

4. BILL FOR SECOND READING

4.1. Council of Ministers (Amendment) Bill 2016 – Second Reading approved

Mr Cannan to move:

That the Council of Ministers (Amendment) Bill 2016 be read a second time.

The Speaker: Item 4, Second Reading, Council of Ministers (Amendment) Bill. I call on the mover, Hon. Member for Michael, Mr Cannan.

Mr Cannan: Mr Speaker, I have promised Hon. Members that I intended to deliver a simple change to legislation that would see the election of the Chief Minister become purely a matter for the House of Keys.

What I hope that you will find in front of you today is a series of amendments that moves the balance of power in this highly important election entirely to the publicly-elected Chamber, removing any input from the Legislative Council and, thereby, not only restoring primacy to the House of Keys, but in having elected the Chief Minister, allows that person to take up position unencumbered by any undue allegiance to the Legislative Council or individual Members of the Legislative Council.

Mr Speaker, this is good for democracy and accountability, and also provides a small but significant step forward in reforming Tynwald.

Of course, Mr Speaker, in electing the Chief Minister, it is therefore only right that the House of Keys retains the privilege of removing him or her from office. Therefore, I propose that the Council of Ministers Act is amended to provide for that to happen by a vote of 16 or more Members of the House of Keys.

Members, of course, will recognise that the current system allows for a vote of no confidence by a straight majority in Tynwald and, in changing the vote back to the House of Keys, I have sought to recognise the change and decrease in voting numbers to 24 Members.

Not only that, but we must also recognise that a vote of no confidence is a serious matter and therefore to avoid such a vote being taken on the back of a singular unpopular decision, for example, or where the Chief Minister has been elected by a slim majority, it seemed right to build in the added protection of requiring two-thirds of Members to vote for such a motion of no confidence.

Mr Speaker, this Bill does not prevent the Chief Minister from electing a Minister from the Legislative Council, but such a move would need to be carefully considered given the implications of this Bill. Finally, Mr Speaker, this Bill makes it very clear that the Chief Minister must sit in the House of Keys and that should he or she leave the Keys they will forfeit their position.

I trust that Members will see the simplicity of this Bill, will see the need to restore primacy in this matter back to the publicly-elected Chamber and will see that by supporting this step they will remove any undue influence that the Legislative Council will have over the policy-making ability of the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am very pleased to second this motion and express my full support for it. I also see this as a small but very important constitutional change which again will strengthen the powers of the Keys.

When I was in the Legislative Council – it seems many years ago now –

A Member: It was. *(Laughter)* You had hair then!

Mr Singer: Don't rub it in please!

We had occasion when in an emergency we had the Chief Minister in the Upper Chamber, and it was a difficulty in that the Chief Minister could only be questioned once a month at Tynwald and that was not ideal. I have always been of the opinion that both the Chief Minister and Ministers should be elected from the House of Keys and this Bill will certainly ensure the former. I think we should take note of what the mover said; that there is protection as far as votes of no confidence are concerned, in having to have a two thirds vote so that it is not just done willy-nilly.

I hope that Members will support this because, as I say, it is a constitutional step, but in my mind very important.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Watterson.

Mr Watterson: A few points, if I may, Mr Speaker.

The first one relates to public consultation, and it is certainly something that when I have moved Private Member's Bills through here, it accepts the fact that public consultation is a good thing. It ensures that legislation is well thought through, that all the potential angles have been examined and that is not something that I have seen evidence of. I appreciate that this is a relatively simple change, but it is something that I still think is a worthwhile exercise and I would like to ask the Hon. Member to do some of that before moving forward with the clauses. There are, of course, two weeks between now and then.

