



STATES OF JERSEY

Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
Migration and Population Sub-Panel

MONDAY, 27th APRIL 2009

Panel:

Senator S.C. Ferguson (Chairman)
Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier
Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville
Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary
Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour
Mr. P. Boden (Panel Adviser)

Witness:

Ms. D. Minihane (Age Concern)

Present:

Mr. W. Millow (Scrutiny Officer)

Senator S.C. Ferguson (Chairman):

Welcome to the hearing of the Corporate Affairs and Migration and Population Sub-Panel. I wonder if you could introduce yourself for the purposes of the recording.

Ms. D. Minihane (Chair, Age Concern):

Yes, I am Daphne Minihane. I chair Age Concern in the Senior Citizens' Association and I would like, at this point, to make Bob Le Brocq's apologies, as he is the vice chair of Senior Citizens. He is out of the Island. He would have liked to be here.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Now, quick housekeeping. We do have a number of health warnings on the sheet there and it notes that, among other things, we are recording this, but you will have a copy of the transcript before we publish it to make sure there are no mistakes in the transcription. Now, if the Panel would like to introduce themselves, please.

Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:

Yes, Deputy Wimberley of St. Mary.

Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:

Carolyn Labey, Deputy of Grouville.

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Geoff Southern from St. Helier No. 2.

Mr. P. Boden:

Peter Boden, Adviser to the Scrutiny Panel.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I think you have been in communication with William Millow, our Scrutiny Officer, who keeps us all in order.

Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour:

Deputy Tracey Vallois of St. Saviour.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

All right. I suppose the big sweeping "covers everything" question is what do you think of the population policy?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, I am worried about it, I have to say. Before coming to this meeting and knowing that Bob was going to be absent, we did meet so that we could prepare our thoughts and we are concerned about it. We know that something has to be done because of our ageing population but we are looking at the numbers and wondering how this figure of 100,000 was arrived at. It seemed a figure that has been plucked out of the air with 96,000 and then 100,000 and also that we were going to bring in 250 and now 150 people so obviously there have been some changes within the policy and the strategy. What we do not understand is how we can know, at this moment, how many people there are in the Island. We have not had a census for 10 years, so how can we know how many people are here before we start looking at bringing in people to make up this magical figure?

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

What is your sort of feeling about it? Do you have any sort of ...

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, I think we have to look at retaining a lot of our own people, not looking to bring in more and more people. We have to look at the infrastructure of our Island. The environment has never been more in the predicament it is at the moment. More importantly, if we bring more people in, it is more cars, more housing, more water, more electricity, more gas, more waste, possibly a bigger hospital, maybe an even bigger prison if we look at the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* in recent years. So our heritage is important. Our Island is our heritage and we are concerned about bringing in this number of people. As far as we are concerned, we feel that if people are to be brought in, they should be only skilled and essential people. They should be on permits so that we know that they are coming into the Island. They should have a job promised and agreed before they come into the Island so that we know from the employer that there is a job for the proposed employee who will come in. They should be allowed to bring only their immediate family, not grannies, aunts, uncles and everyone else. So that is one thought we have. We feel - and I know that the word "discrimination" is a dirty word at the moment - but we need positive discrimination towards the locals because many of our local people are overlooked for jobs. We always seem to think that by bringing in people from the U.K. (United Kingdom) that they have more expertise and so on than we have locally but we have some very bright stars here who are overlooked very often. We feel that more management courses, administrative courses, things like that, should be offered so that these rising stars can be offered the jobs and not offered outside of the Island. We also feel that if we had more apprenticeships - and I know those are on the cards now but also we have been asking for these for a long time - but more apprenticeships for our own young people to be able to learn a trade so that they are not looking to leave the Island. We feel that younger people, school leavers, are not finding jobs. Even Saturday jobs are at a premium now and most young people like to start getting their feet on the ladder and bringing in some pocket money. They are not being able to get that. Hundreds of young people leave the Island every year to go to university. Every year, some are looking for jobs because they are graduating year after year. We feel that more opportunities should be made for graduates to come back to this Island. Perhaps while locals who have been moved up to the top spots through management training and so on, the younger ones could be coming in. They have a loyalty to

