

STATES OF JERSEY



REFERENDUM: POSITION OF THE CONNÉTABLES IN THE STATES

Lodged au Greffe on 10th September 2009
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to agree that a referendum in accordance with the Referendum (Jersey) Law 2002 should be held as soon as practicable to seek the views of the electorate on the position of the Connétables as members of the States and that the text of the question should be –

“Do you think that the 12 Parish Connétables should have an automatic seat in the States Assembly by virtue of their office?

YES NO ”

- (b) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to take the necessary steps to implement the referendum.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

States Members are never ceasing to tell us what it is that ‘the people’ want. This was particularly apparent in the recent debate on States reform. Not only is this very presumptuous, it is usually completely unverifiable. Depending on whom you talk to – or rather who talks to us – the opinion given will differ.

Clearly there is support for the position of Connétables. Having this referendum will clarify once and for all whether this support extends to a desire for them to continue to have automatic seats in the States Assembly.

One might ask the question, why only Connétables and not Senators? This is a valid point, but it should be noticed that the position of Senator (and indeed Deputy) does not seem to polarise public opinion in the way that the Connétables do. Moreover, there is not the issue of the dual rôle with these other positions.

We are democrats and we live in a democracy; it is right then that we should let the public decide rather than speculate on what their views may or may not be. The referendum process will engage the public and let them have a direct say on the difficult issue of States reform, and will put the issue *to bed* once and for all.

Financial and manpower implications

The cost of running a referendum of this nature is estimated to be in the region of £15,000 to £20,000, a similar sum to the amount that is spent on a senatorial election. The States has spent countless hours in the Assembly and in PPC over the years debating this issue, and commissioned surveys and polls, all at great cost to the public purse, and all without being any the wiser. This referendum will give us a clear answer and before we waste more States time and public money on this subject.

I believe that this should be funded by PPC from their predicted 2009 underspend, which is currently estimated to be more than adequate to meet this cost.