

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 13th DECEMBER 1977

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(360 TO 412)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
GIBRALTAR.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

A copy of the Answers to Questions asked at the Meeting of the House of Assembly held on the 13th December, 1977, is attached.

2. In case of any amendments Hon Members are kindly requested to hand them in not later than Tuesday, the 31st January, 1978.



9.1.78.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
GIBRALTAR

Clerk to the House of
Assembly

Your reference:

Our reference:

Date: 10 January 1978

PQ - HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MEETING 13th DECEMBER 1977

Page 2, FDS's answer to Bossano's first supplementary
(which starts at the bottom of page 1): in line 3 for
the words "until such time as they are told" substitute
"Until such time as the Income Tax Department is told".

(A Collings)
Financial & Development
Secretary

13.12.77.

No.360 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

What measure of delay, if any, is there in the repayment by the Income Tax Office of amounts that may be due to taxpayers as Income Tax rebates?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Under the non-cumulative system of PAYE adopted for Gibraltar the time span involved in finalising assessments and thus determining whether a refund position arises is from 6 to 8 months. The process starts with the return by employers of deduction cards. Employers are not required by law to return their deduction cards to the Income Tax Office before 30th April. It is then necessary for the Income Tax Office to check the cards and to verify that the tax deducted by the employer has in fact been paid over. It is only then that an employee's final assessment can be prepared. In practice it is generally possible to commence the issue of final assessments - and thus establish either a refund position or an under-collection during the latter half of May but bearing in mind that some 13,000 individual cases have to be dealt with in the manner I have described, a time-span of from 6 to 8 months is not considered unreasonable.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 360 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I to understand, Mr Speaker, that work on these cards begins straight away but the result of the refund in respect of the first cards dealt with is not made until 6 or 8 months have elapsed?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Sir, that is not the position. They are treated seriatim so that if the first batch of cards, let us say for the sake of illustration, are completed by early June or the middle of June and a refund position is established in respect of any one of them, then the refund is made. But it takes from 6 to 8 months to work right the way through the 13,000 cards, or cases, which have to be dealt with.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying that in a good number of cases it takes less than 6 to 8 months to actually effect the refund?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker, the process as a whole takes from 6 to 8 months.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Financial and Development Secretary confirm whether in

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fact the Income Tax Department is refusing to give refunds where these are known to be due to public sector workers on the argument that a further adjustment will need to be made when the 1976 review is eventually settled?

MR SPEAKER:

This widens the scope of the question tremendously because we are now going into the policy applied by the Income Tax Office in allowing or disallowing a refund. I will allow a general answer.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can give a very generalised answer to what I think lies behind the questioner's supplementary. Insofar as employees of the Official Employers are concerned, until such time as ^{the Income Tax Dept} they are told the 1976 Review is finalised, it is not possible to process any assessments for the Income Tax Year 1976/77 as the actual amount of earning in that year is of course not known. If assessments were to be issued on the information which is presently available, it would result, in the end, in duplicating every single assessment once employees in the ~~private~~ ^{public} sector had received their pre-review arrears.

HON J BOSSANO:

So that in fact, Mr Speaker, it would be correct to say that the Hon Member's answer as to 8 months is only applicable to 40% of the labour force, the other 60% will have to wait until 8 months after they have been paid their back money for October 1976, that is the situation, which could be 2 or 3 years?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

If that is the Hon Member's interpretation of what I said then so be it.

HON J BOSSANO:

I would like, Mr Speaker, the Financial and Development Secretary's interpretation of what he has said.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the Hon Member has given a straight answer to a straight question. He was asked in the general order of things, what is the delay on repayment of overpaid tax and in the normal order of events it is six to eight months before the whole process is completed. There are exceptions which may affect in this particular instance a large area of the work force but that is not the rule, it is the exception.

HON J BOSSANO:

With all due respect, the general order of the day would apply if in fact it was the general order of the day for pay reviews to occur on the due date which has not been the general order of the day since 1974, I am asking the Hon Member, in the light of the fact that pay reviews in the public sector since 1974 have been a couple of years in arrears, is it true to say that what he has said about 6 to 8 months would only apply to 40% of taxpayers, the other 60% of taxpayers it would be 8 months after their pay review was eventually settled which in the public sector since 1974 has been in arrears for 2 years.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I will only say this, Mr Speaker, that if one dealt with the delayed cases as they arose, the entire assessing machinery and other activities of the Income Tax Department would be completely jammed up and the whole process could easily grind to a halt because as I have pointed out if the assessments are made on the information which is available now, then the same process will have to be repeated once any settlement is reached which affects the year in respect of which an assessment has already been made. It will have to be reassessed and the whole machinery would creak to a halt.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member not accept that notwithstanding what he said about the additional work involved, the situation is that there must be very many cases where the Government owes taxpayers money, that is, where taxpayers have been over-taxed. Would he not accept that that is a situation that exists and does he not agree that it is wrong, in fact, for the Government to withhold money from people?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Since I am not in possession of the Income Tax returns I can't make a judgement one way or the other.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon Member not agree that if, in fact, we have a situation where at least 300 workers in the public sector spent 7 months of the year without pay from their employer as a result of a dispute which he will no doubt recall, there is a clear cut case where there are 700 people^{who} have been overtaxed because they have been overtaxed on 5 months pay as if they had been working for the 12 months and in that particular instance is the Hon Member not aware that they have been refused a rebate which is known to be due to them?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, I am not aware that any refund which is actually due to any taxpayer has been refused payment.

MR SPEAKER:

We are now enlarging the orbit of the question. I think what the original question was asking was whether people who are entitled to a refund were not getting it within a reasonable time.

HON J BOSSANO:

There is another point, Mr Speaker, which I want to make which I feel is important. Is the Hon Member aware that in the case of immigrant workers who become unemployed and who are required to leave Gibraltar after 13 weeks unemployment, there are no arrangements to ensure that they get a refund of tax before they are compulsorily obliged to leave Gibraltar and does he not agree that this is something that needs to be put right?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, that seems to me to be a considerable departure from the original question and I would suggest, if I may, with respect to the Questioner, that if this question is put down properly on the Order Paper I shall be pleased to look into it and provide him with an answer.

13.12.77.

No.361 of 1977.

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

In view of the similarity between the new £5 note and the £1 note is Government taking any steps to replace the £1 with a new issue to avoid confusion?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Apart from the fact that both notes are green in colour, the Government does not agree that there is any confusing similarity between the new issue of £5 notes and the £1 notes which are currently in circulation.

As I have previously announced in this House, the existing £1 note is to be replaced. The new £1 note will be reddish brown in colour - very similar to the colour of the old sterling ten shilling notes - and will be somewhat smaller in size than the new £5 notes. The new £1 notes have already been printed and should be available to be put into circulation very shortly.

13.12.77.

No.362 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether the list of the names of all approved Government contractors is available for inspection by members of the public and if not why not?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

I assume that the list to which the Questioner is referring is that relating to contractors for building construction and civil engineering works. The answer is not yet: this list is now in the final stages of preparation and it is hoped to publish it in the Government Gazette before the end of the year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 362 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the list of approved Government contractors limited to construction and engineering firms, as the Hon Member has said, or does it not apply to every Government contractor.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, this is hardly within my particular province but I understand that it does confine itself to building construction and civil engineering works. I would say to the Hon Questioner that anybody who is successful in a tender for anything becomes a Government contractor. I find it difficult there to see how the Government could possibly have a completely comprehensive list.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is it not a fact that the entitlement to tender is subject to being an approved Government contractor and to complying with the Fair Wages Clause and doesn't the Director of Labour and Social Security have a list of all approved Government contractors from which he is supposed to delete those firms that do not comply with the Fair Wages Clause?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY: *o*

I was not aware of that, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon and Learned Attorney-General perhaps contribute to this and say whether the Director of Labour and Social Security is required to delete from the list of approved Government contractors firms that do not comply with the Fair Wages Clause and if so does that not presume that a list exists.

MR SPEAKER:

The nature of the question itself reveals the reason for asking it and the reason for asking is obvious. The Hon Member wants to know whether there is some requirement that all Government contractors in this particular list should be required to accept compliance with the Fair Wages Clause.

HON J BOSSANO:

No, Mr Speaker, what I am trying to find out is in fact whether the Government keeps a list of all the firms that are approved as Government contractors and if such a list exists whether it is possible to ask to see who they are.

MR SPEAKER:

You have gone beyond that now.

HON J BOSSANO:

I have only gone beyond that because the Hon Member said that the list was going to be gazetted as far as construction and engineering firms were concerned.

MR SPEAKER:

You have asked the Hon and Learned Attorney-General whether he can answer the question as to whether Government contractors are required to sign acceptance.

HON J BOSSANO:

No, Mr Speaker, I know that they are required but given that they are required to comply with the Fair Wages Clause and given that in the last House of Assembly the Hon and Learned Attorney-General informed the House that a contractor could be taken off the list, would he not confirm that in order to be taken off the list there must be a list in the first place which he must be on otherwise they can't take him off it, that is what I am asking. If there isn't a list then obviously people can't be taken off the list.

MR SPEAKER:

What information do you want from Government?

HON J BOSSANO:

The Hon Financial and Development Secretary apparently doesn't know whether contractors other than building contractors, are on the list, contractors who are recognised as approved contractors who can submit tenders for Government work. On the basis of the answer that I have obtained to one of my supplementaries at the last meeting of the House, I think the House would be right in drawing the conclusion that there is a list of all approved Government contractors. We were told, Mr Speaker, that if a contractor failed to comply with the Fair Wages Clause, the Government could take him off the list. Given that he can be taken off the list, Mr Speaker, can that list be seen, the list of all the people who have not been taken off, that is what I am asking.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, perhaps there is a little confusion in this matter. The list to which

the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary refers is a new list which is being prepared regarding the potential of contractors of civil engineering and construction work for the kind of work and the potential that they have having regard to the nature of the work and to the value of the work. They have been classified and these are the ones that are being published in the Gazette for everybody to know and the limitations within which the nature of the contract is to be accepted. This is in order not to lose time with all sorts of people applying for work for which they really have no potential. As I understood the Hon and Learned Attorney-General, what he said is that there is a duty on the part of any contractor of the Government, obviously who provides work, who provides a labour force to carry out the contract, to comply with the requirements of the Fair Wages Clause. There is no exhaustive list of that. What it means is that anybody who doesn't will not be considered for further acceptance of Government contracts in tenders and not that there is an exhaustive list of everybody who supplies items ranging from toilet paper to meat or whatever it is. But in any tender where it is proved that the Fair Wages Clause is not being complied with in respect of that tender, then it will be up to the Government, to say: "That is not a good contractor because he is not complying with the Fair Wages Clause and he will not be considered in the future?"

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister whether in fact the Government knows at any one point in time all the contractors who are supplying services to it since the Government is under an obligation to establish that all these firms are complying with the Fair Wages Clause.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Attorney-General refuted that suggestion the other day because it was up to the worker and to the union concerned to draw attention to the fact that the Fair Wages Clause was not being implemented and when this is done then the Government does so. Of course the Government has got lists all over the place of all contracts. I am sure that they have not all been collated except perhaps at the Treasury. The number of contracts with the Government is very extensive and I am sure that there is not an alphabetical list of them in any one place. What the Attorney-General says, and I don't speak for him, is that we have a duty if the attention is drawn to the Government to see that the Fair Wages conditions of the contract are carried out but we have not got a politic duty with regard to tender contracts to see that the Fair Wages Clause is carried out.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask then if there isn't a central collated list whether at departmental level it is possible for example to....

MR SPEAKER:

I think that you are anticipating another question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask whether it is possible to obtain a list at the level of the department? Is it possible to go to a department and ask, for example, for a list of all contractors who at that point in time are providing a service and who, by definition, one can check whether they are complying with the Fair Wages Clause or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I cannot speak for departments but from my long experience I think that at any one time there isn't any one list and if there was the question of whether it should be available to interested parties is another matter. I am sure that there is not a comprehensive list in any particular department, perhaps, in smaller departments only. In big departments who have 25 or 30 people supplying them various things I am sure that they have a list and it can be prepared but I don't think that there is a list readily available for inspection. I would like time to be able to provide that information.

13.12.77.

No.363 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Will Government consider the introduction of specific allowances against Income Tax for persons with special dietary/or medical requirements, and for single persons living on their own?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The Government will look at the possibility of affording some relief from tax for persons with special dietary or medical requirements and for single persons living on their own.

19.12.77.

No.364 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how many infringements of the requirements of the Trade Licensing Ordinance have been found in the current year by the 10 weekly inspections carried out by Government inspectors giving a detailed breakdown of the requirements of the Ordinance that have not been complied with and of the steps that have been taken to ensure compliance with the law?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

A total of 94 infringements of Section 3 of the Trade Licensing Ordinance have been detected as a result of weekly inspections. Section 3(a) provides that no person shall trade or carry on a business unless he is the holder of a licence. Section 3(b) provides that no person shall trade or carry on a business otherwise than in accordance with the terms of such licence. The greater part of the total number of infringements which I have mentioned concerned Section 3(a) and only 15 cases of persons trading otherwise than in accordance with the terms of the licence have been detected.

As to the steps taken to ensure compliance with the law the position is as follows:-

Persons trading without a licence contrary to Section 3(a)

57 cases were warned that unless they initiated action to obtain a licence within 7 days they would be reported. In every case an application was submitted to the Trade Licensing Committee and 12 such applications have already been approved. The remainder are being processed and will be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

16 cases are under consideration by the Attorney-General.

6 cases are still in the hands of the Investigating Officers and will be forwarded to the Attorney-General shortly for consideration.

Persons not trading within the terms of their licence contrary to Section 3(b)

10 cases were warned and a visit by the Investigating Officers on the day following the issue of the warning confirmed that the offending articles had been withdrawn from sale.