their Island. It is their Island so we feel that they should be given far more chances to come back. Because of my age - and I am a gran - I meet lots of young people who have gone off to university who say: "I do not know what I am going to do when I finish. I do not think I will find a job." This is sad, while we are still bringing people into the Island from outside. We feel that there should be strict regulation of immigrants anyhow, maybe a permit like they do in Australia. They are not allowed into Australia or America without a permit so they know who is there and that they are there. We feel they should be English-speaking as they are now being asked to be in the U.K. Some people have been in the Island for more than 20 years and still cannot speak English or understand English. We also feel - these are very strong points and you are probably going to throw me out of the room in a moment - but there should be health checks before people come into the Island, as in Australia, to try and prevent some of the diseases that are coming in. Some were eradicated. They are now back in the Island, having been brought in. Health Service expenditure is already overstretched and the money should be channelled, we feel, where it is most needed and by cutting out, perhaps, some of these diseases coming into the Island, we could channel more towards people with cancer or whatever. I belong to a charity that helps cancer patients to pay doctors' bills, medicines, visits to the hospital over in the U.K. and so on. This is a charity having to pay for this.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

You also mentioned discrimination. Do you feel that there is any particular discrimination against the aged?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, I do, ageism, for a start, in many ways and something that they are saying now that we hearing all the time that: "We are problems" and that becomes a discrimination against the elderly because they are beginning to feel a problem and a concern to the Island and they should be made to feel more welcome, to be loved, if you like, for everything they have done for the Island. The Island would not be as prosperous as it is, or was, if it had not been for our older people who had run bed and breakfasts and things like that over the years, gone without holidays, gone without drink, and what not, even a bottle of beer or a drop of good wine. They have really put their all into this Island. Now, they are being penalised, there is no doubt about that.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Do you feel they are being thrown on the scrap heap at 60 or 65 and ignored?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, I do. A lot of older people are not getting any help through income support because they have a few savings. Now, those savings are theirs. They have saved all their lives. They have not asked for help before but they are being penalised now because they have savings. Some of them come in to me and say: "How am I going to pay for my funeral?" This is a concern to most of them: "How am I going to pay for my funeral? My son has a mortgage and 3 children. My daughter is a single parent", whatever: "I cannot ask them to do it" and the words they use: "I do not want a pauper's funeral."

Deputy G.P. Southern:

There are a lot of problems, as you know and I know, with the income support system as it is currently delivering, but could I return us to the population migration issues which have arrived on the back of the Imagine Jersey 2035 consultation process and proposed basically 2 things: one, that we increase the population in some means in order to support the ageing population but, secondly, that we should change the age of retirement or the age at which you can work to. It is linked to the age discrimination issue. How do your members, or how do you feel about increasing the age of retirement?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I think there are a number of people who would be happy to do so because we are living longer and health is better and I do hear that from a lot of people because of the fact that they are having to use their savings that they would like to stay in work. But I think it has to be, at this moment, their choice because it was put through the E.U. (European Union) and they threw it out and now it is being looked at in the U.K., that people should be asked to work longer, maybe until 68, another 3 years or so. I think this could be helpful to the economy but it is going to be difficult to bring in because people have long looked for their retirement. It would have to be a mandatory thing. At this moment, older people are known to be better employees. They are far more reliable and they will tell me that here. They turn up on time, they turn up on a Monday morning, they have not been binge drinking all weekend and cannot turn up but I hear this from employers themselves: "Give me your older people to work." But, of course, they have grown up with the idea of retiring at 60 or 65 and it is going to be difficult to change that, I think, except from a financial point of view. If we could encourage them to do something, even offer a carrot in some way, to keep them in ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

So incentives to work longer but not mandatory: "You must work longer."

