

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 25 JANUARY 1977

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(1 TO 73)

QUESTIONS ASKED BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AT THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON 25.1.77.

No.1 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government explain why and how Lottery tickets for the first five draws of 1977 inadvertently printed the second prize as £2500?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

Yes sir. The printing of the second prize as £2500 on the reverse of the lottery tickets for draws Nos 1 to 5 of 1977 arose as the result of an oversight within the lottery administration. This was not spotted until the tickets for draw No 1 of 1977 had been put on sale and the tickets for draws Nos 2 and 3 had been printed. In these circumstances with the interests of the lottery and punters alike very much in mind the government decided to proceed with all the January draws on the basis of the prizes stated on the back of the tickets which had already been put on sale.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 1 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Hon Member please say when, in fact, the oversight was noticed?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I have already said that in my answer. I am afraid I can't give a date.

MR SPEAKER:

It was after the tickets for the first draw were put on sale and since the tickets for the 2nd and 3rd draws were printed they decided to continue those three draws at a higher prize. That is the answer you have been given.

HON G T RESTANO:

Wasn't the notice made in the middle of December and, if so, were the tickets already on sale for the first draw of 1977 in the middle of December?

MR SPEAKER:

I think that the hon Questioner is trying to ask whether it is a fact that the tickets were on sale when the error was discovered? You are asking for confirmation of that, is that correct?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I said the error was not spotted until the tickets for draw No 1 had been put on sale.

HON G T RESTANO

Obviously I will accept that but what about the other draws? Could the other lottery tickets not have been overprinted to save the £2,000 which the Government has lost on those tickets which were not already on sale?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

They could have been, yes, but the Government decided otherwise. And I am very glad that the Hon Member is pursuing this question because I think he is trying to get information out of me which he tried yesterday to get out of an officer at the Treasury by cross examining him in a public place.

MR SPEAKER:

No, we are not going to bring in matters that happen outside the House otherwise supplementaries will be directed towards what happened and we must not go beyond the scope of the question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Financial and Development Secretary inform the House whether he thinks that the House should have this information in view of the remark that he has made?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, I have ruled him out of order.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Financial and Development Secretary know why the Government has decided to discontinue the prize at this level in view of the fact that he has stated that it was following the interest of both the Government and the punters.....

MR SPEAKER:

The answer has been very explicit. There was an error, the tickets for the first draw were on sale, the tickets for the 2nd and 3rd draws had already been printed, they took a policy decision not to change the prize for those three draws and then continue with the prizes as hitherto. It is as simple as that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am asking for an explanation of the opposite decision now. Why having decided to continue it for these 3 draws, did the Government not decide to continue it indefinitely?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

At the end of last year when the question of revising the prize structure of the lottery was under consideration, there were a number of proposals which were before, firstly, the Lottery Committee and from the Lottery Committee, the Government. One of these proposals provided for a second prize of £2,500. Another proposal which was, apart from the 2nd prize, identical in structure was a £2,500 structure provided for a second prize of £2000. It is only fair to say that the recommendation of the Lottery Advisory Committee was for that structure which carried a prize of £2,500. The Government, however, in considering the whole matter and taking cognizance of the recommendations of the Committee, decided otherwise and decided on the structure which calls for a 2nd prize of £2,000.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I am still not clear why the unprinted tickets of the 4th and 5th draws, what the reasons were

MR SPEAKER:

There have been given no reason. It was a policy decision to solve the problem in this particular way. They could have gone another way but we are not going into the reasons for taking this decision.

HON G T RESTANO:

Well, this is the point of the question. I would like to know the reason why.

MR SPEAKER:

The reason was not to disappoint punters with the interest of the Lottery and punters alike. Bearing this in mind the Government decided to proceed with the January draws on the basis of the increased prize.

HON G T RESTANO:

I can understand that, Mr Speaker, on the printed tickets but I cannot on those that were not already printed.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, there was no particular reason other than confidence in the lottery which decided the government that, the error having been made, 3 sets of tickets have already been printed, the remaining 2 sets of tickets for the draw for January should continue on the basis of the tickets already issued for the January draw, that is to say, with a prize of £2,500. The tickets for draws after the end of this month, and there is one more draw to go, will revert to the government decision of £2000 for the second prize.

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government explain why the new import procedures are causing such unprecedented delays in the processing of documents?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is aware of and regrets that there have been delays in the processing of documents. The pre-entry system was only brought into operation on 4 January: so far as Gibraltar is concerned it is a new system to both importers and revenue staff, and like all new systems it takes time to become fully familiar to all those involved, and some teething troubles inevitably arise. Before it was brought into operation steps were taken to instruct the revenue staff and familiarisation seminars were held for importers. I can assure the House that every possible effort is being made to overcome the difficulties which have been encountered during these first 3 weeks of the system's operations and further seminars will be arranged by the Collector of Revenue. These seminars will provide a forum for discussion of areas of difficulty. Suggestions from importers for improving procedures will be welcomed and to this end the Collector is arranging for a Suggestion Box to be installed both at Waterport and at the Airport.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.2 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO

Mr Speaker, would the Government consider placing a Revenue Inspector during the period of the teething troubles all day long at Waterport to instruct and help traders who may be unfamiliar with the processing of their documents so that the whole process can be speeded up?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

The Government will be very willing to consider all suggestions which are made from importers or others involved which hold out the prospect of improving the smooth flow of documentation and the flow of goods through the Customs.

HON G T RESTANO

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member then say that he will consider my suggestion?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will certainly consider it in consultation with the man who is responsible for the actual operations, namely, the Collector of Revenue.

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government consider extending the 72 hour time limit for the withdrawal of goods from Waterport?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Mr Speaker, Sir as I presume, the Hon Questioner is referring to the period of free storage allowed in the transit sheds at the Port, the answer is "No Sir". As the Hon Member knows, the period is not just a bare 72 hours but is three full days excluding the day on which goods are put in the sheds and excluding as well Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. Moreover the Collector of Revenue has discretion to extend the period if he is of the opinion that circumstances warrant it.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.3 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO

Is the Hon Member aware that on many occasions 3 or 4 different vessels are being unloaded at the same time and the transporters who physically withdraw the goods from the Transit Shed, are simply not capable of carrying the amount of goods which are necessary within the period of three days and that is why it would be greatly convenient for that period to be extended.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have thought these sort of circumstances were such that the Collector of Revenue could exercise his discretion.

HON G T RESTANO

Mr Speaker, Sir, these occasions happen very often.

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government confirm that the general Merchants Association has requested that no further licences in that trade be issued as the trade is amply covered and the granting of any further licences could result in higher prices, and will government state its policy in this matter?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

Yes Sir. Representations have been made by the Gibraltar General Merchants (groceries) Association to the effect that no further licences should be issued to trade as wholesalers in groceries. The government policy concerning trade licensing generally is reflected in the Trade Licensing Ordinance which provides that where the Trade Licensing Committee is satisfied that the needs of the community in any particular area are adequately covered by existing businesses no further licences in that area should be issued.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.4 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, can government say what its policy is when licences are rejected and yet importers who have had their licences rejected continue to trade in these particular lines?

HON A W SERFATY:

I would have thought that this is a matter for bringing to the notice of the Financial and Development Secretary and the Trade Licensing Committee because if that is happening then something is wrong somewhere but certainly not the policy of the Government.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, obviously there is something wrong somewhere. I do believe that the matter has been brought to the notice of Hon Financial and Development Secretary, so could....

MR SPEAKER:

This is slightly diverting from the question. I think what you are being answered is what the policy of government on enforcing an existing law, is because you are asking that if someone is trading in breach of the existing legislation is Government prepared to take action to prevent that. That does not arise from the original question.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Government assure the House that whatever the virtues of the policy which the Minister has referred, that the application of such a policy will be equally carried out for all trades.

MR SPEAKER:

Which policy?

HON M KIBERRAS:

The policy of restricting licences.

HON A W SERFATY:

All trades for which the Trade Licensing Ordinance applies, certainly. I hope we have no discrimination on that.

HON G T RESTANO:

On the previous supplementary the breaches are surely of great interest to the Government policy and I would like to know...

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. A breach of an existing legislation whether it be under the Trade Licensing or any other existing legislation is a matter for the enforcement officers of the Crown and Government can be asked whether it is a general policy to see that these laws are enforced, but it doesn't arise under the question that has been asked under Trade Licensing.

HON G T RESTANO:

Surely it arises in that the general Merchants Association have requested that no further licences be issued. An application was rejected and yet the person or the company whose licence was rejected is continuing in the trade for which he is not licensed.

MR SPEAKER:

You have been told that it should be brought to the notice of the relevant authorities.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it Government's policy when breaches of the Trade Licensing Ordinance are brought to their notice through the Trade Licensing committee to take immediate steps to enforce the law. Is that their policy or not?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Government's policy always has been that the law must be abided by, of course.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr speaker, I am asking the Government whether it is their policy, have they given directives, that if it is brought to the attention of the officers concerned that there are traders trading without a licence, steps should be taken to enforce the requirements of the Trade Licensing Ordinance? Is that an established policy directive from government, or not?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a reasonable relevant question. Is it the general policy of Government to see that the Trade Licensing Ordinance is enforced?

