

H.A. N^o

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

SUBJECT

**H.O.A MEETING
22 JULY 1971
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
(37 TO 50)**

PERTINENT PAPERS		PERTINENT PAPERS	
SUBJECT	NO.	SUBJECT	NO.

Questions asked by the Honourable Members at the Meeting of the House of Assembly which was held on 22.7.71.

No.37 of 1971

Oral

The Hon. A. W. Serfaty

Sir, what progress has been made on the feasibility study for the proposed Yacht Marina at Montague Basin?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Sir, representatives of Edendale Properties Limited and their technical advisers visited Gibraltar last month and had consultations with me and with the various authorities concerned. They expect to be in a position to submit their feasibility study by the end of 1971.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.37 of 1971

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Can the Hon. the Chief Minister tell me when the feasibility study is going to be started?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

As far as I am aware, when the present development firm took over they undertook to carry out a feasibility study. Since then the Viaduct Site was allotted for the construction of Government Housing. Last March, consultations took place between the developers and Sir Hugh Wilson, the firm that is undertaking the study of the Viaduct Site, and the latest information available is that there is nothing in that site that would interfere with the developers proceeding.

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Thank you.

The Hon. A. W. Serfaty

Sir, when will Government repair the damaged pavements in Main Street?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Public Works

It is intended to carry out this work early in September.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.38 of 1971

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Thank you.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

September, this year?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Early September, 1971.

The Hon. A. W. Serfaty

Sir, when is the Casemates Area going to be put out to tender for development purposes?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Our plan is to put the area out to tender in September - although it is not in the written answer - 1971.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.39 of 1971

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Thank you very much, Sir. (Laughter)

The Hon. A. W. Serfaty

Sir, what is the position regarding the Halcrow Report on the reclamation of land on the east side of Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Sir, as the Hon. Questioner is aware, this is, for Gibraltar, a large and ambitious scheme and the opportunity to proceed with it has not yet arisen.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.40 of 1971

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Sir, is the Hon. the Chief Minister aware that this scheme would provide 44 acres of land in Gibraltar, as well as for the lengthening of the runway. According to Messrs. Halcrow and Partners the cost is going to be under £2m. So, is it really so big, considering how important this can be to Gibraltar?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Sir, I fully agree that this is something that we would all like to see under way. The cost of the Halcrow Scheme at the time it was prepared which was in 1968 - I am talking from memory now - was £2.8m. It is probably much more than that now. If that is the case

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

On a point of order Sir, I think it was £1.8m.

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Sir, the official information that I have is that it is not £1.8m. but £2.6m., and this could be verified if required. I think it is a very ambitious scheme and we would all like to see it underway. There are, I think, other sites which might be more attractive to developers at this stage, and although I can assure the Hon. Member I myself am particularly interested in this and have never missed any opportunity when speaking to developers that come to Gibraltar to impress on them how much could be derived if this was undertaken, unfortunately it has so far been impossible to attract any developer.

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Sir, is the Chief Minister under the impression that this scheme could only be carried out by a developer in the private sector, or is it not a scheme that could be carried out by the Gibraltar Government, with the help of the British Government.

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

At this stage, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that I could not in any way commit the Government to participate in such a scheme. There are other schemes which I think are much more practical, more feasible in carrying out than that one.

The Hon. A. P. Montegriffo

Can the Hon. Financial and Development Secretary say why a letter addressed to him on the 27th May, 1971, by a Mr. Lombard on the subject of Old Age Pensions has not yet been acknowledged?

Answer:The Financial and Development Secretary

Sir, I am afraid that the delay in replying to Mr. Lombard, which has now been done, was due to a misunderstanding. It was thought that Mr. Lombard would benefit from the improvements to the supplementary benefits which the Minister of Labour and Social Security stated at the last meeting of the House he would be proposing in due course and which I understand he will be doing today. It would then have been possible to inform Mr. Lombard that these improvements would more than compensate him for the loss of a half penny a week on the conversion of his pension to the new decimal currency. However, it appears that Mr. Lombard does not qualify for Supplementary Benefits; his pension is paid out of the Social Insurance Fund. This is not a Government fund. It is merely administered by the Government on behalf of the contributors thereto, and payments therefrom may be made only in accordance with the law. The conversion of all these pensions was effected in accordance with the Decimal Currency Order 1971 and could be adjusted only if the law were amended.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.41 of 1971

HON. A. P. MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the very happy coincidence which brought about an acknowledgement to the letter, followed almost immediately by a reply to the letter, on the day I put my question, I hope that the Hon. Financial and Development Secretary appreciates that it is not a question of a $\frac{1}{2}$ p or the odd penny, it is a question of the principle involved. Can he now tell me whether there is any possibility of having any redress so that in the conversion these Old Age Pensioners will not stand to lose even a $\frac{1}{2}$ p. ?

