

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JERSEY BRANCH OF
THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
ON MONDAY 18TH JULY 2011**

I am pleased to make this statement today, in our parliamentary Assembly, to mark the centenary of the establishment of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The Association, originally known as the Empire Parliamentary Association, was founded exactly one hundred years ago today, on 18th July 1911 when a group of parliamentarians from parts of the then British Empire and Dominions met in Committee Room 15 in the Palace of Westminster. The parliamentarians had originally travelled to London to attend the Coronation of George V and, when they met on 18th July, approved a motion that an Association should be formed *'to provide more ready exchange of information and to facilitate closer understanding and more frequent intercourse between those engaged in parliamentary government of the component parts of the Empire'*.

I commented in our recent CPA Newsletter that the photos of the 1911 meeting show a group of parliamentarians who were mainly elderly, white, and male. The Association, which changed its name to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1949, has certainly changed beyond all recognition since 1911. There are now 175 Branches throughout the Commonwealth with active involvement of women parliamentarians. Young people play a very important part in the CPA work through events such as Youth Parliaments and attendance at the annual Commonwealth Day Observance. The Jersey Branch was pleased to select 2 young people from Jersey earlier this month to attend the next Commonwealth Youth Parliament which is being held in London in early September.

Jersey has played a very significant role in the CPA since we first became members in June 1952. A former Chairman of our Branch often used to comment that Jersey 'punched above its weight' in the CPA and I think that is an accurate description. In the CPA every branch, whatever its size, has an equal status in the affairs of the Association. As a result Jersey, or even smaller branches such as St Helena or the Falkland Islands, carries equal weight with huge Branches such as India, Australia, Canada or the United Kingdom. Jersey was instrumental in the setting up of the Small Countries Conference which has become such a valuable forum for jurisdictions with populations of less than 500,000 people. Jersey takes its turn on a rota of regional branches in serving on the Association's Executive Committee and 2 members, former Senators Jeune and Horsfall have served as Treasurers of the Association and, more recently, former Senator Le Maistre served as Acting Vice Chairman for a year. Our involvement has undoubtedly raised the Island's profile internationally and many useful contacts have been made. Conferences, seminars and meetings of the Executive Committee held in Jersey have brought many eminent parliamentarians to our island and enabled them to leave with a much better understanding of our constitutional position and economic situation.

The CPA clearly faces challenges at the present time to ensure that its work remains relevant and that governance arrangements are appropriate. The Jersey Branch looks forward to hearing the outcome of the Working Party that is reviewing these issues and the concerns will no doubt be raised at the Centenary conference that I will be attending with Senator Breckon and Deputy Martin at the end of this week. Today is, however, a day to look back over the last 100 years and to celebrate the Association's achievements. I am sure all members will join me in marking the centenary and wishing the CPA well for the next 100 years.

6. The Chairman of the Jersey Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will make a statement to mark the centenary of the Association

6.1 The Connétable of St. Clement:

I am pleased to make the statement today in our Parliamentary Assembly to mark the Centenary of the establishment of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Association, originally known as the Empire Parliamentary Association, was founded exactly 100 years ago today on 18th July 1911 when a group of parliamentarians from parts of the then British Empire and Dominions met in Committee Room 15 in the Palace of Westminster. The Parliamentarians had originally travelled to London to attend the Coronation of George V and when they met on 18th July approved a motion that an Association should be formed to provide more ready exchange of information and to facilitate closer understanding and more frequent intercourse between those engaged in Parliamentary Government and of the component parts of the Empire. I commented in our recent C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) newsletter that the photographs of the 1911 meeting show a group of parliamentarians who were mainly elderly, white and male. The Association, which changed its name to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1949, has certainly changed beyond all recognition since 1911. There are now 175 branches throughout the Commonwealth with active involvement of women parliamentarians. Young people play a very important part in the C.P.A. work through events such as Youth Parliaments and attendance at the Annual Commonwealth Day observance. The Jersey branch was pleased to select 2 young people from Jersey earlier this month to attend the next Commonwealth Youth Parliament, which is being held in London in early September. Jersey has played a very significant role in the C.P.A. since we first became members in June 1952. A former chairman of our branch often used to comment that Jersey punched above its weight in the C.P.A. and I think that is an accurate description. In the C.P.A. every branch, whatever its size, has an equal status in the affairs of the Association. As a result Jersey or even smaller branches such as St. Helena or the Falkland Islands or even Guernsey carries equal weight with huge branches such as India, Australia, Canada or the United Kingdom. Jersey was instrumental in the setting up of the Small Countries' Conference which has become such a valuable forum for jurisdictions with populations of less than 500,000 people. Jersey takes its turn on a rota of regional branches in serving on the Association's executive committee and 2 members, former Senators Jeune and Horsfall have served as Treasurers of the Association and more recently former Senator Le Maistre served as Acting Vice Chairman for a year. Our involvement has undoubtedly raised the Island's profile internationally and many useful contacts have been made. Conferences and seminars and meetings of the Executive Committee held in Jersey have brought many eminent parliamentarians to our Island and enabled them to leave with a much better understanding of our constitutional position and economic situation. The C.P.A. clearly faces challenges at the present time to ensure that its work remains relevant and the governance arrangements are appropriate. The Jersey branch looks forward to hearing the outcome of the working party that is reviewing these issues and the concerns will no doubt be raised at the Centenary Conference that I will be attending with Senator Breckon and Deputy Martin at the end of this week. Today is, however, a day to look back over the last 100 years and to celebrate the Association's achievements. I am sure that all Members will join me in marking the centenary and wishing the C.P.A. well for the next 100 years. [Approbation]