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer is definitely Yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst accepting the Minister's assurance that there is no discrimination in respect of different trades, can I ask the Minister whether, in fact, there is an equal interest in all trades, in other words whether there is an investigation of the desirability of cutting down on licences in all trades, or is Government interested in respect of particular trades?

MR SPEAKER:

No, Government has said that there is an in-built protection within the Trade Licensing Ordinance for all trades. Their policy is to implement the Trade Licensing Ordinance.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Committee, to Government's knowledge, reviewing all trades equally?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not able to say because I don't see the Minutes of the Trade Licensing Committee.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government consider introducing legislation to grant Income Tax relief on contributions to non-profit making organisations?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

No Sir. Contributions to non-profit making organisations, which would include sporting, recreational and cultural societies in addition to charitable and ecclesiastical institutions, are in the nature of gifts or donations.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.5 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, considering that this legislation applies in the United Kingdom, will Government consider granting income tax relief to recognised charitable institutions?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Sir, the Government sees no reason why income tax relief should be granted on such contributions. It would be tantamount to the revenue subsidising an individual's charitable disposition or not subsidising one which was not a charitable institution. I might add, however, that there is of course although this is slightly different from the general question of relief to religious and charitable organisations, there is, of course, rates relief under the appropriate ordinance for religious and charitable organisations.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Financial and Development Secretary not understand that the principle that is involved is that where a contribution is made, or covenanted, to a charitable institution, in fact, the tax liability passes from the donor to the recipient, and since the recipient is not taxable this is how the tax saving arises. Does he not understand that this is how the machinery works and it is not a question of Government subsidies.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, he does.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member explain, why if he understands the machinery, Government is not prepared to allow the same facilities to charity in Gibraltar as are allowed, for example, in the United Kingdom?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

All I am prepared to say at this stage, Mr Speaker, is that the Government will consider this matter in relation to and in the light of numerous other matters which it will be considering in relation to Income Tax.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

According to his statement, the Hon Member disagrees completely with Income Tax relief as granted in the UK.

MR SPEAKER:

Next Question.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will the Government consider exempting the tenants of Kings Bastion from paying rates in compensation for the discomfort they suffer from the constant noise caused by the Government Electricity Generating Station and for the health hazard they are exposed to due to the poisonous fumes emanating therefrom, until the Government can abate these two public nuisances?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

No Sir, there is no provision for exempting premises which are in beneficial occupation save those which are listed under Section 298 and 298C of the Public Health Ordinance. Neither is there any power to reduce or remit the payment of any rates except on account of the poverty of the ratepayer.

I might add in relation to this question that only the tenants of the top floor flats are liable for the payment of rates since the rest of the dwellings in King's Bastion pay inclusive rents.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.6 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA

Couldn't the same arrangement of the tenants in the lower floor be extended to the tenants in the upper floor and at the same time make a reduction in the rents to compensate for that situation?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government cannot, in principle, accept explicitly or implicitly any liability in respect of any nuisance or health hazard which may allegedly be emanating from a public utility or public service installation. If that position were accepted, Mr Speaker, the repercussions are almost limitless.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA

Isn't the Government aware that this is a unique situation and couldn't the Government, in view of the danger, make an analysis of the atmosphere in the area

2.

MR SPEAKER

No, no. We are not going to discuss under this question the pollution of the atmosphere due to the Generating Station. We are going to discuss most certainly whether Government is prepared to reduce the rates due to that fact but no more.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA

Mr Speaker, in view that the Government is not prepared to give consideration to this could they, perhaps, allow a higher point allocation to the families living in that area so that they have a greater possibility of change of accommodation and not be condemned to the present area indefinitely?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, Sir, if that question is put down properly on the Order Paper it will be answered.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government say when the wages and salaries award payable as from the 1 October 1976 under the Scamp formula will be paid out to Gibraltar Government employees?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

No Sir. The Government cannot say. As the House will be aware all the trade unions and staff associations limited their acceptance of the Scamp Report to the first two years. Separate negotiations must therefore take place in respect of the 1976 award. Also there remain some details in relation to allowances and conditions of service to be agreed at JIC in respect of the 1974/1975 awards and the Transport and General Workers Union have indicated that they would not wish to enter into any discussions on the 1976 awards until these details have been settled. Therefore I am not in a position to say when negotiations will commence and hence I cannot say when payment will be made to employees.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.7 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Member say whether all Government Associations concerned - I didn't catch that part of his answer - have, in fact, put in claims already in respect of this particular stage of scamp?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not aware that the Government has received any claims in respect of the 1976 Award.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So, in fact, there are no claims even yet from the Unions.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

To my knowledge, Mr Speaker, the answer is, no, sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Therefore, my next question, Mr speaker, is a non sequitur, possibly. Are any of these claims expected to be in the region of 100% of parity?

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, perhaps, the Financial and Development Secretary can confirm that the TGWU has already indicated...

MR SPEAKER:

No, No.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, can I ask the Financial and Development Secretary whether he is aware whether, for example, the Gibraltar Government Clerical Association has requested the commencement of negotiations for the 1976 award?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, I have no information that they have.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the financial and development secretary attribute this to a lack of interest?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Financial and development Secretary whether in the case of non industrial employees Government considers that the staff inspection that was part of the 1974/1975 settlements has to be conducted before agreement can be reached on the 1976 rates of pay?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not read anything apropos that into the question I was asked and I must therefore give the Hon Member the same answer that I gave to the Hon Major Peliza, that if the question is put down properly on the Order Paper it will be answered.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Financial and development Secretary if he realises the repercussions that the delay in settling claims like that has on the public sector.

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, I am afraid you have misunderstood. There have been no claims therefore there has been no delay.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Couldn't Government possibly urge the Unions to speed up their claims so that the private sector can at least settle their position which is a very difficult one, I assure you.

HON A J CANEPA:

The private sector has settled the review for October 1976.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I was thinking of the coming one. When you say the private sector you mean the large concerns but there are smaller concerns in Gibraltar who find it very difficult other than through the guidance of government. The point is this, Mr Speaker, that it is very difficult for the private sector to settle with their employees and be able to exist unless there is more money coming in. In view of that could the Government possibly urge the Unions to try and put in their claims?

MR SPEAKER:

What is the answer to that question.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I would have thought that question would have been better addressed to the officials of the Union rather than the Government.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

With all due respect to the Hon the Financial and development Secretary I don't believe that the small firms of Gibraltar could possibly do that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Financial and development Secretary not concerned that the present stage of Scapp.....

MR SPEAKER:

Which is the present stage of Scamp you are referring to?

HON M XIBERRAS:

October 1976. Has even at this not reached the level where government and the Unions are negotiating bearing in mind that the government itself is committed to this stage of Scamp?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, quite naturally the government would like a speedy settlement, quite obviously. But there are two parties in every case.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Financial and Development Secretary note that I am giving him the opportunity to express his concern insofar as it is within his province to do so and in his interest to do so. Mr speaker, would the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary in view of this concern which he has expressed, make it public here today that he would like to see the early submission of claims by the Unions?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I would have thought this has been made public.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Financial and Development secretary whether, in fact, in the case of non-industrial employees there are also issues outstanding from the 1974/1975 Review just as there are in the case of industrials and whether this is a factor?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I believe that is the case.

HON M XIBERRAS:

May I ask when, in fact, the Financial and development Secretary thinks that this whole matter would be settled, in the main?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I haven't an idea.

The Hon J Bossano

Does Government agree that a property developer who employs direct labour to construct on his own site is engaged in the business of building contracting and consequently requires a licence under the Trade Licensing Ordinance?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

Mr Speaker, I am afraid that it is not possible to answer this question without knowing all the facts surrounding the particular operation. If the Leader of the Opposition has a particular case in mind I would invite him to bring the matter to my attention in writing and I will consider it.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.8 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO

Mr Speaker, could the Hon and Learned the Attorney General just say as a matter of general policy that in cases of property development where the developer is engaging direct staff, it would be logical to come to the conclusion that either the developer or the direct labour must be operating as a building contractor, that is, that somebody must, in fact, be carrying out the function that would be carried out by a contractor if a contractor was used.