HON. FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As I said before, this is a contributory scheme and the conversion is made in accordance with the Banking and Accounting Table, a table which was prepared by the Decimal Currency Board in England, and from that angle I am afraid that we have no powers to make any adjustments in those payments.

HON. A. P. MONTEGRIFFO:

Is there any possibility to make good, at the end of the year, the amounts that they had been underpaid from any other fund or through any other means?

HON. FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I think this would raise a most important point of principle, because in point of fact, why should we stop then at this particular fund, it could be applied to the conversion of all the depositors in the Savings Bank or even in the private Banks.

HON. A. P. MONTEGRIFFO:

At least after three or four months we know the answer is no. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Sir, will the Hon. Financial & Development Secretary tell me what is his authority for reducing a man's pension once it has been granted. I will repeat that. Will he please tell me, Mr. Speaker, what is his authority for reducing a pension once granted? I know that there is a Conversion Table, but then there should be means of making up this loss every other week, so that in the even there is no loss to the individual over a period.

HON. FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I have referred the Hon. Member, Sir, to the Decimal Currency Order 1971 and perhaps I could refer the Hon. & Gallant Member too to Section 6 of the Decimal Currency Ordinance 1971.

The Hon. Lt. Col. J.L. Hoare

Is Government satisfied with the present safety arrangements at our beaches?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Public Works

No progressive Government is ever satisfied but seeks always to introduce improvements in all its Departments and activities. Among those which are in hand in relation to safety arrangements at beaches are the following:

- (1) supervision of the service by a Beach Supervisor who is to be appointed shortly; (the post having been advertised already)
- (2) the issue of Royal Life Saving Society vests to beach pickets; and
- (3) plans to convert the platform above the "Beachcomber" at Eastern Beach into an elevated beach picket post when the aerial is removed this year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.42 of 1971

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

I am very grateful for that list, it covers one of the points that I was going to suggest. May I suggest a few more points that a progressive Government would put on. First of all, to ensure that there is no period of the day when the beach is not covered by lifeguard service. At the moment, I understand, there is a little period during the relief of the two people concerned, when the beach is unattended. This, a progressive Government would eliminate. Would he look at that first please?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, all the beaches are fully manned. I admit that there might be instances where, because of the change of shifts the beaches, occasionally and especially in mid-week, might be undermanned. However, a progressive Government also depends on a progressive society, and every member of this society, or virtually every able bodied member, should themselves be lifesavers. (Laughter)

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Is the Minister aware that, although this is so - and I have nothing but admiration for the present lifeguards - the responsibility for providing that service, even if there are individuals prepared to perform such a service for them, still rests solely on the Government? May I then carry on with another suggestion which might be of use....

MR. SPEAKER:

Order. May I suggest that you put a question?

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

I said "May I?".

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes, but not a suggestion, a supplementary question.

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Is the Government satisfied with the standard, the size and the positioning of the flags to which the public look for instructions?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, that is another question, but the hoisting of the red flag in bad weather, the regulations pertaining to this and their enforcement, come under the Commissioner of Police.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.42 of 1971(Contd.)

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

I am aware that this comes under the Commissioner of Police, but does this over-rule the responsibility of the Government to provide adequate warning notices? May I put to the people concerned first of all, that the flags should be of adequate size - at the present time the flags are very puny, very tattered, very small, they are badly located. Does the Minister not agree that the flags should give positive instructions, that is, that they should be of adequate size and that the red one should be endorsed "No-bathing allowed" and that when bathing is allowed, a green flag of adequate size should be displayed endorsed "Bathing is allowed". That will be point No.1.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member opposite is so full of suggestions, instead of putting questions, that I fail to be able to answer him.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Mr. Speaker, as regards to the previous statement of the Minister that it is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police, does he want to indicate in that answer that, therefore, it is not the responsibility of the Government?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Not at all Mr. Speaker. What I said was that the regulations pertaining to the red flag, and their enforcement, come under the Commissioner of Police. As to the size of the flag, the colour of the flag, where the flag should be put, and where it should not be put, and so on and so forth, I should think that this is a matter of opinion. I see the flag perfectly well and I am sure that lots of people see it very well, they cannot miss it! If there is bad weather, the person has only got to make sure by looking for the flag and they will see it. In Catalan Bay it is positioned right in the middle; in Eastern Beach there are two flags, where does the Hon. Member opposite think that the flag is wrongly placed?

