

2.16 Deputy R. Labey of the Chief Minister regarding the recruitment of people with a broader, more diverse range of backgrounds to States committees and boards: 1(393)

What assessment has the Chief Minister made of the efforts made to recruit people with a broader, more diverse range of backgrounds to States committees and boards and what measures, if any, is he proposing to ensure more diverse recruitment to such bodies?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Sir, could I ask Senator Routier to answer this question?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

The Chief Minister and I wish to support greater diversity of board appointments and greater equality of opportunity. There is positive work being undertaken in a number of areas. There are some good examples, for instance, Jersey Heritage have open days to encourage people to become more involved; the use of social media to attract people to positions in the Arts Trust; and the Statistics Users Group. The work of others is also being improved to ensure that there is a wider cross-section of people from our community. There is also the Board Apprenticeship Scheme, which has also been in place for some time now.

2.16.1 Deputy R. Labey:

Nevertheless, a no negative inference is intended to any individual concerned. We meet them regularly and we are grateful to them for their work. But, this Government seems to be congenitally incapable of appointing a board upon which certain ex-civil servants, or States Members, do not sit. Politics is all about perception. It looks like an old boys' network and the worst excesses of the Jersey Way, does it not?

Senator P.F. Routier:

In a small community it is always difficult to find people, who are prepared to offer themselves to take on various roles. If we were to go along the route of excluding very capable people to do certain tasks, I am not sure whether the Island would be best served. But, certainly, the Appointments Commission are involved in the appointments of significant importance. If the Deputy is inferring that recent appointments, perhaps he has not been happy with that, I can assure him that the Appointments Commission has been fully involved and have endorsed the process which has gone forward.

2.16.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Does the Assistant Minister not agree that one way to achieve this diversity would be to limit the number of boards one individual can sit on at a time? Therefore that would open up a way for other people to come forward and apply. Will he not take that forward and present that to the Appointments Commission as something to consider and report back to this Assembly on?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I thank the Deputy for that comment, because it is something which I have been considering as well. I think it is something we should progress and take forward to the Appointments Commission into the way we appoint people, certainly.

2.16.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Does the Assistant Minister agree that, perhaps, some fresh thinking is required in this area? Would he commit to providing some details on the work that is already happening in this area to the Jersey Community Relations Trust, of which I am trustee, and to possibly work with us

to make further improvements in this area, to increase diversity on the boards of States owned bodies?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, I think the Deputy is suggesting something that would be very valuable. From my point of view, I want to ensure that we do the best that we can to get as much a diverse group of people on the various boards. The problem, that some people are highlighting, is that there are adverts placed for positions across the various media. The Appointments Panel can only make a selection from those who come forward. There is a dearth of really good, quality people who are prepared to work within our community. I would love to see a more diverse membership of boards. It is something, certainly, I would want to happen. But, as far as the Community Relations Panel is concerned, I would be very happy to work with them, very closely.

2.16.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

The Minister mentioned ways of advertising. Is there a possibility of looking at alternative ways, so we can avoid the “if you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always got”? Can we, perhaps, look at social media or other ways of advertising, so that people who are not seeing the adverts might then see them and consider the positions?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, certainly. I think in my opening answer I mentioned that the use of social media was becoming more prevalent now and we need to break the mould. I believe that is what we need to do. We have to encourage as many people ... not only for the boards and all the rest of it, but also for this Assembly. We have to ensure that we have a good cross-section, a representation of our Island community in everything that we do.

Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Deputy Maçon took the words out of my mouth and asked the question I had written down.

2.16.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, the U.K. I.O.D. (Institute of Directors) do recommend a maximum number of N.E.D. (Non-Executive Director) positions to be held by people. We have a wide pool of talent in the Island and the Council of Ministers seem to fish in a very small part of it. Will the Minister commit to extending the size of the pool in which they fish?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Certainly we currently do do that. The net is as wide as it possibly can be within our Island community. If we want to ensure that people are from within our own community the adverts and the availability of people being aware of the positions, which are coming up, is wide. But the thing is there is a limited pool of people who are prepared to offer themselves for service. We have to make it a better thing for them to be able to do, something that they want to support in our community. We have recognised there are some people who are not prepared to serve our community, because of all the detractors that are around. They keep on getting knocked back all the time.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Senator, that brings the period allocated for questions of this type to an end. We now move on ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

A final supplementary, Sir?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, because the time is ...

The Deputy of Grouville:

Sir, could we have a vote to extend the questions?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, I am afraid there is not any option to have a vote to extend this particular period for questions. That has to be specifically provided for in Standing Orders, which do not apply in this case, Deputy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, there is a provision, I believe, in Standing Orders that says that any matter that is not provided for in Standing Orders can be put down to the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Bailiff:

The President has previously ruled, Deputy, on other occasions that you would have to suspend the effect of the Standing Order that currently provides that it is 2 hours and no more than 2 hours. If you suspend the effect of the Standing Order, you have no legitimate basis for question time in the first place and, therefore, we cannot extend it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could I just raise this last point - and it is not something I wish a ruling on now necessarily - other Parliaments around the world and Assemblies do suspend Standing Orders on a regular basis and continue to function. Could you direct P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) to look at this to see if it could function in the Jersey context?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, I do not think I can give any direction to P.P.C., Deputy, but there is no reason at all why you should not raise the matter with P.P.C. if you believe that would usefully add to the powers of the Assembly. We come on now to Questions to Ministers ...

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sorry, just very finally, mine was one of those questions that could not be asked. Could I, therefore, ask the Minister for Education to circulate what would have been his answer to it to States Members, please?

Deputy R.G. Bryans:

I have no problem with that.