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr Speaker, I am afraid that this is not the time to go into legal niceties. There is a legal problem to be considered and I think it only right that I should have all the facts before me before I can consider it and give an opinion.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what are the latest estimates for receipts of Development Aid Funds in the current year under the different Heads in page 74 of the Estimates for 1976/77?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

Mr Speaker, sir, the estimated receipts of development aid funds in the current financial year under the heads listed at page 74 of the 1976/77 estimates are as follows:

Housing	£417,248
Schools	14,193
Medical	55,766
Tourist development Projects	15,000
Other developments	46,900
Municipal Services	-
	<u>£549,107</u>

If approval by Her Majesty's Government of the following supplementary applications for aid in respect of on-going projects is forthcoming before the end of the financial year, the Government will be able to claim re-imbursment of expenditure already incurred amounting to a further £1,034,808 in respect of:-

Varyl Begg Estate	£949,954
St Bernards Hospital renovations	84,854

In addition a supplementary aid grant of £6,200 has been submitted to finance an extension to the Staff Room at the Boys Comprehensive School. This work has not yet been started and no expenditure has been committed. Thus, subject to these approvals, the total receipts of United Kingdom development aid funds during this financial year could reach £1,590,115.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 9 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker will the Financial and Development Secretary confirm then that on the most optimistic assumptions the receipts will be about half of what they were estimated at the beginning of the year and on the most pessimistic assumptions one sixth of what they were estimated. Is that the implication of the figures he has given the House?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

that, indeed, are the facts if this total is achieved.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the financial and development secretary not agree, Mr Speaker, that it is a very serious thing for the development programme that even on the most optimistic assumption the Development Aid Fund received in 1976/77 should have been the lowest, certainly for the last 3 or 4 years, and, in fact, half of what they were thought to be at the beginning of the year?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

It does indeed represent an unfortunate state of affairs.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member give any explanation for this?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, sir, the receipt of development Aid funds and their credit to the Development Aid revenue depends upon the rate at which money is spent here. Perhaps, I could enlighten the House a little. A project is approved and on the approval of a project the money for the project is eligible to be drawn down subject to certain quite well-defined clear cut procedures. Once a project is approved and if work is to start on that project a forward claim is submitted for estimated expenditure on the project in the coming quarter. If that claim is approved by HMG the funds as stated in the claim are put on deposit. They do not move from the deposit into revenue until actual expenditure has taken place. All development aid money is in reimbursement of money actually spent initially from this Government's own pocket on projects which have been approved.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Financial and Development secretary whether the delay in getting projects into effect has been due to any limitations on the capacity of the construction industry as has been suggested on past occasions?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, sir, I do not feel that I am qualified to answer that question. I only speak for the flow of money through the government estimates.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, perhaps then the financial secretary is not aware that in the 1974/75 budget his predecessor, in fact, gave the explanation to the House that the so-called slippage in development projects was due to physical constraints on the part of the capacity of the construction industry and not to financial constraints. Since the slippage has turned into a landslide on this occasion I would like to know whether that is still the explanation or not?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Basically, fundamentally, Mr Speaker, it is. It is the capacity to carry out work. It assumes that when the project is approved all the pre-investment studies and planning have been carried out and it assumes that once the contract is let work goes ahead according to plan. There are many factors but in essence it is the capacity to carry out a physical programme, an actual construction programme in step and in line with whatever financial estimates were originally made.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the financial and development secretary then aware that according to the construction industry there is going to be virtually no capacity very soon because of the number of workers they are having to make redundant.

MR SPEAKER:

That is another matter. Next question.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what were the Income Tax receipts for 1975/76 and give a breakdown to show the amounts collected through P.A.Y.E. in each of the following areas: M.O.D., D.O.E., Gibraltar Government, Private Employers?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Yes Sir. The Income Tax receipts for 1975/76 were £3,549,588.04. The amount collected through PAYE was £1,765,726.52 which may be broken down as follows:-

a. MCD	£324,802.33
b. DOE	£ 68,314.30
c. Gibraltar Government	£524,411.36
d. Private Employers	<u>£848,198.53</u>
	<u>£1,765,726.52</u>

No.11 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what were the final Revenue and Expenditure figures for the Financial Year 1975/76 and the size of the surplus transferred to the Consolidated Fund?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

With respect, may I invite the Hon Member's attention to paragraph (xv) of Order No.17(1) of the Standing Rules and Orders of this House. The figures he asks for were published in the Gibraltar Gazette of October 14 1976.

No.12 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Will Government revise the personal allowances under the Income Tax Ordinance for the forthcoming Financial Year to take account of inflation since these allowances were established?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Sir, personal allowances were increased as from the commencement of this financial year. I am not prepared to say whether or not there will be further variations next year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.12 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO

Mr Speaker, does the Financial and Development Secretary agree that if the allowances were to be altered it would require an alteration of the tax tables and is there any possibility of this being done before the start of the Financial Year?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Of course.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether O.D.M. has agreed to meet the additional costs of projects funded by them as a result of the new wage rates agreed with the construction industry?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The literal answer to the question is No since the Government has not sought any formal agreement from Her Majesty's Government. In practice however, applications for aid funds for construction projects include provision to enable the Government to meet claims for additional contract payments made under fluctuation clauses. All applications for development aid funds submitted during the past 12 months have included such provision. This clearly would not apply in the case of projects which it is intended to carry out under fixed-price contracts.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.13 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO

Mr Speaker, have any applications been made since the wage rates were agreed in the construction industry and, if so, with what results?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

I am not aware myself of whether any particular applications have, in fact, been made but there are three Government contracts containing a fluctuation clause for increased cost of labour which are, of course, covered by the Government decision to meet higher cost of wages retrospective to the 1st October 1975. These projects, and the estimated cost to each, are as follows:-

The Varyl Begg Project - £16,700

The School for Handicapped Children - £1000

St Bernard's Hospital Renovations - £2,300

I do not know whether in fact any claims have been made in relation to these three particular contracts.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Sir, can Government confirm that one community constable has been transferred to other duties and the other is on the verge of resigning and if so what steps do they intend to take to remedy the situation?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

It is not correct that one community constable has been transferred to other duties: he does, however, undertake other duties from time to time but his prime responsibility is as a community constable.

No application has been received by the Commissioner from either constable to be transferred to other duties nor has the Commissioner received any indication that either is contemplating resigning from the force.

The community constable scheme has been such a success that planning is going ahead for it to be extended to other areas of the City.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.14 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO

In my opinion the community constable scheme is a great success and I hope Government will consider the appointment of more community constables, but does Government agree to the appointment of more community constables?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL

If I could perhaps repeat the last sentence. The community constable scheme has been such a success that planning is going ahead for it to be extended to other areas of the City.

The Hon M Xiberras

Is the old "Goods Vehicle" parking bay in Engineer Lane in front of Risso's Bakery still to be regarded as such?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

31 Engineer Lane is still a loading and unloading bay under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Traffic (Parking and Waiting) Order, 1973.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.15 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the Hon Member aware that it is not very clearly marked whether it is a "goods vehicle" loading and unloading bay under the Schedule mentioned?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL

I am not aware that it is not clearly marked but I will bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how many cases of alleged unfair dismissals have been heard by the relevant tribunal, on which dates the hearings have taken place and whether a ruling has now been made by the tribunal in each case?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

Four cases have been heard by an industrial tribunal: the dates of hearing were as follows -

9 April, 1976

27 April, 1976

19 May, 1976

14 - 16 October, 1976

No ruling has yet been given by the tribunal in the two cases heard in April or the case heard in May.

In addition there are three cases in which the tribunal has to decide a preliminary point before coming to the substantive hearing.

I have been informed that the three rulings outstanding will be given this week and that rulings on the three preliminary points will also be given this week.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 16 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned the Attorney General agree that it would be regrettable if a question in the House has to precede each ruling in future.

No.17 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can the Government state how often Government properties are painted as a rule and when the exterior of the dwellings at Kings Bastion in Line Wall Road was last painted?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Sir, the aim is to paint buildings every 8 years but due to the backlog of work there are a number of buildings which have not been painted for a longer period. The eventual aim must be to reduce the period to 5 years. Government has no records of the last time Kings Bastion was painted as the building was previously the property of the Ministry of Defence. Government's first tenants were housed there in April 1966.

Some fairly extensive repair works are scheduled for this building and will commence in the near future and painting should follow the completion of the work.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.17 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA

Since it is obviously an eyesore in one of our main thoroughfares in Gibraltar, could the Minister state what he means by "the near future"? Will that be another five years, five months, five weeks?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE

I would say three to six months.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA

Thank you very much.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Has Government now received the report from the Consulting Architect regarding the roofs at Varyl Begg Estate?

MR. SPEAKER:

May I before the answer is given state one thing very clearly. There are in this meeting 7 questions which deal with matters which were dealt with at Question time at the last meeting. There is a Standing Order which says that a matter which has been dealt with at Question Time must not be dealt with within the course of 6 months subsequent to the asking and answering of the question. However, all these 7 questions were answered in such a manner that it showed clearly that Government undertook to take further action. To the extent that that undertaking is given by Government it is proper for the Opposition to follow the matter up but may I give a very clear warning that under the guise of finding out whether the Government has done what it has promised to do we are not going to open the whole question which was dealt with at the previous meeting and may I warn the Members of the Opposition and the Government that I am well armed with the Hansard of the last meeting so that if they challenge me as to whether I am ruling out of order I hope you are as well prepared as I am.

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

A meeting was held at Secretariat on the 18 July last year in which the consulting architects undertook to send a Report to Government. An Interim Report was received and the architects undertook to submit a final Report.

The Final Report was overtaken by events as the architect has now issued a formal instruction to the contractor to commence the repair of the roofs.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.18 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Is Government then in a position now to take legal action to ensure that the repair to the roofs are carried out?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the instructions to the contractor was given on the 7th December, final notice was given on the 19th of January. Unless there is some rapid reply to this final notice Government would be in a position to take legal action.

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

The Hon J B Perez

Mr Speaker has the Minister for Public Works now looked for an alternative site to replace the Talus Area placed out of bounds by the Government for motor-cycle sport and if so with what success?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Sir, as I feared, there is no other Government land which could be used for motor cycle trials.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NC,19 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ

Mr Speaker would the Hon Member then state which sites he has considered, if any?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE

Sir, with my advisers we have looked at all reasonable areas but there is no area as I have said which is suitable which provides the rough terrain that these people actually require. I have given instructions that the present site can continue to be used on a 24 hour basis, my engineers keeping it under review to see that there is no extreme danger of any slip.

