

H.A. No

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

SUBJECT

HOA MEETING

16 DECEMBER 1971

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(71 TO 82)

PERTINENT PAPERS

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SUBJECT

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No.71 of 1971

The Hon A W Serfaty

OFFICE COPY ORAL

Sir will Government consider the advisability of constructing a swimming pool for adults in the complex Camp Bay/Little Bay?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

As the Hon Member is aware, the possibility of providing a natural swimming pool by the construction of sea walls in the area referred to in the question has been investigated thoroughly in the past and at one stage the Royal Engineers were asked whether they would undertake this project for the Government. The RE's were unable to help because they lacked the necessary resources to tackle a project of this magnitude. The Government is advised that the building of such a pool would not be economically feasible in the present circumstances.

As I informed the House in the course of the Budget debate on the 16 March 1971, it is the aim of the Government to provide swimming pool facilities whenever possible. This is still our policy but so far our available resources have had to be devoted to development projects of higher priority.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.71 OF 1971

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, in view of the fact that this project is one which will take a very long time to execute, possibly two or three years, will Government consider the possibility of carrying on with the first phase of the project in the development programme for 1972, not trying to carrying on such a big project all in one year but to consider advisable to carry it out in phases over a period of two or three years in which, of course, then the financial cost would be born<sup>e</sup>over that long period?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I very much appreciate the constructive views of the Hon Member and I think we went through this on the 16th of March when we had a debate on the budget. I can assure the Hon Member that his views have not been forgotten and if it were to be possible to do it in that manner the Government would not hesitate to do so. However, I think the Hon Member would like to know that we have schemes perhaps in other areas which will not be so costly as those and which will materialise perhaps quicker than in the stages that he foresees and to what he is suggesting. The technical advice we have is that to start constructing a natural swimming pool in that area will be extremely costly. It would require quite a number, a lot of plants to be brought out to Gibraltar and on the whole it seems at present anyway from the advice that we have that this at this moment is not feasible, but the Hon Member can rest assured that his views are taken very seriously and that we shall certainly if possible proceed with some kind of swimming pool whether in that area or somewhere else - a natural or just an internal one - it is difficult to say at this stage.

HON A W SERFATY:

The Hon Chief Minister has said that there are possibly other schemes which will be considered for the construction of swimming pools. Could we know at what dates more or less we shall have information of these other schemes?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I would not like to give dates because obviously, quite rightly, I would be held to it at a later date, but I think that in the spirit which I have answered the question, the Hon Member will realise that as I said before, something that will materialise earlier, and one area which I think the Hon Member will be pleased to hear is in the Viaduct area where because of depth and other reasons, it might be easier to construct it than in the area that he has in view but I can assure the Hon Member that his views are taken very seriously.

HON A W SERFATY:

Thank you.

The Hon M K Featherstone

Has the Minister looked into the matter of publishing the purchasing power of the Pound in Gibraltar in comparison with a fixed guide date at reasonably short intervals?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

Yes, the matter has been looked into, as I undertook to have done, and the conclusion has been reached that although it is possible to work out the figure the Hon. Member is seeking, the work involved would make it impracticable to do so at a regular or frequent intervals.

For practical purposes the changes in the purchasing power of the pound can be gauged from the regularly published figures for the Index of Retail Prices. This in fact is the practice followed in the UK.

However, partly in deference to the Hon Member's question of some months ago, a Press Release was issued by the Government Statistics Office on 18 September 1971, informing the public of the result of a specific exercise carried out on this subject.

When will the lifts at Tower Blocks be working effectively?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works

If the Honourable questioner is referring to the lifts at Referendum House, both lifts have been working effectively since the 12th December.

One lift at Referendum House was however out of service for 13 weeks due to a major electrical fault, though the tenants were able to use the other lift in the interim period. The second lift also failed on occasions during this period.

I should like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the frequent misuse of the lifts. In 1970 there were 112 breakdowns of the lifts in the Tower Blocks. In 1971 so far there have been 59 breakdowns. 95% of the mechanical breakdowns are known to be a direct result of vandalism. It is more difficult to assess the cause of electrical breakdowns but at least 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of these were also due to vandalism. During the last 18 months the Fire Brigade have been called out 103 times to deal with emergencies in these lifts, over and above calls dealt with by the Public Works Department. It is clear, and this is supported by technical advice, that the breakdowns are mainly due to wilful damage. I therefore ask for the full cooperation of all concerned in keeping these lifts in proper working order.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 73 of 1971

N I ABECASIS:

Mr Speaker the Opposition appreciates the situation but what about the caretaker. Could ~~not~~ the caretaker be in charge of the lift at least to see that vandalism does not take place?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker I thank the Hon Member opposite for that observation. Two months ago Government employed lift attendants for these blocks and nonetheless ~~this~~ is still persisting.

