

TELEVISION LICENCE FEES: REBATE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS OVER 75

**Lodged au Greffe on 31st October 2000
by Senator C. Stein**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

180

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PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

- (a) to agree that citizens aged 75 and over, resident in Jersey and living in domestic accommodation, should receive a free television licence, subject to application; and
- (b) to charge the Finance and Economics and the Employment and Social Security Committees to make arrangements for the proposal to be implemented from 1st January 2001.

SENATOR C. STEIN

REPORT

In May 2000 the States debated my proposition "Television Licence Fees: rebate for senior citizens" (P.53/2000) on television licence rebate for senior citizens. This proposition was based on a pledge made by the President of the Finance and Economics Committee during the debate on Senator R.J. Shenton's proposition on television licences in December 1999 (P.180/1999). This pledge was that the President would come back to the newly constituted Assembly with a proposition at the earliest opportunity.

Nothing happened. Yet, in the meantime our senior citizens have been looking forward to the pledge made during that debate by Senator F.H. Walker being realised. I lodged my proposition relating to free television licences for the over 65s (P.53/2000), and the Finance and Economics Committee presented an amendment to it on the day of debate (on a "blue") to provide that television licences should be free for the over 75s. Members will remember the unsatisfactory end to this debate.

Since then, Senator Walker persuaded me to compromise, and I reluctantly agreed to seek to introduce free licences for the over 75 age group only. This would cost considerably less to administer and Jersey would be in line with the United Kingdom. He was clearly delighted. As he said in his statement dated 24th October 2000 to the Assembly, the Finance and Economics Committee had prepared a draft proposition to be lodged this month, with an implementation date of 1st January 2001. I had understood from an earlier conversation with Senator Walker that he was minded to support backdating this proposal to 1st November 2000.

Consistently, the over 75s have been promised that this rebate would be implemented and those people have been counting on this promise. Yet again, the Finance and Economics Committee is breaking its promise as it has now decided not to pursue it.

Ultimately, of course, it is for the States to decide. The U-turns made by the Finance and Economics Committee on this issue must be seen as bad government and cannot be accepted because -

1. in January 2000, the Finance and Economics Committee itself pledged to introduce a scheme for the rebate of television licence fees;
2. it proposed a scheme in amendment to my proposition in May 2000;
3. it promised that a proposal would be brought to the Assembly in October 2000 and a draft proposition was prepared in September 2000 to this effect;
4. much work has already been done by the Committees involved so as to be ready to commence the scheme in January 2001.

I believe that it is right that the States should determine whether citizens aged 75 or over, resident in Jersey and living in domestic accommodation, should be entitled to apply for a free television licence.

Note on financial and manpower resources

As an individual member I am unable to assess the financial and manpower resources of the proposal, but in accordance with Article 18A of the Standing Orders of the States of Jersey, I have forwarded this proposition to the Finance and Economics and Human Resources Committees for a report.

27th October 2000