HON J B PEREZ

Mr Speaker, the question was, what sites, if any, has the Hon Member considered? Sites, if any?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE

Sir, we have considered the area at Little Bay, near the Keightley Tunnel, but it is considered that it is not good enough and it is also too dangerous as we have already had a landslide there recently. There are no other rocky sites that are available in Government property.

The Hon J B Perez

Can Government state what are their projections for staff requirements in the teaching profession in the next academic year given possible resignations from the service and the return of newly qualified teachers?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

An analysis of staffing requirements for 1977/78 has been made and it is estimated that the Department will require 8 additional staff to its present establishment and 13 replacements. These requirements can be met from the number of staff returning from in-service training and unpaid leave and from the number of teachers scheduled to complete their initial teacher training this year. Difficulties may arise however in matching the specialists among the latter to the posts to be vacated, particularly at secondary level and, of course, resignation from local staff will not be known until the end of March at the earliest.

The Hon J B Perez

Does Government still envisage that the new primary school at Varyl Begg will be ready for occupation by the date given in the City Plan, namely, September 1978?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

The first project application for the new primary school at Varyl Begg was made in April 1976. At the request of HMG and following consideration by its Education and Building Advisers, a revised application was submitted in November 1976. No approval has been given by HMG as yet to this project application. Since the estimated construction period is two years, the school will not be ready for occupation as scheduled.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 21 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is Government then making provision for the temporary primary school at Varyl Begg Estate to last beyond the date of September, 1978, in view of this?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, the site offices on the estate have been purchased from the contractors and have been converted into temporary accommodation for the school in conjunction with the continuation of use of the nursery and the two flats.

HON J BOSSANO:

So, Mr Speaker, am I right then in thinking that the nursery at Varyl Begg would not, in fact, be available as a nursery once the temporary primary school is available because of the delay in the permanent primary school?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

That is correct, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does Government not agree that it is essential to be able to provide those necessary facilities, and if they do, have they looked for an alternative to the nursery site that was earmarked originally?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it is not agreed that the nursery accommodation is so essential as to have the accommodation for the actual schooling especially insofar that we allow children to go to school at the age of 4 not at the compulsory age of 5. We have looked around to see if there are other areas available for the nursery accommodation but without success.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say, with the nursery accommodation and the temporary site offices, up to what date will there be sufficient accommodation in view of the fact that obviously the size of the population will be expanding every year with a new intake?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I am not quite sure up to what date we can cover. It depends on the rate at which the Housing is occupied at the Varyl Begg Estate but we hope we will be able to get through 1977 and most of 1978 on a reasonably satisfactory basis.

The Hon J B Perez

Will Government give details of the conditions contained in the Agreements signed by students sent for training to U.K. Universities?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

In consideration of the grant awarded to them, students undertake and agree as follows:-

- (1) That they will complete a course of study/training to the best of their ability at a College of Further Education leading to the award for which the scholarship was granted.
- (2) That they will not change the said course of study/training without the permission in writing of the grantor.
- (3) + That on completion of the said course of study/training they will return to Gibraltar and if required by the grantor so to do will take up such appointment with the Government of Gibraltar as the grantor shall specify and that they will continue in the service of the said Government for a period of not less than three years or:-
 - + That on completion of the said course of study/training they will return to Gibraltar and if required by the Grantor so to do will for the period of not less than three years practice in Gibraltar the profession for which they had been trained/qualified.
- (4) That in the event of their failing to fulfil for any reason whatsoever all or any of the obligations set out in sections 1, 2 or 3 above, they will if called upon by the grantor so to do repay to the Grantor the whole of the amount of the grant awarded to them or such proportion thereof as the Grantor may in its absolute discretion require.
- (5) That the provisions of the Undertakings by Students Ordinance (chapter 180 of the Laws of Gibraltar) shall apply to this agreement.

+ section 3 to be completed as applicable.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.22 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member confirm that, in fact, two local young men whilst in the middle of the summer exams last year were informed by government that at the time there was no work available for them in Gibraltar and to seek work elsewhere?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, we occasionally do have to tell persons that there is no work available and that we release them from the terms of this contract. I am not sure whether there were two last year or whether there was one or whether there were three, I know there was one.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr speaker, would the government not agree that if students sent to the United Kingdom for training are required to return to Gibraltar in order to work here either for the government or outside government service for a period of three years, there is at least a moral responsibility on the government also to provide employment?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, to some extent it might be argued that there is a moral responsibility for government to give them a job. On the other hand since the student is allowed to choose the subject in which he wishes to be trained it is not always possible for government to give them jobs. We have the example that many students wish to be trained as economists and government cannot use the services of 6 or 7 economists, or astrophysicist for that matter. If we give the student the right to choose the discipline in which he wishes to be trained, I don't think it can be the bounden duty of government to employ them afterwards.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr speaker, whilst accepting that whether the government needs economists or not is a matter of judgement - I accept that they do not need astrophysicists - but economists is another matter. Would the government agree that if that is the situation, it should be government policy to explain to students before they undertake a course what their prospects of employment are so that they can take that into consideration in their choice?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, this is explained to them. There is a careers guidance leaflet that has been given to students and the Careers Guidance department is available to them. The difficulty, sir, is that it is not always easy to project 4 or 5 years ahead exactly what needs there ^{are} going to be in the Government service. We may have a position in which there are no vacancies today but in 4 years time because of persons leaving or deaths or what have you, 2 or 3 positions suddenly become vacant so it is not easy always to project so far in advance.

The Hon J B Perez

Has Government now looked into the question of further provision of Government nurseries in the future and if so what specific plans do they have in this respect?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

The situation with regard to the expansion of nursery facilities has changed in one aspect since I replied to a similar question in this House last year, and that is, that Government has leased a shop area on the Glacis Estate to two persons for the purpose of operating a private nursery. Otherwise, Government is not in a position to expand nursery facilities until the purpose-built nursery at Varyl Begg can be released from use by the Varyl Begg School. However, efforts are being made to obtain alternative accommodation nearer to the northern housing estates for the Government Nursery now located at Hargrave's Court.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.22 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member recall that subsequent to the question he mentioned last year, he undertook at Budget time to look further into the question of the expansion of the nursery service and it is in relation to this undertaking that I would like to know, Mr Speaker, what investigation there has been about the possibilities and with what results?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE

Yes, Sir, I do indeed recall it and it has exercised our minds on several occasions but unfortunately without very much success.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member agree that it is important not just from an educational point of view but also from the point of view of planning of Gibraltar's labour requirements, to provide nursery facilities for potential working mothers?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, we do appreciate this, so much so that in our present nursery we are considering having it working both mornings and afternoons.

The Hon M Xiberras

How many Government tarpaulins are currently being used to cover leaking roofs and is the number in excess of previous years; if so, does the increase reflect a worsening of the Housing Maintenance Programme?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Sir, it is estimated that there are 84 tarpaulins of various sizes covering leaking roofs but in many instances more than one tarpaulin is used to cover a single roof. The number of leaking roofs has not increased over previous years.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.24 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Minister then say that the Housing Maintenance Programme is at least keeping pace with the rate of previous years?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, some 30 to 40 roofs have been repaired during the year but I would make it public at the moment, Sir, that on some of the older roofs persons should not run the risk of damage to the roofs by walking on them in placing TV aerials, etc. This is one of the reasons why some of the roofs suddenly become leaky.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister say whether there is a shortage of tarpaulins?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Shortage of tarpaulins?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Government policy in any set of cases to rehouse temporarily those houses which are covered by tarpaulins and to put the tenants into well known hotels in the locality?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

sir, when we have an extremely difficult case I do try and get in touch with my friend the Minister for Housing to see if something can be done on a temporary basis and I think we have had one or two occasions in which something has been done.

No.25 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether shortages of skilled labour have prevented the F.W.D. from completing its programme of recurrent and non-recurrent works in the current year?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Shortage of skilled labour has definitely been a contributory factor in the FWD's inability to complete its programme of recurrent and non-recurrent works. In this respect it must be borne in mind that at certain periods of the year both the public and private sector building industries are further affected by the high degree of prolonged absence from Gibraltar of a considerable number of building workers.

SUPLIMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.25 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Public Works Department, in fact, employing extra labour at the moment?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, if the labour is available in most instances we are happy to employ them.

No.26 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state which contractor was responsible for supplying and installing the stands used for the City Plan exhibition held just prior to the general elections, the cost of the same and the use to which they have been put since?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

The contractor responsible for supplying and installing the stands used for the City Plan exhibition was Dell Construction Co Ltd. This firm was awarded the contract as their tender was the lowest of four tenders all received on the 21st April.

The cost was £971.43 inclusive of items involving extra works to the original specification and drawings.

The stands are now on loan to the Education Department.

The Hon J B Perez

Does Government intend to take any action as a result of the reduction of flights to Gibraltar by British Airways?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

The Government is very concerned about the reduction in frequencies and loss of seats on the route and I have already had preliminary discussions with charter carriers and other interested parties. The Hon Questioner formed part of a team of Government and Opposition which discussed aviation matters with British Airways on the 18 January 1977 and joined me in expressing concern about the reduction.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 27 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

The question is, does Government intend to take any action?

HON A W SERFATY:

Government will consider what action to take after we have a reply of the airlines sometime after the end of this month, as the Hon Questioner knows only too well.

HON J B PEREZ:

Does the Hon Member consider that Government involvement is vital at this stage?