5 cases are still in the hands of the Investigating Officers and will be forwarded to the Attorney-General shortly for consideration.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 364 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Hon Member whether return visits are made to the places which are found to have articles not included in the terms of the licence, periodically, to ensure that the items do not make a reappearance?

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HON A W SERFATY:

I would have thought that this is part of the job of the Inspectors.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say whether that job is being done or not?

MR SPEAKER:

I do not think the Minister himself is in a position to answer that question.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Minister not agree that there would be more respect for the provisions of the Trade Licensing Ordinance, if the Trade Licensing Committee dealt with applications more expeditiously?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not in a position to say how expeditiously the Trade Licensing Committee deals with applications and therefore I cannot answer the question.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Minister aware that there are applications with the Trade Licensing Committee that have been there for periods in excess of six months?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, I am not aware.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Hon Member how often does the Trade Licensing Committee sit?

HON A W SERFATY:

As often as is required, Mr Speaker.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I would like to say that I have seen a paper in connection with the non-attendance of quite a number of members continuously and the complaints by some of the members that others are not attending and this is a committee in which all parties are represented.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would it not be a good idea for the Minister to reconsider the recommendations of the Select Committee on the composition of the Committee which will then ensure regular attendance by members of the committee?

HON A W SERFATY:

As the Hon questioner knows this is a matter that is going to be discussed within

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the next few days with some interested parties.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, have there been any infringements reported for the non-displaying of licences?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not aware, Mr Speaker.

13.12.77.

No.365 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government now given consideration to the report of Crown Counsel on the dispute at the Generating Station and does Government intend to take any action in this respect?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

Government has, of course, given consideration to the recommendations and is proposing to act on them. In particular it is proposed to hold meetings with management and the unions concerned to endeavour to agree upon some code of procedure whereby stoppages of the nature which led to the enquiry can be avoided. General consideration will also be given to methods of improving industrial relations at the Generating Station.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.365 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Atterney-General give the House an indication of what steps those might be? I make this point in relation to his last point of improving industrial relations, generally, at the Generating Station.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I cannot, at this stage, but it is under very active consideration by Government.

13.12.77.

No.366 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government indicate when the industrial tribunal is expected to pronounce its verdict in the case of Mr J Wilkie?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

Counsel for both the employee, Mr Wilkie, and for his employers, Stevedoring and Cargo Handling Company Ltd, have agreed to take action to compel the industrial tribunal to give a Judgement in this matter. Such action, which will entail proceedings in the Supreme Court, is about to be filed and, therefore, although the matter is not at the moment sub-judice it is very nearly so. In the circumstances it would be improper for me to say anything further.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 366 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I right in saying, Mr Speaker, that the matter has been outstanding some eighteen months?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Yes, quite correct.

13.12.77.

No.367 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government make available the text of the Helsinki Agreement, especially those parts of it that might affect Gibraltar and the human rights of Gibraltarians.

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Yes Sir. I have obtained copies of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe commonly known as the Helsinki Agreement which will be sent to all Hon Members.

13.12.77.

No.368 of 1977

CRAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government inform the House as to the present state of affairs in the dispute regarding the Varyl Begg Estate?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

Preliminary investigations have been carried out by a senior engineer in a firm who specialise in structural problems. His report and programme for full investigation is expected in a short time. It is hoped that the full investigation will commence early in the new year. Once we have the result of the investigation then it will be possible to decide against whom to proceed.

2. In the meantime observation is being kept on the roofs and all steps will be and are being taken to alleviate the leaks. Further information will also be given in answer to question No.372/77.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.368 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Hon and Learned Attorney-General inform the House of the name of this firm since we know the names of the other parties in the dispute?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I don't know the answer but I will find out and I will undertake to supply the Hon Member either before the end of this meeting or within a matter of days.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And could the Hon and Learned the Attorney-General give the House an indication of the terms of reference of this firm that is going to start the investigation early in the new year.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

The terms are to find out what is the cause of the leakage in the Varyl Begg roofs, is it due to faulty design, is it due to faulty construction or a mixture of both but, generally, to tell Government exactly what is the root cause of the trouble.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Hon and Learned Member tell the House whether the parties to the dispute, namely, the Contractors and the Architects have, in fact, agreed to the appointment of this firm to look into these aspects of the matter?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

It has nothing to do with them at all. It is we, the Government, who have decided that we must now have independent advice as to the cause of the leaks. There is no question of asking for the consent or agreement of the contractors and the architects to this appointment.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then I am right in saying that this is not an arbitration and bearing in mind it is not an arbitration by, when does the Government feel that this investigation is going to be over and the matter taken up once again with the contractors and the architects.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I cannot give an indication as to how long the full investigation will take. I will again endeavour to get an estimate of that time and I will inform the Hon Member of the information which is given to me.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I believe the investigation will take place in the middle of January and early February and they hope to have an answer within three months.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would I be right in saying that then there would be a further process of negotiation with the contractors and the architects or does Government propose to act on the findings of this firm?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

We shall have to see when we get the findings.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can he anticipate, Mr Speaker, that substantial work on Varyl Begg Estate will start at least by next summer?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Government certainly very much hopes that this will be so. It would be wrong for me to give an undertaking at the moment until the report is received.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned Member give an indication of what steps are being taken to attenuate the position at least in...

MR SPEAKER:

No, I will rule that out of order. We are discussing the present position as to the dispute and nothing else.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether the parties to this dispute have, in fact, undertaken to do any work in the interim period whilst the report of this firm is being prepared?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, there is still a certain amount of discussion going on between the contractors and the architects over what remedial work the contractors are prepared to do. The situation is not exactly clear at the moment.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it not a fact though, Mr Speaker, and will the Hon Minister for Public Works inform us that the contractors had in fact offered to put right certain flats?

MR SPEAKER:

I am not under any circumstances going to allow questions to get into that orbit. I allowed the original question, and the Hon the Leader of the Opposition knows this, in the knowledge that it has been asked regularly in the last six meetings. It was worded in such a way that you were entitled to ask it but I am not now, under supplementaries, going to allow the whole matter to be re-opened. Next question.

13.12.77.

No.369 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Can Government state what its policy is towards expanding the activities of the Committee for Cultural Activities to ensure that there is growth in cultural activity in Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

With the formation of a separate committee for the allocation of grants to cultural associations and activities, support and development of cultural activities has entered a new and more positive phase. In this financial year, the Committee has concentrated on music, graphic art, drama, nature and the sciences, history and literature. Particular interest has been evoked in the education of young musicians and support to Gibraltar's Symphony Orchestra and, in this field, I would anticipate that the Committee was working towards the formation of a Youth Orchestra. In other fields, it will continue to assist those associations and individuals in the organisation of exhibitions, competitions and the collection of relevant cultural material and to press for the expansion and improvement of accommodation in which cultural activities can thrive to the benefit of society. Government will endeavour to provide the Committee with the funds it requires to pursue these objectives.

13.12.77.

No.370 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Has Government any plans to encourage the use of the Theatre Royal to develop the same for its traditional cultural activities?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

No, Sir. No approach has been made by the proprietors of the Theatre Royal in this respect. Restoration of the Theatre Royal to its former condition would no doubt be very expensive and subsidies to running costs would also be costly if it was to run exclusively as a theatre.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 370 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Government have no interest in recovering the use of this theatre for cultural activities?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

As the Hon Member is well aware it is a privately owned theatre and I don't know how far it is Government's duty to look after the private property of individuals.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not saying this from the owners' point of view, I am talking from the point of view of the community. Bearing in mind that it was a rather fine theatre and a central cultural point, is the Government not interested in recovering this for the use of cultural activities in some way?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

We haven't looked at it other than we know that the restoration of the Theatre Royal would be very expensive indeed.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Government commit itself to investigating the position afresh from, again, a public point of view?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, we are willing to do that.

13.12.77.

No.371 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Is Government still committed to providing necessary facilities and equipment for the adequate running of St Martin's School?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Yes Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 371 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Would the Minister consider, say, blankets essential to St Martin's School?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I haven't heard yet why you need blankets in the school, Sir; but if it is considered essential by the Headmaster we will be happy to look into it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Would he consider kitchen utensils to be essential for St Martins?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Some kitchen utensils are provided because we give lessons in cookery etc., and they are there at the moment. The majority of meals are provided from the hospital so there is no need for kitchen utensils as far as cooking in the actual school for the children is concerned.

HON G T RESTANO:

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Would the Minister explain how it is that a request/being made by the Headmaster in a circular to various firms asking for funds for extra items required which they cannot obtain through normal expenditure, things like blankets, linen and kitchen utensils and an ironing board?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think the Headmaster has applied to various places for a lot of items which one might consider as unnecessary to the running of the school but which of course would be very pleasant to have if one can get them and the Headmaster who is a very active gentleman in pursuing what he considers would be the optimum for the school has been doing fund raising activities etc., but as far as the necessities for the school, these are all provided by Government. The frills, of course, are not provided.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Minister aware that this list was sent out?

2.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I understand that the Headmaster has been making certain efforts to get these extra items that he would like to see in the school.

HON G T RESTANO:

Were these extra items asked for from the Government?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think they were asked for and he was told they were unnecessary.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is an ironing board unnecessary for the school?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I don't see where the education of handicapped children specifically needs an ironing board.

HON G T RESTANO:

If the Headmaster thinks so it means that it is a necessary item.

MR SPEAKER:

I am not going to allow discussion in this House as to whether an ironing board is essential for the school. What we are being asked is, exclusively, whether Government is satisfied that they are supplying the necessary facilities and equipment to the school.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

If you ask Headteachers what they would like to have in their school you will get a tremendous list which goes far beyond what is absolutely necessary and I would mention that the Headmaster of the Handicapped Childrens School, possibly from his experience in such schools in England, goes well beyond what is necessary and he hopes to obtain these things from private charities which is, I understand, the same way as is done in Britain.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, didn't the Hon Member say in answer to one of the original supplementaries that the Government would provide anything the Headmaster considered essential? He just said that, I heard it.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Well, if I said that I retract it. Anything that the Headmaster considers it essential and can get the department to agree is necessary.

HON J BOSSANO:

Then, Mr Speaker, is the House to understand that the arbiter of what is essential is, in fact, the Minister and not the Headmaster?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, I should say it is the Director of Education.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware that one of the features of education in a handicapped school is that precisely because one is dealing with handicapped children it may happen that children soil their clothes and require those clothes removed, washed, ironed and returned. Is he aware of that which does not occur in normal schools?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, this does occur.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Minister review this list in view of the claim of the Headmaster in the attached letter of appeal in the light of what obviously the Headmaster of St Martin's School considers to be necessary and I would include a portable garage in this list apparently. Would the Hon Member review this list with his Director so that the special needs of the School are met by the Government whose obligation it is to meet these needs?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The special needs, as far as I understand, of this school, have been met and in the own words of the Headmaster he has a school which compared to United Kingdom standards is of the very highest so that I do not think that Government is falling short in any way of its responsibilities in this matter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member give an answer to my question? Would he review this list?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Well, if another list is sent in it will be looked at with exactly the same attention as previously but as I have said it is not the duty of Government to provide every frill that the headmaster can think up and I can tell you that the present headmaster is pretty inventive at thinking up frills.

13.12.77.

No.372 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government now state when the remedial work on the roofs at Varyl Begg will be starting?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

The Contractors and the consulting architects have not yet resolved their disagreement despite intensive Government efforts on the matter. Consequently, the remedial works to the roofs in the project have not yet commenced.

In order to reduce the quantity of rainwater penetrating through the roofs this coming winter, Government has now commenced temporary waterproofing over the existing tile finish by the use of a brushed-on mastic compound.

This measure, whilst only temporary, should improve the living conditions in the top flats until the problem is resolved on a permanent basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 372 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is this in fact the contingency plan that Government stated in the House previously they had ready to put into effect if the dispute with the contractors was not resolved?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, the contingency plan was that Government itself was going to strip the roof and see what was wrong and try to get it put right on its own efforts.

HON J BOSSANO:

I see. Has the contingency plan now been dropped and replaced?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Well, it has been superseded since we have now brought out a firm of experts to look into it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, this temporary measure that is being taken, has it, in fact, been adopted elsewhere in Gibraltar previously? Does Government have any indication of the sort of result they can anticipate from this temporary measure?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

We have two temporary measures, one of them is "flinkote" which has been done

elsewhere and has proved effective. The other one is a different type of paint called "Flamenco" which we have just painted one roof completely and we are still awaiting to see what the results are?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, have the contractors offered to repair or re-do some of the work for which they might be willing to claim responsibility?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The difficulty with the contractors is that they have made two or three somewhat differing offers and we have never yet been able to pin them down to exactly what they have offered to do. They have offered to do remedial work on the roof of seven buildings where there are a number of faults. We are trying to pin them down as to whether they are willing to remedy the complete roof or only patch up the areas that they say are faulty. We have not yet got a full answer to that question.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

The further difficulty is that the contractors have said that even if the roofs are reinstated to the original specification, even then, they say these roofs will still leak because of the faulty design on the part of the architects. That is an additional problem with which Government is faced.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it, Mr Speaker, that this would be completely free of charge?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Yes, it would certainly be free of charge but it would be again a complete waste of time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has Government, in fact, examined in detail the proposals of the contractors in respect of this remedial work or has it just discarded it as possibly interfering with the course of the resolution of the dispute?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

It is not a question of examining in detail. It is trying to get a detailed reply from the contractors exactly what they are willing to do. At one time they say they are willing to make remedial repairs to those roofs which have been found to be faulty and we have tried to say: "Are you going to do the whole roof or are you just talking of patching up in little areas where already part has been lifted up and has been found underneath to be faulty?" We have never yet got a satisfactory answer to that question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I right in saying, Mr Speaker, that this has been on offer by the contractors for the past, let us say, nine months?