In terms of the constitution and the requirements around that, I do still believe that it is important that the Chief Minister must have the confidence of Tynwald and is nominated by Tynwald, and Tynwald therefore has the power to fire him. I accept that this would just transfer that to the House of Keys, but I think there are reasons to worry about that. For example, what would happen in a circumstance where the Government of the day has lost the confidence of the Legislative Council? In those circumstances it will make very little legislative progress, Bills need to get a majority in both Houses in order to pass. Now there are provisions there for a budget to ultimately go through under the arrangements where we can come back and have a joint vote in a following month; but by having the confidence of Tynwald, and therefore including those numbers in Legislative Council, there is that requirement then to make sure that you have the ability to move your legislation through both Houses.

To use a corporate analogy, I am not entirely convinced that it is a wise move to choose your managing director or chief executive officer by excluding the votes of the non-executive directors. I think the jury is still to a large part out on what Legislative Council are for and there is a lot of research going into that, so we are kind of blocking ourselves into a corner with this legislation and pre-empting somewhat what we feel the views are going to be of what the purpose of Legislative Council is. But, if nothing else, they are the equivalent of non-executive directors. They are unlikely to be Chief Minister. I think there is an acceptance that they are unlikely to be Ministers, but the ability is there in the worst case. But it is important that those people with that, shall we say, general lack of political ambition, that are unlikely to be Chief Minister or Ministers, still have the opportunity to weigh in on who will lead our parliament.

Another thing that would have otherwise been a hypothetical question, but for actual circumstances that happened just over a decade ago, is what would have happened in those circumstances where we had a Chief Minister resign, and actually Tynwald – all of Tynwald – rallied around one individual who they thought would be the best person to take Tynwald forward – and that person was Donald Gelling and that person was a Member of the Legislative Council.

Now, this of course would close off that option so you are closing off an option which would be primarily led by the Keys – 24 Members of the House of Keys and nine voting Members of the Legislative Council – but Tynwald as a whole rallied around a single individual there. That would be

denied to them, even if it was their will to do that again. So I wonder if the Hon. Member could just square that circle for me in his summing up.

One other thing – and it might be a minor thing, but it is something that did make me have cause to reflect when I was thinking about the implications of this Bill – is about the constitutional balance between the legislative and the executive Branches. We have to be careful about vesting too much power in too small a group, and one of the things that would happen here is we are talking about Ministers predominantly being from the House of Keys and we are then talking about requiring a two-thirds majority in order to have a vote of no confidence in the Chief Minister. I think that makes the Chief Minister almost bullet proof inasmuch as you would need at least a couple of Ministers to actually vote against their own Chief Minister, and I do not know if that is entirely healthy either, in terms of that ability. It is a *very* high hurdle and I do not know if that is an entirely healthy one. So that is why I think, again, the inclusion of Legislative Council in those wider numbers is a valuable asset.

Those were the points I wanted to make. I am not dead against this Bill; I think it is pre-emptory in terms of – (*Laughter*) I have not found good answers to those questions. Now, if the Hon. Member has, I want to hear them. I will not vote against it today but I do really want serious answers and if I do not get serious answers to what I think are serious questions ... but I do think it is pre-emptory in terms of the work that is being done for Tynwald and, unless I do get at least some nod towards the right answers, I might be voting against. I want the Hon. Member to take the comments seriously and I think that might have been flushed out a bit by public consultation.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mrs Beecroft.

Mrs Beecroft: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I will be supporting this today because I think anything that brings us greater democracy has to be welcomed. My only comment really – and it is just a minor one – is when you have to have 16 Members of the House of Keys voting for a vote of no confidence to remove a Chief Minister. I just worry that if we are in circumstances where there is possibly three empty seats, for example, a two-thirds majority would actually be 15, and I am wondering whether it should be two-thirds of the elected number at any given time because otherwise ... I do believe in a high hurdle, as Mr Watterson called it, because it is a very serious step to take. But I am wondering if we are actually making it an even higher hurdle in circumstances where there are less elected Members in future possibly waiting for by-elections and things like that.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Robertshaw.