HON A W SERFATY:

It may well be but we cannot really take a decision until we have an answer from the airlines which has been promised by the end of this month and then we shall review with the knowledge of the number of flights we are going to have next summer. Then the Government shall review the matter and, if necessary, I hope they will become involved.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister say which is the latest date at which some arrangement has to be made due to the airlines having to apply I believe for the use of that route and could the Minister say which is the time limit. By when must Government take action?

HON A W SERFATY:

I would have thought that there is time right up to the end of February to take action so that is why we have pressed the airlines for an early reply.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Can we hear something from the Government then before the end of February, one way or the other?

HON A W SERFATY:

The government will have to take some decisions during February and I am sure everybody will know then what the situation is and what decision has been taken.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

So that this will be made public?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir.

HON J B PEREZ:

The Hon Member referred to a meeting with British Airways. Would he state what is the highest number of flights that British Airways are even considering of putting on the Gibraltar route?

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer to that is that in the summer, and that is not even certain, we shall have 7 flights a week. But, of course, we also have to take into account that Exchange Travel and Panair are flying one charter flight a week.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, the question asked about British Airways flights.

MR SPEAKER:

They anticipate 7 a week in summer.

HON A W SERFATY:

British Airways four flights and Gibraltar Airways three flights.

3.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the government consider that if on the most optimistic assumption the scheduled airlines produce 7 flights a week and there is a charter operation run by Exchange Travel, as the Hon Member has said, that will be sufficient to meet Gibraltar's requirements and no further action will be required?

HON A W SERFATY:

It may be sufficient if the forecast of demand for next summer is what some people fear it will be. Now is the booking period and you have got to watch that at the same time before we take a decision on additional charters.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I presume the Hon Member when he speaks of forecasts is referring to English tourists?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, let us not go into details. Next question.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government confirm whether the whole cost of the Rosia Dale project is being met by O.D.M. and whether any cost escalations in this project will also be met by O.D.M.?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Mr Speaker I would like to answer both this question and the next question at the same time if I may.

Sir, the whole cost of the Rosia Dale project will be met by the Ministry of Overseas Development.

The approved grant includes an allowance for increased costs during the construction period but it cannot be assumed that any additional increases would be met by ODM.

The contract for the project has been awarded to Fabri Constructions Ltd for the sum of £596,213.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS.28 & 29 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member explain how in fact this contract has been awarded when he stated previously in the House that the lowest figure for which it was possible to envisage the construction of this project was £700,000?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, that was the estimate of the experts of the Public Works Department. We have been very lucky to get what may be a relatively low tender.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, is the sum mentioned by the Hon Member the total cost of the project? Does it include building costs, architect fees and land costs?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, certainly land costs are not included, nor architect's fees. The project was designed by Government architects. It does include the parking areas but it does not include some connections of water mains and sewers to the Government system of water mains and sewers. Apart from architects' fees and cost of land and these connections that I have mentioned, it does include the whole project.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I have confirmation from the Hon Member that, in fact, there has been no material change in the design of the project which could account for the difference between the figure he has given now and the original estimate?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not as far as I am aware. Certainly I don't think there has been any material change.

No.29 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Rossano

Can government state whether the contract for the Rosia Dale Housing project has now been awarded and if so the value of the contract and the ~~name~~ of the successful contractor?

(Answered by the Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development together with question No.28 of 1977).

the Hon M Xiberras

for what purpose is the old Merchant Navy Club in Engineer Lane now to be used?

Answer:

the Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Sir, the future use of the old Red Ensign Club in Engineer Lane has been considered in the light of the various factors involved. It has been agreed, in principle, that it should be used for residential purposes but whether this will be in the form of bed sitters or a hostel, for example, has yet to be determined in the light of further technical, professional and financial investigation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.30 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I got the impression - and would the Hon Member correct me if I am wrong - that the Merchant Navy Club was to be used to house labour from abroad of a particular firm and that this was the reason given in a Bill which came before the House some little time ago.

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, sir, this was offered to the particular concern in question but was not accepted.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Wasn't the reply from the Government bench that Government was getting, in fact, a good deal and the concern was getting a good deal because the labour which is now housed at the end of the North Mole was to be put into this Merchant Navy Club and why is this not the case now?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not in a position to say. The Company is not interested in the Red Ensign Club.

HON M XIBERRAS:

My question is, was it not given as an explanation of the Bill before the House that this was, in fact, what was going to happen.

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

I think not. The reason for the Bill was that the Red Ensign Club Committee, having no further use for the club, had asked to surrender the lease to Government. This being so the whole purpose of the Ordinance - the Red Ensign Club Committee Ordinance - fell to the ground and that is why the Ordinance was repealed. There is no purpose in repealing the Ordinance for what was to be done with the property afterwards.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am not saying that this was the reason for the Bill, but that this was a reason adduced in favour of the Bill.

MR SPEAKER:

If I remember well the explanatory note for the bill was the fact that the lessees of the Red Ensign Club were no longer interested in keeping the lease and were surrendering the same.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, but also at the same time, Mr Speaker, I think the House will recall it was said that this was a question of killing two birds with one stone and that Government would have available an area in the North Mole which it wanted to clear or to use for another purpose. The purpose of this question is, what has happened in the meantime to change these matters and wasn't there something of a commitment on behalf of the firm that was involved in this transaction to use the Merchant Navy Club for the purpose of labour from abroad?

HON A W SERFATY:

The situation as I see it was that the Red Ensign Club was no longer required by this Committee, so that building had become available to the Government. Then we thought that in view of our plan to convert the building at the Western Arm into the Captain of the Port's office, that this would be a good offer we could make to the company in question so that they could house their workers there. We made the offer and the offer was not accepted. It is as simple as that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, may I ask the Minister, was it not his intention or whoever spoke from the government bench, to say that the offer to the particular firm was in the interest of the Government in two ways, (1) insofar as it would make available the area at the end of North Mole, and (2) insofar as labour from abroad accommodation, which is at a premium, could be provided. Was the Government not firm on that at that time or was the firm not firm?

HON A W SERFATY:

We were firm and we shall be obtaining that building at the Western Arm. There is no question of the company staying in that building, so now they are making their own arrangements and it is up to them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it not a fact then, Mr Speaker, then that the employees who were previously housed at the end of the North Mole are now being accommodated at Casemates?

HON A J CANEPA:

A few, may be, I think a lot of them have made their own arrangements and have been making their own arrangements over a period of time so that it is now a case of re-accommodating a small number.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Government take note, Mr Speaker, that I believe a number of Members of this House were of the view that the government had, in fact, included that part of the transaction with the firm in question whereby the Merchant Navy Club would be used for this specific purpose at the time the bill was brought to the House.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, since this particular building seems to be suitable for bedsitters, if I understood the Minister correctly, could the Government consider beginning a scheme for the purchasing of small flats particularly by small families possibly appealing to young married people or people who intend to get married, and start a sort of self-financing scheme or near self-financing scheme in Gibraltar? Isn't it a good opportunity to give thought to that?

HON A W SERFATY:

Well whether it is a question of purchasing these small flats I don't know of any that are on sale but is it becoming evident, quite evident....

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to discuss the advisability of Government building flats for the sale. You are being asked simply if this property could be used for that purpose.

HON A W SERFATY:

this is what we are looking at and I do sincerely hope that it will be converted into bedsitters.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, if that is so could the Government consider then starting a sort of self-financing purchasing scheme so that the young people who....

MR SPEAKER:

No, we are not going to go into that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that the accommodation of labour from abroad has over some years been considered a semi-public duty or a semi-public matter and bearing in mind that it now appears that the Merchant Navy Club is not to be used for the purpose which I for one understood it was going to be used by the particular firm in question, would the Hon Member not consider prevailing on the firm in question to use whatever accommodation is provided here in some way related to a Government purpose, in other words, they should not...

MR SPEAKER:

You are now going beyond the orbit of the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I will make it much simpler. If this transaction was carried out with the intimation that the firm would be using this for labour from abroad which has been considered a semi-public purpose, would the Hon Member now consider prevailing upon the firm to use these flatlets that are apparently going to be built for a semi-public purpose, too?

HON A W SERFATY:

I would have thought that bedsitters for the people of Gibraltar were also a semi-public purpose?

HON M XIBERRAS:

this is in fact what I am driving at, Mr Speaker. For what people are the flats to be used?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no.

HON J BOSDANO:

Does the Hon Member agree that whatever the purpose the flats are used for the important thing is of course to use them and not leave them lying idle for the next year or so?

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

No.31 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M. Xiberras

Will Government state whether the fence known as the "unclimbable fence" on the Upper Rock has been sold?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

No, Sir. The unclimbable fence on the Upper Rock has not been sold nor is it intended to do so.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.31 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, was it ever intended to do so in the recent past?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, not since the Government has had it in 1967.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government state how many small boats there are registered in Gibraltar, what facilities are available at present for their users, and what facilities are being provided for these small boats at present in the area being reclaimed for the new Marina?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

- (a) The total number of licenced pleasure boats amounts to 224 as at 31 December 1976.
- (b) There are no facilities available at present for their users except that in accordance with the Port Rules the Captain of the Port allows these boats to anchor in the area contained between the aircraft runway extension and the waterport quays; also, subject to availability, the Commander of the Dockyard allocates berths at the Camber. (In order to assist small boat owners the Captain of the Port allows one boat at a time to be placed on the Quay at Fish Quay to enable painting and minor repairs to be undertaken). The Queen's Harbormaster also allows boats to be placed on the quay at No 5 Jetty for painting and repairs.
- (c) In answer to the third part of the question, it is proposed to provide a slipway and small store on the east side of the Varyl Begg Estate and it is hoped to provide additional berths in the naval Camber by using floating piers, and boats may also be permitted to berth within the Montague Basin.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.32 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Does the Minister believe that this will be adequate facilities for the boats that are at present registered and probably for more boats that will be added to the register if the present blockade continues?

