

STATES OF JERSEY

COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO TENDER PROCESS AND AWARD OF BUS SERVICE CONTRACT

BLAMPIED ROOM, STATES BUILDING

<u>Committee:</u>	Mr Huw Shephard (President)
-	Mr Christopher Blackstone (Member)
-	Mr Trevor Garrett (Member)
-	
<u>In attendance</u>	Mr Mac Spence (Committee Clerk)

EVIDENCE FROM:

MR C. G. PICKERING
(Former General Manager Jersey Bus)

on

Wednesday, 20th April 2005

(Digital Transcription by Marten Walsh Cherer Limited,
Midway House, 27/29 Cursitor St., London, EC4A 1LT.
Telephone: 020 7405 5010. Fax: 020 7405 5026)

Reviewed 27/04/05 Committee Clerk

MR SHEPHEARD: Good morning, everybody. The Committee of Inquiry into the Bus Tender Process and Award of the Bus Contract is now in session. We will proceed to receive the evidence of Mr Carl Pickering. Now, Mr Pickering, the Committee is receiving evidence on oath. I will now proceed to administer that oath to you.

The witness was sworn

MR SHEPHEARD: Thank you. Would you for the record give us your full name, Mr Pickering?

MR PICKERING: Carlton Geoffrey Pickering.

MR SHEPHEARD: Is that Geoffrey with a G?

MR PICKERING: A G, yeah.

MR SHEPHEARD: And your occupation, Mr Pickering?

MR PICKERING: General Manager.

MR SHEPHEARD: And that is of Jersey Bus, is it?

MR PICKERING: No, of Tantivy Blue Coach now, previously Jersey Bus.

MR SHEPHEARD: Were you employed by Jersey Bus throughout the period of 2001 to 2003?

MR PICKERING: I was, yes.

MR SHEPHEARD: I think I will stop questioning at this point and hand you over to my colleague,
Mr Blackstone.

MR BLACKSTONE: Good morning, Mr Pickering.

MR PICKERING: Good morning.

MR BLACKSTONE: Do you remember a meeting held on 28th February 2002 with Mr
Macklin of Halcrow?

MR PICKERING: I certainly do, yes.

MR BLACKSTONE: Can you tell me who was at that meeting, please?

MR PICKERING: It was myself, Mike Cotillard, Alan Muir, Roger Macklin and Chris Lewis.

MR BLACKSTONE: Sorry and?

MR PICKERING: Chris Lewis.

MR BLACKSTONE: Chris Lewis, right. And were all those people there throughout the
meeting or did anybody come up late or leave early?

MR PICKERING: Myself and Mike were there. Roger Macklin was there. Alan Muir was probably about a minute or so later than Roger Macklin and Chris Lewis just a few moments or minutes after that.

MR BLACKSTONE: Mr Muir, you say, was there just a minute or so late from the start?

MR PICKERING: Yeah, he might have been there. Well, they arrived separately, so whether it was a minute or so between them, there wasn't much between them.

MR BLACKSTONE: Right. Was business started before Mr Muir arrived?

MR PICKERING: No. **(Pause)**

MR BLACKSTONE: What was the purpose of this meeting?

MR PICKERING: The purpose of the meeting, I thought, was to clarify the tenders.

MR BLACKSTONE: Included in the tender was a provision for a shift allowance arising from the wage claim by TGWU. Was this discussed at the meeting?

MR PICKERING: It was mentioned, but not discussed over any great length.

MR BLACKSTONE: The shift allowance was mentioned but not discussed?

MR PICKERING: Definitely mentioned, yeah.

MR BLACKSTONE: When you say it was mentioned, can you describe how it was mentioned?

MR PICKERING: Yeah, I mean, we were exchanging pleasantries at the start of the meeting and we was asking about all the tenderers, were they in a certain price range and all that, and they said they were pretty close to our tender bid, so at that point we were saying: "Well, have they left tenders on the same basis", i.e., with the shift allowance and the new wage claim and all that? They said everybody had, yes.

MR BLACKSTONE: Was Mr Muir present when the shift allowance was mentioned?

MR PICKERING: Yes, yes, everybody was there then.

MR BLACKSTONE: But there was no detailed discussion?

MR PICKERING: No, it was mentioned and they said that everybody tendered on the same basis, so we didn't think there was any need to go over anything any further.

MR BLACKSTONE: But the words "*shift allowance*" were definitely mentioned in the presence of Mr Muir?

MR PICKERING: Definitely mentioned, because it was obviously a big item in our tender.

MR BLACKSTONE: And nobody raised any questions about it?

MR PICKERING: Nothing at all. It was just like a matter of fact and it was just forgotten with.

That's how I'd put it.

MR BLACKSTONE: I have no further questions, Mr Pickering.

MR SHEPHEARD: Mr Garrett?

MR GARRETT: Thank you. Can I sort of take you forwards now to the sort of handover period when Connex commenced their service? Some allegations have been made in relation to the build-up to that. Do you have any knowledge of the negotiations between Jersey Bus and Connex in relation to the use of the Weighbridge facilities at all?

MR PICKERING: In between what, sorry?

MR GARRETT: In relation to the use of the Weighbridge facilities by Connex.

MR PICKERING: What, with ourselves?

MR GARRETT: Yes.

MR PICKERING: Yes, we offered Connex the use of the Weighbridge and lease of vehicles prior to the agreement, as we obviously didn't think they would get the vehicles here in time to be up and running on the start date.