3.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think this offer was made originally some time in May and it is since then that we have been trying to get from them exactly what they are prepared to do and we have never got a definite answer.

13.12.77.

No.373 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Will Government be making provision in next years estimates for a maintenance workshop for the Glacis and Laguna Estates?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

The personnel of the Maintenance Section who work at the Glacis and Laguna Estate report and operate from the Ragged Staff Depot. In order to facilitate the work simple carpentry and plumbing and other items are prepared in three wash-houses at the Laguna Estate.

As one of these wash-houses is required by the Electricity Department for conversion into an electrical sub station provision will be made in next years draft estimates to build a small workshop in that area. This workshop will not in any way replace the facilities available at Ragged Staff Depot.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.373 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree it might be an improvement in terms of the use of the time available if people were to report direct to the Laguna Estate instead of reporting first to the Ragged Staff and then making their way to the other end of town?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

There is a possibility that this is so, Sir. On the other hand one cannot have depots in each and every different area of Gibraltar. One might as well say that anywhere that anybody is turning to work they should have a depot and report there because it saves time rather than going to Ragged Staff first. We have to weigh one with the other but we are willing to look at it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is there some sort of industrial dispute in this respect?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Not that I know of.

13.12.77.

No.374 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what is being done to remedy the problem of water penetration in the lift shafts of the Tower Blocks?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

The problem of ground water in the pit of the lift shaft at Constitution House, which has occurred in very few instances is related to tide conditions and is of no consequence whatsoever.

On certain abnormal occasions high water tide has caused water to enter the pit but the level of water has no effect on the working of the lift.

There is an overflow from the pit to the stormwater drain but in conditions of heavy rainfall coinciding with high tide create a backwash which results in water entering the pit via the overflow. This water eventually flows out as conditions return to normal.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 374 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Hon Member then satisfied that there is absolutely no chance of the actual working of the lift being interfered with as a result of the presence of the water in the shaft?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, I have already stated that it has no effect on the working of the lifts.

13.12.77.

No.375 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

When is work on the new Public Works Garage due to commence?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Demolition works are scheduled to start in March 1978. I would mention these are demolitions at the Slaughter House site. The building of the new Public Works Garage is scheduled to commence in mid-June 1978.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.375 OF 1977

HON P J ISOLA:

I thought the actual new structure had been in Gibraltar for about 6 months or a year. Why is it taking so long? Why can't work start now, for example?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

All the contract documents have to be prepared and the whole job has to go out to tender and this will take some little time yet.

HON M XIBERRAS:

When did Government start preparing these contract documents? I seem to recall hearing in the House that the programme of implementation was far ahead of the time stated now.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think the approval from ODM was not received until fairly well into this year and then the contract documents started to be worked on.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware of the opposition of the personnel in the existing Public Works garage to move to the proposed site and does he not think that that could well interfere with the implementation date that he has suggested to the House?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, I am aware that there is some opposition to the move.

13.12.77.

No.376 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Would Government consider installing a circular conveyer belt for luggage at the Airport?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

It is not possible to instal a circular conveyer belt for luggage at the airport because of the limited space available.

However, the luggage conveyor will be replaced when the existing Air Terminal is extended and it is hoped to do this within the next development programme 1978/81.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 376 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

I take it then, Mr Speaker, that Government has made investigations as to what size of conveyor belt can be obtained?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, a scheme has been prepared for the extension of the Airport Terminal building which includes a race-track type of conveyor belt.

13.12.77.

No.377 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government make a statement on the progress of the deep-drilling project for water at North Front?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

In August 1977 a representative of the Institute of Geological Sciences visited Gibraltar to examine the feasibility of carrying out deep drilling, for potable water, at North Front and in the Rock area.

Based on this assessment, which puts the probability of striking suitable water in the Rock's area as higher than at North Front a project application has been made to the Ministry of Overseas Development in order to seek the necessary funds to carry out the project.

A reply is still awaited.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.377 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

When was the application first made?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

This gentleman, as I said, came out in August, we got his findings by September and I think by late September we were making the application.

HON M XIBERRAS:

How high is the possibility of finding water in the Rock area?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

According to this gentleman the possibility of striking water in the North Front area is only 5%. The possibility of striking water in the Rock area is 50%.

13.12.77.

No.378 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

What plans, if any, does Government have for the old St Joseph's Hospital?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

A project application is in course of preparation for submission to ODM for the erection of 50 maisonettes/flats on this site. It is the intention to demolish the old St Joseph's Hospital and ODM have already agreed to pay for the demolition if the project application is approved.

13.12.77.

No. 379 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

What immediate plans does the Government have for the clearing up of the area above the Laguna Estate known as the Jungle?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

There are no immediate plans for the clearing up of the area above the Laguna Estate, known as the jungle, although it is hoped that at some future stage when funds permit the area may be cleaned up for use as an amenity area. The costs, however, would be very substantial as not only would the exercise involve very high initial capital cost, but there would also be the recurrent cost of keeping the area clean and looked after by permanent staff.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 379 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I right in saying, Mr Speaker, that there have been offers of volunteer work in this area?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, not as far as I am aware.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I right in saying it was the Army that started the project?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, the Army as far as I am aware have not volunteered to clear up the jungle.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Minister received any representation, other than the question by my Hon Friend, that this area should be cleared up and made available for a different purpose?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir. We are aware that many people, including the Ministry of Defence, have suggested that it is a pity that this place should be kept in that condition but it is all a question of priorities and costs.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Hon Member have any idea of how much an exercise, however gradual, would cost?

2.

HON A W SERFATY:

I have a rough estimate of about £40,000 and recurrent costs of about £6000 a year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

£6000 for what, Mr Speaker?

HON A W SERFATY:

Cleaning, maintenance, etc.

13.12.77.

No. 380 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Has there been any change in Government plans with regard to the siting of the new Girls' Comprehensive School?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

No Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 380 OF 1977

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister then give any indication as to when something is going to happen in that direction?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, the position is that the original estimate of the cost of the school was £1½m. Assuming that approval can be given in April, 1978, the revised estimate is £5.3m taking into account future inflation with completion date of October 1981. This is a matter which will be, hopefully, discussed in the 1978/81 Aid Programme.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker do I take it that consideration was not given by Government to the siting of the Girls Comprehensive School at St Jago's site area?

HON A W SERFATY:

That was considered at the beginning at one time before we decided on Montagu Basin but the site is not big enough.

HON P J ISOLA:

Am I right then in thinking that there is really no possibility of having the new Girls' Comprehensive School built in Gibraltar before four or five years? Is that the realistic position?

HON A W SERFATY:

Four years. That is correct.

13.12.77.

No.381 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Will Government give a progress report on the construction of flats at Rosia Dale?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The Contractor took possession of the site on 4 th January 1977 and work has proceeded since then. Work goes according to programme save for a two week lag and should be completed by March 1979.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 381 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has there been any modification? Am I right in saying that extra flats are being provided there?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, thirty eight flats is the provision and as far as I am aware there have been no alterations.

13.12.77.

No.382 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

What building schemes have been proposed by MOD & DOE/PSA to the Development and Planning Commission for implementation over the next five years?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The only building scheme brought by MOD/PSA to the Development and Planning Commission is that relating to the proposed conversion of Sandpits Stores into married quarters.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.382 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying that with this little activity on the part of MOD and DOE/PSA, coupled with the little activity there seems to be in the Government building programme, that the level of economic activity in this sector has fallen drastically?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, I am inclined to agree, Mr Speaker.

13.12.77.

No.383 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Will the Minister responsible for the Port report to the House on his recent promotion in the United Kingdom of the Port facilities of Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

A cruise seminar took place at the Charing Cross Hotel, London, on Friday November 25, at which the guests included representatives from 14 Shipping Lines and Mr John Lancaster Smith, the senior executive of the Passenger Shipping Association.

2. After an address by myself on general matters, an audio visual presentation to demonstrate the latest promotional aid and a factual statement on the current incidence of cruise calls at Gibraltar was made by the manager of our London Office.
3. Following the presentation a prolonged discussion and a question and answer period followed. The discussion included such items as publicity, the need to identify the best local bargains in the shops, the organisation of special events to be co-ordinated with the arrival of particular ships when possible, arrangements to provide discount vouchers to passengers by shops which would wish to participate, more effective contact with the ships' "port briefing and shore excursion officers", and the distribution of Audio Visual packs to such officers.
4. One point which came out during the discussion was that owing to the diversification of cruising, such as fly cruises to the eastern Mediterranean and Caribbean it would not be realistic to expect an upsurge of cruising in the Western Mediterranean. A contributory factor is that a reduced number of cruise liners are now operating from widely diversified areas - as far afield as Australia.
5. Statistics to the effect that Gibraltar was obtaining over a third of all cruise ships passing through the straits from UK Ports was considered by the representatives to be good, but I personally do not share their view.
6. Another important, if not the most important, point to emerge was that the catchment area for cruise passengers to the Western Mediterranean is widening and it was the view of the representatives that it would be advisable to take Gibraltar marketing to these areas which are now opening to us. Statistics in fact show that about 46% of cruise passengers originate from places outside the UK with as many as approximately 18% coming from Germany and Austria, and over 12% from the USA and Canada.
7. All in all, it was an interesting and instructive experience to us and to the shipping companies. We have met old friends and made new ones in the shipping world. The four hour meeting has given us a clearer picture of how our limited resources can be best expanded in the future in order to increase our share of the market.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 383 OF 1977

HON P J ISOLA:

I thank the Minister for a most interesting report but would not the Minister agree from what he has said that there is obviously a potential in this respect for promoting the port facilities in Gibraltar, and will he not agree that there is therefore a need to reconsider the expenditure in this respect, a need for more money to be spent to expand what I would have thought was a very important activity of his Department and has he got plans for that?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, it is an important activity, I agree though from the point of view of visitor expenditure in Gibraltar it may be not that important but important enough. I agree that we have to look into Europe and we are thinking of ways and means of increasing our promotion. We have done a little in Sweden last year and we propose to do something about it, particularly in Germany, in the near future.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Hon Member not recall his statement that £2000 was enough for this aspect of publicising the facilities available at the Port and would he not be prepared to reconsider this in the light of his recent visit?

HON A W SERFATY:

We are considering some promotion in Germany, it is a bit early to give details at this stage, which will include cruising but will also be aimed at the inclusive holiday market.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Were the Minister and the Captain of ^{the} Port promoting solely passenger cruises, or was the Minister also promoting other aspects of the facilities available at the Port?

HON A W SERFATY:

The advertising that has been done by the Port Department, to differentiate from the Tourist Office, is aimed at cruising and other very important aspects of the Port, cruising being only one of them. The Tourist Office is mainly concerned with the promotion of the cruising business so it is a two-pronged affair. The Port will limit itself in the future with an increased budget; I hope next year, to advertise the Port, generally, including cruising. The Tourist Office will have to do promotional efforts in Europe.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Minister not agree that there is a need to re-appraise the balance of expenditure within his Department as between inclusive tour packages and the promotion of the port facilities, not only for cruise liners but also ordinary ships that come to Gibraltar in view of the fact of the very

small number of seats there are on aircraft to Gibraltar? Will he not agree that there is the wrong balance in expenditure, there is too much on one side of his Department and very little on the other?

HON A W SERPENTY:

I am not inclined to agree with you. The inclusive holiday market is by far the most important and that is what will take the lion's share of our promotion. I agree that there is a limited number of the cheap seats in the scheduled flights from London but that is why we are so interested in the promotion and encouragement of charter flights that I have said on other occasions. That is by far the most important. The limited number of yachts that come to Gibraltar spend a lot of money too and cruises is not much higher than that. It is the inclusive holiday market that is really what brings the money in.

HON G T RESTANO:

The Minister said that we were getting about a third of the cruise liners passing through the straits and coming from UK Ports. Has he any idea why we only get a third?

HON A W SERPENTY:

The shipping companies give all sorts of reasons and one of them is that they must produce a variety of alternatives to their clients. Not all of them might wish to come to Gibraltar so they include Gibraltar in one cruise and they do not include it in another. That is one of the main reasons. I have a hunch, too, that in other ports the Shipping Companies make a larger profit by offering excursions to far away places. If they go to Ceuta they offer an excursion to Tetuan and they make more profit on that than if they offer an excursion in Gibraltar to go and see the apes and the Cave.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is there a consensus of views within his Department that the Port can be promoted rather more than it has been in the past?

HON A W SERPENTY:

We started advertising the port a year or two ago because we fully appreciated that a lot can be done to promote the port of Gibraltar as such apart from cruises. We propose to increase the amount of money to promote the Port of Gibraltar next year.

HON M KIBERRAS:

My question is, is there a consensus within his Department?

HON A W SERPENTY:

The consensus is that we must carry on promoting though there is a limit to the amount of advertising that one can do.

13.12.77.

No. 384 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Will Government confirm that it has received representations to convert the area adjacent to Notre Dame School into an adventure playground and what, if so, is Government's reaction to the proposal?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Two proposals have been received by Government regarding the Laguna area, one from the Rotary Club in 1976 and the second from a number of voluntary bodies early this year.

Both proposals, however, fell through because of financial considerations. The cost is very high not only because of the need to provide land drainage before any work on the actual playground could begin but also because the site would have to be surfaced, fenced in and provided with lavatories, caretakers stores, etc. There would also be subsequent recurrent maintenance and servicing costs.

However, Government is sympathetic to the concept of an adventure playground in this area.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 384 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member state what the proposals of the Rotary Club were and what does he mean by saying that they fell through through financial reasons?