Mr Robertshaw: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Perhaps I can help the mover with an answer to a question posed by the Hon. Member for Rushen where he tries to compare the process here with that of non-executive directors, and I was somewhat amused by that. Having gone through many an interesting AGM over my life, the idea that the shareholders might be content with the rest of the directors deciding who the non-exec directors should be and that those non-exec directors should then elect the chairman, I think, would cause more than a degree of amusement amongst the shareholders' world, as it should actually cause a degree of amusement and concern on the part of the electorate that they are so divorced from the process.

So I think the Hon. Member's argument was more than just a little flawed.
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Gawne.

Mr Gawne: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

Yes, just interested in the serious questions that my hon. colleague and friend for Rushen, Mr Watterson, was describing.

I think he has hit a point in relation to one of his serious questions and that is the majority. I think that is something that needs to be considered. Knowing that you would have to have at least one Member of the Council of Ministers to support the removal of the Chief Minister under the proposed vote of no confidence in the Chief Minister, I think, is an important issue which the hon. mover will have to consider.

However, the rest of the serious questions I am not so sure about. I think the reality of the situation is that the public, not just in this country but all around the world, are becoming disaffected; they are becoming less and less interested in mainstream politics. And we in parliament – parliaments around the world, not just in this one, in Tynwald, the oldest parliament in the world – have a really big task ahead to try and reconnect with the public.

One of the few ways that we can most directly connect with the public is to stand for election and to go out and talk to the public and actually get clarity from the public of what they actually think. Having done that – and those of us who do that and are successful, get elected – the first and probably most important thing we do is elect the Speaker. Obviously, that is the key role but then directly following on from that, perhaps the most crucial thing that we do is we vote in a Chief Minister.

So 24 of us have a direct understanding from the public what the public want – an absolute, direct and clear understanding from the public. There are nine, by that stage, more experienced Members of Tynwald sitting in the Legislative Council who have not been out and asked the public what they think and do not have that same knowledge that we will all have directly after an election. Those nine have a significant influence because they are more experienced and they go around and they do influence the way in which, particularly bright-eyed and bushy-tailed newly-elected MHKS choose to vote.

And it is possible. Certainly, I am aware of at least one occasion where Members of the Legislative Council have significantly altered a vote for Chief Minister. I think that is *part* of the problem that is driving people away from mainstream politics. It is not the whole problem. I certainly would not blame the Legislative Council for the woes of the whole of the developed world when it comes to that disconnect between mainstream politics and the public, but it is part, it is a symptom, of this disconnection and it is something that we really seriously must address.

So I do support the Hon. Member in moving this Bill. I think it is a very timely Bill. I think that we can reasonably discount the concerns – well, I can certainly reasonably discount the concerns the Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Watterson, has raised in relation to the influence of the Legislative Council. But I do think that there is an important point there in relation to the majority and I think the Hon. Member for Michael may wish to consider that and possibly accept some helpful amendments at some point.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Thomas.

Mr Thomas: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In the Minister for Rushen, Mr Watterson's, support I just wanted to say that what was very clear when Mr Watterson spoke was the reasons why he was thinking about voting against, and full respect to the Member for that. I would hope that anybody else who is thinking about voting against this at either this stage or the clauses stage will be equally clear in raising their concerns at this point and putting them down on *Hansard* because that is what this sort of place is for. It is for actually indicating to people what it is we are doing with their entrustment to be their representatives and having the judgement to make decisions on their behalf.

The second point that I wanted to raise was in contradiction to what Minister Watterson, the Member for Rushen, says though, because as far as I am aware, there is not actually a minimum number of Ministers; there is a maximum but there is not a minimum inside the legislation. So, given

what is going on in other parts of the review, it could be that that number of Ministers falls in coming months or years.

Secondly, what we do have a minimum for is, we have a minimum number of departmental Members, political Members. We have to have one per Department and that could obviously change so that would have an effect on the way that this parliament works and the way that it interacts with Government and with the people that we represent. So nothing can be taken in isolation.