HON I ABECASIS:

But would the Minister agree or accept that the tenants are as much entitled to demand this service from the Government, as the Government as landlords are entitled to demand from the tenants rent and rates?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker I fail to see the connection in this respect. I have just said that the Government has provided two lift attendants for the Tower Blocks. What more service can you obtain for this? If after the lift attendants leave and lifts are tampered with such as with screwdrivers, urinating over the mechanical parts, burning with lighters emergency switches etc. it is surely not too much to ask tenants for their cooperation in the interest of their own safety!

HON I ABECASIS:

On the contrary I was not suggesting that we shouldn't ask for the cooperation of the tenants or the people of Gibraltar as a whole. What I did not know until now is that two operators had been employed.

HON SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Perhaps he could answer these two points. I would like a little clarification on this question of the attendants. Are they full time? Are they in respect of the two blocks, two of them or one block, and in fact what is the use if despite the full time attendants, how is it that these things cannot in part be prevented? Or has there been an improvement at all?

HON J CARUANA:

Yes Mr Speaker the two attendants have been working for the last two months and they were in fact employed as a result of an investigation carried out by the Fire Brigade and the Public Works Department to establish the periods when vandalism took place and this occurred during peak periods so the attendants were in fact employed originally to deal mainly with the rush hours, which was in fact the lunch hour and then from 4.30 in the afternoon to 10.30 at night, after which they went home i.e. virtually full time. Nonetheless, in spite of this the rate of vandalism has not changed so therefore the Government is looking into the possibility of having full time attendants but the indications are that even if they are full time and even with the attendants inside the lift the faults are in the main caused from the outside on the floor levels. Not necessarily in the lifts but outside the lifts.

HON SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

I think there can be no doubt that we condemn as much the vandalism as anybody else. Let there be no doubt about it and we will support the Government in any measure they take to see that they work properly.

HON J CARUANA:

I am very grateful for the concern and the sentiments expressed by the Hon & Learned Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon Lt Col J L Hoare

Are the sanitary conditions round and about Castle House considered satisfactory?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works

Mr Speaker. No recent complaints on sanitary conditions have been received at the Cleansing Section or the Public Health Department.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.74 of 1971

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Is the Minister aware that there has been no brackish water in the Dustbin compound for the last 18 months?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker, we are aware that there has not been brackish water in the area where the refuse bins are kept, nonetheless these areas are kept clean, as clean as they can possibly be kept under these conditions and were examined as a result of the Hon and Gallant Member's question because we were in fact puzzled as to the reasons behind his question. We found that that refuse deposit area was no dirtier than others in the area with brackish water.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

But is that considered satisfactory that it is no dirtier or cleaner than the others despite there is no water? Should it not have water?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker, obviously it should have water. There is a tap provided for water and it is like all the others have.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Do I take it then that water will be provided for this compound fairly soon?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker, I would like to answer that one very briefly, but it seems the Gallant Member's question was not specific. We were at a quandary as to exactly what he was trying to pinpoint so therefore I am not in fact prepared at this moment to answer a specific question like that one. We shall endeavour obviously to do so.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I accept that Mr Speaker, but is it not a fact that complaints have been made by tenants during the last 18 months, because I have had several?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker I have investigated and tried to get the advice of the Cleansing Section and the Public Health Sections who are the two bodies who receive these complaints and the Heads of those departments were as much foxed with the reason behind the Hon Member's question as I was, so I can't possibly add any more.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

May I also ask the Hon Minister whether he is satisfied with the rubbish which is accumulating beyond the iron railing of the steps leading down there. It is now assuming mountainous proportions. I will leave it at that for the moment.

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker I believe neither the area nor the question is related to the original one, surely.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Member is referring to the area round Castle House.

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker, the immediate paving surrounding Castle House has been found lately to be satisfactory. Obviously there are areas which are known to be eyesores where people persistently deposit rubbish and this is not satisfactory and twice weekly they are collected. Nonetheless complaints do come in but again this is where the public could also cooperate a little more.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I accept that Mr Speaker but an area where it has not been collected for some time is that known as the Jungle which is behind the railings. Do I take it that this area is being cleaned up very soon because it is assuming as I said before mountainous proportions?

