

2.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Chief Minister regarding a ‘cap’ on population in Jersey:

It has been reported that the Guernsey Government intends to cap its population at 60,000 people for the next 60 years. What does the Chief Minister consider to be the maximum number of people for Jersey? Thank you, Sir.

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

The subject of population growth and inward migration is one of the most fundamental issues which we in the States and the public have to debate. That is why the Council of Ministers has commissioned a full review of potential changes in the population and the implications of these changes. A cross-departmental officer group was set up last year to look at the impact of population changes and the aging population on our public services, our environment, our economy and society as a whole. The report of the cross-departmental officer group will be presented to the Council of Ministers on 22nd February and will subsequently be published as part of an open consultation process. The Council of Ministers will consider the outcome of the consultation process during June of this year and the Council’s findings will be presented to the States as soon as possible thereafter. It is not possible for me to speculate in advance of this report what may or may not be a sustainable maximum number of people for Jersey.

2.3.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Within the next 15 years, Sir, Jersey could have a situation whereby three-quarters of the population would be non-Islanders. We could indeed be facing a loss of heritage and cultural identity. Does the Chief Minister not agree?

Senator F.H. Walker:

There is no evidence of that at this time. In fact the proportion of Jersey people in total population has risen in recent years. There is no evidence of the problem the Deputy suggests may arise but of course all such matters will be the subject of the report and they will be presented to the States as I said in my principal answer.

2.3.2 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

The Chief Minister started by saying this is one of the single most important things that we have to decide. Then he said he has the top cross-department officers working on this. From what I can work out, Sir, the report will take between 8 to 10 weeks. Over the years we have had reports from Strathclyde University and O.X.E.R.A. (Oxford Economic Research Associates) which were probably more in depth and took a lot longer. Is the Minister sure, Sir, that he has the right people working on this most... this report must be completely accurate and have all the imponderables taken in. With no disrespect to the officers concerned, is he sure we have the right experts looking into the future of the population of Jersey?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Absolutely sure, Sir, and of course the group is drawing on the previous work undertaken by O.X.E.R.A. and Strathclyde and indeed previous reports on the matter by the former Policy Resources Committee. It will be a very well informed and knowledgeable document which I am sure the States’ Members will appreciate when they receive it.

2.3.3 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

The *Jersey Evening Post* quoted last year that 120,000 people are in Jersey during the summer months. Does the Chief Minister know how many people are here now and, if so, can he inform the States’ Assembly?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have not got the exact figures at hand but it is readily available and it is frequently published by the Statistics Unit and available to all States’ Members.

2.3.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not accept that in doing this report and investigation at this stage he has rather put the horse before the cart because policy is already in place and the evidence will be found now? Is he prepared, dependent upon the findings of this report, to reconsider his current migration policy?

Senator F.H. Walker:

If it is necessary to do so, but as the Deputy well knows there are 2 stages for the States to go through before the migration policy approved by this House becomes law. There is a Registration Law which would be lodged in the middle of this year and a Migration Law later in the year so the States themselves - and only the States - will have the opportunity to decide upon the final outcome.

2.3.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I wonder could the Chief Minister indicate whether indeed he thinks the notion of a cap is a viable notion and an option; and secondly, Sir, will he be varying the population policy to offer political refuge to former Guernsey Cabinet Ministers? **[Laughter]**

Senator F.H. Walker:

The answer to the last part of the question has got to be a very warm: "Yes", Sir. But is a cap correct for Jersey? In my view, probably not, and I think that was a feature of the migration debate that originally set up the Migration Law. Can I just make the point about Guernsey clear? Guernsey have not yet decided to cap their population at 60,000. It is a proposal at this point. It is also linked to a proposal which will allow 250 new inward migrants per annum so it is not at all what I think the thrust of the question might suggest. I would also remind the House that if Jersey currently has the same population density as Guernsey our population would today be between 105,000 and 110,000. But, Sir, we would be ready to take 3 or 4 additional people from Guernsey should the situation merit it.