

**Speech given by Bailiff
Swearing in of members of the States
8 December 2008**

Senators, Connétables and Deputies,

May I, on behalf of His Excellency, the Deputy Bailiff, Jurats and Crown Officers, and in my own name, congratulate you all most warmly on your election to office and welcome you to the Royal Court. Some may find it surprising that the oath of office of members of the States of Jersey should be taken before the Royal Court rather than, as in most other parliaments, before the Assembly itself. The reasons are of course historical and traditional. As a matter of history, the States Assembly grew out of the Royal Court itself when the Bailiff and Jurats consulted with the Rectors and Connétables before petitioning the Crown for any change in the law. It was only in 1524 that the States Assembly emerged as a separate institution, and only in 1771 that the law-making powers of the Court were removed leaving the States as the Island's only legislature. And traditionally the oath of office has always been taken before the Court. What is a tradition? A tradition is by definition a custom or practice handed down from generation to generation. It links us with the past and constitutes, for the gardeners amongst you, a form of tap root going deep into the soil. Just as the tap root gives stability to a plant, so too do traditions give stability to institutions.

The position of the Connétables in the States is another longstanding tradition which the Assembly has many times now voted to maintain. The Connétables, accountable at all times to their electors at parish assemblies, constitute a unique link between the the people and their legislature. This is the first time they have been elected concurrently with the senators, and sworn to office with the senators and deputies. It is a small but significant change, and although they have chosen to sit a little apart in their traditional seats, they have generously foregone the opportunity for individual recognition in the interests of the Assembly as a whole.

The Royal Court and the States Assembly of course now have different functions and different responsibilities. But they do have these enduring links, and not just through the officers of the Crown, the Lieutenant Governor, the Bailiff, the Law Officers and until recently the Viscount, who sit in both places. The former Chief Minister, and others, have expressed the view that the role of the Crown Officers should be examined and, speaking only for myself, I would welcome such a review by informed and fair-minded people. The welcome is qualified only in one respect, and that is that the review be thorough and impartial. When one is dealing with possible reforms of longstanding institutions there ought to be no place for lightweight, casual proposals. Any review would need to be conducted, if I may borrow the phraseology of the Book of Common Prayer, not lightly or wantonly, but discreetly, advisedly and soberly, with a full understanding of all the consequences of change, if it is to be accorded respect.

Some of those who have only recently been elected may not have yet had the opportunity to reflect upon the oath or affirmation which they have just taken or made. It is a wonderful oath which encapsulates in a few lines all the obligations which members of the States accept. First, you have accepted the duty of loyalty to the Queen, our Head of State. Secondly, you have agreed to uphold and defend, amongst other things, the privileges and liberties of the Island. These are not privileges in the sense of exclusive advantages enjoyed by a particular class of people. They are privileges in the sense of legal constitutional rights enjoyed by all the inhabitants of Jersey to have their own courts, their own parliament and their own government. They are privileges for which our ancestors have fought long and hard, and they have been confirmed by numerous sovereigns. We are not part of the United Kingdom, and we should not look across the water for solutions to our problems. Thirdly, you have agreed to carry out all the duties of the political office to which you have been

sworn by representing the interests of all your constituents, and not just those who have honoured you with their trust.

The business of politics can be tedious but can also be uplifting; it can be full of negativity and despair, but also full of enthusiasm and hope. It can occasionally engender nastiness, but much more frequently it can create, notwithstanding political disagreements, cooperation, consensus and genuine friendships.

This is an important day on which you are to choose the Island's next Chief Minister. The members of the Court will detain you no longer. They wish you all a stimulating and satisfying term of office.