HON J CARUANA:

Mr Speaker now we have ascertained the railings belong to the Jungle I thank the Hon Member very much. This is something I was not thinking in relation to his original question. I was thinking of some other railing this is why I would like the Hon Member to be more specific in his questions and I will gladly be more forthcoming. The Jungle has a wall of at least 20 to 30 feet and it is a very difficult area to clean. It has been cleared on several occasions in the last two years but it is a major exercise to collect rubbish and again another instance I am afraid of the public throwing litter out of the windows onto this area.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I am sorry Mr Speaker I don't think we are on the same wave length on this. This area has no drop on either side. It is just a railing dividing two areas, which is quite accessible. Will the Minister please look into this particular area? If necessary I am prepared to go and meet the man responsible for that area and pinpoint exactly where it is.

HON J CARUANA:

Having been brought back onto the rails, I am still not, to tell you the truth, Mr Speaker, very clear as to the specific area that the Hon and Gallant Member means. I will certainly look into it and I shall certainly let the Hon and Gallant Member know about the matter.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Thank you.

The Hon I Abecasis

Sir will Government consider the erection of a wall at ground level at the entrance to the lifts at Tower Block to protect the users of the lift against inclement weather?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works

Yes Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.75 OF 1971

HON I ABECASIS:

Thank you very much. Will that be in the immediate future?

HON J CARUANA:

We have not yet determined the timetable for this but there is a very good reason for erecting a wall in the area. There is a tremendous wind tunnel formed in the area, and I went through the area the other day on the topping up ceremony and it was in fact a cruel wind blowing through those gaps in the blocks. It certainly is a justified case.

HON SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

And in view of the time people have to wait to use the lifts, it is so urgently required. (Laughter)

HON J CARUANA:

I would like to add, Mr Speaker, en passant, that the tenants are not at all unprotected in the area, the fact is mainly wind and driving rain that can get in.

No.76 of 1971

ORAL

The Hon A W Serfaty

Has the Government arrived at any conclusions on the viability of containerisation at the Port?

Answer:

The Minister for Commercial Economic Development

The simple answer to the Hon Member's question is yes Sir, the Government has reached the conclusion that it is possible to handle small, non-standard containers, which can be lifted by existing equipment. On the other hand, it has also come to the conclusion that the provision of facilities for handling standard 20 ft or 40 ft containers at the port would not be economically viable at the present time. These conclusions were reached after the most detailed consultations, investigations and enquiries, which I had caused to be made. I therefore feel that it would be appropriate and advantageous if I make a statement on this important matter at a later stage in these proceedings when I shall of course be pleased to answer any points of clarification that may be raised.

The Hon A W Serfaty

What has been done to implement the principle of establishing advisory facilities with interested parties at the Port?

Answer:

The Minister for Commercial Economic Development

I congratulate the Hon Member for keeping strictly to his six months schedule. In pursuing this principle of using advisory facilities I have held meetings during the last six months with the Shipping Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the Transport Association. The meeting with the Transport Association was also attended by the Minister for Labour and Social Security in view of the possible labour implications.

As I informed the House on the 3rd June (1971) the type of advisory facilities best suited to our needs could well be of an ad hoc nature. This is in fact the type of advisory facility which I am at the moment using i.e. rather than having a set committee I call together the interested parties in regard to any particular question, as the situation demands.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.77 OF 1971

HON A W SERFATY:

When the Hon Minister says Transport Association what does he really mean, I plead ignorance?

HON MAJOR A J GACHE:

I am glad you have asked that question because I was as ignorant as the Hon Member was about this Transport Association, because when they formed this association I asked them to come and all the members came. This is an association which apparently has been formed of all the people who have transport which operate in the port.

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer is in a way satisfactory, Mr Speaker, but I wonder whether the Hon Minister would not consider the creation of a permanent advisory board. Is he satisfied that this way of working the port with the advice of ad hoc committees is a satisfactory one? Would it not be better to have a permanent committee with representatives of different parties?

HON MAJOR A J GACHE:

As the Hon Member is aware I do welcome committees of this nature and certainly advisory committees. We did go very carefully into whether we should have in connection with the port, a permanent committee, but all the advice that I received with which I agree and I do agree at the moment, is that it would be better for the time being in any case if we were to use ad hoc committees of the nature and of the type that we are using at the moment, but I shall always be keeping close touch on this situation and keeping this matter under review.

HON A W SERFATY:

We shall give it another six months, Mr Speaker. (Laughter)

The Hon A P Montegriffo

Is it a fact that there was not sufficient ice at St Bernard's Hospital to run an oxygen tent required for a baby on November 26th 1971 and, if so, can the Minister give the reasons for this deficiency?

ANSWER:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

No Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.78 of 1971

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Is the Minister saying that there was ice?