Building on that, I just wanted to remind people that in July at the latest, if not earlier, we will have a full report about the workings of the Branches of Tynwald which will consider the passage of legislation. It will consider the role of MHKs and the role of MLCs. So we will not be going into the unknown, we will actually have somebody who has brought together the evidence submitted over the years and put it together for us in one place so that there will be better understanding, full credit to the Chief Minister and the Minister for Policy and Reform for that, for actually managing to complete that work. Not quite Winston Churchill doing it in six weeks, but at least they can claim to be Neville Chamberlain, at least coming back with a piece of paper for peace for our time inside this Tynwald Court, (*Laughter*) and let's see what happens when they come back with that paper. But that is the sort of place where we should be addressing the legislative process and the role of different Members.

To me, the simple fact that the Equality Bill – probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that is coming into Tynwald Court, is going into the other place – actually profoundly changes the way that we are going about our business. That myth that Legislative Council is a revising Chamber is surely knocked on the head once and for all because how can you be a revising Chamber if you are seeing the legislation first? The Legislative Council is actually stepping up to the mark of being a 21st century player, to being a legislative committee considering legislation before it actually goes into the main Chamber. It is acting as a legislative committee as happens in Scotland and Wales and perhaps even in Jersey.

So, yes, of course this Bill is transformational, potentially, but we have got the Tynwald inquiry going on and we have already got changing behaviours by the Branches of Tynwald Court.

That comes on to the final points I wanted to make which are really there are only two principles that matter at the minute as we make up our minds how to vote.

The first principle is; are we well connected with our electorate? And it is with respect to the people who are thinking of voting against this. Name the parliaments anywhere else in the world – serious parliaments anywhere else in the world – where after an election a quarter of the people who choose the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers are unelected? It does not happen in Ireland, it does not happen in Westminster. Name a place where it happens. So we have got to take that into account and the perception of our own people and people outside this Island of what it means.

The second principle – and this is a phrase I termed back in January 2014 in the Modernising Ministerial Government debate – what we need to be doing is we actually need to be having a better programme of government in future administrations, more in line with what people have got the mandate for. I coined the phrase 'mandate politics' and what we need is a really good programme of government which can really create a government of national unity because it actually reflects the way that people have voted because politicians are being completely honest about what is important to them in terms of policies, what values they represent, what issues they are trying to deal with and exactly how they are going to go about dealing with those issues. Therefore the next administration will be much more secure if the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers that come out of the Chief Minister's election is actually secure in terms of having a mandate.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Hon. Members.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Douglas South, Mr Malarkey.

Mr Malarkey: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I had not really intended to speak on this. It goes without saying how much I am going to support this; it is something I have believed from the first day I came in to this Hon. House. I was absolutely flabbergasted that 24 Members, who had just had the mandate of the people, and then 31 upstairs were actually voting for the Chief Minister. Absolutely totally wrong in my opinion, Mr Speaker! Totally wrong!

I think this is a move in the right direction. I did not get my referendum with regard to LegCo. Everyone well-knows my views on LegCo either being elected by the public or they could be diluted in what their job is, coming forward. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) I believe this actually dilutes the job going forward. It is a step in the right direction, because the Chief Minister is going to get elected in here. If he is not in here, he cannot stand in the parliament.

I think this is a small step in the right direction. I would urge Members in here, if you are thinking of going for re-election this year and you want to be on the doorstep, do not vote against this, because I will tell you, as somebody who has just come back – almost 12 months ago – from being on the doorstep, people are astounded with the fact that LegCo get to pick the Chief Minister as well as the House of Keys. They are actually astounded. When you talk to real people who are interested, they are going, ‘Well, we never knew that!’ They had absolutely no idea, Mr Speaker.

I believe this is a major step in the right direction for democracy, for this parliament and moving forward. I know we are having a review, but we have reviews and what is going to happen? Maybe nothing in the next parliament. We have a chance here today and in the next coming weeks to move forward with pure democracy.