The Deputy Bailiff:

The statement having been made is open to questions. The Deputy of St. Mary.

6.1.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was pleased to hear from the statement that Jersey had a hand in setting up the Small Countries' Conference within the C.P.A. Can the chairman of the Jersey Branch tell Members how often this has met, when it last met and what the topics of discussion were?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

If I recall correctly the first Small Branches Conference was held in 1981 in Fiji. I was not there. It has met every year since for 2 days prior to the plenary conference. The issues are wide but basically focusing on the needs of smaller communities. Migration and immigration is certainly one that I can recall and one that is certainly on the agenda for next week when we meet in London. Climate change is another that I recall. So, many items over 30-odd years now.

6.1.2 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I ask a supplementary on that? The climate change and migration are clearly spot-on in terms of importance to this Island. Does the Jersey membership of that group take steps to make sure that the media are aware, that States Members are aware and that relevant departments are aware of those discussions?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Absolutely, of course. We report back to the States Members certainly at our A.G.M. (Annual General Meeting) and more quickly through our newsletters, which are available to the media, and of course we do normally brief the media as soon as we return from these conferences.

6.1.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

First of all, would the highly-esteemed chairman comment on whether he believes it is possible to extend our work by taking a more independent stance at meetings of the Commonwealth itself and, secondly, could he comment on the increasing tension between the third world and what you might call the traditional countries at the C.P.A. and how he sees a resolution to that?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

My understanding is that membership of the Commonwealth itself is a matter for Sovereign States and Jersey is not yet a Sovereign State. Certainly there have been some tensions which have developed through governance concerns over the past few years, and we have seen some rift in the Association, but I am much more hopeful now that that rift can be healed with appropriate election results hopefully for the chairman and so on at the meeting which we shall soon be attending. I am much more optimistic now than I was 12 months ago.

6.1.4 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

I am sure Members will join with me in agreeing that the small jurisdictions find this invaluable. I had the pleasure of going to Guernsey in 2009 with the Connétable of Grouville, the Connétable of St. Brelade and Deputy Jeune and we met there to discuss the economic downturn with the likes of St. Helena, Malta, Gibraltar, and I am sure that the rapporteur, along with other Members, will join with me in saying this is a really valuable exercise for the likes of Jersey.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

I thank the Deputy for her comments and am delighted that she found going to Guernsey a pleasure. **[Laughter]** Certainly the subject of the economic downturn and the potential for recovery was a very important subject at the plenary conference 2 years ago in Tanzania. We learn so much from other jurisdictions and equally they learn a lot from us and certainly communications continue backwards and forwards on various issues because of contacts made at these conferences.

6.1.5 Senator F.E. Cohen:

Does the chairman endorse the Coalition Government's renewed endorsement and commitment to the C.P.A. as expressed to me by the Secretary General at my recent meeting with him?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

I was not privy to that conversation but certainly I would endorse anything which enhances the reputation and status of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

6.1.6 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Would the chairman also endorse not only the helpful discussions that Senator Cohen has had with the Director General but importantly the Coalition Government's new, reinstated support of the Commonwealth generally as evidenced by the Secretary of State in recent remarks? And that can only bode well for the relationship between the Parliament and the Commonwealth and good for the C.P.A.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Yes, I would certainly agree with that 100 per cent. As to whether Senator Cohen's media comments were helpful, if he chooses to give me a briefing on that meeting then I will decide whether they were helpful or not.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think you do not have responsibility, political or otherwise, for Senator Cohen's meetings. Any other questions?

6.1.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

How does the Commonwealth Association interact with the E.U. (European Union)?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

That is not a function of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association but very often the E.U. will send observers to the plenary conference, which I am sure they find is an excellent way of doing business, and I am sure they could learn a lot from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings the 10 minutes allowed for questions to an end. The adjournment is proposed and agreed. The States now stands adjourned until 9.00 a.m. tomorrow morning.