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, I think that will come. Truthfully, I think that will come, but at the moment if we could offer some sort of a carrot, some incentive, I think it could be helpful. A lady, a friend of mine, who is actually on Cancer Relief with me, worked in one of the banks for 25 years and when she became 60, they said: "Out, time for you to go." Now, she was perfectly well. She was very fit. She was very able. She had done a perfectly good job. They had never had any complaints against her over her work. She had to go and they took 2 young people in to do her job. Now, that does not make sense to me. She had the expertise to bring others in to train.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Quick supplementary. Why would they have done that?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Because that was the age, I suppose. At 60, you go. This is what she was told, that was her retiring age as far as she was concerned.

The Deputy of Grouville:

On the point of incentives, I agree there should be incentives to stay on. It should be a voluntary thing if people want to stay on. What sort of incentives would you envisage? Also for our graduates who go away. There may be job opportunities here but, given the price of housing over here, do our graduates need more incentives to come back to the Island?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, absolutely. They should be encouraged to come back to the Island and they should be given help with housing and jobs and so on. As I said earlier, discrimination in favour of locals, "discrimination" being the operative word here to keep our own people. We are looking for people who love their Island and want to keep the environment, who want to be part of their Island. I lived in England for 10 years, I was in the Air Force and my Island meant everything to me to be able to come back. People who come from another country, wherever it may be, their allegiance is always to the country of their birth so to try and get this lovely feel again of care and community in the Island, I feel this is what we should be looking at to bring our own people back.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was going to ask how that connects to your Age Concern, and I can see that it is a strongly held view of yours and of many people, but can you sketch out how that connects to Age Concern and

with the emphasis on locals and loyalty and bringing people back who have lived here with an emphasis on local; how does it work?

Ms. D. Minihane:

As older people, we want to see our grandchildren being able to come back into the Island. We have children and grandchildren. We want to be able to see them back in the Island, back in their own Island. It is only by having this family, this extended family, if you like, that you can have the care in the community that we are so lacking now. I feel strongly about this. Yes, I am sorry if I am feeling too strongly about it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

No, I just wanted you to spell out the connection, which you have done.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Older people need their family around them. We have older people here with no family. Their families have moved to Australia, to New Zealand. They could not live here. It was too expensive. They could not buy a house, could not find a house and so on. They have lost an awful lot because these older people do not even have their grandchildren here. They do not see their grandchildren. This is where the community spirit has gone.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, what sort of input have you had with regard to the general population policy and the makeup of the population? Have you had any input with the Council of Ministers and the policy at all?

Ms. D. Minihane:

No, there was a time when Age Concern, myself as chair, were always invited to meet with the Chief Minister. We have not had any under the current Chief Minister, not to this time, anyway.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I find that rather woeful when one of the proposals is that they were going to mess around with the retirement age and ...

Ms. D. Minihane:

No, we have not been invited to any meetings at all.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Have you raised it with them?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Difficult.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

We can give you the email address.

Ms. D. Minihane:

I have to be honest. The former Chief Minister would invite us, often invite me to a meeting and we would have meetings, maybe one or 2 hours, to discuss things. Maybe the present Chief Minister is too busy for that to happen.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

So you have discussed it with the previous Chief Minister within the previous Strategic Plan?

Ms. D. Minihane:

