society to exhibit, in this Chamber, at least some of those self same exceptional qualities and traits. I was wrong. For a significant part of my term of office, few if any of those sitting in this gallery at the moment (or those listening to the debates on Radio Jersey) would have used adjectives such as friendly, harmonious or tolerant to describe what they had heard and felt. Even though I acknowledge that I come from the school of thick-skinned warriors, I was nothing short of staggered by the levels of vitriol, character assassination and of personal invective that ricocheted around this Chamber. But it was not just the words, which are on the transcripts and are therefore irrefutable; what really surprised and upset me was the mood and the atmosphere of antagonism and personal hostility which permeated this Chamber. The more so since it had

actually been created by those who claimed to be of the Island and for the Island - and elected by the Island. In short, it seemed to me that, some Members of this Chamber, far from emulating and enhancing all that is fine about the character of Jersey and its people, were, on occasions, getting close to destroying the fine reputation of the society they had been elected to represent. They were also beginning to undermine the Island's long-standing and hard-earned reputation for political stability. Mr. Bailiff, I recognise that those are very harsh words and that some of those who perpetrated that behaviour are no longer States Members today. But others, who are also erstwhile Members of this Chamber, have told me that one of the main reasons for refusing to stand for re-election, was that they could not tolerate any more personal attacks of the sort to which they had been subjected. Mr. Bailiff, I should add, very quickly, that since this current house assumed office, those unseemly days vanished and this Chamber has, once again, started to reflect many of the character traits that make Jersey society so very, very special. I therefore very much hope that those dark days have now been consigned to history, and will never, ever be repeated. **[Approval]** May I conclude with a very short and personal assessment of Jersey's future. It is a question I am often asked and I believe it is appropriate to declare my hand with those who will ultimately prove my predictions to be right or wrong. I should emphasise that they are the views of an optimistic realist. I am an optimist, because my instinct has always been to look for solutions to problems, however daunting they may seem at first glance. Indeed, I have considerable trouble with those whose first and natural instinct is to complain and then to spend valuable time telling me why things cannot be done. But I am I think also a realist, and I like to think that, as a general rule, I do have a reasonable feel for the art of the possible in both practical and political terms. So, as an optimistic realist, I will declare that I am hugely encouraged when I assess Jersey's future. Indeed, if I was in your position, and had to play the cards that will determine the course that Jersey takes in the future, I would be delighted with the hand that I had been dealt. The more so when I compare it with the hands that most other nations have to play. I see a robust, expanding, capable, efficient, resourceful and highly competitive finance sector which underpins the Island's economy. I also see an increasingly harmonious, understanding and therefore successful relationship between the finance sector and those who provide the political and regulatory oversight over it. So, short of an unforeseen and calamitous external event, over which Jersey has no control, all the indications are that the finance sector will be profitable here in the foreseeable future. In addition, I see an extraordinary level of enterprise and entrepreneurial endeavour being generated in Jersey which is creating new and successful businesses outside the finance sector. Some of these may have the potential to provide Jersey with a second or a third string to its economic bow in the future. Last, but by no means least, 5 years here has demonstrated to me that this society is an exceptional environment for developing leaders of the highest quality. It has an education system (in its widest sense) which must be the envy of many nations. Not only does it inspire individuals to gain the highest academic standards that they are capable of achieving. It also identifies, cultivates and develops the leadership skills which the youth of Jersey seem to exhibit in abundance. And, in concert with extramural organisations and family traditions, it also engenders the social and the moral conscience and the community spirit that is frequently found lacking or decaying in other societies. All that is in addition to the ability of this Island to identify and develop sporting, musical, theatrical and artistic talent of the highest order. It is that rounded education, when coupled with the inherent discipline, determination and drive, which are so evident in the people of Jersey that convinces me that there will be no shortage of exceptional leaders to run this Island in the future. One of the tasks of this Chamber, I suggest, is to ensure that your pool of young leaders is inspired to return to the Island and take up the reins when you surrender them. I wish you every possible success with that and your myriad other tasks. The challenges are indeed great, but, from the perspective of a realistic optimist who has had the immense privilege of being part of team Jersey for the last 5 years, none of those problems is insurmountable. My instinct, my experience and, of course, my heart all tell me that beautiful Jersey will continue to be both beautiful and hugely successful in the years ahead. Sam and I

thank you all for the support, help and friendship that you have given to us. We could not have asked for 5 happier and more fulfilling years. I know you will give the same welcome and support to Andrew and Valerie Ridgway when they arrive in June. But, for our part, we are very sad to be leaving. Be assured that we shall leave a large part of our hearts in your Island. Mr. Bailiff, I thank you and all the members of this Chamber for allowing the mute to mutter, just once, at a States Sitting. **[Approbation]**