HON A W SERPATY:

I must assume that it was because the voluntary bodies as well as the Rotary Club couldn't find enough money to get on with the job. As far as I can remember, none of the proposals included the conversion of the whole site into a recreational area, it had to be limited, but even that fell through.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member then saying that the reason it fell through was because Government was not prepared to lend any financial assistance?

HON A W SERPATY:

It is not a question of being prepared, it is a question of availability of funds. We are talking of a lot of money here, far more than for the "jungle".

HON J B PEREZ:

How much money is involved?

HON A W SERFATY:

I have not been able to obtain a detailed estimate because there isn't one, but I can give the House an idea by saying that the area of the site is 50,000 sq ft and that the whole site has to be drained by means of underground drains. It is not a question of a sewer as the land becomes waterlogged. It doesn't require much of an engineer to appreciate that providing land drainage to 50,000 sq ft is bound to be at least £100,000, I should say. Then, of course, there is all the fencing, lavatory accommodation, etc. We are talking of a large sum of money.

HON P J ISOLA:

It is an important part of the public area of Gibraltar. Will the Government not consider putting this into the next development programme as worthy of assistance from Overseas Development?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is a question of priority, Mr Speaker. I have already said in the answer that Government is sympathetic to the concept. This is as far as I can go at the present moment of time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it a fact that the Government has received an offer of construction including some of the heavy work, from a military source?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, it is not a fact.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Hon Member sure?

MR SPEAKER:

May I say one thing. Matters are being thrown at Government without notice which I think is completely and utterly unfair. There is a Standing Order which says that Members will make themselves responsible for the statements they make. It is no use asking if it is true that someone has made an offer unless there is basis for the statement.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Otherwise it wouldn't be made, surely, and this is why I am making it. I am asking the question.

MR SPEAKER:

Perhaps, you might give the reasons on what you base your statement on.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not prepared to do it because the Hon Member opposite has not heard about it. If he had an indication of where it came from, perhaps, I could pursue the matter.

HON A W SERFATY:

At one time the Royal Green Jackets and some youth associations made certain limited offers but they fell through too.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Minister who are the parties he mentioned that have made an offer apart from the Rotary Club? Who are these voluntary organisations?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Youth Association, the Royal Green Jackets and Barclays International.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Member not agree that even granting that the cost would be a relatively high one, that he has offers of help from very substantial bodies in Gibraltar, people, for instance, like the youth clubs who raise £2000 or £3000 in each of their fund raising activities and would the Hon Member in view of this not try to get all the different parties who want an adventure playground there, together, so as to pull their financial resources aided, perhaps, by Government?

MR SPEAKER:

Order. You are now making a statement. Let us ask questions. You have made a statement which is difficult to answer.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not be prepared to try to get some sort of cooperation between the different parties who have offered in one way or another to help financially in the development of that area into an adventure playground and also consider if he obtains enough financial support from private aims, adding to this some sort of financial contribution from the Government?

HON A W SERFATY:

Of course I am prepared to consider but I am not going to go cap in hand to Barclays and ask for money towards the cost of a scheme which may well be £160,000 or £200,000.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a simple question. Are you prepared to consider a suggestion that you should get together all those interested parties to see whether something could be done. I think that is the question.

HON A W SERFATY:

If the offers are there I am certainly prepared to consider the matter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not take a more active part in this because he has had an offer already from these various parties.

HON A W SERFATY:

We shall try and revive the interest and see what happens.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The interest is there. Hasn't the Hon Member seen the letters in the press about this?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Royal Green Jackets are in Northern Ireland now.

HON M XIBERRAS:

May be he should tell the Gibraltar Regiment, then.

13.12.77.

No.385 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

What works are currently in progress in respect of the Government's Modernisation Housing Programme and can Government state how many tenants have been re-housed since the scheme began and how many tenants have been decanted during the same period?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

To date 56 dwellings have been modernised and allocated. Work is currently being carried out on another 17 units. Tenders for a further 15 flats will be invited next week.

During the period 1975 to 1977 the number of families who have been decanted and rehoused has totalled 93.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 385 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

So in fact, Mr Speaker, the arithmetic of this is that 93 families have been decanted and 56 dwellings have been modernised.

HON A W SERFATY:

Plus another 32 being carried out or going out to tender next week.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And these 15, in fact, Mr Speaker, on which work will begin next week have already been decanted and form part of the 93 that the Minister has mentioned?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, these 15 flats must have been decanted already.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I would like the Minister to give an indication, if he would, as to how effective the modernisation programme is in terms of numbers, of people actually going back to their original houses?

HON A W SERFATY:

The ninety three are back in modernised houses, and others in houses which have had major repairs carried out and which have required decanting. That is why some people have been decanted not only for the modernisation scheme but for the maintenance and repair scheme.

HON J B PEREZ:

Can I ask the Hon Member whether he is satisfied with the way the modernisation programme is working. Is he satisfied with the results?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am never satisfied with the results and least so with the modernisation. The modernisation scheme requires a lot of decanting and that is the problem we come across. It is an enormous problem to get people out of their houses because we cannot provide reasonable alternative houses.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member on the rate of modernisation per year. At one time I seem to recall when the Minister was defending the programme, am I not right in saying, that it was 15 a year.

MR SPEAKER:

Let us have the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

My question is at what rate are these flats being modernised?

HON A W SERFATY:

Approval has so far been received for 125. We are talking of a 3 year period so if you divide the 125 by 3 you get the answer, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

No, Mr Speaker, I wouldn't get the answer. I am not talking of those that have been approved plus those that have been constructed, I am talking about those that have actually been constructed or modernised.

HON A W SERFATY:

I have already said in my original answer that 56 have been modernised, 17 are being modernised right now, 15 will start next week and some more will follow. It is very difficult to answer this question without notice. I don't think the actual work of modernisation started as early as 1975.

HON M XIBERRAS:

At what rate are modernised flats actually completed?

MR SPEAKER:

If you cannot answer you can say that you require notice.

HON A W SERFATY:

I need notice of that question.

13.12.77.

No.386 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government received the necessary equipment to modernise the 600 old telephone lines and if so when is work to commence?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

Yes Sir. The replacement of the 600 telephones in the 3000 group will be effected when the new extension to the Cross-bar exchange is commissioned early next year. The 600 telephones cannot, technically, be replaced until such time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.386 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

What is the cause of the delay, why can't it be done right now?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We are doing it, it is not a question of delay. We are extending the exchange and this is part of the programme of providing extra lines and at the same time replacing the old lines.

HON M XIBERRAS:

When will it finish?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It will be commissioned early next year.

13.12.77.

No.387 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Has Government now taken a decision as to whether Cable and Wireless should run the international telephone service?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

Since the original proposal was made, the government has been informed by Cable and Wireless that additional facts will be brought to its attention. The matter will be considered further when this information is available.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 387 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

So in fact the Government has still got an open mind as to whether to allow Cable and Wireless to take over the Government's running of telephone services?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It is not a question of whether it is going to allow Cable and Wireless to take over. Additional facts are going to be provided which will require further consideration of the matter.

HON J BOSSANO:

So the Government has still got an open mind as to whether they will allow Cable and Wireless to take over?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We haven't taken a decision yet.

HON J BOSSANO:

I want to know whether the Government has decided they will not hand over the running of the international telephone service to Cable and Wireless or whether, in fact, it is still undecided one way or the other, that is what I want him to answer. The Hon Member said at a previous meeting of the House, will he not recall, that the matter of Cable and Wireless running the service which at present is run by the Government was something on which a policy decision would be taken by the Council of Ministers. I am asking whether the decision has already been taken and if the decision has not already been taken, I am now asking whether, in fact, it is correct

to say that it is still an open question whether the running will be handed over to Cable and Wireless or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I think there is an innuendo in the question, I am sure well meant, which confuses the matter and there could be an arrangement, I am not saying that it is going to be, there could be an arrangement which does not mean a takeover.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the answer that I am asking from the Government is whether on the question of the takeover a decision has been taken?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, we are not in favour.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, that is what I want to know, Mr Speaker, is the Government in favour of the Cable and Wireless taking over?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Mr Bossano is not qualifying. Taking over exactly what?

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I understand that the Government was approached by Cable and Wireless with a view to Cable and Wireless actually running the international telephone service which is run by the Government. I want to know whether the Government has now thought about that proposal and rejected it or whether it is still thinking about it?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We still haven't made a decision. We are still considering the matter in view of additional factors they are going to provide. The Government is not in favour of the original proposal.

HON P J ISOLA:

Will the Government very much bear in mind the obvious exciting prospects, if I may put it that way, that are offered to Gibraltar, in its expansion and development, by the possibility of an earth satellite, being shoved up in front of us. I would have thought that that merited very serious consideration and the balancing of factors and so forth.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, that is one of the additional factors that are available now which we have to consider. I am quite as excited as my Hon and Learned Friend.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I not right in saying, Mr Speaker, that the proposal to put the

satellite is not conditional on obtaining control, that one thing is not conditional on the other. Could I add, Mr Speaker, whether the matter as it is now being considered by the Government, has, in the Government's view, now got wide implications?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That is correct, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Hon Member then refer to question 326 of 1977, where the Minister responsible for this said, in fact, that if there were any wide implications on the matter he would inform the Opposition before a decision was taken and does the Hon Member stand by this and at what stage does he intend to inform Hon Members of the proposal?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

When we have information, which we still haven't, we will certainly do so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I do take it, Mr Speaker, that the Hon Member will consult the Opposition before a decision is taken.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We will inform the Opposition, certainly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Before a decision is taken?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Certainly.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I hate to come back to the same thing but as I understand it the matter was left at the last meeting of the House in that the proposal then was that Cable and Wireless wanted to take over the actual running. Is it in fact that Cable and Wireless has now withdrawn that proposal or is it in fact that the Government has replied to that proposal in the negative?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We haven't considered the complete takeover of the international lines favourably. There are now other additional facts which have^{been} brought forward to our attention and which we will consider in the general context.

13.12.77.

No.388 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether the decision to instruct telephone operators not to telephone Spain through the United Kingdom was taken by the Government of Gibraltar or the British Government, and when this decision was taken and why?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

The decision to instruct telephone operators not to telephone Spain through the United Kingdom was taken by the Gibraltar Government on the 12th May 1977 when the new semi-automatic service with UK was inaugurated. I gave the reason for this decision in reply to supplementary question arising out of Question No.349 of 1977.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 388 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member recall that he didn't know, in an answer to that question, that instructions had been given and can he explain how it was a Gibraltar Government decision of the 12th May and in November he was not aware of it?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, at that period of time there were other more important things affecting my department and in actual fact the Superintendent of Telephones did telephone me and I did make a note and subsequently I lost the note and I completely forgot about it because my main concern at that time was the Generating Station.

HON J BOSSANO:

But, in fact, Mr Speaker, was the Hon Member a party to this decision? Was he involved in deciding that the operators should not connect?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, certainly, the Telephone Superintendent rang me up about it and I agreed with the decision that he had made.

HON J BOSSANO:

So the decision was not made by the Government of Gibraltar but by the Superintendent of the Telephone Department?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

No, the Superintendent of Telephones rang me up and said what decision he should take and I said, yes, he should take the right decision.

HON J BOSSANO:

The Hon Member said, yes, he should take the right decision, but in fact who was the decision made by, was it made by the Hon Member or was it made by the Superintendent of Telephones?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It was made by me.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say, in fact, when he made this decision. Is he talking of having made it on the 12th May 1977?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, it was made around that date?

HON J BOSSANO:

I see. In arriving at this decision, Mr Speaker, that telephone operators should be instructed not to connect calls, can the Hon Member say whether it was indicated to him in any way that the British Government would not approve of an opposite decision?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Certainly not. The British Government has never come into the question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, it is absolute coincidence then that the Hon Minister for Municipal Services in Gibraltar and the Postmaster-General in the United Kingdom came to a simultaneous decision as to the instructions that would be given to Cable and Wireless and to telephone operators without any communications between them, telephonic or otherwise.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, Cable and Wireless have never come into this question.

HON J BOSSANO:

What I am asking the Hon Member is whether he is asking the House of Assembly to believe that he came to a decision to tell the Telephone Operators not to connect telephone calls to Spain unilaterally and simultaneously with the decision taken by the Postmaster-General in the United Kingdom to ask Cable and Wireless not to connect telexes. They both came to the same decision at the same time without any communication between them. Does he expect the House of Assembly to believe that, Mr Speaker?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I certainly did not liaise with the Postmaster-General in England or with the Cable and Wireless. The reasons are very simple. Before an international exchange, in this case the London Exchange, can accept traffic between other administrations, it is necessary for those administrations to have reached agreement inter alia on tariff and the sharing of fees. In view of the Spanish Government's policy on

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telephone communication with Gibraltar, there would have been no purpose in attempting to reach such an agreement. Nevertheless, in accordance with a motion on this subject passed at the meeting of this House held in July, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were asked to investigate the matter further as was also stated in my reply to Supplementary Questions at the last meeting.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the difficulty then in the London Telephone Exchange?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There is no question of difficulties. We haven't got any agreements with Spain to use these lines. Spain cut the communications.

HON J BOSSANO:

I am well aware of the fact that Spain cut the communications. I am not talking about the communications between Spain and Gibraltar, I am talking about the communications between Spain and London. Is the Hon Member saying that if a telephone operator put an STD call through London, London would not put it on to Spain, is that what he is saying, whether the Hon Member wanted to or didn't want it?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Technically, the Operator in Gibraltar can telephone direct to Spain through London. There is no manual operation involved except at our end but we would not know what to charge the client because we have no agreement with Spain.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member not agree that it is possible for him to establish what the charge is from London to Spain and from Gibraltar to London and to add the two?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That is a hypothetical question.

HON J BOSSANO:

It might be hypothetical to expect the Hon Member to be able to add but I would like to know.

HON G T RESTANO:

Has a reply been received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

MR SPEAKER:

A reply to what?