HON A W SERFATY:

The question of how many boats we can accommodate in the Camber still remains a bit unresolved but we are going to increase definitely with these floating piers the capacity of the Camber considerably.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether you consider the facilities to be adequate to meet the requirements.

HON A W SERFATY:

With the additional anchorage that is going to become available at the Camber with a possible overflow at Montagu Basin, it is considered that we shall be able to cope with all the present requirements and, if possible, increased requirements in the future.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister say how quickly this plan is going to develop since at present I understand that the users are in a rather difficult position both at Montague Basin which is completely overcrowded and most certainly in the new Marina area.

HON A W SERFATY:

We want to get them out of Bayside if we want to get on with the project of the Marina and I am pressing hard with the Navy and with the Developer of the Marina - he comes into this too - so that the Camber floating piers project can be started quickly.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Can the Minister say how quickly because obviously the users are very concerned. They are being pushed out of areas, they have nowhere to keep the boats, they cannot take them home and I think if they park them in Main Street it will create a bigger traffic problem. Can the Minister say what does he intend doing and how quickly?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am also very concerned, Mr Speaker, but I think that we are now talking in terms of money.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Will it be before Summer, Mr Speaker?

HON A W SERFATY:

I couldn't commit myself.

3.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

By Christmas?

HON A W SEREATY:

I think so.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

So it will be a Christmas present.

No.33 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can government state if they have made any arrangement to avoid passengers departing Gibraltar at the Air Terminal having to wait at Immigration after the flight is called, in uncomfortable cramped conditions, because the Immigration Officer has suddenly to abandon his post to attend to arriving passengers as happened on Thursday 28 October 1976?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

No Sir. However we will look into the matter.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government state what progress if any has been made with regard to the now long overdue development at Engineer House?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

sir,

With permission I will answer questions 34 and 39 together.

MR SPEAKER:

The only point here of course is that the questioner of Question No.39 the Hon G T Restano deals with the same subject matter. I do not want to deprive both questioners of having the right to ask questions but I think it is only right it should be answered all in one and then there can be supplementaries. We will also call question No.39.

HON A W SERFATY:

In pursuance of Government's contractual obligation to invite fresh tenders the development and Planning Commission has advised that the sale of Engineer House should be subject to the following conditions:

1. the site is to be developed essentially for residential purposes within specified times in accordance with plans previously approved by the Commission,
2. the building is to be restricted to the level part of the site subject to the statutory maximum density of 4:1,
3. the surrounding land is to be maintained as an amenity area,
4. the building line is to be cut back to enable Engineer Road to be widened by some eight feet on average,
5. the developer is to provide a public footpath within the existing boundaries of the site to link up Castle Ramp with Engineer Lane and to give access to the area north of the property which is being retained as a public garden,
6. on site parking facilities are to be provided on the basis of 1:1,
7. the Model Room is to be demolished and the area used as an exit to the site.

It has also been recommended that if the property is not sold it should be retained as a public amenity and parking area.

These proposals will be considered by the Government in the near future.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTIONS NOS. 34 & 39 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Can the Minister say what "the near future" is? We are hearing all the time about the future, but never the present. Can he tell me when the first brick is likely to be laid and when the last one is going to go up? Can the Minister give us an idea?

HON A W SERFATY:

These proposals have meant even legislating on these new rules on parking of 1:1 so we haven't been wasting our time. I hope that these proposals go to the Government within a week or two now that we have got the legislation.

HON G T RESTANO:

Will Government then put the work up to tender?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, of course, immediately.

MR SPEAKER:

Is it the work to tender or is it the site to tender?

HON A W SERFATY:

The site to tender.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr speaker, did the Minister mention among the list of conditions what type of accommodation the Government would like to see built there?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, residential purposes.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Residential, generally, but what type? We have had willa accommodation, we have had luxury flats. What type of accommodation, generally?

HON A W SERFATY:

That must be up to the developer. So long as he keeps to the 4:1 density the Commission has an open mind.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So the Government has not specified that it should be of a particular type as was done, for instance, in the case of Gardiner's Road?

HON A W SERFATY:

I was not aware - that was before my time - that any particular type was specified in the Gardiner's Road development.

HON M XIBERRAS:

It was in fact the recommendation - amply discussed - in the Development and Planning Commission, if the Hon Member would refer to the minutes of this.

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not supposed to refer to minutes of the previous administration.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, perhaps he can refer to his own reports in which I think his Executive Officer says that there is need for continuity in these matters - I am referring to the City Plan - and perhaps he might...

MR SPEAKER:

It is a side issue whether he should or he shouldn't.

HON M XIBERRAS:

A side issue I did not bring up at all myself, Mr Speaker. What I am asking is, bearing in mind that at the time of Gardiner's Road an indication was given to a developer as to what Gibraltar required in that particular area, whether the Minister is not going to do the same for this important site of Engineer House?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am afraid we must leave this to the developer and the imagination of his architect. The Development and Planning Commission cannot say, for example, whether it has got to be bungalows or whether it has got to be a block of flats. We will look at the project and we will decide on its merits.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not consider it reasonable, since this is going to be a competitive affair, to give an indication to the prospective buyers of the site as to what the Development and Planning Commission would like to see in that place?

HON A W SERFATY:

We considered this matter in the commission and the yardstick must be 4:1 density. We have got to leave the rest to the architects to propose to the Commission.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I signify my disagreement with that, Mr Speaker. Will there be a condition that the site must be developed comprehensively?

HON A W SERFATY:

In the first condition we say: "within specified time in accordance with plans previously approved." As is normally known in these contracts the site would have to be started at a certain date and completed by a certain date. It is not such a big site or as complicated as Gardiner's Road.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon Member please bear in mind in anything that he has to do with this particular site the unhappy experience of Gardiner's Road whereby there was a clause in the contract for comprehensive development of the site but the site was not, in fact, developed comprehensively. I have made representations to the Hon Member on the subject and put questions in the House which the Hon and Learned the Attorney General did his best to answer. Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member therefore ensure that this site is developed comprehensively?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, sir. I would like to remind the Hon Member that I told him on one occasion that if the development of Gardiner's Road has not gone and it could have gone he has only himself to blame and nobody else.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in this comprehensive development would the Hon Member say whether there is going to be some sort of time limit for the development of the project as a whole bearing in mind the history of the site up to now?

MR SPEAKER:

He has said so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The site as a whole.

MR SPEAKER:

The site is to be developed essentially for residential purpose and within specified times and in accordance with plans previously approved by the development and planning Commission.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I have put this question, Mr Speaker, because it is possible within that, and this was the flaw of the last contract, apparently to develop a part of the site and wait until the market is right to develop the rest of the site or even to sell the land of the site.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether the development and planning Commission has recommended that there should be a reserve price when the site is put to tender?

HON A W SERFATY:

This is not up to the Development and Planning Commission to advise on.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it Government policy then that there should be a reserve price?

HON A W SERFATY:

surely there must be. In fact, it is my opinion, it has not yet gone to the Treasury that the government should also tender for the site.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to know whether there is a minimum price below which the Government will not allow the property to pass into private hands whichever way this is achieved, whether it is by a reserve price or by the Government tendering themselves?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, we agree and I am sure this will be considered by the Council of Ministers when it looks at these recommendations.

HON J BOSSANO:

In that case, Mr Speaker, does Government intend to do anything about the clause which apparently exists in the previous contract which says that any profit made on a subsequent sale of the site goes to the previous owner?

HON A W SERFATY:

This will have to be considered by the council of Ministers.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does Government recall having said in the House that as a result of an unfortunate clause in the original sale, any profit would go to the person who has failed to develop the site and if this is still the case will they make sure that something is done about this before the sale takes place, otherwise it will be too late to do anything afterwards?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, we will see what we can do about it with the legal advice we have.

HON G T RESTANO:

What time limit is going to be given to the developers to develop the site?

HON A W SERFATY:

I wouldn't like to say at this moment of time.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked what time limit is going to be given to the developer to build.

HON A W SERFATY:

It depends on the project, of course.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, one more question. Would Government take steps to ensure that there is no profiteering in the actual sale of any part of Engineer House on the sale of the land as opposed to the development of the site?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, we will try and see to it that it is put in such a way in the contract that that is avoided if possible.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Government bear in mind again, without referring to these secret documents, the experience of Gardiner's Road?

HON A W SERFATY:

Very much so.

No.35 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state what has been the seat occupancy since flight reductions were introduced by British Airways?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes Sir, the total seat load factors on UK/Gibraltar/UK scheduled services are:

	<u>1976</u>
London/Gibraltar November	82.3%
December	74.3%
Gibraltar/London November	82.7%
December	76.6%

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.35 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Do these figures include the vacant seats for the load factor?