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Is the Hon. Minister aware that not only Gibraltarians use the beaches, that tourists who are here for a very limited period use the beaches, and they are the people who get into difficulties because they are unaware of the conditions. Therefore, it is this positive approach that should be undertaken. Does the Minister not agree with this attitude?

HON. J. CARUANA:

There are ample notices in the beaches stating the regulations and when they can be used and when they cannot be used.

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

May I ask the Hon. Minister whether he is sure that these instructions in fact adequately exist, so that visitors, who don't know the conditions here, are made aware of them?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, can the Hon. Member opposite say whether he can state that they don't exist?

MR. SPEAKER:

We cannot have members of the Opposition answering questions. I think we have debated this matter long enough in Question Time, and we will proceed with the next

HON. LT. COL. J. L. HOARE:

I entirely agree, but can I ask the Minister whether he is satisfied with the safety arrangements regarding spear guns?

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.42 of 1971 (Contd.)

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, this is a more difficult question, and a valid one too I must admit. There are ample warnings exhibited that spear guns should not be used on the beaches; sometimes, I admit, one gets frightened when one sees children carrying spear guns around in our beaches, but normally you will find that they keep to the outskirts, to the rocky side in the extremes of the beach, but I will admit that it is a point to bear in mind and that it is very dangerous to play around with spear guns in the beaches.

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

May I have the Hon. Minister's assurance that he will have a jolly good look at this aspect please?

HON. P. J. ISOLA:

Mr. Speaker, isn't there provision in the law to prohibit the use of spear guns in the vicinity of the beaches, I thought that was provided by a statute?

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Mr. Speaker, may I have an answer to my last question, please?

HON. J. CARUANA:

I thought I had already given it, however, I shall endeavour to make sure that the law is enforced.

The Hon. I. Abecasis

Sir, why has the lift at the Haven been out of order for over three weeks?

AnswerThe Minister for Housing and Public Works

Mr. Speaker it was difficult to trace the fault when the lift broke down and it became necessary to contact the manufacturers. The lift has been operational now for the last few days.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.43 of 1971

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Fully operational? From ground floor to top floor?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member opposite that the day before yesterday, yesterday and today, I have travelled on the lift from ground floor to top floor.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Wasn't there a manual available so that the persons who are going to repair it could see the diagram?

HON. J. CARUANA:

I am sorry; what was available Sir?

HON. I. ABECASIS:

A manual.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, the manual is available and the wiring diagram was carefully studied.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

And, wasn't the lift guaranteed for at least one year so that if it did not work properly the agents or the suppliers would see that it would be repaired?

HON. J. CARUANA:

No, Mr. Speaker, the local agents in this case did not come into the picture at all, the whole operation was carried out by the direct labour of the Department. All the fault finding and all the corrections were done locally by direct labour.

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that the agents for the firms supplying the lift would have been contacted by the Department and they should have been asked to put the matter right.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I have said that the local agents were not in any way involved in this operation. Once any user of an article takes the responsibility of installing it and tampers with it, the Agents immediately absolve themselves of responsibility, though I understand that consultations were held between the Department and the local engineers, to the extent of being helpful.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.43 of 1971 (Contd.)

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

But without casting aspersions on any agent, isn't it fair and reasonable that an agent should provide servicing for the goods that he represents in Gibraltar?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Not necessarily and not if it is not solicited. I can't say at this moment that it was solicited from the very beginning of the contract.

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Will the minister give an assurance that in future all lifts that are purchased for housing schemes etc. are purchased from firms that provide proper servicing facilities in Gibraltar?