Please support this Bill today. I absolutely applaud Mr Cannan for bringing it forward.

With regard to the two-thirds majority to oust the Chief Minister, I am quite happy with that number and I will let you know why: over the years, I have seen people coming in here after a lunchbreak and going for quick counts because there was not enough people sitting in the ... I have seen Governments doing it. ‘We will go for a quick count now, because some of the Members have not come back here and we will win at this stage.’ (**Mr Cregeen:** Queen’s Pier!) Well, yes, that was done in Tynwald – and Mr Gawne is remembering the time of doing it.

But these things can be done. If you are only going to go for two thirds of those sittings, that is a very dicey game to be going forward. If it is going to be such an important vote – because someone is coming forward to try and oust the Chief Minister – I think people are going to come off their, almost, deathbed to get in here one way or the other to do the vote.

So let us not have a flexible number that can be moved if somebody decides that they have to go away on business or they are going to come in late for one reason or another. I am very happy – it is a major decision – if you are going to oust a Chief Minister or put one in, you need to have two-thirds of the elected Members, which are 24. For that reason, I am more than happy to support this, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Bell.

Mr Bell: Mr Speaker, I only want to make a few comments about this. I think the principle behind this Bill is sound. It is something which is very hard to disagree with and argue against. But I do have a concern – and one or two Members have raised it – about the fact that there is already a review taking place as to what the role of LegCo is and, indeed, how Tynwald is constructed into the future.

Mr Speaker, the road to constitutional hell is paved with good intentions and I think we need to be very careful before we go down this route, to think through what the implications of all this are. On the surface it seems a very sensible, democratic choice, very simple: elected Members should have the direct responsibility for electing the Chief Minister. But, whether we like it or not, LegCo exists and until it ceases to exist, it will have a role to play in Tynwald. You cannot deny it that.

This is where I was hoping that the report, which I hope will be back with Tynwald in June – July at the latest – will give us some clear pointers as to what the new shape of Government for the future will be. It could be, for example, we will be recommended to peruse a unicameral system.

One which I say, myself, I do support. Then this issue will either become redundant or complicate matters. Until there is an overall plan for the structure and workings and relationships between the two Branches of Tynwald, which is the overall parliament of the Isle of Man, then we have to find a working arrangement between those two arms.

This move is a very populist move which I am sure will attract the majority of people in this Chamber, but I would ask Members, before you charge off down this new direction, to think of the consequences. Sometimes experience does come into play; sometimes we do benefit from experience and the time to step back and take a second look at things. There are times when the role of Council has been helpful. I would just ask Members to bear that in mind before you rush headlong into constitutional changes which seem to be popular on the surface, which seem to be logical on the surface, but just think of what the consequences might be.

Until we get a complete reform of the overall structure of parliament, the overall structure of Tynwald, a clear understanding of what that new relationship is likely to be, it would be more helpful if we had seen all these various amendments coming together in a single debate so we could have an overall picture.

The Speaker: The Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, it is not very often that I would agree with the sentiments about not doing something because it is popular. I think the point is it is not about being popular, it is about what is right.

In my opinion, the situation is that, as legislators ... If the whole idea of trying to have a modern democracy is about the separation of power, we battle hard to get the judiciary away from when they were not allowed to prosecute Government Departments; we have not managed to split the differences between the role as far as the executive is concerned and the parliament. That is why we had the absurdity in the last House – where I was the only Member of parliament that was not in the Government. How can parliament –

The Speaker: Hon. Member, (**A Member:** *Manx Radio!*) for the record, the presiding officers are not in the Government. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) Please let that be noted.

Mr Karran: Yes, absolutely – but the point is that presiding officers would not last very long if they did not have executive people –

The Speaker: Hon. Member, that is a quite uncalled for comment of opinion.

Mr Karran: Okay, that is fair enough, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Please stick to the subject.