HON A W SERFATY:

Well this is a percentage of the seats offered, so if the load factor was 82.3% the number of vacant seats was 17.7%.

HON G T RESTANO:

How do these figures compares with the same period the previous year?

HON A W SERFATY:

If we compare them with 1975 for example:

	<u>1975</u>
London/Gibraltar November	67.6%
December	63.7%
Gibraltar/London November	70.7%
December	59.9%

the Hon G T Nestano

Has Government begun a study on its Development Programme for the next four years, and if so what stage has been reached?

ANSWER:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes sir. The current Development Programme period ends in March 1978 and Government is at present studying the requirements for the following three year period. High priority areas have already been identified in Housing, Education and Public Utilities and it is hoped to finalise the government's proposals early in the next financial year so that an approach can be made to Her Majesty's Government for aid to finance the programme with the least possible delay.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.36 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware that one of the problems faced when asking for Development Aid is the capacity to build and that from the answer we had from the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary today unless something is done about increasing the capacity the Minister is going to find difficulty in getting...

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, we are not going into that. The question asks whether Government begun a study on its Development Programme. We are not going to discuss the viability or the feasibility of the programme. The question asks exclusively whether Government has prepared a programme. Later on as a result of this question you might have to ask other questions.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the House have an opportunity to look at the programme when it has reached a more concrete stage?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am afraid I am not in a position to say that we shall bring this Programme for the Opposition to look but maybe we can give an indication. This is not for me to decide myself.

MR SPEAKER:

Now, Major Peliza you had a question. The only way you can ask your question, if I may suggest it is; is government, in the preparation of this programme, taking into consideration....

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

.... the capacity of the work and try to make it obvious that Gibraltar has the capacity to build, which at present apparently it hasn't.

HON A W SERFATY:

capacity to carry it out and what is I think as important capacity to prepare projects and bills of quantities and all that. And speedy answers from London when we send the projects there. This is also fundamental.

HON G T RESTANO:

When is it expected that the programme will, in fact, be submitted to the British Government?

HON A W SERFATY:

Can I have that question again, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER:

When is it expected that government would submit its programme to HMG?

HON A W SERFATY:

I would say sometime mid-1977.

HON M ALIBERRAS:

Reference to the reply to the question by the Leader of the Opposition that there would be no consultation or showing of the study to Members of the Opposition, would the Hon Member not agree that this is a retrogressive step bearing in mind that there was consultation at the time of the previous development Programme?

MR SPEAKER:

I am sorry but I didn't get the beginning of your question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The Leader of the Opposition has asked whether the Members of the Opposition could have this study which is being prepared. The Government's reply was "no" and I am saying that this is going back on the practice during the previous Development Programme when there was consultation with the Opposition through Professor Clayton and I was informed at the time of the general drift of Government plans for the development Programme.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There will be no difficulty over that, but there certainly will be no less opportunity for discussion than there was with the 1969 Programme of the previous administration.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am asking in respect of the last Development Programme when Professor Clayton was here. Will the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister bear in mind that consultation afterwards is hampered by the fact that Members of the Opposition don't know what the Government wanted originally. In other words if there is going to be, would he not agree, fair consultation then the Opposition should be in on this from the start.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, sir. I think that there will be consultation through the medium that there was last time but certainly we are not prepared to bring the Development Programme to this House for prior approval.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That is not what I was asking, as the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister well knows. What I am asking is what will be the nature of the consultation on the Development Programme, as a whole, starting with the study?

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, perhaps, I could just make the point does the government appreciate that I was not really phrasing my question in terms of consultation but in terms of information.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Absolutely.

No.37 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government pressed the FCO to give a reply on the report of the Select Committee on Air Communications?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

Sir, when a copy of the Hansard of my answer to question No.31 of the 6 December 1976 became available it was sent to the FCO on the 10 January 1977.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.37 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

I take it then that no reply has been received?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir. Not so far.

No.38 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government consulted with the Ministry of Defence in order to find a provisional solution to the problem related to additional space at the Port, and if so, what solution has been found?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

An approach has been made to the MOD to acquire additional space at the North Mole and this request is being considered.

No.39 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Westano

What advice has Government now received from the Development and Planning Commission on the future of Engineer House?

(Answered by the Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development together with Question No.34 of 1977).

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government give the reason why the interest paid on deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank is as low as 5% and not higher when the Bank of England lending rate is 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ %?

Answer:

The Minister for Postal Services

Yes Sir. The main reason is that deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank are demand deposits. The savings bank must therefore maintain a high liquidity ratio. Moreover there is a large turnover of small deposits and withdrawals and thus relative to the amounts deposited the administrative expenses are high. These factors apply equally to the Savings Accounts maintained by the commercial Banks and thus, like the post office Savings Bank, pay only 5% on such accounts. It is understood that the united Kingdom Post office Savings bank currently also pays 5%.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 40 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Isn't it a rather high profit margin, 5% related to 14%, and couldn't the Minister look into the possibility of making it more attractive for people with small savings to have a little extra incentive to save and also perhaps to get something more for their money? Isn't it quite excessive the amount of profit derived from this by the post Office?

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, first of all I would like to put the record straight. The present lending rate in the Bank of England is 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ % and not 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ % as stated by the Hon questioner, let me give him a breakdown of the accounts in the Post Office. There were on the 31st december 11,266. Out of that 9,088 are for accounts under £100 which means roughly, that about 90% of our accounts are for sums under £100. Surely we cannot pay higher rates of interests to such small amounts and furthermore I am sure the Hon questioner would not like the government to compete with commercial banks locally or with the British postal Service Banks.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I would have thought that would be an excellent idea, Mr Speaker, if I may say so, if the post office could generate more business. Couldn't the Minister give thought to that? Perhaps if he were to increase the interest he might attract many more people to invest in the Post Office Savings Bank rather than leaving it idle underneath carpets and stored away in mattresses and places like that.

HON I ABEUCASIS:

Mr Speaker, if the rate of exchange or rather the rate of lending in England was 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ % the Savings Bank in England was only paying 4% so Gibraltar would not go any higher than 5% under the existing number of accounts and the value of the accounts.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Hon and Learned the Attorney general has some legal interpretation.

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

No interpretation. There is one factor which has not been considered and that is that the first £30 of interest from the Post Office Savings bank is tax free so that, in fact, boosts the interest so the depositor is getting a much higher rate in practice.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

This is perhaps another encouragement but could the Minister state, if this is possible, if the amount of gains in that particular department can be worked out in relation to the money saved on the amount invested. Is this 5% done by guesswork?

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I would very much like to know that, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

What is the question?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

The question is, could the Minister state at the moment on that particular Department, what are the profits derived on the basis of 5% interest.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, I think that would require notice.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Well, Mr Speaker, if he can't perhaps he can say so and then I will put the question in that way formally on another occasion because I think we ought to see in that particular aspect and not in relation to what other people think of whether it is competitive or not.

HON I ABECASIS:

I have no idea at this stage but it is published in the Estimates. But I can assure the hon and gallant Member that this is not done by guessing, absolutely not.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What other way? If he can't state what the profits are which other way is it done? Intuition?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The Hon and Gallant Major appears to feel that there is a direct relationship between the bank of England lending rate and the rate paid on small ~~cr~~ demand savings. If that was so....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, let us not complicate life. The hon questioner has only used the bank of England rate as a comparison as to what can be obtained in the open market and what can be obtained in the Savings Bank.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is there not really a difference between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom insofar as in Gibraltar, the Gibraltar government really only has the Gibraltar Post Office Savings Bank as a means of savings for people whereas in the United Kingdom there are the Government loans, Treasury loans and so forth. Would he not consider it a good idea for the post office, not necessarily in competition with the banks - and I don't see why that should worry the Minister too much - to have a system of time deposits in the post office so that people who are prepared to leave money for a time would have a better rate of interest.

HON I ABECASIS:

I am prepared to consult the Financial and Development Secretary on that one.

HON J BOSSANO:

can the Hon Member say what rate of interest has been paid on demand deposits to government in the period because will he confirm that he has said that the rate of interest reflects the factor that deposits in the Post office Savings bank are demand deposits. Can government say what rate it has obtained on its demand deposits, for example, with crown Agents?

HON I ABECASIS:

they
Sir, I think/very from 2% to 12% for all that I remember.

MR SPEAKER:

We mustn't go beyond the orbit of the question. You are right to make a comment because it was brought out in the budget session as a matter of fact last year as I remember well. However, you mustn't go beyond the orbit of the question. Next question.

The Hon G T Restano

Will government confirm that new equipment has been received by the telephone department and whether it now intends to introduce fully automatic dialling systems on external circuits for both telephone and telex?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

Yes sir, new equipment ordered in 1975 has been received and is expected to be in operation by the end of this year. It is however specifically designed to extend exchange capacity to meet the continuing demand and also to replace some old equipment. The answer to the second part of the question is in the negative insofar as telephones are concerned. With regard to telex it is understood that Cable and Wireless will consider fully automatic external operation when they have a sufficient number of subscribers.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 41 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr speaker, how many external lines do we have in Gibraltar?