We did have meetings, yes, and we spoke about some of the things that I have already discussed and others. One of them which worries me a lot, because we are looking at finances here and

how we are going to support our old people and that is why I have brought some of the points forward, but we do know that there are people working in this Island for 7 hours for many, many employers, maybe 7 or 8 a week. By so doing, they are not signing a contract. They are asking to be paid in cash. They are paying no I.T.I.S. (Income Tax Instalment Scheme) and they are paying no contributions because they do not have to. You have to work for 8 hours for one particular employer to do that. Now, speaking about the former Chief Minister, I have discussed it with him and he said we could not do anything about it. Now, I think that we have to do something about it. We have to make sure that everyone is paying their dues. It is unfair to the taxpayers if they do not and it is money that is going out of the Island rather than staying in the Island to help with an ageing population and anything else we may have to help with. This needs addressing because it is causing problems.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Have you any sort of feeling as to this, any evidence as to the size of the problem?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I do not have numbers but I can tell you that there are a lot of them and they will not accept a cheque. They will only accept cash and there is no way of tracing that back. The only way I think this can be addressed is by making every employee, whether he is employed for one, 2, 3, 4 hours, whatever it is, to register so that Social Security pick up on that and gets the I.T.I.S. They get contributions. I think you have to pay I.T.I.S. even if you only work for one or 2 hours. I think I am correct, but in these particular cases, we are looking at people here who are working maybe 49 hours a week and contributing nothing to the economy but still possibly having children in school, going to hospital, all sorts of things. So we just worry that, again, looking at the ageing population, we are trying to look at all ways that the money will be available to support the ageing population and it being fair and, at the moment, it is not fair.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

If you are correct, you are pointing out a serious problem among our employers rather than our employees. Employees do not want to be taken on short term. Temporary contracts do not want to not be paying social security so it is an employers' problem. I am surprised that the previous Chief Minister should suggest that there is not much we can do about this when we are in charge of changing the regulations.

Ms. D. Minihane:

If I say nothing more is done in spite of the fact ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That you made the complaint.

Ms. D. Minihane:

That was the point rather than saying there is nothing we could do. Nothing was done and he said it would be difficult and nothing has been done. We are talking about perhaps housewives, women who are taking on a cleaner for 7 hours. They are not wanting to be bothered about getting all the ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Certainly.

Ms. D. Minihane:

But what I am saying is, it is wrong because all this money is not being recorded, nothing being paid on it and it is possibly going out of the Island. Not possibly, I think it is going.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Going out of the Island, why does that concern you so much?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Because it is going straight out of the Island and nothing has been paid. No contributions, no I.T.I.S., nothing. It is going straight out of the Island.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Are you suggesting, then, that this practice is largely performed by some of our non-native populations?

Ms. D. Minihane:

It is possible, yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay. It is clear on that.

Ms. D. Minihane:

It is unfair on the taxpayer, on those who are being honest about it and it is money that is needed in the Island at this moment, and if we are looking at how we are going to support an ageing population we need to look at every aspect.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

And if these people are benefiting from the services in the Island?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Exactly. Many are on income support. Many are in States housing.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Have children in schools.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Attend the hospital.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Attend the hospital.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We are largely based on evidence. I think what we are getting here is anecdote.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, I could give you names but I will not. I think it has to be looked at, Deputy. It cannot just be again overlooked. It has become a big problem.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The question that comes to my mind, as somebody who sits in the "Big House", is obviously are there are other areas of lost tax revenue that come to your mind?

Ms. D. Minihane:

No, that mostly, because these are the points that are made to me by older people who say: "I have to use all my savings. I get nothing and yet we have people living in this Island who are getting everything and still able to abuse the system."

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So what you are saying is that your constituents, if we can use that term, the members of Age Concern are aware of this particular form of tax leakage but they may not be aware of other forms of tax leakage?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I do not know of any other forms. Possibly people are painting and decorating and doing the same with their garden. I do not know.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I had other things in mind but this is what is reaching you?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

May I simply ask how many of your membership are from the Portuguese community?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Only about 2, I think, currently. They have their own club and their own support groups. We have invited them. We have a French group in today, for instance, and our French group have taken up our offer but the Portuguese have their own support groups around and their own cafés and restaurants and all their things and I am not getting it from just one section of the community. You have mentioned the Portuguese. There are others.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

In fact, that brings up the question which we asked the previous people before the panel. These views that you bring to us today, how can you say these represent the views of the membership of Age Concern? What kind of process is there whereby you and probably Bob, who is not here, would bring statements to us?