HON G T RESTANO:

A reply to the possibility of opening communications.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

A reply has been received on the matter which is not correct, in fact, and we are in communication with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office again.

HON G.T RESTANO:

May we ask what was the information received?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I am not at liberty to say at the moment but as soon as I have the full information I will pass it on.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Hon Member, in relation to his anticipated provision of a limited number of STD facilities which will be operated directly by clients, would there be anything to stop in those circumstances somebody simply dialling through?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, I don't think that forms part of the question.

MR SPEAKER:

It is part of whether it is possible to dial direct to Spain. If you have not got an answer you may say that you need notice of the question.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It is possible but the question of the special service for subscribers is not moving the way we wanted it because we are having trouble with extra lines.

13.12.77.

No.389 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

For how long has one of the Hospital lifts been out of order and when can the lifts be expected to be fully operational?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

The fault which lead to the stopping of one of the lifts at the hospital was detected in May 1977. The matter was referred to the Public Works Department who ordered the necessary spares immediately. These spares did not arrive until two weeks ago when the work was put in hand.

Works were completed on the 6 December 1977 and trial run commenced on the 8 December 1977.

The lift became operational on the 9 December 1977.

13.12.77.

No.390 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

What reply does Government propose to give the Gibraltar Nurses' Association in respect of those points contained in the recent communique which have to do with the availability of Doctors at St Bernard's Hospital and of duties which are apparently currently being performed by members of the nursing staff, and does Government not agree that there is cause for anxiety?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

A Government press release was published on the 26 11 77 in answer to the first press release made by the Gibraltar Nurses Association on the subject which it is thought was fairly explicit. Bearing in mind that negotiations have been conducted with eight prospective applicants the first of which commenced within three weeks of the notice of retirement of our ophthalmologist it can hardly be alleged that there has been any delay in taking active measures.

It is regrettable that press releases such as these as produced by the Gibraltar Nurses Association can only lead to upset and alarm the public. In view of the efforts made to find a replacement and of the assistance given by the Royal Naval Hospital which guarantees very adequate ophthalmic coverage, it is not fully understood why a professional body such as the Gibraltar Nurses Association with full knowledge of the facts should adopt such an attitude.

It will interest the House to know that the Board of Management, who met during my absence in the United Kingdom recently, have gone deeply into the matter and are fully satisfied that the Government has taken the right steps both in trying to recruit an Ophthalmologist and in obtaining the necessary coverage in the meantime.

Finally, nurses do not carry out diagnostic duties for the doctors but clearly in all departments, for example, Out-Patients, Ophthalmic, E.N.T. and Maternity they do assess patients for the medical staff and in this particular instance, Ophthalmic, the same thing applies and whenever necessary patients are referred to the Consultant. This has always been the practice.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 390 OF 1977

HON M X IBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member say whether in the Ophthalmic Department, in particular, the situation there is a normal one?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, Sir, it is not normal but it is not alarming or giving cause for anxiety. It is not normal because as the Government stated in the original release, the routine services are not there, as efficiently as it would have been if we had got an Ophthalmologist. We have got to refer people to the opticians outside, we have got to refer people to the clinic at the Naval Hospital, but let me say that the Naval Hospital Ophthalmologist is now also coming down once or twice in the mornings. I accept the routine services are not the same as if we had a full establishment but there is absolutely no cause for alarm or anxiety, I can assure the House.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Whilst accepting what the Hon Member has said in respect of the reasons or non-reasons for anxiety in the hospital, would the Hon Member give an indication as to how the Ophthalmic clinic is handled now? Are patients seen by the nurse there or are new patients seen only when the Naval Hospital Consultant is there to see them?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, Sir. The Naval Hospital Ophthalmologist has got a clinic a week. He has told us that if we want another clinic he is prepared to do it but there is no necessity for that at this stage. Secondly, on emergencies patients can be seen within a quarter of an hour of being referred either by a private doctor who has access directly to the Naval Hospital at no cost at all or if they go through the Health Centre and the case needs immediate treatment, they go to the Hospital as for every case and make an appointment or if it is an urgent matter they go to the Naval Hospital immediately. Basically, the service is there.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Bearing in mind the situation, Mr Speaker, can the Minister say when the Ophthalmologist is going to come?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I have been in London recently not exclusively for that, I went for something more important which will come out later on. I asked the ODM and they said that the doctor had not yet signed the agreement as such though he has committed himself, and that they expected him some time towards the end of February or the beginning of March because he has got to give 3 months notice. In the

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meantime we have tried to get locums but it is not easy.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister say what is going to happen to those patients who are in need of an operation, perhaps not urgently, but who have been waiting now for a number of months and obviously they are very anxious about it.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No patient who needs an operation will go without it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does this apply to cataract operations?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Precisely, they are the ones it applies to mostly.

HON G T RESTANO:

And there is no delay?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Absolutely no delay.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, though the Ophthalmic Department is the one, I think, foremost in people's attention, could the Association's communique also be said to apply to other areas of the Government and is there a shortage of doctors there?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, we haven't got any shortage of doctors. The only one missing is the Ophthalmologist if "missing" is the right word because we have got the one at the Naval Hospital.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it Government's intention to recruit more doctors in the near future?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

We are not short of doctors.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But is it Government's intention to recruit more doctors in the near future?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Recruit replacements but not more doctors.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is there an indication that a number of doctors or specialists are about to leave?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I can give a solemn assurance that if ever we were to lose that particular one gynaecology would be covered fully and completely. Perhaps I may refer to the arrangements that are now getting a little bit more expeditious, the arrangements with the Naval Hospital to try to merge at a human level before we finally merge at the structural level. They will be taking any service that we cannot cope with and we, on the other hand, will take services that they cannot cope with.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Minister said that this particular doctor is leaving?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes.

13.12.77.

No.391 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

How many cases are there presently on the Housing Medical Category Lists and does Government intend to adhere to the same percentage of allocations in respect of such cases?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

There are at present 78 cases on the Medical Category List. Government will adhere to the same percentage of allocation in respect of such cases.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.391 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could the Minister tell me what is the rate of influx on to the Medical Category List? Does he get many new cases a month?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it depends entirely on the actual cases but I can say in all sincerity that when this question was asked there were 75. As a result of the question coming some time last week, there was a meeting of the Housing Advisory Committee and it went up to 78. It would depend entirely on circumstances and we may go for some time with absolutely none and then you may have 6 or 7 coming through. It is difficult to pin it down to a particular percentage on a weekly or monthly basis.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the current percentage now 15%?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, 15% is the allocation for Medically categorised cases.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would I be right in saying, Mr Speaker, that for those persons at the end of the medical category list there is not much hope of rehousing in the next, shall we say, 3 to 4 years. Is that the position?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I can't answer that one definitely because of course one doesn't know what will happen in the next 3 or 4 years. I can say that with the 140 vacant flats at Varyl Begg some 23 cases may make it at the allocation of Varyl Begg. Thereafter, of course, it depends entirely on the return of modernised flats or any other system that will provide more housing.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In view of the fact, Mr Speaker, that this percentage was arrived at at a time when flats were more easily available to the Government, more were being built, has the Government considered either reviewing the percentage or re-examining the cases on the medical category list to see which are the most deserving?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, as the Hon Member well knows there happens to be a doctor on the Housing Advisory Committee who is the person, together with the Committee, that sits down and considers individual cases categorised or otherwise. The question of the allocation system....

MR SPEAKER:

No, you are being asked a simple question. Is Government prepared to change the percentage for medical cases. Otherwise we will be discussing every aspect of every item and that we cannot do.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Government at this stage is not considering a change.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The other question, Mr Speaker, was, in view of the fact that some of these cases are not going to be housed for a long time, has Government in mind to review the cases as such by the competent doctor so as to pick out the most deserving out of these 78 or whatever they might become in a year's time, so that these are housed before others that are less deserving.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I don't think I would like to commit myself to say that Government would be prepared to give priorities within the priorities of being categorised. I assume that when a person is categorised it is because he or she happens to have a particular illness that warrants specific advantage, if I may use that word, over the normal waiting list. I can say, Mr Speaker, that the whole spectrum of the Housing Allocation Scheme is being studied by the Housing Allocation Committee and the Government is also looking at it. I am not saying that it is going to alter anything.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, since the persons who can form a judgement on the seriousness of cases in relation to the actual accommodation in which they live are, in fact, the Housing Advisory Committee, can the Minister undertake to put the points, for consideration to the Housing Advisory Committee?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Of course it can always go to the committee, Mr Speaker. If they are prepared to further list a particular individual which they have already given certain advantage to is not for me to say.

13.12.77.

No.392 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

On what conditions are Government tenants issued with materials to deal with repairs and improvements of their dwellings and can Government explain what system of accounting and checking there is in this respect and what Government department is responsible for deciding on the merits of individual cases?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Tenants of Government dwellings are not normally given materials to repair or improve their dwellings. Exceptionally when the Public Works Department cannot undertake an approved urgent repair or decoration work tenants who accept to do the work themselves and at the request of the Housing Manager, are issued with materials to carry out the work.

The material required is estimated by PWD Technical Officers who ensure that the amount issued is adequate for the approved work and they also carry out spot checks on completion.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.392 OF 1977

HON P J ISOLA:

Do the Public Works Department Technical Officers advise in the first instance by on the spot inspections whether this work should be done or not?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

This sort of work is normally painting, Sir, and it is the Housing Manager who applies to us and says: "This house needs painting, can you do it urgently?" In the instance that we cannot do it and the tenant is willing to do the painting himself then one of our maintenance staff will agree with the Housing Manager if this can be done.

13.12.77.

No.393 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

For how much longer is sport to be deprived of the use of the Victoria Stadium and does Government not agree that it is high time something is done to restore the Victoria Stadium to sport and what is Government doing in this respect?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Government has indicated on a number of occasions its willingness to accept arbitration in the case of the Victoria Stadium Sports Centre and to be bound by the results. Regrettably the TGWU has not seen its way clear to attempt to find a way out of the situation by using arbitration. Government considers that Sport can no longer be deprived of the use of the Stadium and is therefore taking the necessary action to resolve the problem. To this end Government has decided that from 3 January, 1978, the two cleaners involved in the dispute will be transferred within Government to the Department of Education. The two cleaners were given notice of transfer on 5 December 1977, and the Union was informed accordingly.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.393 OF 1977

HON P J ISOLA:

May I ask the Minister if there is any particular reason why a month's notice should have been given in this respect? Is any delay of any kind justified now?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I would assume that because it is quite simple to make allegations against the Government in possibly acting with some haste and to avert such possible allegations, it was decided to give these two ladies a month to consider if in fact we can offer them the kind of employment that they are apparently seeking, that is to say, where they can work for $1\frac{1}{2}$ or $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Hon Member not agree that it is not justified to hold up the use of the Victoria Stadium by thousands of schoolchildren, by lots of sporting people, to suit the convenience of two ladies and to allow them to consider or reconsider. Does Government not agree that there is an urgent need to restore the Victoria Stadium to Sport in view of the fact that the dispute concerned has been seen to be purely a gimmick on the part of certain people and not a genuine dispute.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, Government agrees wholeheartedly that we consider that sport cannot be

deprived by the action of two part-time cleaners who apparently wish to work in different conditions to that which was originally agreed. The only thing that I would like to inform the Hon Member, Mr Speaker, is that although it can be said that a month is possibly too generous, we had hoped that the two ladies would have accepted the offer and have left before the 3rd January ie, they would take up employment within the Department of Education which, we understand, are conditions that suit the particular ladies' desire.

HON P J ISOLA:

Could I ask the Minister, I am talking about the return of the Victoria Stadium to Sport, whether there are any other impediments once these good ladies have been transferred, in the way of returning the Victoria Stadium to sport?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

There should be no other impediment, Mr Speaker. I can say that if these two ladies were to leave tomorrow, the indoor sports facilities could be opened that very same day. The other cleaning staff are prepared to go in and do the work once these two ladies have left. In the case of the external facilities, that is, the football and hockey pitches and athletics track, that is a different kettle of fish, Mr Speaker, because we are still blacked, it would require a salt water valve to be repaired and if that was repaired then, of course, limited use of the facilities could be made. Nortex, of course, is still blacked and that would require a much greater treatment but the indoor facilities could be used within hours and the outdoor facilities we could use on a restricted basis if we had the salt water valve repaired.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, I don't know whether the Minister has missed the whole purpose of my question. I am asking when the whole of the Victoria Stadium is being returned. What steps is Government taking to ensure that adequate materials are supplied to the Stadium and adequate repairs are done. I think the public of Gibraltar are fed up with not being able to use the Victoria Stadium. Does the Government not envisage taking strong action in this respect which would have the support of all sporting people in Gibraltar as well, I am sure, as the great majority of the people of Gibraltar. That is the main purpose of the question, not about two cleaners. It is the use of the stadium by the people of Gibraltar.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I concur fully with the Hon Member's sentiments on this matter. I think he is fully aware that we have done our utmost...

MR SPEAKER:

What you are being asked is what steps is Government taking to see that all the amenities of the stadium are available.

3.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, we hope that when these two ladies leave the stadium that things will return to normality. We hope that the union will find no need to black the stadium because there will be no longer a dispute if the two part-time cleaners are no longer in the stadium and in so doing we can bring the stadium back to its full operational standard again.