Mr Karran: The situation is the fact that what we need to look at, as far as this Bill is concerned, is about creating the environment. Legislators are there to create the environment, so that we do not end up with a toxic environment as far as the economy is concerned; so that we do not end up with a toxic environment as far as providing the public services that need to be provided for.

I believe that the situation is that this is not about being populist; it is about doing what is right. In my opinion, what is right is the fact that the Lower House ... Like the Hon. Member for West Douglas said, where else would you find potentially a third of your Members – if not over a third – being able to vote on whoever is going to be in Government, and they have no mandate outside this House?

Now the situation is: I was around when the Donald Gelling situation happened. That was because of other things happening before that, when we pleaded about the problems that were

going on at the time, and Donald lost his Chief Ministership. But I think Members need to realise that we do need a role, as far as the MLC is concerned; the MLCs need to be a different role than executive function. We have a Public Accounts Committee that needs to be more robust and separated from the role, as far as executive Government is concerned.

Hon. Members, if we support the *status quo* I believe we will do a disservice, not only just to the issues of democracy but also to the fact that we need to change. We cannot afford to run things how we have run things in the past. I believe that one of the problems that we have at the moment – the reason why we have seen the biggest economic boom not being successfully handled how it should have been – is the fact that we have a situation where there is no proper audit in the executive function, as far as one of the strands, as far as Government is concerned.

So I hope Hon. Members will not see this as being populist, because I believe that what we have got to do, is do what is right. I believe that the Hon. Member for Michael deserves the support of the Second Reading – and let people put their amendments to it, because at the moment we are not talking about tinkering; this is something that has been talked about for the last 20 years. There are other issues that need to be addressed, in my opinion, as far as this Bill is concerned.

I hope I have not affected the chances of the Hon. Member for Michael to get this Bill through with Second Reading, but I do feel it is important to realise the people who vote for this Bill are not doing it because of popularity. They are doing it because it is right.

The present system has failed. It has failed the people outside this Chamber, allowing for the biggest economic boom. I believe this is a stumble in the right direction, and then maybe we can get away from the absurdities that we have seen at the present time: when you look at the Public Accounts Committee where everybody is on a Government Department. We need to put the good systems in Government.

I believe that this is a stumble in the right direction and I hope Hon. Members will not be attacked for having the decency to say the environment we have got at the moment, as far as how good governance does not work, this will be one of the stumbles in the right direction.

I hope Hon. Members will support this and what I hope is – like so many other things in this House – it is on record for when people come back looking at why things did not work, they can at least see the pointers were pointed in the right direction.

The Speaker: I call on the mover to reply, Mr Cannan.

Mr Cannan: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am going to try and deal with some themes that have arisen from the various speakers.

Let me just start actually by picking up on a comment from the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran: 'It is not about being popular; it is about being right'. (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.) Why is it that every time somebody moves something that is good for democracy, wholesome in its integrity, right for the people of the Isle of Man, it gets slammed by the Government as being a populist move? (**A Member:** The Government?) Let us, for once, do something that is right for the people and that the majority of people support.

Now, the Hon. Member for Rushen says and suggests that we need to go out for public consultation. Well, I would suggest that the Hon. Member, Mr Malarkey, has hit the nail on the head. We should be in touch with the people to know what they want and I can tell you, you go out for public consultation, people will actually have the Legislative Council scrapped, never mind retained! We know that and yet so many people in here are constantly arguing this way and that about their different views.

The majority of people ... and I was with some members of the private sector on Friday who were just incredulous that the Legislative Council existed at all and felt that the whole thing served absolutely no good purpose and was tantamount to a scandal, given the current financial circumstances. So I would suggest there is no need for a public consultation. We know absolutely that the public wants change. In supporting this Bill, we will actually start to see some sensible

change in terms of restoring the primacy of the elected Members of Tynwald to elect and influence the outcome of the Chief Minister's vote.

I want to thank Mr Singer for his seconding of the motion. He says, 'This is a small but important step' and I concur with him on that.