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Sir, I have a further supplementary. Would the Government ensure that proper maintenance is given to this lift, especially the Minister for Housing whose offices, I understand are on the fifth floor, as it might give the impression if this is not done that those applicants who have to go ever so often to see him or his staff would have to wait until the lift is repaired, or climb five floors.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity of reminding the House that the lift was installed over a year ago and therefore it is most unfair to try to put the blame on an agent who has not been involved, in any case, at any point in the negotiations; and secondly, Mr. Speaker, my offices are not on the fifth floor, my offices are on the second floor and it is no great hardship to walk up to my offices - there is absolutely no sinister motive of putting my offices on the second floor - I don't think it should cause any hardship to anybody. If the lift has been out of order I can assure you it was not intentional.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Will the Minister bear in mind the elderly people who have to go to the fifth floor to deliver their Rent Relief Forms; that is on the fifth floor, that is for certain?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acquaint the House later on of the intricacies of what is happening at the Haven. Provision has been made on the ground floor for a counter and a cashier's desk, which is already constructed and can be seen by anybody, so that nobody can allege that this has been prompted by a question from the Opposition, that rent relief and enquiries, especially from elderly people, can be done at ground floor level.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Maybe the Government has been prompted by the fact that they haven't got much faith on the lift! (Laughter)

HON. J. CARUANA:

Not at all, Mr. Speaker, the Government has been prompted from a purely humanitarian point of view. (Tapping on the table)

MR. SPEAKER:

I am afraid I shall have to rule that questions
out of order.

HON. A.W. SERPATY.

Right, Sir.

The Hon. I. Abecasis

Sir, what is the Government policy regarding police quarters at present occupied by retired Police Officers?

Answer:

THE Minister for Housing and Public Works

Mr. Speaker, the whole question of Government quarters, including Police quarters, is at present under review.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No. 44 of 1971

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Can the Government say how many tenants in Police Quarters are no longer members of the Police Force?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, that is a specific question which will require a separate specific answer.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that if the Government were going to give the policy about these Government Quarters, surely they would have had statistics ready, because statistics seem to be something which is very much in the minds of the present Government.

MR. SPEAKER:

In fairness to the Minister, that is a specific question which should have been asked specifically and I must agree with the Minister.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Would Government consider the allocation of houses to the people residing in Government Quarters or Police Quarters, on a ratio of basis, as is done in the case of medically categorised cases.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, the question of allocating new housing to Government Officials on a percentage basis, is a monumental difficulty and one which in the past has led to a lot of conflict between the various departments in the Government Service. How can you differentiate and give priority between one profession and another every time new housing becomes available. I would venture to suggest that this is being considered in the general review of Government Quarters.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

My suggestion was, Sir, that whenever there is an allocation, of say 60 houses, 40 would go to the Priority List, 15 to the medically categorised and five, I am suggesting, could go to those living in the Police Quarters, these five retired Police Officers could move into other Government houses and leave those vacancies for Police Officers who are still in the service.

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the Hon. Member opposite clarifying the point. I think that he is virtually on the same wave length as we are on the review which is about to take place.

HON. P. J. ISOLA:

Sir, will the Minister assure us that this particular policy is not used for getting houses through the back, i.e. that people should not become Police Officers to get a Police Quarter and then, in accordance with the question of the questioner, obtain in that way, on retirement of the Police Force, Government housing which they would not have been entitled to if they had not joined the Police. I hope that matter will be taken into consideration.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.44 of 1971 (Contd.)

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker, I can assure my Learned Friend Mr. Isola that this will not be the case in the plans envisaged because there will be no guarantee to any particular Government Department. It will go, possibly, on a percentage basis to Government Officials who will then be considered on individual merits, possibly also based on their family requirements and needs and on the conditions under which they are living at present.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Isn't the danger mentioned by the last questioner happening all along the line and not just with Police Officers?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this has been happening all along the line and this is what we are trying to correct.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Sir, could I be given a possible date when the Government will be ready to produce a paper on the question of the allocation of housing to retired Officers?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Mr. Speaker I cannot give a date but I can inform the House that this matter has been discussed on various occasions already by the Government and the Council of Ministers, and the details - because this would affect the conditions of service of some Government officials - will have to be negotiated and agreed upon with the various Staff Associations.

HON. I. ABECASIS:

Sir, I am sure the Minister will agree that the longer it takes the greater the problem becomes. Will he please expedite this question in the interest of all?

HON. J. CARUANA:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is another problem which we are very anxious to clear up soon.