HON P J ISOLA:

Will the Minister not agree that it is rather a pious hope? May I ask the Minister, having regard to the statements that have been made by the union involved in the dispute, it is quite clear that this is not going to be the case. Does Government propose to take during the month of December positive steps to ensure that materials reach the stadium and that essential repairs are carried out to the Stadium in view of the public support that those steps would have, or is somebody else going to govern Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I can certainly say that we have all the material we require for the indoor facilities. The position is that the staff at the stadium refuse to clean, polish and treat the floor until these two ladies have left. On that one there is no problem once these ladies are away and the indoor facilities can be restored straight away. On the outside facilities I am afraid I can't answer as to what action Government is going to take to convince the union. We have been trying to get them to lift the blacking at the stadium for nine months, I am afraid that present day circumstances not only in Gibraltar cannot allow us to do things that we would like to do.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is it not a question of the Government, after allowing a reasonable period of time for negotiations to take place with the union, after allowing a reasonable time for arbitration if required or not, is it not time that the Government asserted its right of ownership over materials, its right to transport its material? Is it not time, does the Minister not agree, that the Victoria Stadium was returned to Sport and that Government took positive steps to ensure this is the case and the question....

MR SPEAKER:

Order. It is no use asking a general question without suggesting what you think that Government should do.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can I ask the Government what steps it proposes to take to ensure that the Victoria Stadium, the whole of it, is returned to sport when the cleaners are removed?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, we have taken the step of transferring these two good ladies to another Government department. It might be a pious hope, it could be wishful thinking. We hope, Mr Speaker, that the union will realise that there may be no need to further black the stadium if these two

cleaners are no longer there and that is, I am afraid, all that we can do. We cannot under any circumstances move our own Nortex. Will the Transport Contractor move the Nortex if the union asks them not to move it? I agree fully with the Hon Member's sentiments and no one more than I would like to see the stadium back to normal.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member whether in fact this offer which has been made has been accepted and if not are there any indications?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

First and foremost, Mr Speaker, it is not an offer, it is compulsory transfer within Government's right of transferring its staff from department A to department B. On the other one I did say that the union had been informed accordingly. The union have, regrettably, not accepted our order.

HON P J ISOLA:

When in situations such as this, and this has happened to other employers in other parts of the world, including the United Kingdom and including Gibraltar, the employers have taken certain steps to ensure that their particular domain is administered properly and efficiently by using other means other than just transferring employees and is this not the sort of thing the Government should be thinking of in respect of the Victoria Stadium and in respect of returning the Victoria Stadium to sport, or is the situation going to stay as it is for so long as materials are blacked in the Victoria Stadium? Is Government never going to take any action until the blacking is lifted?

MR SPEAKER:

Let us have an answer to that.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I accept the Hon Member's views but surely I don't think Government can be accused of taking no action. We have taken action which I think a lot of people may have well advocated but I think it is probably the first time that action has been taken on the transfer of two particular persons from a particular employment.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, since the Minister has now admitted that his action, however unprecedented, is not going to improve and has no hope of improving the situation as regards the external facilities at the Stadium, will he agree that at least the question of the valve or stopcock or whatever it is which is about 10 minutes work and which might allow a limited use of the grounds, at least is something well within the compass of the Government and much less, in fact, than transferring two cleaners compulsorily.

5.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, who will repair the valves?

HON M XIBERRAS:

If it is a matter of ten minutes work, surely, somebody can repair that valve. Members of the ground staff could do it.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, members of the ground staff will not do anything until these two ladies are no longer at the stadium.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon Member bear in mind that once the Government's action has been taken and the indoor facilities have been made available once again, that then there is no excuse really for not doing that work on the valve.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I said that to the Hon Peter Isola.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

13.12.77.

No.394 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government give the figures for full-time employees in the Public Sector broken down into Gibraltar Government and the UK Departments and into male and females and nationality for the three months ending on the 31st October, 1977?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

Employment Survey figures are normally published approximately six months after the start of each survey. This is the time taken to process and tabulate the information received from employers. It is therefore not possible to provide the relevant figures for October 1977. The latest available figures in respect of full-time employees in the public sector refer to the April 1977 Employment Survey although in the case of the UK Departments the latest figures relate to the April 1976 Employment Survey. On this basis the figures are as follows:-

		<u>Gib. Government</u>	<u>UK Departments</u>
		<u>(as at April 1977)</u>	<u>(as at April 1976)</u>
Males	British	1863	2892
	Moroccan	406	672
	Other	7	-
	Total	2276	3564
Females	British	723	343
	Moroccan	9	5
	Other	2	-
	Total	734	348

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.394 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

May I ask, Mr Speaker, why is it that in respect of the UK Departments the figure is for April 1976?

HON A J CANEPA:

The data on the number of employees in the United Kingdom Departments is not available either for October, 1976 or for April 1977 because of the effect of the protracted CPSA dispute which affected these departments at the time.

13.12.77.

No.395 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Now that the Consumer Protection Unit has been in existence, fully staffed, for a considerable period of time, does the Government have a comprehensive report from it, as regards price structures and profit margins in Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

It is, in fact, only very recently that the Trading Standards and Consumer Protection Department has been fully staffed, and one Trading Standards Officer has still to arrive from the UK to take up his post.

A comprehensive report was submitted to Government by the previous Consumer Protection Officer in May 1976 dealing with all aspects of consumer protection in general and advising on future policy.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.395 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it the intention that such a report as suggested in my question should be carried out in the near future?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, Sir, it is not necessary, it is not required.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Why not?

HON A J CANEPA:

Given the nature of the sort of claims that we get on the various commodities which are price controlled, it is not necessary to have that sort of general viewpoint. Each has got to be looked at separately on its own merits, the conditions appertaining to the margins of profit and so on are totally different for cigarettes, say, as against groceries and so on.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not asking the question purely out of interest in price control but rather in price structures and profit margins in Gibraltar, generally. Is it intended that such a study should be made?

HON A J CANEPA:

Such a study is made at each stage when dealing with any claims. Such a study is made in respect of each commodity. That we control as it arrives, it is a continuing exercise. What we don't have and what we do not consider that we need is a comprehensive report across the whole spectrum.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Do I take it then, Mr Speaker, that the Hon Member does not think that such a general report on price structures and profit margins would be of interest to Gibraltar, generally?

HON A J CANEPA:

It might be of interest, certainly, but we do not require it in the Department.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not saying whether you require it, I am saying would it not be of interest generally?

HON A J CANEPA:

It might be of interest, generally, but it is not for the Consumer Protection Department to undertake it. It might be of interest to the Statistics Office to have it available, it might be.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is such a report in preparation or is it the intention of Government to produce, through any of its departments such a study?

HON A J CANEPA:

It has never arisen.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Government consider it now?

HON A J CANEPA:

I can discuss it with the Statistician. However, I do not think that either under the Statistics Ordinance or under the powers that we have at the moment under the Price Control Ordinance, whether we may have the powers to investigate into the matter to that extent. We may not be able to obtain the information.

13.12.77.

No.396 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Government give unemployment figures, by industries, for each of the last 12 months?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

Records of unemployment figures broken down by industries or occupations are not kept and I cannot therefore give these particulars.

The Hon. Questioner will recall that, in reply to a rather similar question (No.268) in July, 1977, I said that it was impossible to break down the figures of unemployment for the previous 6 months by trade (which was taken to mean 'occupation' as distinct from 'industry') in the very short time available. The same applies even more now, if in fact what he is after is an occupational breakdown. Records by industrial classification are not kept, and I could not therefore give the figures asked for, even if given time.

Such breakdown of the monthly unemployment figures as I am able to give have already been furnished in answer to question Nos.268 and 343 of 1977, which together covered the period January to September 1977. If the Hon Questioner wishes, I can furnish him with the corresponding figures for October and November 1977.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 396 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Minister, or anyone in the Government, provide figures in respect of certain industries if sufficient notice were given, for instance, in the building industry?

HON A J CANEPA:

It might not be easy, Mr Speaker, unless we know what category of labour we were talking about. It might not be difficult to do it in respect of plumbers but it would be very difficult to do it in respect of labourers because a labourer is a very wide and a very general categorisation of someone who might be employed in one industry or another. It is not easy.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What about building?

HON A J CANEPA:

On Buildings, which is a skilled trade, we might be able to make better progress but even so there are some skilled trades who are not necessarily classified under building, they may be employed in some other industry. It is a difficult exercise, very time consuming and we don't have the staff in the Department of Labour and Social Security to do this.

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HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Minister not agree then that one would have to go by impressions of unemployment. I am concerned particularly with the building industry. Could the Hon Member produce as much information in due course as possible as to unemployment in the building industry?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, and I have given the House quite a lot of information. We usually go by what the individual who is unemployed classifies himself. If he alleges that he is a mason, then under the classification for unemployment he would be registered as a mason and therefore in respect of these skilled trades in the building industry we are able to keep our tabs on them. Also, of course, we are able to have fairly accurate information in respect of unskilled people if we are able to find out that they are unemployed as a result of having had their employment terminated with a former employer who is the contractor. Then we know he has come from the building industry but this is the only way that we can find out.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I think the Hon Member, if I may say so, is trying to be too accurate and too scientific about it. What I would like is a general impression as to what the level of unemployment is in the building industry and will he not agree that this could be got by sifting through the cards which he has on unemployment and asking questions of the main construction firms?

HON A J CANEPA:

That is not easy, Mr Speaker. I received the question on a Thursday morning and I have got to clear it with my Chief Minister on a Friday evening and that cannot be done. I have already given, in answer to previous questions, information regarding occupations, I have given that. I have been asked for a breakdown by nationality and I have been asked for a breakdown by trade and I have given as much information as I could but it is impossible to provide the information which he is seeking in this question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could the Minister for Labour not agree that if what one is concerned about is about knowing the level of employment in the construction industry as opposed to the level of unemployment, then by comparing the number of permits issued for that industry now as opposed to the number of permits issued 12 months ago, one would deduce that there are that less many people employed and it is a fairly simple exercise to do and that information is public and readily available.

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, and of course it does not mean that because there are less people employed by the industry that the shortfall are all unemployed, they may be out of Gibraltar for all we know.

13.12.77.

No.397 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Will Government give an indication of the rate of unemployment of school leavers?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

Approximately 250 young persons left school in June 1977. Of these school leavers there are now 7 males and 30 females still registered at the Youth Employment and Careers Office seeking first employment.

13.12.77.

No.398 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government confirm that it is Government's responsibility to ensure that approved Government contractors are complying with the requirements of the Fair Wages Conventions and if so what steps is Government taking to discharge this responsibility?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

It cannot be said that Government has responsibility to ensure compliance with the requirements of fair wages clauses if this means that Government has a duty to carry out a day to day supervision of all contractors and the manner in which they deal with their employees. If, however, it comes to notice, either in the course of dealings with contractors or by reason of reports from employees that there may be non-compliance with the requirements of the clause then Government has the responsibility to take certain action under the clause.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.398 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does Government require contractors to certify that they are complying with the Fair Wages Clause before they are placed on any approved list of Government contractors or before they are allowed to tender?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Certainly the requirement to comply with the Fair Wages Clause is made in the term of any contract which Government enters. Before tender, I do not think, I stand to be corrected, I do not think that Government requires an undertaking that the contractor will comply with the clause because there is no indication at all that the particular tender will be successful. It is at the moment before the contract is entered into that the Fair Wages Clause is made a term of that contract.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Hon and Learned the Attorney-General aware that a leaflet issued by the Department of Labour and Social Security says that before being allowed to tender for Government contract a contractor shall certify that to the best of his knowledge and belief the wages, hours of work and conditions of labour of all the work people employed by him in the trade or industry in which he is offering himself as a contractor are fair and reasonable having regard to the provision of these rules, namely, the rules covering the Fair Wages Clause?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

No, I wasn't aware but knowing the competence and the interest which that particular department shows, I am not surprised that they do issue a leaflet to that effect.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon and Learned Attorney-General not agree that if there is a leaflet saying that the contractor shall certify this before he is allowed to tender for Government contracts, Government has got a responsibility to ensure that this is happening? Mr Speaker, I am asking the Government what its responsibilities are in respect of ensuring that the requirements of the Fair Wages Convention are being complied with, that is my original question. I am asking the Hon and Learned Attorney-General whether, in fact, if according to the Labour and Social Security Department a requirement of the Fair Wages Convention is that would-be tenderers must certify their willingness to comply with this clause, would he not agree that it is a responsibility of Government when inviting tenders to ensure that people do certify that they are willing to comply with the Fair Wages Clause if according to the Labour Department this should be done.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

If a person tendering has certified that he is complying, Government, understandably, takes that on trust unless it has any reason to believe to the contrary. It would, I think, be quite impossible for Government to carry out an investigation in every case to find out whether the certification was true but in any event the crunch comes when it is made a condition of the contract that the Fair Wages Clause will be observed.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am asking whether Government tenderers are asked by Government to certify that they are complying or that they will comply with the Fair Wages Clause. I am not saying whether Government believes it or not, I am asking whether it is happening.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I cannot tell you. You told me about these leaflets, I wasn't aware the leaflet was issued but I can tell you that before a contract is entered into, the Fair Wages Clause is made a term of the contract.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if tenderers should certify their willingness to comply with this clause as a requirement of their being allowed to tender, would the Hon and Learned Member not agree that it is part of Government's responsibility to ensure that this is carried out?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

To a certain extent, but I cannot agree that it is Government's duty to go round and carry out the most thorough investigation of every case. As I said in my answer if in the normal course of business it comes to notice that the clause is not being complied with or if an employee complains, then Government would take the necessary action.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am not asking the Hon and Learned Member that Government should go round carrying out any investigations, all I am asking the Hon and Learned Member to say is whether, in fact, he agrees that the Government should require prospective Government contractors, as a condition of their being allowed to tender, to certify their willingness to comply with the Fair Wages Clause. I am asking him whether Government should do that or it shouldn't do it. It is a simple question which requires a simple answer.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer is that once a contract is signed a clause of that contract states that they will abide by it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the Labour and Social Security Department says that in order to comply with the Fair Wages Convention it is necessary for contractors to certify this before being allowed to tender for Government tender. I am asking the Hon and Learned Attorney-General how one Department can say this and another Department not see that it is put into effect. Surely a piece of information put out by a Government department reflects Government policy in this matter, so I am asking the Hon and Learned Attorney-General if the Labour Department says that this is necessary to comply with the Fair Wages Clause, surely it behoves Government to see that it is being put into practice. Is that the case or not?

