

8. Statement by the Chief Minister concerning industrial action by members of the T.G.W.U. (Transport and General Workers Union) at the harbour:

8.1 Senator F.H. Walker:

Members will recall my statement to the States in April this year at the time when industrial action by members of the Transport and General Workers Union had disrupted services at the harbour. At that time I also issued a fact sheet, copies of which I have again provided overleaf. Essentially, the reason that a dispute had arisen is that the employer - in this case, of course, the States - wants to move some members of its workforce from the harbour to other workshops both at the harbour and at Bellozanne and the workers concerned are so far refusing to go. The issue that has arisen is that some of the staff contracts stipulate that their place of work is the harbour and therefore new contracts, after all due process, have been drawn-up. The only change from the old contracts is that the place of work has changed from the harbours to anywhere within the States. The movement of staff from one States employment location to another is established practice which has been agreed to by staff, including manual workers, on a number of previous occasions. There are no other changes to the workers terms and conditions of service and no threat to the security of their jobs. The reason behind these moves is to ensure that the existing workshops, which are now surplus to requirements, are made available for commercial use. The estimated rental income to the States is £330,000 per annum. Small though it may be in the overall scheme of things, this is the sort of change that is essential if the States is to maximise its efficiency and maintain control over expenditure. Protracted discussions have taken place through the manual workers joint consultative machinery with a view to reaching an agreement and all appeal procedures have been followed to the letter. They are now exhausted and culminated in a meeting of the Joint Council on 2nd October 2007. Following that meeting, the Employers Side has written to the Transport and General Workers Union by letter on 5th October setting out its final position, which is that in return for the employees in question agreeing, when instructed, to relocate to the T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) workshops at La Collette and Bellozanne, the employer will (1) provide a 10-year service level agreement for the provision of engineering and maintenance services by T.T.S. to the Harbours Department; (2) enter into meaningful discussion with the T.G.W.U. without commitment on the possibility of introducing a grade 9 - the current highest manual worker grade is 8 - into the manual worker factor comparison grade structure; and (3) redraw the new contracts. This final offer is now under consideration by the T.G.W.U. and its members. The States Employment Board hopes that the T.G.W.U. will accept the offer and the employees in question move as requested. If, however, the offer is rejected and the employees do not move voluntarily, the employer will then instruct the employees concerned to move their operational base.