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

What is the procedure for enrolling a child in a Government Nursery School?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Recreation

Children between the ages of 3 and 4 are eligible to attend the Government Nursery school in Town Range. All that is necessary to enrol a child is for the parent to visit the Department of Education to provide details of the child together with a certificate of employment signed by the Director of Labour and Social Security indicating that the mother is working.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.45 of 1971

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, would the Minister consider reducing the age limit to lower than 3 years?

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

The Minister, Mr. Speaker, is willing to consider anything, but quite frankly I do not think that it would be advisable, certainly not at this stage, to go into the question of lowering this even further than we have done so already. Perhaps I might add that we are slightly disappointed with the number of people who are attending the present nursery, and I think that if one were to lower the age, one would become baby-minded rather than anything else. I don't think that this would be the right thing to do.

HON. LT. COL. J. L. HOARE:

But surely, is it a matter of lack of accommodation or that a woman with a child of 2½ is not being encouraged to go out to work?

MR. SPEAKER:

Again, we must bear in mind the question of supplementaries. The question is a simple one "What is the procedure of enrolling a child...." We must not debate the question of whether it is fit and proper to have the nursery school and the implication. So I would ask questioners to bear this in mind.

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

What proviso has Government for a nursery school in the Glacis area?

Answer:The Minister for Education and Recreation

There is provision in the Glacis Estate for a nursery. If and when there is demand Government will consider expanding in this direction at that juncture.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.46 of 1971

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, is this not a case of which comes first: the chicken or the egg? (Laughter)

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

I could answer that question Mr. Speaker if he would tell me which is the chicken and which is the egg. (Laughter)

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, is it not better to provide the school and then the demand will probably come?

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member is aware premises do not become available just like that, in fact they are at a premium, and whilst there is provision for a nursery in the Glacis area - and as I said before one would certainly consider favourably expanding in that direction if there was a demand - I don't think it is fair to expect us to start a nursery if there is no demand at the moment. The place is there and it could be promptly put up if there is a demand.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, in view that approximately 5,000 people living in that area, will the Minister get assistance, perhaps from the Minister of Labour, to get some statistics whether there is a demand or not?

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

Mr. Speaker we have enough statistics available to cater for every contingency, thanks to the Minister of Labour, backed by the Government. Sir, I think the question now is really unnecessary because, as I have said, we have provision and if the demand is there we shall meet it. I would like to add Mr. Speaker, that it is obvious that because people are earning a lot of more money, precisely by working mothers for whom the nursery was intended, they prefer to send their children 100 yds further down the road to a Private Nursery, paying perhaps £2.50 or £3 rather than to send them to a Government Nursery. Perhaps there is even something of a status symbol in this, that for £2 or £3 it is not worth while sending a child to a Government Nursery, although, I might add that the present Government Nursery is second to none. The facilities there, are excellent.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, is this surely then an example of people for once not out to get something for nothing?

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

I think you are thinking on the right lines. (Laughter)

HON. LT. COL. J.L. HOARE:

Is the Minister not being somewhat coy in saying that not many people know that these services are available? If people are made aware of the fact that these are available surely they would then ask to use them but if they are not told that they are available how can they ask to use them?

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.46 of 1971 (Contd.)

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

Mr. Speaker, the point made by the Hon. and Gallant Member opposite is perhaps if not 100% valid, at least half valid, in the sense that this might be true to some extent, but we do advertise the fact, we have done so every year. In fact in September of last year the people who were coming forward was so small that I requested the Department to once again make the facts known through television and the press, and even then the demand was very, very small. I think we have about 10 children in the Nursery now and I think for next September we have only three or four enrolled; this is ridiculous. We are in fact considering whether it is worth while having it, especially as there is some demand for that building for other purposes. So really, one begins to think whether it is worth going into this question, or not.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Is the Minister satisfied with the conditions prevailing in all the private nurseries?

HON. L. DEVINCENZI:

I am prepared to answer the question Mr. Speaker, I suppose you accept this. As the Hon. and Learned Leader of the Opposition is aware the Government ~~had~~ some control over private nurseries. Some are better than others, but I can assure the Hon. Member opposite that every private nursery falls within categories which are acceptable to Government.

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

Sir, when will stamps be available in the vending machines at the General Post Office?

Answer:

The Minister for Information, Post, Trade and Industries

New stamp vending machines to dispense the new decimal coil stamps were ordered as early as April, 1970, but owing to heavy commitments on the part of the manufacturers the earliest delivery date quoted was July 1971. All our efforts to bring the delivery date forward to coincide with decimalisation proved fruitless.