MR GARRETT: When you say "*offered*", was it a reasonable rate that you were offering it at or?

MR PICKERING: I would say it was probably slightly over reasonable, but they never tried to negotiate. There was no further meeting after that.

MR GARRETT: Right, so they backed off from discussions on that?

MR PICKERING: Yes. We offered them the vehicles and the facilities. I forget what the actual amount was now, I think probably 40,000 a vehicle or whatever, but they never once come back and tried to reduce the price or anything.

MR GARRETT: Right.

MR PICKERING: In fact, the only thing they actually wanted towards the end of the contract or near the start of the tender process was the drivers' bags.

MR GARRETT: It has been suggested that Jersey Bus sought a premium in the rate to the extent

of about 200% above the actual value of the vehicles. Would that be accurate?

MR PICKERING: No, I wouldn't say so, no.

MR GARRETT: But your starting position would have been slightly high?

MR PICKERING: Yes, obviously, because we would have expected them to negotiate down, but they never even come back.

MR GARRETT: But they didn't come back.

MR PICKERING: No.

MR GARRETT: Okay. There has also been a suggestion that Jersey Bus were reluctant or slow to transmit information across to Connex on details of staff and so forth, staff records.

MR PICKERING: Not true. The first meeting we had with, I think it was, Dennis Ord, Tania Stephenson (sic) and their accountant from France, Remy somebody, they said they would want all details of drivers, inspectors and everybody's contract, myself's, everybody, and they had them pretty much straightaway as they wanted.

MR GARRETT: Right.

MR PICKERING: I actually give Philip Julhes details of all the drivers' aspects, overtime, standbys, everything.

MR GARRETT: Okay. Lastly from me, there has been an allegation that Jersey Bus didn't comply with an instruction to remove the buses from the Weighbridge on the night of the changeover. Were all your buses cleared from the Weighbridge as instructed?

MR PICKERING: I think so, yes. I mean, there was no ... They operated on day one from the Weighbridge. There might have been a couple of vehicles that were on lates from the night before, but there was no deliberate attempt to stop them operating.

MR GARRETT: Right, and the vehicles would have been moved by Jersey Bus staff as opposed to ----

MR PICKERING: Yes, because they were still employed by us on the Saturday.

MR GARRETT: Right, and where were the vehicles put in the first instance?

MR PICKERING: I think there were some down the Harbour. We had some placed down at La Collette, but we've moved them all over. But, as they were finishing during the day on the

Saturday they would have been moved away. It was only the later ones and there were only a few there anyway. There couldn't have been many. They didn't interfere with their operation at all.

MR GARRETT: Right, thank you. **(Pause)**

MR SHEPHEARD: Mr Pickering, going back to the meeting on 28th February, am I right in thinking that this took place at Jersey Bus's premises?

MR PICKERING: Yes. **(Pause)**

MR SHEPHEARD: Now, presumably, the meeting had been arranged a few days beforehand; is that right?

MR PICKERING: Yes.

MR SHEPHEARD: Do you remember who arrived first?

MR PICKERING: Well, obviously myself and Mike were there. I think Roger Macklin was very slightly ahead of Alan Muir and that was about it. There was nothing in it.

MR SHEPHEARD: When did Mr Lewis get to the meeting?

MR PICKERING: As we were exchanging pleasantries really, just a couple of minutes after.
(Pause)

MR SHEPHEARD: So both Mr Muir and Mr Lewis were present throughout the business part of the meeting?

MR PICKERING: Yes. **(Pause)**

MR SHEPHEARD: Do you recall Mr Muir making any comment when the question was raised about the terms of tendering and saying "I haven't heard about this shift allowance", or "That's a new one on me", or something like that?

MR PICKERING: No, they said everybody had tendered on the same basis or on a level playing field. It wasn't mentioned in isolation, although we had mentioned it as well, obviously.
(Pause)

MR SHEPHEARD: Right. Mr Pickering, thank you very much. I think that concludes all the questions I had. Do either of my colleagues want to come back on anything? **(Nothing indicated)** Thank you very much for coming here today to assist us.

MR PICKERING: Okay, thank you very much.

MR SHEPHEARD: This session of the Committee of Inquiry is now adjourned until Tuesday of next week.

MR SPENCE: Tuesday of next week at 9.30, Sir.

MR SHEPHEARD: At 9.30?

MR SPENCE: At 9.30, Tuesday of next week.

MR SHEPHEARD: Thank you.

When the microphones had been turned off and the recording was being saved to disc, Mr. Pickering asked for permission to address the Committee of Inquiry again. After being reminded that he was on oath, Mr. Pickering made a statement, summarised by the Committee Clerk as follows:-

- I wish to clarify that the wage negotiations were nothing out of the ordinary in the way they were handled. It was normal for the documents, setting out the new terms, to be signed some time after they came into effect.
- There was a lack of mistrust between Public Services and ourselves.
- I was offered a contract with Connex with a signing-on fee of £5,000 but I did not take it.
- I met Philippe Julhes on a few occasions before they commenced business. Many of his ideas were impractical, such as reducing drivers' hours to 40 a week. Those impractical ideas guaranteed trouble in the first 3 months, so I did not accept the offer.
- Philippe Julhes did not want to have dealings with the previous management, although he was told to do so by his head office in France. His heart was not in it.
