

FIRST REPORT: THE MANAGEMENT OF STATES' BUSINESS.

**Lodged au Greffe on 17th January, 1989
by the House Committee.**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROPOSITION 13

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

- (1) to agree that from 4th April until the end of the second Session of the States in 1989 -
 - (a) the States should sit for a full day on alternate Tuesdays;
 - (b) the hours of States' sittings should normally be from 10.00 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.;
 - (c) the first Session of the States in 1989 should end on 22nd August and the second should begin on 5th September and end on 12th December;
- (2) to suspend Standing Order No. 4(1) and (4) from 4th April until the end of 1989, to give effect to the foregoing decisions;
- (3) to agree that no regular meetings of administering committees should be scheduled for those Tuesdays when the States are not sitting;
- (4) to agree that the Greffier of the States should be given the responsibility of planning the public business of the States on the lines described in the First Report of the House Committee.

REPORT.

Introduction

In its Report and Proposition P.155/1988 the House Committee identified three areas in which it believes that there is scope for making the work of the States less burdensome to members. These are -

- (a) instituting a more regular pattern of sittings of the States throughout the year;
- (b) improved management of the agenda for States' sittings;
- (c) a revision of Standing Orders in order to reduce the number of trivial items which at present have to appear on the Order Paper.

That report dealt with the first of these only and the point was made in the debate on 13th December, 1988 that the House would be better able to judge how the proposed procedure might work if it had before it the Committee's proposals on (b) above as well. The Committee recognises that this was a valid point and now therefore presents this revised version of its earlier report which contains its proposals under both (a) and (b) above. (c) is a matter for detailed study, which will be desirable whether or not the House accepts the Committee's proposals under (a) and (b). The Committee will be bringing proposals to the House under (c) in the course of 1989.

PART 1.

Instituting a more regular pattern of States' sittings.

1. The present pattern of States' sittings is prescribed in Standing Order 4(1), which was originally made in 1966. The Order was amended in 1980 on the initiative of Deputy (as he then was) Horsfall, the principal intention and result of which was to increase the number of sittings held during the

summer months of June, July and August. Nevertheless, the present pattern of sittings, which corresponds roughly to the traditional pattern of school terms and holidays and which may be presumed to have corresponded to the pattern of life of States' Members twenty years ago, manifestly does not correspond to the general rhythm of life in the Island today. The records show that over recent years there has been a growing tendency for Members to remain in the Island during the months of July and August, when the number of sittings is reduced to its lowest, while more and more tend to go on holiday in the autumn when the States once more resume their practice of weekly sittings. At the same time the process of government is not carried on by fits and starts. Public business comes forward at a steady rate throughout the year, except for the early months in a new House.

2. The statistics indicate quite clearly that the States can get through their current volume of work (including the trivia which it should be possible to prune from the agenda) in 26 full day sittings a year. The Committee therefore proposes that, from 4th April until the end of 1989, the States should decide to suspend Standing Order 4(1) and instead to sit for a full day on alternate Tuesdays. If this experiment is considered to be successful, the Committee will, in due course, bring forward an amendment to Standing Order 4(1) to provide that in future the States will sit on alternate Tuesdays throughout the year, save when a Bank Holiday falls on a Tuesday, and subject always to the right of the States to fix an additional or cancel one of their regular sittings to take account of any exceptional circumstances.
3. The Committee proposes that, for 1989 only, the first Session of the States shall be deemed to end with the sitting on 22nd August, 1989 and the second to begin on 5th September, 1989.
4. It is a condition of the success of this experiment that the States should do a full day's work on sitting days. The Committee believes that Members will welcome this, many

finding it an unreasonably inconvenient interference with their other occupations and responsibilities when the States rise in the middle of the morning or the middle of the afternoon. The Committee therefore proposes that the hours of States' sittings should normally be from 10.00 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. There will obviously have to be some flexibility with regard to the timing of the end of a sitting. The Committee believes, however, that the President will find that he is correctly interpreting the wish of the House if he closes a sitting at the nearest "natural break" to 5.30 p.m., subject to the rider that only in exceptional circumstances should a sitting continue after 6 p.m. The Committee believes that Members will find it convenient to have this greater degree of predictability in regard to their obligations on States' sitting days and, with the co-operation of the proposers of propositions, this should be attainable with a minimum of departure from present practices.

5. The Committee also proposes that the States should decide that no regular meetings of administering committees should be scheduled for those Tuesdays when the States are not sitting. These days will then remain free for regular meetings of the Policy and Resources and the House Committees and for extra meetings of other committees.

PART 2.

The better arrangement of the agenda.

6. The present procedure whereby the agenda is fixed by the full House under section E of the Order Paper has the following disadvantages -
 - (a) it does not ensure that the business of the House comes forward in an orderly way. As Members are all aware, there are occasions when the agenda does not occupy the House until lunch time, while, at the other extreme, as recently on December 13th, the House is

only able to get through the agenda with unseemly haste;

- (b) the fixing of the agenda occasionally leads to complicated and time-consuming exchanges in the House, to which the great majority of Members are mere spectators.

7. The Committee believes that a considerable degree of improvement will be obtained if the Greffier of the States is formally given the responsibility for producing, after consultation with Presidents and other Members making propositions, an agenda which can be expected to constitute a day's work. (The Committee and the Greffier expect that this consultation will normally be carried out by telephone).

8. The Committee believes that the benefits to all Members of such an arrangement will be so obvious that proposers of propositions will co-operate willingly. Specifically, the Committee would expect that the proposers of important propositions would normally be willing to fix the date for the debate (even if some time ahead) when lodging the report. This will make it possible to space major debates and avoid, as has happened, two occurring during the same sitting. In the same way, the Committee hopes that proposers of less controversial propositions will be willing to co-operate in the inclusion of their proposition as "stocking-fillers", to make up a proper day's work.

9. The Committee considers that this objective can be achieved by introducing on a continuing basis a modified form of the procedure currently employed prior to the beginning of each session. No change will be called for to the existing rights of the States as a whole or of committees or individual Members. The States will remain master of their own agenda and the rights of individuals to propose dates for their own propositions will continue as they are. (So will the present rules governing propositions on the blue pages, though the Committee does not at this stage exclude the

possibility that a re-examination of the whole procedure for lodging may suggest some modification of the procedure for the blue pages).

10. On the assumption that the House agrees to make a trial of meeting fortnightly, the Committee envisages that, at each sitting, under Section E of the agenda the States will be asked to confirm the Greffier's proposals for the agenda for the next sitting and also to note the details of matters which the Greffier has, up to that time, been able to enter on the subsequent dates in the programme of sittings. The "pink sheets" will continue to be used as at present; but the format will be altered slightly to make it easier for Members to foresee the prospective pattern of work.
11. These arrangements will apply only to matters which have been lodged au Greffe; propositions of which notice has been given under Standing Order No. 18 (propositions on blue sheets), will continue to be taken before the consideration of matters lodged au Greffe.
12. The Committee accepts that it is not possible to make a precise estimate of the time any item will take. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that past experience, supplemented by consultation with those most closely concerned, should enable the Greffier to establish Order Papers which would be generally regarded as likely to constitute a full day's work, finishing at 5.30 p.m. Any items not taken would automatically be put as first items of Public Business for the next sitting, unless that day had already been reserved for a major debate such as the Budget. If time could not be provided at the next sitting, the item would be rescheduled by the Greffier in consultation with the proposer, for debate as soon as possible.