Ms. D. Minihane:

It is representative, it is quite highly representative, because people are telling us this all the time and coming into us and saying: "It is so unfair. Can you not do something about it?" I am now trying to do something about it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Well, not just on this issue. I mean on all the statements, all positions that you are bringing to us. I just wonder what kind of formal or informal discussion goes into bringing that here.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, we meet with our older people and before we say anything we always have a meeting. We have a meeting on a Tuesday afternoon, for instance, and if there is any burning question ... I have had a letter a couple of weeks ago about the Fort, whether we should develop the Fort. That is discussed, things that affect them and that they understand. There is another one out now about parking charges for disabled and I have had a letter this week, so I need to talk to them about that. The things that I have mentioned mostly have come to me from individuals rather than a whole meeting because we have not discussed the migration of population with them but they have discussed with us their feelings about being put on the sack heap.

The Deputy of Grouville:

When you discuss the migration population policy with them, would it be possible to put to them what they believe to be a sustainable population and gauge their views or have you done this already?

Ms. D. Minihane:

We have not, no. We truthfully have not asked them. I am not sure that a lot of them would really understand what that is about. They know that they are living in the Island. They think we have too many people in the Island, that is what I get told: "There are already too many people living here" and I would not get, I think, a consensus there at all.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would you favour an approach instead of the approach that was adopted in Imagine Jersey 2035, which talked about immigration scenarios from zero to 650?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I was there.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I have no doubt you were. Would you favour an approach which put a cap, a ceiling on population? At the moment, we have a population policy which suggests that we will peak under 100,000. Does that make sense to you or would you pick another figure? Have you talked to your members about those 2 approaches, number of immigrants versus what should the population be, the population figure?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, as I said earlier, we feel that local people, not just Jersey locals, should be encouraged to work here, thus cutting back on the number we have to bring in. I think 100,000 is a lot in an Island of this size. We are only 9 by 5, after all. You can barely get around now in cars. You have your waste problem, a bit on the incinerator road, but we have a lot of problems and we do not want to lose our heritage. We do not want to lose our coastline and our buildings everywhere. It should be looked at very carefully and every aspect should be looked at. How can we cope with this number? Would the infrastructure cope with 100,000? I am not sure it can at this moment.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

How do you perceive the current standard of living in Jersey, you yourself and your members?

Ms. D. Minihane:

The standard of living?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

The standard of living at the present.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Taking into account food and hospital care and everything else, you want ...

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Just in general, the basic standard of living. How do you feel about it?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I think the standard of living is quite good here really. I think it has been better and I think people are having to look twice at how they are spending their money now. I think an awful lot of older people are worried about their heating bills because they are getting them in now after the winter that we have just had, a cold winter, and they look at it and they are bringing them into me and saying: "Look at this, how am I going to pay for this?" or "I will not be able to go to the doctor this month because of this." We have paid heating for older people out of Age Concern's money this year because we could not see them go without their heating, and I did say at one stage that it was going to be heat or eat and I still feel that. It is certainly the case older people are saying they had no idea that their heating would run up those ... some of them have moved into one room. Some of them living in States housing, of course, are not as badly off as those living in

their own homes. States housing have their background heating and it is paid for all year round and so on.

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Not all housing.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Some, there is some States housing, but for a lot of older people living in their own homes up in the sticks who only have their interest on their savings, which is almost nil at the moment, and their savings, they are very worried.