The Hon. Member for Rushen also talks about the Legislative Council being 'non-executive directors'. Well, I am not sure what planet he lives on, but the public would be horrified to hear him describing the Legislative Council as 'non-executive directors' as if somehow the Chamber, the House of Keys, are incompetents who need another body sat above them to guide and direct them in terms of what they are doing. If the Hon. Member thinks the Legislative Council are non-executive directors, it is no wonder nothing has happened in this Chamber for many years to alter the balance of power and restore what most people would regard as a common sense move in restoring the primacy of the House of Keys in these difficult times, and in particular setting out steps for reform.

The Minister does raise, I think, a point that was picked up by his colleague from Rushen about the majority. In fact a couple of Members, including the Hon. Member for South Douglas, Mrs Beecroft, questioned this issue of having 16 Members or more – or two-thirds – to remove the Chief Minister, and questioned that this would involve probably, most likely, a Minister being involved in such a vote. Well, I accept that and that was one of the reasons I set it at two-thirds, because actually this is not a vote to be taken lightly. Therefore, a serious vote is likely to involve a Minister from within the Council of Ministers and I would have thought that at least one Minister would be involved in such a vote to give it enough status and weight.

The other reason – and why I have set it at 16 – is to ensure that it is a serious vote that requires everybody to be present. Again, as the Hon. Member for South Douglas, Mr Malarkey, insinuates, this is not something that you want to fudge or fiddle somehow by having people conducting a vote, knowing that perhaps certain Members are going to be absent, or forcing the issue in such a way and manipulating it in such a way that it does not carry the full weight of seriousness.

So whilst I am happy to look at some potential amendments, I would caution those bringing forward amendments on that side, that we cannot devalue this, and that by simply having a two-thirds majority of the people available in the House, they do run a serious risk that that process becomes regarded as unrecognisable or does not carry the weight necessary for such a process to be recognised. That could be used both ways: either by the existing Chief Minister who was fighting such a vote, or by the party or persons bringing forward such a vote.

So I hope that when I am speaking to the Hon. Minister for Infrastructure who raised that same issue, I was giving him some reassurance there: yes, whilst it will be a difficult decision for any Minister to join a vote, that is the purpose of having a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority. Also, it removes this element ... Were, for example, a Chief Minister to be elected ... or the House of Keys to come into force where, say, there were 13 sensible Members and, let us say, 11 from the Liberal Vannin Party in the House, (*Laughter*) again it is a protection mechanism to ensure that a small issue cannot suddenly result – or one controversial or unpopular decision – in a vote of no confidence being called, and a populist move in that particular case to get rid of somebody. So this is all about creating the seriousness of such a vote.

Mr Speaker, I thank those who have supported it. I think the Chief Minister feels we are on the road to constitutional harm. I fundamentally disagree with him. We can wait; we can kick this down the road. We can wait for a report and there will be lots of handwringing and nothing will actually probably change.

I think, fundamentally, at times there is a need to take decisions that show the necessary leadership, that take decisions for the right reasons – not the populist reasons – and that we set out and we give a platform. Because this is what it will do: it will give a platform for the next House of Keys, the next Chief Minister and his or her Council of Ministers to actually bring in some proper reforms to the legislative process which are likely to arise from this report that we are going to see in June or July.

So, with that, Mr Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I put the motion that the Council of Ministers (Amendment) Bill be read for a second time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

FOR	AGAINST
Mrs Beecroft	None
Mr Bell	
Mr Boot	
Mr Cannan	
Mr Cregeen	
Mr Gawne	
Mr Hall	
Mr Harmer	
Mr Joughin	
Mr Karran	
Mr Malarkey	
Mr Peake	
Mr Quayle	
Mr Quirk	
Mr Robertshaw	
Mr Ronan	
Mr Shimmin	
Mr Singer	
Mr Skelly	
Mr Teare	
The Speaker	
Mr Thomas	
Mr Watterson	

The Speaker: There are 23 votes for, none against – carried unanimously.