

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

SATURDAY, 9th MAY 2009

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The Roll was called and the Dean led the Assembly in Prayer.

64TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIBERATION OF JERSEY

The Bailiff:

May I first of all, on behalf of all members on this very special occasion when we celebrate the Liberation of the Island as a result of the Forces of the Crown, issue a very warm welcome indeed to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor and to his lady sitting in the Bailiff's Gallery. **[Approbation]** May I also extend a warm welcome to His Excellency the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs. Boomgarden, also sitting in the Bailiff's Gallery and express the hope that they enjoy the celebrations to the full. **[Approbation]** I now call on the Chief Minister to address the Assembly.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

I was only 3 when the war ended, and I don't have any clear memories of that day. But as I was growing up I became aware that life contained three phases: "Before the war", "during the Occupation", and "after the war". Liberation Day became a defining moment. To be invaded and occupied by an enemy – to lose freedom of speech and action – to experience one's island home becoming a prison – to be deprived of news of family and events elsewhere in the world – to become increasingly short of basic necessities – and, above all, not to know how long the war would last and whether it would end in victory or defeat – this was everyday reality which those who have not lived through it find hard to imagine. Every anniversary of Liberation Day rightly ensures that we continue to remember how important it is to all of us, but it is especially important to those of us who were here on May 9th 1945. During the war most local people remained here, even though the Island had become a prison. As the Occupation progressed many men, women and children were deported to Germany for various reasons. Some died in the terrible conditions of concentration camps. They are commemorated at the Lighthouse Memorial outside the Maritime Museum, and remembered every year on Holocaust Memorial Day. Other deportees were sent to internment camps, wondering if they would ever return home; when the war would end; and how it would end. Yet even the experience of most of these deportees was preferable to that of the slave workers of various nationalities who were brought to Jersey to work on the enemy fortifications. They were reduced to degradation. Some of these slaves – whom we shall remember and honour this afternoon at Westmount - were helped, and even hidden, by Jersey people, several of whom paid with their lives for their selfless actions. For all of us living here, it was the uncertainty which was so disconcerting. It is difficult for those of us too young at the time to remember, or born later, to comprehend the experience of those long, uncertain years. Each year Liberation Day gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect. As I was growing up I remember the overwhelming desire people had to get rid of anything that reminded them of the Occupation. We have heard how a good many of the German guns were thrown over the cliffs at Les Landes, but some of the results of occupation were not so easy to get rid of. I remember the difficulty the official demolition teams had when they were trying to take down a German bunker behind the Pomme D'Or Hotel. Others remain as a reminder of those years. I also remember that at home we used empty Klim tins as makeshift storage containers for years after the war. They survived because they were a welcome memento of the arrival of Red Cross parcels. And, of course, we were living in the post-war days of thrift. We recycled and re-used anything and everything we could. With the passage of time, islanders have realised the importance of maintaining and restoring historical remnants of the Occupation as a reminder of the need to be ever vigilant in the protection of our freedom. If the world forgets what happened sixty-four years ago, we are more likely to have to live through something similar again. History is more than just an account of what happened in times past – it should also be a way for us all to understand what has happened, so we can learn from our predecessors and avoid making the same mistakes. And we need to ensure that future generations understand the past, despite not having lived through it. I am pleased to see we are now putting

former German fortifications to new uses. Not only does the Channel Island Occupation Society continue to do its bit by refurbishing and opening buildings to the public through their untiring interest in Jersey's past, but the old gun tower at Corbière can now be rented out from Jersey Heritage for holidays, giving a new twist to the way we experience our past. And Jersey War Tunnels provides a very effective and atmospheric interpretation of our Second World War history, keeping it alive for families today and, hopefully, into the future. Today we are the arbiters of our own destiny. Jersey has a long and proud history of democracy, which has evolved through the centuries, and I hope it will continue to do so, adapting to suit the changing needs of 21st century society. Liberation Day is the day above all days on which we must remember that we should not take our freedom for granted. I have dwelt on the past and the necessity of remembering and respecting the suffering of those who endured the Occupation. But we must also leave behind some aspects of the past. Enemies of one generation are often reconciled and become our friends in future years. Together we enjoy the benefits of freedom. Therefore I am particularly pleased that this year we are sharing our Liberation services and commemorations with the German Ambassador to the Court of St James, His Excellency Ambassador Georg Boomgaarden and Mrs Boomgarden. I offer them a warm welcome and hope that when they leave, they will take with them vivid memories of our island and our special day. It is important that we never forget those five years of our island's history. It is even more important that we never forget the soldiers, sailors and airmen who were fighting for our freedom throughout the world whilst we were trapped here, without freedom of speech and action. Now we can enjoy both. Of course we have a right to both. But with rights come responsibilities. All of us should treasure our freedom of speech which cost so many lives and so much suffering to secure. We should accept the duty to use that precious gift wisely, within the constraints of a responsible society. The right to freedom of speech should be used constructively, and not abused by constraining or destroying the rightful freedom of others. Sir, on behalf of all of us I hope that we can look forward to many more years of freedom, and that we shall never forget how that freedom was restored through our Island's Liberation. **[Members: Approbation]**

The Bailiff:

Thank you Chief Minister. That concludes the formal proceedings in the Chamber and I invite members to go down to the Royal Square in preparation for the procession to Liberation Square. The meeting is closed.

ADJOURNMENT