Mr. P. Boden:

Bundling the economic prosperity, economic growth in the Island with immigration, do you think it is possible to continue to develop Jersey's economic prosperity without having a significant immigration flow into the Island?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I think I said earlier that we should have skilled workers and people coming into jobs, to fill jobs that are needed, not just coming in willy-nilly, but should have a job to come into so that we do not have people living here looking for jobs but we must look after our locals and build up on the expertise of our local people which cuts down on housing, building more housing. Also, as I said earlier, I think, bring back the community spirit which we have lost because if you have families living here, they are supportive of each other and maybe some older people would not be stuck in their 4 walls and unable to get out because there is no one to take them. They would have a grandson or a granddaughter or son and daughter who could take them. A lot of them cannot get out of their homes. We have buses which we run to pick people up to bring them in. It is not just a good neighbour scheme. You need to try and get your families back together again.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

You talk about looking after the local people. Would you be in favour, as a suggestion in the migration policy, of moving their so-called 5-year rule for local qualification for jobs to 10 years as has been suggested?

Ms. D. Minihane:

What, people come in and ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Need 10 years to get certain set jobs.

Ms. D. Minihane:

I still come back to what I say. I think we should be looking at our own people. We are talking about immigration, immigration. We have to bring some in but I do feel that we are looking out rather than inwards and I would like to feel that we are looking inwards first and if we need to bring in ... we have very intelligent people in this Island. They are sitting around here, look at them all. Some of you are local like me, but I just feel that we must always look to the U.K. or elsewhere and I cannot see why.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

One of the problems with people who come to the Island is that unfortunately we do age and the Baby Boomer generation is with us now and is fast approaching, if not already approached, retirement age.

Ms. D. Minihane:

But these people who come in are going to approach retirement age as well.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Exactly.

Ms. D. Minihane:

They are going to be at the other end.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Which is where the migration scenario to solve our problems started to break down, I am afraid.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, this is why I want to bring in graduates and people like that, young people, who have years to give, not bringing in people aged 50 or 55 and find that at 60 we are keeping them. I want to start bringing in younger ones.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That was proposed in early drafts about 5 years ago, that we would only import young, single, highly qualified immigrants into the Island. However, some serious thinking about that quickly evaporated. It is extremely difficult to enforce.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Well, it is another form of discrimination really and not everybody wants to obviously come ... you are talking more of young people coming home to work.

Ms. D. Minihane:

If they wanted to. There are young people who cannot find jobs here so they are moving away from the Island. This is expensive to the Island. We have taken them through our educational system. They have gone on to university. Then they cannot find a job here so they go somewhere else. It does not make sense to me.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is jobs the limiting factor or is it the cost of housing?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I think jobs as well, though I did say earlier that if we could attract those back, we should provide help with housing or some form of incentive, some way of getting them back into the Island. I am trying to pull it all together and build up our community and bring our own people here. I am not saying I have anything against immigrants but we are looking at trying to save money and also looking at our Island as a whole, looking at our environment and, Deputy, you are very much involved with that heritage.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, going back to the oldies, speaking as one, how would you assess the contribution that the older part of the population is making to the Island?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, if you look at the charities and I am involved with an awful lot of them, it is the older people who are there. It is not the younger ones. It used to be but now our younger ones are trying to keep the family together and paying off the mortgage and so on. So grandparents are very much in demand for looking after any children that are here. They are also helping with charities. If you go into any of the charity shops or go to fairs or whatever, they are giving of their time. They do not have the money but they are giving of their time and I read, I think, or hear that it has been said through the policy strategy or by the Chief Minister, I am not sure, that charities should be invited, in the future, to have meaningful partnerships with the States. I could see that being helpful but I cannot see it happening at the moment because like everyone else the credit crunch has hit charities. We are not getting the money in that we used to by way of donations and so on,

so I cannot see that coming to fruition yet, but older people give a lot back to the Island in many ways to do with charity and so on. If the charities did not exist, the States would be paying out an awful lot more money than they are at the moment.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

And as we get more and more older people, how do you see the contribution they will make to the population changing?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, as they get older, they are going to need care, are they not, and I hope they are going to have the best possible care but ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, but assuming we are going to have more of them rather than ... very old ones.

