

# **STATES OF JERSEY**



## **ST. HELIER WATERFRONT: TELEPHONE POLL – COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY**

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**Lodged au Greffe on 23rd August 2005  
by Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement**

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**STATES GREFFE**

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

in accordance with Article 36B of the States of Jersey Law 1966, to approve the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the circumstances surrounding the attempt to distort the result of the telephone poll on the St. Helier Waterfront development organised by the Jersey Evening Post on 5th August 2005.

DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT

## REPORT

On 16th August the Jersey Evening Post (JEP) advised that attempts had been made to pervert the phone poll they had set up to determine public opinion regarding proposals for the Waterfront. Apparently, 5 mobile phones logged nearly 3,000 votes, 2 registering over 1,000 each.

In the absence of referendum, Mori polls or the like, and in full realisation that telephone polls by such organisations as the JEP cannot be as accurate as the aforementioned processes, the public and politicians alike nevertheless draw inferences from such polls. For instance, had the poll demonstrated a majority in favour of the Waterfront schemes, there is every reason to suppose that members of the public who opposed them would have shrugged their shoulders and taken for granted that they were in a minority. Likewise, politicians would have assumed that the public were generally supportive of these schemes and this in turn would have affected their future decisions.

The Managing Director of Dandara made light of the issue, reportedly saying 'it does show how silly these phone polls are', but in my view it is an extremely serious matter.

Assuming the allegations are true, this is not an accident or bit of fun. People have gone to the trouble and expense of deliberately setting out to mislead both public and politicians, clearly with the intention of getting something done against the public's wishes. This is a scandal that, had it not been detected, could have had serious repercussions.

It is obvious that all sorts of innuendo and accusation will arise as a result and, as the JEP are apparently unable to advise us who attempted this perversion because of Data Protection (as with Human Rights, I sometimes wonder if these Laws protect the right people) a Committee of Inquiry is to my mind the only vehicle that could deliver the necessary information. Article 36B of the States of Jersey Law 1966 states that a Committee of Inquiry can be established to enquire into "any definite matter of public importance" and I believe that this issue is indeed a matter of considerable public importance.

I am not suggesting that actual names are necessary, but knowing whether the duplicated calls were made by person(s) associated with the developers, person(s) connected with WEB Ltd. or a politician would greatly assist in clearing the air. If, for example, it turned out to be a politician, then I would expect sanctions to be brought against him or her.

The legislation relating to Committees of Inquiry allows for a committee of one, and this is what I propose. The investigation should not take long as only a handful of witnesses need to be interviewed. Likewise, the cost involved should be tiny by comparison with other Inquiries of recent time. I anticipate that the overall cost should not exceed £5,000 with minimal manpower implications.