HON MISS C ANES:

There was sufficient ice to operate the oxygen tent and give ample time for further supplies to be obtained later.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Will the minister be surprised, and I am not doubting in any way her honesty and the truth of her statement, but would she be surprised if I were to say that the information that has been passed to her is erroneous and would she agree that in the interest of truth both in her interest and in the interest of hospitals generally, that the father who is prepared to stand up and say that this information is erroneous, should be called and the whole thing investigated?

HON MISS C ANES:

Sir I was given to understand that the parents had no reason to complain at all, but certainly if the Hon Member feels that there is any element of doubt among the relatives I should be very pleased to call them in and have the matter explained.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Thank you very much. And the second point is, assuming that the information is true and that there was sufficient ice to start it going but not to keep it running, would the Minister consider the purchasing of an ice making machine which I assume will not cost more than £50 or £80?

HON MISS C ANES:

I have been advised by the Director and Staff that there is no need at all for the department to acquire an ice making machine. May I also state now that at no time was the child in question deprived of any oxygen whilst the baby was in the hospital and I would like to say this, that the child would never suffer any lack of oxygen at all. There was sufficient oxygen, in fact 3 tents, two other more up to date than the one that was used and one of them is in fact installed in the children's ward.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Will the Minister see my point, and the fact is that if there were two other tents, instead of causing a flap and having people running all over Gibraltar asking and seeking for ice like Lathbury Barracks, Prescotts etc. they could easily have used the other tent which do not need ice instead of causing the flap and the anxiety to the parents. And my point is that if any doctor might feel so inclined to use the ice making one, would it not be better to have an ice making machine to prevent a recurrence of this nature?

HON MISS C ANES:

I did also make this enquiry when I heard that this had been going on, this thing about the lack of ice. Apparently it seemed that somebody did make a wrong remark at the time. I have been advised that there was no panic at all whatsoever; that there was sufficient ice and that the child never suffered in consequence. The Hon Member says that the parents are a bit doubtful about the amount of ice available. I shall certainly go further into it and enquire, and I certainly promise to have the parents in and see them.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Thank you very much.

The Hon Lt Col J L Hoare

How many meetings of the Victoria Stadium Control Board have been held this year?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Recreation

Sir two meetings were held in January this year by the Victoria Stadium Control Board. As you are no doubt aware the administration of the stadium was transferred to the Department of Education as from 1st February 1971.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 79 OF 1971

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Did not the Minister have a press conference about mid January when dealing with the appointment of a Stadium Manager; he stated that he would set up a control board to whom this manager would be answerable?

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker I cannot remember having said previously that I would do so. It is quite possible that I might have said that it might have been advisable to do so. This was then passed on to the Department of Education since they were running it satisfactorily in any case, but never the less I have not discarded the possibility of forming some sort of control board of an advisory nature and this will be considered. Quite frankly I do not see the need at the moment because all the necessary advise that we need is forthcoming from any particular association which is relevant to a particular case that should arise.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

But is this not the very purpose for which a control board is instituted, so that each separate association does not grind its own axe? that there should be one central body which will analyse the claims or the demands of each of those associations and give judgement to all, and justice to all?

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, it is very well put. The Department of Education is there to see that there is no axe grinding and this I can assure you is the case. As I said before there might be some merit in forming an association. On the other hand one has to be careful. There are a great number of sports in Gibraltar, it might not be easy to leave some people out and this can be conflicting in fact and if at the moment it is working satisfactorily I do not see really the need, at the moment, to change what is working quite well. Perhaps once the second stage of the stadium is completed, this may be the time to reconsider whether it might be advisable then to have a board and I can assure the Hon Member that I am not against having a board.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

May I put in a plea for him to not only think about reconstituting or constituting this board but doing it? and would he have people on it who are interested in sports generally and have no direct link with any one individual sport, so that nobody can point a finger at either the Manager or the Board, and say you are favouring this sport, you are favouring ~~them~~. An independent board, would he please consider that seriously and get it into being before the second phase starts?

HON L DEVINCENZI:

This will be considered.

HON SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Following on that in the broader angle. Is it not desirable generally that a thing like that should not appear, I am not suggesting that it is, but would not appear to be Government controlled, therefore political control. I am not suggesting in any way that

there is, I don't know anything about it, but the point is that generally speaking if you have independent people in a Board like that it does seem to me to be a better arrangement and perhaps even more comfortable for the Minister anyhow.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Point taken sir.