Ms. D. Minihane:

I cannot see it. It is going to be the same thing really unless other things change. If the older people are invited to stay at work longer, which is what we have already discussed, then that can be helpful to the economy here but otherwise they are going to be thrown out at whatever age and things have to be found for them. There is a lot of expertise among the older people that has been lost, totally lost. They are not asked and it is such a pity because if you come to a Senior Citizens' meeting ... and I do not know if anyone has been, have you been, Deputy?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I have been outside one.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Outside one, yes, because you were not allowed inside, I remember that one, yes.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I have been on the block in one.

Ms. D. Minihane:

They ask quite pertinent questions. They follow what is going on in this Island. They are not just walking around with their heads in the air. A lot of them have far more common sense than they are given credit for. I very often am amazed at the questions they ask me when I am sitting in a chair like this. They are not just saying: "Oh, well, let the rest of the world go by, let them look after us." The older people are interested, particularly in their Island, and this is important.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

All right. Anything else?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, I would like to carry on from where you were. I went to the tail end of the conference up at Hotel de France about vieillissement, i.e., ageing, and one of the speakers there talked about the need to change our collective mentality about ageing and the elderly. So the first part of the question would be ... and, of course, you will not have prepared this so it is kind of speculative, but how could one go about changing the collective mentality because we saw in 2035 what the political mentality is now. It is that ageing is a problem, so how can you change that, is the first question that I want an answer to.

Ms. D. Minihane:

It has to come from the top, does it not? If they keep on putting out statements that the old people are problems ... it has to come from the States themselves, surely, because this is where all the pronouncements come from and this is what the old people hear, so it has to be from all of you.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

All right. Any other forms or ways of ... just exploring, opening it, so that how could one ... because it is vital to the next question.

Ms. D. Minihane:

It is about making older people feel part of the community and not the fringe of the community, that they are still part of the community. That they can still give something back to the community through the various things I have said but there may be others. I said a little while ago that the Rotary Club used to have a workshop where they used to get some people in. Stuffing envelopes was something they were doing. They got a few bob at the end of it but it was something they were doing. Surely there must be things that older people could be involved in.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

But possibly more creative than stuffing envelopes?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

That sounds fairly ...

Ms. D. Minihane:

A lot of older people were involved in the ... down Kensington Place somewhere. I do not know if any of you can remember that. Some of you are too young, probably, but it had and it was lucrative for the older person. They got a few bob, as I said, for it, but they were doing something and that is the important thing, to feel useful.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you feel any real research has been done by anyone really into the aspirations and needs of old people?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Not actually done. At Age Concern, we have our work cut out to keep ... because the Island is our catchment area. We are not just St. Helier. We are all over the Island. They are phoning from all over the Island. They are coming in from all over the Island. We do not have the money to employ more staff. I should not be here this morning and I spoke to Mr. Millow about it. I am, at this moment, in charge of Age Concern, running the office, serving the lunches, helping to wash up, running a French group, because I have only one paid person in the office and she is sick, and I did every day last week and I have this week and next week. As I say, I should not even be here. I have had to leave someone in charge who is not au fait with Age Concern to answer questions and so on. We do not have enough money to do more. We would like to do more but we do not have any money from the States except for £15,000 a year, which was given us 2 or 3 years ago, because we said we had to give up the frozen meals service which we distribute or deliver around the Island's people who have come out of hospital at whatever age, not just elderly, people who have come out of hospital who cannot shop, cannot cook, or may be housebound for other reasons, so we deliver that. As I said, because we did not have the money, we would have to give it up. We have been granted through an S.L.A. (Service Level Agreement), £15,000 a year to employ someone to help us do this. Other than that, we have to raise all our own money with people in their 80s and 90. We would like to do more. We cannot. We do not have ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So you are saying your Age Concern is basically a service organisation? You deal with direct needs and so on?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, and visit homes and hospitals.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So you have not done this kind of serious research and nor has the Government?