HON ATTORNEY -GENERAL:

I don't think I can go further than what I have already said, that as a belt and braces provision, put it that way, the Department of Labour and Social Security put this as a pre-requisite, then we come along to the contract itself where in all Government contracts the provision is put in. It is no more than a reiteration of the undertaking given to observe Fair Wages and Conditions of Employment and thereafter the Government takes such reasonable steps as are open to it to see that the clause is observed.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if the Department of Labour and Social Security states, in writing, that a firm in Gibraltar wishing to tender for a Government contract is required to certify that it is complying with the Fair Wages Clause, whose responsibility is it to see that this requirement is being complied with?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I have said that Government is, in my opinion, perfectly justified in the first instance in relying on the certification, it has not got to go into a thorough detailed analysis of the contractor.

HON J BOSSANO:

If the Hon and Learned Member will allow me to interrupt him. I am not interested in whether the certification is genuine or a complete fabrication,

4.

I am interested in whether it is taking place. What I am asking the Hon and Learned Attorney-General is, given that the Department of Labour and Social Security says that this is a requirement before one can tender for Government contracts, is this requirement being complied with?

MR SPEAKER:

What the questioner is trying to suggest is that all tenderers must enter into an agreement with Government to comply with the Fair Wages Clause irrespective of whether it is successful or not.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I don't know the answer to that. I imagine if the Department of Labour and Social Security put out this requirement then it is observed, but that is speculation on my part and I would have to make further enquiries.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister for Labour and Social Security in a position to say whether his department has got machinery for ensuring that this requirement is being complied with? Does anybody check prospective Government contractors to find out whether they have certified their willingness to comply with the Fair Wages Clause?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I think I can certainly give an undertaking that the matter will be looked into.

13.12.77.

No.399 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Has Government now considered the question of the application of the Fair Wages Convention with regard to companies in receipt of Government loans, subsidies or licences and can Government now state its responsibilities in this respect?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The position in relation to companies which, although not under contract with Government, receive any loan, subsidy or licence is that in any contract for which assistance is granted the company must observe fair wages and other conditions.

Government's responsibilities in this class of case are the same as in what I may call the direct contract case to which I referred in my answer to the previous question.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.399 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to know what is the actual situation. Does the Government check before any licence, subsidy or loan is granted whether the firm in question is complying or willing to certify that it will comply with the Fair Wages Convention?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I cannot give the answer to that but I am prepared to give a written answer on this one. I discussed this matter with the Director of Labour and Social Security. In the time available the facts could not be ascertained but they will be ascertained and the Hon Member will be informed.

13.12.77.

No.400 of 1977

CPAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government explain what is the current position with regard to the broadcasting in colour by GBC?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir, with your permission I propose to answer questions 400/77 and 410/77 together.

HON G T RESTANO:

I think they are rather different, Mr Speaker, one is on the broadcasting in colour and the other one is on the premises.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well they are bound together.

MR SPEAKER:

If the Hon Member agrees we can have both answers jointly now. If he doesn't the Chief Minister will be entitled to say that he has no information to give on this one and he will give it to you with the other one.

HON G T RESTANO:

I would like separate answers.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, I am not going to answer the second one. I will answer the first one. Mr Speaker, I will answer the two questions together.

Agreement has been reached with Link Electronics Ltd on the terms of the contract for the purchase and installation of a fully operational colour television station. The contract has not been executed yet pending a decision on GBC's new premises.

The Hon Member will recall that in my reply to question 350 of 1977, I stated that Government was in the final stages of negotiation with the owners of the Vasquez Tobacco Factory, and that Ocean Heights was being kept in mind as a possible alternative. Since then, estimates of the cost of conversion have been prepared by consultant quantity surveyors, and these amount to £170,000 for the Vasquez Factory and £150,000 for Ocean Heights, exclusive in both cases of the cost of air-conditioning which is estimated to be £30,000. These costs render these two premises unrealistically expensive in view of the fact that the works would be carried out on privately owned property and that a commercial rent would be payable.

In the circumstances, an exhaustive search was conducted for new alternatives and the idea of converting Mercury House, which Cable and Wireless offered to sell to Government some time ago on a freehold basis, was reverted to. This possibility was considered by GBC at the outset but discarded because it presented difficulties of access. It seems that these difficulties as well as the parking situation for members of the staff, may be resolved and GBC are satisfied that this property would serve their purposes well.

The cost of converting this property is expected to be lower than for the other two buildings. In addition, once purchased no rent would be payable. Detailed estimates of costs are being prepared and as soon as these are available a firm decision will be taken, hopefully in the very near future.

Once the contract is signed, Link Electronics Ltd will supply the transmission package within weeks and this will make partial colour transmissions possible, for about 1 hour daily to start with and increasing as more colour programme material becomes available.

I would add that GBC have already purchased some colour equipment, ie video tape and colour test equipment, which made possible the recent test transmissions in colour.

I would reassure the Hon Member that Government does not consider that Wellington Front is suitable for continued occupation by GBC in view of the colour project and that all efforts are being made to find alternative premises.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTIONS NO. 400/77 & 410/77

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, could the Chief Minister elaborate on the new equipment that has been received by GBC? How many programmes can be broadcast in colour with this particular equipment?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The contract provides for a full colour television system transmission. We have contracted for a full colour television station and that is what we are buying and that is what the House will be asked to vote money for.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, that wasn't the answer to the question. The question was, what was the equipment that GBC has already purchased, which the Chief Minister made mention of a moment ago, and how many programmes can be emitted in colour with that equipment?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I said in my answer that they have already purchased some colour equipment, video tape and colour test equipment, which made possible the transmissions in colour which were made on test. You will remember I asked for extraordinary

expenditure last year and this was bought in anticipation so it is equipment which would have been included in the contract had we not purchased it and as Hon Members know they are already being used for interviews and so on in anticipation of their being put on the air.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can we expect further colour transmissions other than just testing in the near future?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

About an hour daily once the equipment is received, progressive as the equipment is established. We have not purchased television colour equipment, we have purchased a colour television station, except that we haven't got quite where to put it as yet.

HON G T RESTANO:

But with the video equipment that has been purchased and which has been transmitting in colour on a test basis, will we see regular programmes in colour in the near future?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No more than for testing because the colour video can only be used with the testing equipment which we have. That is different, that was described to me the other day as coloured television and not colour television and therefore until we get the substantive equipment to start the proper transmissions it will continue to be on a testing basis however pleasant and dearly we would like to see it all the time.

13.12.77.

No.401 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government give an assurance that all unions will be entitled to negotiate on behalf of their members, if they so wish, and can Government state how many claims have been received by the Official Employers in connection with the review of wages and salaries?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The Honourable Member can have the assurance that all unions with negotiating rights will be entitled to negotiate on behalf of their members. With the exception of one association, the Official Employers have received claims from all unions with negotiating rights - a total of eight claims from seven unions. All unions have now been invited to form a single ad hoc negotiating body for the purposes of the current review other than the Federation of Senior Government Officers and the British Medical Association.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.401 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Of these claims, Mr Speaker, how many of them are, in fact, for 100% parity?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I couldn't say. I know that there is one for 97% .

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, that is one, at least, which he knows.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

At least I know that, I do not know what the others are.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And he doesn't know whether any other union has claimed on the same basis?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, on the whole they are claiming on the same basis.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, still on this one. Am I to take it that the negotiations will take place in the forum which the Chief Minister has referred to?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

They have been invited to do so. I don't know what the answer is.

2.

HON M XIBERRAS:

You don't know what the answer is yet?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Some invitations have gone very recently.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is there any union which has not yet submitted a claim in respect of the Review taking both Government and UK Department involved unions?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The only union that has not submitted any claim is the Federation of Senior Government Officers.

13.12.77.

No.402 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Kiberras

What steps is Government taking to ensure that the employment situation is not adversely affected in the Ministry of Defence and DOE/PSA as a result of the final agreement on wages and salaries?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Since the Unions' claims are still under examination, it is not possible to say what the final agreement on wages and salaries will be. The possibility of an adverse effect on the employment situation in the Ministry of Defence and DOE/PSA is being borne in mind by the Government.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.402 OF 1977

HON M KIBERRAS:

I am glad to hear that Mr Speaker. Would this be in the exercise of Government's responsibility qua Government rather than as an employer?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think in both ways. Qua Government, certainly, and qua official employers we would try if the possibility should arise of discussing the matter amongst the Official Employers. We will try and do it at every level possible.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Would the Government, as Government, bear in mind that whatever benefits are gained as a result of the negotiations that are about to start that these would be very much affected adversely if there was to be a reduction in any way of employees in the UK Departments particularly.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, of course.

HON J BOSSANO:

Has the Government been given any indication that the MOD and DOE would reduce the number of their employees if the level of wages were to reach a certain level or they were to exceed a given level?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

So, in fact, Mr Speaker, the question is hypothetical to the extent that there isn't a hidden threat that if wages exceed a certain level there will be a cut-back

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I haven't heard of any.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister not agree that if that situation were to materialise, that should be put to the union concerned, that is, that the alternatives should be put to the union concerned, so much in pay and so many in numbers or, alternately, more pay and less numbers.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Or more productivity. That would be a matter for the unions to decide with the employers. If money itself is the constraint and not the extent of the claim, of course.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Chief Minister not agree, however, that as Government and, indeed, as Members of the House of Assembly, Members would have an interest in the employment situation, generally, as it might develop as a result of negotiations apart from the obvious interest that unions would have in it?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We have, generally, an interest in the employment and the extent of expenditure by the Ministry of Defence and it is of course in our interest, as responsible elected Members, to keep an eye on that but, of course, it is to some extent outside our hands.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Government philosophy in this respect that the important thing is the level of expenditure of the Ministry of Defence in Gibraltar rather than the number of bodies given in fact that we need to....

MR SPEAKER:

We are now going outside the orbit of the question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, with all due respect, the Government is being asked this question to ensure the employment situation is not adversely affected. That suggests to me that there is an implication there that the Government policy should be that if the Ministry of Defence, for example, ^{were} to spend a £1m. on their wages, bill, it is better to spend a £1m. to employ a thousand people than to spend a £1m. to employ 900 people, that is where the maintaining of the employment situation is concerned. I am asking the Government whether they agree that the important thing is to get the Ministry of Defence to spend a £1 $\frac{1}{2}$ m. rather than to see how many people they employ, given that we import 3,500 non-Gibraltarian workers.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, of course. The level of employment is important and also the extent of

13.12.77.

No.403 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government state how the negotiations of the claim for parity of wages and salaries with the United Kingdom is proceeding?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Written evidence in support of their pay claims has been received from two trade unions and this is still in the course of examination by the Official Employers. The scrutiny of this evidence is not an easy task which can be dealt with cursorily and it is likely that some time still will elapse before a reasoned reply can be given. In the meantime negotiations on other conditions of employment have taken place in JIC leading to broad agreement on sick pay, allowances and annual leave for industrial employees.

13.12.77.

No.404 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether HM Government now recognises that the entry of Spain into the EEC would be contrary to community rules for as long as the blockade of Gibraltar continues?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir, it is not for me or any other member on the Government side to answer for Her Majesty's Government in this House. It is, of course, open to the Hon Member, if he so wishes, to address his question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through His Excellency the Governor.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.404 OF 1977

MR SPEAKER:

May I perhaps say one thing in so far as this question is concerned. I had some difficulty in deciding whether to allow it or not and I came to the definite conclusion that the operative words were "can Government state" which recognises the fact that the Gibraltar Government could be in a position to get information from Her Majesty's Government as to what the position is now and then give information to the House. To that extent, of course, I held that the question was acceptable and that is why I allowed it but to no larger extent than that. I say this in view of the answer given which, perhaps, might imply that it should not have been acceptable.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I don't question your judgement, Mr Speaker, but I have a right to answer the way I consider it proper.

MR SPEAKER:

I have no doubt of that whatsoever and there is no insinuation otherwise. On the other hand the answer says that it is of course open to the Hon Member, if he so wishes, to address his question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office because you are not answerable to the House for the actions of Her Majesty's Government. To that extent only I am saying that it is one of the borderline cases in which one has a difficult decision to take and to the extent that the Gibraltar Government might have certain information, to that extent they are answerable and nothing else. I am saying this so that the supplementaries may be directed to that extent.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am not, in fact, asking the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister to make excuses for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I am asking him for information and I would like to ask the Hon and Learned Member whether his Government is at all interested in finding out whether Her Majesty's Government now recognises that the entry of Spain into the EEC would be contrary to Community rules for as long as the blockade of Gibraltar continues.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government has always been interested in that aspect of the matter and if the Hon Member will refer to the last paragraph of my letter to him of the 15th August, 1977, he will see that I told him that I was fully satisfied that Dr Owen had the restrictions very much in mind in connection with Spain's application to join the EEC. The matter has of course come up for discussion on each of the three occasions on which I have seen Dr Owen in September and November. The point that I want to make is that we cannot answer to the House for Her Majesty's Government.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am not asking the Hon Member to answer in the sense of making him responsible for Her Majesty's Government's policy. I am asking the Hon and Learned Member to share whatever knowledge he has with the rest of the Members of the House of Assembly. In formulating my question, I am seeking to find out whether, in fact, the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister has had a reply to the motion that was passed in the House of Assembly urging the British Government to recognise this.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There was a reply to that on which I informed the House. First of all, the motion on the question of the restrictions was transmitted to the Acting Governor I think it is reflected in the supplementary which I gave and that is that I was satisfied that Dr Owen had the question of the restrictions very much in mind.

