

Bailiff's Liberation Day speech
9th May 2018

Your Excellency, Chief Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. For this year's Liberation Day celebrations in Liberation Square you see a slightly altered picture in that up here on the stage only those States members who are not standing again for re-election and those who have already been re-elected unopposed are within public view. The reason for that is that those who are standing again are officially in purdah – they are not permitted to take advantage of their position as sitting States members to improve their chances of re-election ahead of those who might be standing against them, thus making the election next week fairer.
2. Some of you may think this is all a bit unnecessary – after all, you are unlikely, I hope, to cast your votes only on the basis of whether somebody's face looks familiar, and of course even if you did you would still have to put a name to a face when you enter the ballot box. Speaking for myself, I find that increasingly difficult wherever I go, but that is a different story. Whatever the rights and wrongs of taking the doctrine of purdah to this point, the fact of the debate at all demonstrates a sensitivity that politicians must be seen to be doing the right thing.
3. For those of you who are wondering what we are doing on the stage in any event, it is a symbolism which picks up the past and

reflects the present and indeed, one's hopes the future. In 1945 the administration of the Island was conducted by a much smaller civil service who would take their lead from the Bailiff and Attorney General and from a less democratically elected States of Jersey, which at that time included the Jurats, the Rectors of the ancient parishes, the Connétables and some Deputies – so today on the stage you have people representing the same offices, although the roles are now quite different, much constitutional change having taken place since 1945.

4. You may wonder why I am talking about this today, and the answer is straightforward. Between 1940 and 1945, Islanders lost their freedom. It is easy to talk unthinkingly about the loss of freedom and probably only those who have lost it really understand what that means. The Occupation years carried an appealing simplicity for some, and unending boredom for others; but for everybody they carried the fear that goes with loss of liberty and freedom – the fear that goes with uncertainty as to how the Nazi occupiers would react if you – or sometimes others, because there were reprisals - said or did anything which they found displeasing. It had not begun like that in 1940, but freedom can be lost by degrees. To me, our freedom is an actuality, marked by a firm black line, not to be eroded under any circumstances. When the Island was first occupied, the administration was to carry on as usual, except that new laws would be submitted to the

Commandant for approval and not to His Majesty in Council. German orders would be registered in the Royal Court so that no one could plead ignorance of them. The Island courts could continue, but offences against military law would be tried by the military courts.

5. Church services were permitted, as long as they were not used for propaganda or utterances against the Nazi government or the occupying forces. Even prayers for the Royal Family and the welfare of the British Empire were allowed, and in the early days, it was possible to listen to the radio. But there was a warning note. Privileges accorded to the people would depend on their good behaviour.
6. Over the five years, things changed. Property was commandeered. The occupying forces were no longer subject to the Royal Court but would only be tried in military courts, if tried at all. British people in the Island, but not Islanders were deported to Bad Wurzach and other places in Germany – may I say now what a pleasure it is to see Herr Buerkle, the Mayor of Bad Wurzach here today at these Liberation Day celebrations with his wife. They are most welcome, as always, a tribute to the Partnerschaft between St Helier and Bad Wurzach, a beacon of the reconciliation which has taken place between Jersey and that town, which is so important as a reflection on the past, exists today and is a hope for the future.

7. So Liberation Day which has become our national day enables us to look back on the loss of freedom at a particularly important time – for our own elections to our parliamentary Assembly, the States of Jersey, take place next week. What a good time to remember the words of Sir Winston Churchill that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others. The turnout in our elections during the last 30 years or so has not been very good – on the whole pretty consistent, but never very good. Liberation Day is a time to remember our freedoms, to treasure them and to exercise them at the polls.
8. For those of you who are not sure it is worth the effort because things are pretty good or because you think things will not change or because you simply do not feel you know enough about those who are standing, I say that all those reactions are understandable but a little negative. If you think things are good and should not change, go out and vote. If you think things are not good and should change, go out and vote. If you do not know enough about those who are standing, there is plenty of information about – seek it out and go out and vote. That is part of our fundamental freedom, indeed guaranteed by the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, an instrument which arose out of the very conflict which led to the Occupation and to Liberation Day itself.

9. Today is a day about freedom, a special day and I hope like me, you will treasure it. Thank you very much.