Ms. D. Minihane:

No.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

On the agenda, this person, this expert in ageing was talking about what old people have to offer, i.e., skills and experience of situations that are outside the canopy of younger people maybe, respect and inclusion. That is the sort of agenda and to find out about that, you need to do some proper going and asking people: "What would you welcome in your life as you get older?"

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, you mentioned young people just a moment ago and respect, whether that has to be addressed in this Island because older people are frightened to go out at night. I know this has nothing to do with migration - I have digressed a bit - but the older people are frightened to go out at night in town.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It is to do with population because, as you say, the issue of how people are seen is very much involved with this policy.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Older people now are really frightened and if we have, say, a Christmas party, it has to be a lunch so that we can get them home before dark because they will not walk out at night.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Would you like to see Government play a bigger role for the elderly? For example, we have had all the young children ushered into the States Chamber this morning as part of the citizenship programme. They are getting taught and we have set up a youth forum and so the young people's voices are heard. Would you like to see more structure coming from Government and doing the research Daniel has mentioned to represent the senior citizens in whichever way they want to be represented?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Well, yes.

The Deputy of Grouville:

For example, skills shortages, teaching ... I know I have mentioned this with Sarah, sort of extending the school day, voluntarily, and asking people with time on their hands to go and teach children basic cooking skills or gardening skills, the most basic of things that they might not get at home because both parents are working or what have you, but could government do more to represent the senior citizens?

Ms. D. Minihane:

I am sure they can. They are a big part of the population and growing bigger. The only voice they have - and I set this up - I started Age Concern about 17 or 18 years ago and I have been chair ever since. I have tried to give up but nobody will take it on. I started the Senior Citizens' Association 7 years ago because I wanted to give the older people a voice in the community, the older people themselves, and that is why I started that. I am a founder member and so on. Now, this is the time we have about 4 or 5 meetings. It depends what the issues are. If there is a

burning issue, we will call an extra meeting. If it is just sort of nothing too much, we will have one about every quarter but they need a voice in the community and they should have a voice in the community so you need more help from government.

The Deputy of Grouville:

So do we do anything at the moment?

Ms. D. Minihane:

You do not do it, no, I would like to see you do it. The only voice, as I said, at the moment, is the Senior Citizens' Association.

The Deputy of Grouville:

Of voluntary groups that are set up so basically Government do nothing at the moment?

Ms. D. Minihane:

No, that is my opinion. I cannot think of anything that they do but ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

All right. Thank you very much indeed. I believe you have a few more points on your piece of paper?

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, I do.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

If you would like to send us a copy, we would appreciate it.

Ms. D. Minihane:

They are just notes really, Madam Chairman. Just finally, Bob and I and other people, older people, have said that the States continue to pay lip service to making economies here, there and everywhere but they are not showing a very good example, and surely the States should be looking at themselves before they start asking the Island and older people to make economy. I think that is a fair question. That came from the floor last week, last Tuesday, from the older people. We hear all the time that we go on taking on more and more staff in various departments although we say we are not going to but at quite high salaries for this size of Island. I am told we would not attract them unless we paid those high salaries but I query that that some people are getting paid more than the Prime Minister.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Certainly more than States members.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Yes, exactly, more than me. That is just a final thought, that if Government showed the way, maybe other people would follow. The Government is not showing the way. They talk about it but they do not do it. Somebody is nodding over there agreeing with me.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Well, I agree with the sentiment but not necessarily the target.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Target being ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Well, for example, we are straying a bit, are we not, but ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, our job is to listen. It is not a debate.

Ms. D. Minihane:

But sometimes the only chance you get to make a point to get people to listen ... I have a few States Members here listening at the moment. I am sorry, I do apologise for digressing, but ...

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Quite all right, it is a captive audience, yes. So, thank you very much indeed for your time. We appreciate you taking time out in a very busy schedule at the moment and we will, in fact, let you have a copy of the transcript so you can check that they have transcribed it correctly and have not misquoted you.

Ms. D. Minihane:

Thank you very much.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Thank you very much.