The machines arrived on the 9th July. (Cries of Hurrah) A requisition to instal was then placed with the Public Works Department and this is now being carried out. Stmaps will be available at these machines at the General Post Office within the next few days. (Cries of hear, hear)

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.47 of 1971

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I am most grateful for that cooperative reply, in fact I believe they were working there at 2 o'clock this afternoon installing the machines. Sir, would the Minister also consider machines which could sell books of stamps either at 10p or 50p per book?

HON. MAJOR A. J. GACHE:

Sir, I am grateful for the suggestion by the Hon. Member; I shall certainly consider that, but in fact during my last visit to London, I did go to the Post Office to see whether they have these book machines. I could not find them outside, perhaps they are inside, but I will certainly bear that in mind. May I say that the question of the stamp vending machines operating today was a happy coincidence and not connected with the question.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I know the Hon. and Gallant Member makes occasional visits to London. May I suggest to him Sir, that Jersey does have these machines, which I think they get from the United Kingdom? Would he pursue enquiries into whether these machines could be obtained?

HON. MAJOR A. J. GACHE:

I shall certainly do so.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Thank you.

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

Sir, is Government satisfied with the present arrangements at the collection section of the Revenue Department at Waterport?

Answer:

The Financial and Development Secretary

Sir, the answer is no, Sir. There is definitely room for improvement, there always is, but unfortunately the problem is mainly one of shortage of staff. In accordance with the policy of the Government the working of all Departments is already being looked into systematically and this will also be done at the Revenue Department at Waterport in due course.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.48 of 1971

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I appreciate the difficulties under which the Revenue Department is working at the moment, and I will not ask the Statistician to work out the cost to the national product, of collecting some of the small sums of money concerned. But will the Financial and Development Secretary consider setting up a small committee, which may take in outsiders and not just members of Government, with a view to improving the situation there, especially on the question of detail?

HON. FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I think that as a first step Government is already set in examining the workings of departments by outside experts, and I think we had better wait and see what they recommend before taking in people who may not be so ~~such~~ experts.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir. I quite agree that that is quite valid, but will it perhaps be put to these gentlemen that they might consider consulting some of the ~~uses~~ of the department to get the view from the other side of the counter also?

HON. FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Sir, I wonder whether the Hon. Member has experience of clearing any goods anywhere else in the world through customs and I think, by and large, he would probably never clear them as quickly as he would do in Gibraltar.
(Cries of hear, hear)

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

Sir, will Government request MOD cooperation to make added parking space available along Eastern Beach Road?

Answer:The Chief Minister

Sir, the Ministry of Defence have very cooperatively provided for parking purposes as much of the area as they can make available.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.49 of 1971

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I don't think that is an answer to the question. Would Government not agree that the fence along the Royal Air Force Station is a considerably long way out from their actual buildings and could easily be pushed back, with some cooperation, perhaps 10 feet, which would give perhaps parking space and more facilities to the flow of traffic, which at the moment is extremely congested?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr. Speaker, there are plans for the area, whether this will be taken into account I cannot promise at the moment, but there are plans for providing more parking space in the area. I can at least mention two places, one is the area around the Slaughter House, which we intend to pull down and provide parking space there, and also when we shift the Refuse Destructor from the present position it is also intended to provide parking space there.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Sir, some years ago the Ministry of Defence temporarily arranged during the summer for the excessive need for parking there, quite near the aeriels at the back of the Mediterranean Hotel subject to certain conditions. I believe this is not being done now, could the Chief Minister pursue that and see whether we might find, as a temporary measure, room in which to park a number of cars?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

As far as I am aware, Mr. Speaker, this is being done now, but if it isn't I will certainly look into the matter and I am positive that if it is possible MOD will cooperate as they always do.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, may I point out to the Hon. Chief Minister that the original question said: will Government request MOD cooperation and not, is Government satisfied with MOD cooperation.

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no need to further request cooperation because MOD is always cooperating.