HON J BOSSANO:

I am sure that he has it very much in mind, Mr Speaker, and I am sure that if he didn't have it in mind the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister would make sure that Dr Owen kept it in mind even if he didn't offer to do so of his own volition, that is not what I am asking, what I am asking is whether, in fact, the British Government recognises that the entry of Spain into the EEC would be contrary to Community rules or doesn't accept that the entry of Spain would be contrary to Community rules. It is as simple as that.

MR SPEAKER:

That is what you are not entitled to ask.

HON J BOSSANO:

But I am entitled to ask, Mr Speaker, whether the Chief Minister has got any knowledge of whether this is the case or not. If he has no knowledge then I assume it is because he is not interested because if he is inviting me, Mr Speaker, to find out from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and if I was privy to such knowledge, with my known desire for open Government, I would share my knowledge with all the other Members in the House.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Let me put it this way, how, as a result of our efforts and as a result of

my contact, how I understand the position. The British Government, in my view, has not at this moment stopped to recognise whether the entry of Spain would be contrary to the Community rules for as long as the blockade of Gibraltar continues. It is obvious from the policy that the British Government is following, whether one agrees with it or not, I am only explaining it and again that is why it is very important that I should make it quite clear that I hold no brief for anybody except for the elected members and for the people who elected us. My understanding of the situation is that they say: "We are putting no pre-conditions for the support of Spain's entry into Europe but we consider that it is contrary to the European spirit and the European concept that there should be these restrictions and we expect you, Spain, to listen." This is the way in which I think the British Government policy is expressed, without saying whether they are against or they are for. It has not been reflected into making it a pre-condition because we know what the British Government has said on that, I am quite satisfied that the question of restrictions is very much in the minds of those who have to deal with Spain on the question of the Common Market.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept all the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister has said, he has said it all before. I am not asking whether Her Majesty's Government considers it immoral for Spain, I am asking whether Her Majesty's Government considers it like we all do in this House of Assembly. I accept that the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister and the Government of Gibraltar is not answerable for the actions of the British Government.

MR SPEAKER:

Let us put it the other way round. The Government of Gibraltar is only answerable for information available to them as to attitudes and that is what the Chief Minister has given you.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister not agree that it is desirable, from the point of view of the people of Gibraltar and the members of the House of Assembly, to be able to obtain a clearcut answer from Her Majesty's Government as to whether, in their view, the entry of Spain into the EEC would be contrary to Community rules for as long as the blockade of Gibraltar continues, and, if so, will he approach Her Majesty's Government to obtain such an answer?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think the answer is superfluous because if they considered that they would not say that it is not a condition of their support to Spain coming into Europe despite the fact that the restrictions are there.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, am I right in deducing from that answer of the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister that his own view is that it is implicit in the stand of Her Majesty's Government that no pre-conditions should be put, it is

implicit in that that the entry of Spain into the Common Market would not be contrary to Community rules.

MR SPEAKER:

You do not have to answer that question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have said nothing of the kind. This is a matter of high policy and the tactics of people in dealing with this matter is the responsibility of those who deal with it.

HON J BOSSANO:

But I am asking the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister for his view.

MR SPEAKER:

No, not at question time.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, I can only ask him for his view of what Her Majesty's Government's policy is.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have given my view. I think the British Government are not committing themselves one way or the other whilst they support Spain into Europe without pre-conditions. This is my judgement, that they are reserving their options if and when the time comes.

HON J BOSSANO:

It is the Hon and Learned Chief Minister's judgement that I would like to have the benefit of, Mr Speaker. I have a high regard for the Chief Minister's judgement when it comes to negotiations with the British Government. Is the Hon and Learned Member then saying that in his view Her Majesty's Government has not yet come to a definite decision as to whether it would be contrary or would not be contrary to Community rules?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am sure that Her Majesty's Government has come to a / decision but whether they want to disclose it or not is a matter for them and no amount of questioning or filibustering is going to make me change my attitude.

13.12.77.

No.405 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Given that the Chief Minister stated that his initiative in calling for talks with representatives of the Spanish Government was to ensure that the latter was not misinformed about the true feelings of the majority of the people of Gibraltar can the Chief Minister state whether he achieved this at the recent exploratory talks in Strasbourg and if so what the proposed further exploratory talks are for?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, question Nos 405, 406, 407, 408 and 409 are all related to the recent Strasbourg Talks. I have already given you notice that I propose to make a statement on the Strasbourg Talks. I will endeavour in my statement to answer all these questions together, and will be subject to your ruling to any supplementary that may arise.

13.12.77.

No.406 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can the Chief Minister confirm that sovereignty over Gibraltar was not discussed at the recent exploratory talks and will not be discussed at any forthcoming talks exploratory or otherwise?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, as you are aware I have already given you notice that I propose to make a statement on my recent visit to Strasbourg.

This statement will provide the answers to Questions Nos 405/77 to 409/77 asked by the Hon J Bossano.

13.12.77.

No.407 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can the Chief Minister state when as far as the Gibraltar Government is concerned, talks with Spain would cease to be considered "exploratory" and become substantive?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, as you are aware I have already given you notice that I propose to make a statement on my recent visit to Strasbourg.

This statement will provide the answers to questions Nos 405/77 to 409/77 asked by the Hon J Bossano.

13.12.77.

No.408 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Will the Chief Minister make public the text of the views he expressed in Strasbourg on behalf of the people of Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, as you are aware I have already given you notice that I propose to make a statement on my recent visit to Strasbourg.

This statement will provide the answers to Questions Nos 405/77 to 409/77 asked by the Hon J Bossano.

13.12.77.

No.409 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Does Government agree that there should be no concessions to Spain in order to get the removal of any or all the restrictions against Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, as you are aware I have already given you notice that I propose to make a statement on my recent visit to Strasbourg.

This statement will provide the answers to questions Nos 405/77 to 409/77 asked by the Hon J Bossano.

13.12.77.

No.410 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Following the recent flooding at Wellington Front, would Government not agree that the provision of new premises for GBC can be delayed no longer?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

May I repeat what I said in my statement dealing with the two questions No.400 and No. 410 that I can reassure the Member that Government does not consider that Wellington Front is suitable for continued occupation by GBC in view of the colour project and that, as I have already explained, all efforts are being made to find alternative premises.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.410 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I gather that the Vasquez Factory and Ocean Heights have both been rejected because of the cost of refurbishment and that Mercury House is a definite possibility. Does the Chief Minister have an indication of how much Mercury House might cost?

MR SPEAKER:

I am afraid I can't allow that question now. You could have asked it if you had had both questions together. Now we are only asking: "Following the recent flooding at Wellington Front, would Government not agree that the provision of new premises for GBC can be delayed no longer". It is exclusively as to whether the move from Wellington Front cannot be delayed.

HON G T RESTANO:

Surely, Mr Speaker, if GBC has to be changed from Wellington Front it has to be changed to some place else and Mercury House has been mentioned as a possibility.

MR SPEAKER:

I am afraid that perhaps we are not directing our minds to the question. It is a question of finding out whether the Wellington Front premises can still be used indefinitely or how long for, or whether the move can or cannot be delayed, not as to the cost or whether the other premises to which they may have to move at a later stage are adequate or not.

HON G T RESTANO:

The other question dealt purely with the broadcasting of colour and this one with new premises for GBC following on the flooding at Wellington Front.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the question is very clear: "Following recent flooding at Wellington Front, would Government not agree that the provision of new premises for GBC can be delayed no longer". It is on the question of the delay for the provision of new premises that you have got to direct your supplementaries. Anyway, ask the question and see how we go along but do direct your mind towards that.

HON G T RESTANO:

The new premises from which GBC could move were originally stated as being either the Vasquez Factory or Ocean Heights. Both these buildings have been ruled out by the cost and Mercury House now seems to have been earmarked. Has the Chief Minister any indication of how much that would cost?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It doesn't arise out of the question.

HON G T RESTANO:

Has it been decided that Mercury House will be used?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The answer to that is, yes. It is Hobson's choice really and it happens to have the most attractive features including four very good flats which could be very conveniently used not to have to pay the very heavy rent we pay in respect of certain officers' quarters.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does the Chief Minister have any idea of what length of time it might take for GBC to move to Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No. I said in my answer to the previous question dealing with the question of colour, which is very relevant and that is why I wanted to deal with them together, that this was being done with a sense of urgency but we have no order of costs yet. They are being dealt with at this very moment, this was done earlier this year. Let me say that what happened at Wellington Front was not just flooding, it was a burst sewer of the PSA/DOE that also visited the premises in addition to the flooding making it much worse. There is no doubt that there is the utmost urgency and there could be considerable amount of movement in anticipation of work from Wellington Front once the Mercury site is in our hands.

HON G T RESTANO:

Presumably there will have to be a certain amount of alteration to Mercury House.

3.

Does the Chief Minister have any idea of whether this will be structural alterations or whether it will be minor alterations?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Nothing is minor when you have to convert big places into proper television studios, offices and so on, but the order of costs seems to be less because there are no major structural alterations. The conversion into a studio is bound to be expensive but certainly not as expensive as either of the other two. There is another extra expenditure involved in the siting because of the distance of the micro wave offset by one or two other savings which would have had to be incurred if it had been in the other place. The only point really that is holding up the finality of it is a derelict MOD site next to it required for access of heavy machinery and for parking of staff cars and we are already in touch with MOD on this matter.

HON G T RESTANO:

What I think is of concern is that the move should not be delayed too long in which case possibly the tender by Link would no longer be applicable.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The tender by Link is still on and all that we want in order to sign the final contract is to be able to designate the site where the station is going to be put.

HON G T RESTANO:

So there is no time limit to that tender?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There is a time limit. We have reached the stage where they are very concerned about having a site. They can start sending the equipment and we have a place to store it straight away but they have a responsibility to put the station in a running order and therefore the timing element in respect of the sending of engineers and all that which is all in the contract, is of essential importance to them but they are being very cooperative so far and we hope that now that we are at the end of a very long and difficult task that everything will go smoothly.

HON G T RESTANO:

Could I know what the time limit is?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There is a time limit of the time from which they start installing to the time when the station is on the air fully. There is a time undertaking on that on their part but not on the question of when it starts.

HON G T RESTANO:

That is what I wanted to know, whether there is a time limit for the actual

cost of the tender, in other words, they tendered whatever it was, £400,000, for how long will that £400,000 stand?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There will be no change in the contract price if we sign the contract within the next few days.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is that what is expected?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, we are just clearing the question of access of the MOD site. The other matters I think are things that can be settled in their due time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it envisaged that there will be a period of overlap when the station will be divided between Wellington Front and Mercury House, and how long will that period be?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

All the time that they will be installing the colour television at Mercury they will be transmitting in black and white from Wellington Front as they are now.

HON P J ISOLA:

I understand that a lot of people with television sets in the South district get Morocco instead of the other channels.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

This is one of the few things that we are looking into about the site in which they are taking technical advice not because of Morocco but because of the kind of traffic that goes on around that place in respect of telex and other things.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, may I ask the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister if the General Manager of the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation is satisfied with Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He is delighted.

13.12.77.

No.411 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has any direct and official communication been received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in reply to the wish unanimously expressed by the House that Gibraltar should be enfranchised in respect of Direct Elections to the European Assembly?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

No, Sir.

13.12.77.

No.412 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Does the Chief Minister still have no definite proposals to make with regard to setting up of the Public Accounts Committee and does he consider control of the public expenditure to be adequate as it is?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Proposals have been prepared and are under consideration. In reply to the second part of the question, I believe that the control of public expenditure is something which is constantly susceptible of improvement. As to the actual setting up of a Public Accounts Committee I cannot say at this stage anything different to what I said in Supplementary to Question No.200 - at the meeting of the House held in May.

I will pursue this matter, in consultation with my colleagues, as soon as other more pressing business permits, and if the Hon Member wants me to remind him of what I said in May I can tell him.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.412 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

It was a very long time ago, Mr Speaker. I am surprised that there has been no advance apparently on the position. Am I to understand from what the Chief Minister has said that proposals have in fact been already circulated amongst members of the Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, they have been sent to me by the Financial and Development Secretary. I did quote in May what I had said in the time of the estimates and this is that: "I wanted to have discussions in the light of this House with Members about the way in which we could start, perhaps in a small way, in a sense of identifying particular departments for examination in one session instead of trying to cover the whole spectrum and then cover nothing at all which is the difficulty about this matter, about part time politicians on the other side and part time on this side." I did mention that and I did indicate that I was agreeably disposed to doing something about this but Hon Members opposite will realise that it requires a considerable amount of thinking and that there has not been the practical ability of dealing with a matter of this nature and I do not want to land ourselves into a Public Accounts Committee without the necessary servicing machinery and experience to do it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am sure the Hon Member realises that in the lifetime of this House it is rather a long time to wait, but could the Hon Member endeavour to bring or to offer for consideration to Hon Members on this side of the House some sort of draft proposal, let us say, before budget time this year?

2.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I will try but I cannot promise. I don't want to make promises that I cannot keep. I would certainly hope that some kind of effort could be made in respect of identifying some department in respect of this year's estimates next year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it the Chief Minister's intention then to consider the proposals of the Financial and Development Secretary in the first place, submit them to his colleagues in the second and then inform Hon Members on this side or ask them for their comments? Is that the way that the Chief Minister intends to proceed?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I do not propose to deal with it in that way. I propose to consider the proposals of the Financial and Development Secretary with my colleagues and see whether the ideas that I have expressed in reply to this answer about a start in identifying particular departments could be done before we go into the full basis of that. I must warn Members that this is a very time consuming process if it is going to be done properly and I want to be satisfied that there is the time available and the people disposed to devote the time that this requires.