HON P J ISOLA:

I do believe the minister, Mr Speaker Sir should bear very much in mind before making decisions on this matter that the Victoria Stadium has been built at public expense, that the maintenance and running costs of it are paid out of monies voted by this House and will he bear in mind the responsibility for the stadium must remain squarely on his Department and on his shoulders so that it is answerable for the department, answerable to the House. Will he please bear in mind that if he is going to set up any sort of board it would well be a good idea that it should be only an advisory board to the Minister so as not to derogate from this House the right to question the way the Victoria Stadium is being run and occasionally used by different associations or bodies.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker it is also a pleasure to answer my friend the Hon and Learned Mr Peter Isola. This is quite so. As you quite rightly say, the control must rest completely in the hands of the Government but of course, there is, in fact, something to be said for the possibility of having a board of advisory capacity and if this is done it will be under those conditions, certainly. Perhaps very much on the lines that the John Mackintosh Hall is controlled.

The Hon M K Featherstone

Sir what is the present position with regard to the proposed New Education Ordinance?

ANSWER:

The Minister for Education and Recreation

Sir a very advanced position.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.80 OF 1971

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir was it not March 1970 when the Government got this report which had already been delayed three months from the Education Ordinance Commission?

HON L DEVINCENZI:

If the Hon Member said 1970 he is correct. That was the date, yes.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir did not the Hon Minister say in May 1970, about this new Ordinance, and I beg leave to read: "This proposed Education Ordinance is now being studied. I am very hopeful, sir, that before the next six months we will be able to produce a proper bill." and later sir, did he not also say about this Bill: "Unfortunately, it did not come in December, it came three months later, that is at the end of March and that is, in fact, the only reason why we had not prepared a proper Bill"?

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker as the Hon Member is no doubt aware a very considerable amount of consultation has taken place at all possible levels. Unfortunately though, understandably, there have been differences of opinion and approach on several proposals which amount to very fundamental changes to the existing Ordinance. However, in fairness to all concerned, Government has now reached a stage where it finds itself in a position to bring matters to a head early next year when we propose to bring the new Education Ordinance before the House. I would like to add here to the Hon Member opposite that I, perhaps more than anybody else, once again it is my responsibility, would have liked to have seen this bill before the House at an earlier date. There has been considerable pressure from all interested parties but unfortunately as I just said, there have been a lot of differences of opinion from the people who are advising and making suggestions. Therefore it has been difficult to do what I personally would have liked very much. Nevertheless, after a long time, this is admitted, and after a lot of consultations we have now come to a conclusion and we shall bring this very early. Naturally it will please some people, it might not please others, but we must come to a decision now and this has been done.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir will the Minister agree that he made a very wise and political statement on the 3rd June this year during the debate of the amendment, for the fourth time Sir of the 1969 Ordinance, the Children and Young Persons (Employment) (Temporary Provisions), when he said: "Instead of leaving this bill for another six months it is to be left indefinitely. This does not mean of course, it is going to take another six months before it lapses, it could very well be done before but I think it is better to leave it indefinitely." The intention sir, is that this bill would be replaced by the Education Ordinance.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Sir I agree entirely with the Hon Member opposite on one thing, that I made a very wise political speech. (Laughter) In spite of what the Hon Member has just said now, this is true, nevertheless, because as I said before it has been difficult to bring the matter to a head because of differences of opinion, one could not extract just a small part of the Ordinance to replace the Young Persons Ordinance and since again we did make a number of rather good amendments to that Ordinance, and it is working perfectly, this is the reason why things are as they are.

The Hon M K Featherstone

Sir have any changes been made in the interim plans for Secondary Schoolchildren, pending the implementation of the Comprehensive System, and if so, what changes?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Recreation

Sir, no changes have been made.

The Hon Lt Col J L Hoare

When are the Gibraltar Regiment Regulations 1971 going to be brought up to date?

Answer:

The Hon Attorney General

In consequence of the reorganisation of the Gibraltar Regiment a completely new set of regulations, replacing those promulgated in January this year, has been drafted. The question is therefore not one of bringing the existing Regulations up to date, but one of a complete re-writing of the regulations governing the Regiment.

The new Regulations are, I believe, likely to be substantially longer than the existing Regulations. They are at present the subject of careful study by the military authorities. While it is difficult to offer a date for their completion, I am hopeful that the new Regulations will be ready for submission to the Governor in Council in the course of the next two months.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.82 OF 1971

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

X I thank the Hon and Learned Attorney General for that. But perhaps <sup>he</sup> you will remember that when these regulations were published in January 1971 I brought to his notice several errors as then published in the original form, and I had understood that those would have been amended before events overtook the amendments. I will accept a few months and leave it at that. Thank you Mr Speaker.

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certain