The Hon. M. K. Featherstone

In view of prevailing conditions in Gibraltar, has Government any plans for negotiating with the Services to permit more areas to be available to the General Public - and in particular those areas with access to the sea?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Sir, there is an agreement with the Ministry of Defence which is a continuing process and under which the Ministry relinquish any property occupied by them as soon as it is no longer required for defence purposes.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.50 of 1971

HON.M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, would the Chief Minister say that Western Beach is required for defence purposes?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr. Speaker, defence purposes

MR. SPEAKER:

I rule the question out of order to the extent that the original question is clear: "In view of prevailing conditions in Gibraltar has Government any plans for negotiating with the Services to permit more areas...", you must not go into specific areas.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Well Sir, in view of the fact that I don't get a proper answer to the question I simply wish to know, has Government any plans? I was already told in answer to my previous question that MOD is always cooperating, I would like to know if Government have any specific plans for negotiating?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr. Speaker, first of all I don't agree that I have not answered the question, I think I have; in fact if I may say so, he asked a new question which you yourself, Sir, disallowed. Perhaps the Hon. Member would like to see a record of how much MOD have released recently; I have a list here. Some illustrations of these releases are:

The transfer of White Stores for Hostel accommodation for workmen and of the Locomotive Sheds at Rosia as a store for Caravans; the Rosia Cold Stores have also been transferred recently; Engineer Battery is also available for hotel development when the conditions are right.

The Ministry of Defence have also made available temporary accommodation to Youth Clubs, at the Old Command Education Centre and South Pavilion and have also agreed that the garden at the rear of Artillery House should be handed over to Gibraltar Government for conversion into public gardens with access from City Mill Lane. This will be a welcome addition to the City's amenities in a densely populated area and will provide a shaded recreational site for small children.

The impending release of Viaduct Reclamation Area will not only allow the development of a large housing estate and the establishment of a Marina, but will open up to the public an extensive water front area which will be fully exploited to the designs of the estate by way of a sea promenade and a beach, and I think that, so far as this Government is concerned, we have opened and obtained plenty of MOD land for the purposes of Gibraltar, and particularly that area which opens to the sea.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

Sir, the Chief Minister has mentioned in his list the Rosia Cold Stores, but as far as I can remember, is it not a fact that this became the property of the Government against payment for sometime now, no question of any recent release. This was purchased by the Government for use in order to be able to make development in that area if the need arose.

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

I think, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should have said two cold stores. I think the Hon. Member is referring to one at Rosia, I think I was referring to the other one at North Gorge.

HON. SIR JOSHUA HASSAN:

That at North Gorge, not Rosia?

HON. A. W. SERFATY:

Would it not be correct, in the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, to say the impending sale of the Viaduct Site, rather than the impending release?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

I think, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is well aware of the Lands Memorandum which the Government, of course, is looking into. We hope to have a definite answer I hope in the near future and this will ease matters even further. But it is not quite right to say that they have sold the land to Gibraltar, as far as I am concerned it is purely a book transaction since the people who are paying for the land are the British tax payers.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

The question originally mentioned the "prevailing conditions" that means the conditions of today, not in three or four years time when 750, 760 or goodness knows how many flats are built at the Viaduct Site. How many of these other sites, that have been very generously given - and I quite agree with that - how many of those have access to the sea?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

I think Viaduct in itself is quite an area and I am surprised that he should be so keen in getting this in such a short time. As I was trying to say before this is quite a record by length as a sea front, I haven't got the statistics available, but perhaps if the Hon. Member would care to consult me I will provide him with the length of seafront that has been opened in the short time that we have been in Government. I would be very interested to see if they can produce a similar record for the time that they were in Government.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

The question was how many of these places mentioned, apart from the Viaduct Site, have access to the sea, in the prevailing present conditions in Gibraltar?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

I think Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows Gibraltar well enough to know how many of those are open to the sea.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, is the Hon. Chief Minister of this progressive Government scared of the word "none" Sir?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

I am afraid that the Hon. Member is always getting the wrong end of the stick: that is absolute nonsense, if I may say so, the answer is, Viaduct Site, and that in my view is a great achievement.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, does the Hon. Chief Minister not appreciate that today, in the present heat of this summer, the people of Gibraltar wish more room, more opportunity for access to the sea? They are not interested in the Viaduct Site in four years time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.50 of 1971 (Contd.)

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

At present perhaps we cannot dive from Europa Advance, or whatever it is called, Europa Lighthouse area, but in the Europa Lighthouse area a promenade is also being built which gives access to the sea - at least to a view of the sea.

HON. M. K. FEATHERSTONE:

Mr. Speaker, why did he not say that at the beginning?

HON. CHIEF MINISTER:

Because, Mr. Speaker, I thought that he knew sufficient about Gibraltar to know that that is being done.