MR SPEAKER:

You were told last time. I think the Minister said there were two direct lines to London, two to Morocco and one from Spain. Is that right?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPANI:

That's correct, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

That is question No.38 of 1976. you are asking for information you asked last time.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is it a fact, Sir, that there have been no new telexes installed for sometime now due to the industrial dispute that has been going on, I believe, for many months? In those circumstances is it a fact that we will not have automatic telex and is there any chance of seeing an end to this extraordinary dispute that seems to go on unseen and unheard for over a year?

MR SPEAKER:

Mr Dellipiani I stopped Mr Restano when he was asking you a supplementary question insofar as how many lines there were available between Gibraltar and the outside world in the belief that it had been answered in the question which was answered in the last meeting. I have gone through the Hansard and I cannot see that information so I must have got it somewhere else. Therefore he is entitled to ask the question. I think the reply is that there are 5 lines.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That's right, sir, the answer is 5 lines.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Hon Member say if all these lines are on the same circuit?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

No, they are not on the same circuits. We have two on VHF and two on HF. The other one is the landline to Spain.

HON G T RESTANO:

I take it then that the two lines which are on high frequency are direct to UK or are they bypassed through any other administration?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The HF circuits are direct to UK.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr speaker, I would like to refer therefore to the Minister's reply in the last House when he said categorically that fully automatic dialling was not possible because of other administrations and he mentioned a particular administration. Here we have two lines direct on HF with UK. Cannot fully automatic dialling be introduced for those lines?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The two HF circuits Gibraltar/UK are suitable for semi-automatic working if the cable and wireless instal a signalling convertor otherwise known as a SECMAT. Unfortunately the British Post Office is most reluctant to encourage high frequency radio within Europe. I think there are these two circuits alone in the whole of Europe working on HF and they don't want to encourage this, they want to do away. This is why we are unable to proceed with semi automatic communications through HF.

HON G T RESTANO:

I never spoke of semi automatic, I have been talking about fully automatic.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Fully automatic is out of the question because it is a process where you start working through semi automatic transmission and then if the demand is there and the working circuits are available then you automatically go on automatic transmission. But it is no use going straight into the expense of going to automatic transmission if we haven't got the necessary circuits or the necessary demand.

HON G T RESTANO:

So therefore, Mr Speaker, the reason why we can't have even semi automatic dialling is because the GPO will not allow for semi automatic dialling equipment to be installed in Gibraltar on the High Frequency lines, is that correct?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

They want to do away with the two HF circuits. It is not used in Europe and they want to do away with this so why^{go} into the expense of putting the signalling convertor by the Cable and Wireless when the BPO don't want to use this. They have other means available through Spain but for political reasons Spain doesn't allow us to use this.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister say how much traffic going into UK goes through the HF lines and how much traffic goes through the VHF through Morocco?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

If the Hon Member will give me time I shall certainly produce this but he must realise I haven't got this information at hand.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Minister say whether more traffic...

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, we are talking about the possibility of going fully automatic.

HON G T RESTANO:

I am trying to establish, Mr Speaker, if most of the traffic goes in fact through VHF.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The HF is the more reliable of the 2 different circuits. The VHF is out of action of the order of about 50% during the course of a year so naturally the HF is the one that is used most, logically.

HON G T RESTANO:

Therefore, Mr Speaker, I think the government will realise the importance of having good telecommunications and how important it is to the economy as well. Here we have the bulk of our traffic going to UK through a direct line and it is only the BPO who does not encourage the new installation which might be necessary which I understand is not very expensive, anyway. Would the government, through the FCO, try to get the agreement of the BPO to this further equipment?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We can but try but it is not up to us whether they say yes or no.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Am I right in asking the Minister then that no formal application has been made so far?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The actual lines do not belong to the government of Gibraltar, they belong to the cable and wireless..

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether any application has been made to the GPO to convert our system through these two lines into fully automatic or semi automatic. That is all that you are being asked.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I would like notice of that question.

HON P J ISOLA:

In view of the appalling service that is given by the BPO in England to people who wish to ring Gibraltar, which inevitably brings 3 hours delay at least, does not the Minister think that it is not unreasonable to ask the BPO that either they permit the semi automatic through the HF, or they provide a better service to Gibraltar, which is absolutely appalling. People just give up trying to ring Gibraltar.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr speaker, can the Minister say when semi-automatic is installed how will somebody from England calling Gibraltar operate the semi-automatic. Will he call his own operator in England, the GPO, or will he be able to directly dial the exchange in Gibraltar?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

In semi-automatic operations outgoing traffic is dialled by the operator and not by the subscriber. The operator monitors, controls and times the call and can therefore deal with the deficiencies in the number and the quality of the available circuits, that is, if you want to ring up the UK you dial the operator here and the operator here rings directly to the subscriber in England. That is semi-automatic.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, what about the other way? That is where the delays occur and they occur today.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The same will apply when we have semi-automatic.

HON G T RESTANO:

Therefore there will be exactly the same delays in England as there are today because the subscriber has to call the operator and it is at the GPO level where delays take place.

MR SPEAKER:

We'll leave the matter now.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can I have an answer to that, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER:

Well, the answer is obvious. There is nothing much we can do because it is on the other side.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr speaker, in view of the vital importance of communication, particularly telephone communication, businesswise, socialwise, humanwise in every sense the importance of establishing good telephone communication between Gibraltar and Britain - this has been going on for months now and nothing seems to be happening - could the Minister give an undertaking that he will promptly act on this and make a formal application to the GPO in the UK to try and get good communications established. Can he do that?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I said previously that we would certainly try.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, can the minister give a sense of urgency about this. It seems that the Minister^{is} not wholeheartedly behind the idea. Could he tell us if he is completely wholehearted behind the idea and is going to do his best to do it. This is what I am after.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I promise.

MR SPEAKER:

That is the first time I have heard a politician promise to do anything.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government report to the House on the state of Management/Staff relations in the Medical Department?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

The relations between management and staff are considered to be satisfactory.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 42 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member explain to the House how he can say so categorically that this is the case in view of the dispute that has been taking place over some time? Could the Hon Member, for instance, say whether the nursing staff are now wearing their uniforms?

HON A F MONTEGRIFFO:

All the staff are now wearing their uniforms.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but we are not going into the reason why they are wearing their uniforms or what prevented them from wearing their uniforms?

HON A F MONTEGRIFFO:

I don't usually interfere in negotiations. They met about two months ago. We settled the points which never arose originally from the industrial dispute. They accepted what we had originally offered in lieu of the double Sunday working overtime. Then because they brought something about leave and that was not accepted for the moment, they then said: "Well, we won't accept the offer that they had accepted in lieu of the Sunday working overtime; and at the moment the Union was in touch with us and they told us that they had formed a new caretaker committee and that when they have a new committee they will be informing us and they will be meeting us."

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government inform parents of the possible risks of whooping cough vaccination, considering the problems that have arisen in the United Kingdom?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical & Health Services

Parents attending the Government's Immunological Clinic and seeking Whooping Cough Vaccination for their children are informed in accordance with the procedure recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of the United Kingdom Department of Health and Social Security which is based on the Standing Medical Advisory Committee's Memorandum on Immunisation Against Infectious Diseases.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 43 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Would the Hon Member elucidate how this information takes place please?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The Procedure is that prior to immunising a child against whooping cough its parents are asked whether the child has a personal or family history of convulsion, cerebral irritation in the neonatal period, epilepsy or any other disorder of the central nervous system, in which case the vaccine is not given. Children with acute illnesses, particularly those with respiratory symptoms, are not immunised until they are fully recovered. In cases where there are any severe local or general reactions to the first dose, no further doses of vaccine containing a whooping cough component are given.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

It obviously allows a doctor to decide when not to proceed but are parents informed of the possible risks of whooping cough vaccination before they are vaccinated?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes, Sir, I explained that they are. I have explained what

No.44 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government state what percentage of children up to the age of 6 years have been fully vaccinated against Poliomyelitis?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

The percentage of children up to the age of 6 years who have been fully vaccinated against Poliomyelitis is 80.4%.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Can Government confirm that some tenants at Varyl Begg Estate are occupying flats with dangerous electrical wiring as a direct result of leakage of water into the electrical installations?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Since the roofs started to leak at the Varyl Begg Housing Estate the contractor has provided a 24 hour service to assist any tenant whose electrical installation might be affected by rainwater. Obviously, if a roof leak were to develop and the tenant were to disregard it the danger would exist. However, in all cases where leaks have been reported the contractor's electricians have immediately attended. There is no reason to presume that any dangerous electrical wiring exists in flats that are occupied unless the tenant has not reported the leak.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.45 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say that the degree of service provided has been to disconnect the electricity?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I didn't hear the last few words.

MR SPEAKER:

That the degree of service being given consists exclusively of disconnection of the electricity supply when the report is given.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it is not a question of disconnecting because the fuse system in these houses disconnects itself automatically.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked that the degree of service being given by the contractor allows exclusively for the electrician to go to the house where a report has been made and disconnect the electricity supply so that there will be no danger, in other words, leaving the tenant without electricity.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, in certain instances the electrical people concerned have brought wiring in from outside into the house so that some electricity is available.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the Hon Member agree that in the majority of these cases in fact all that has happened is that the particular point or light or switch has been made safe but that there is no electricity available and there is no indication of when it will be available.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir I don't know any of those cases but if you would like to bring some to my notice we will look into them.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Hon Member aware that there have been a number of cases where it is only after the tenant has had an electric shock that the 24-hour service has come into operation?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, that is not the information given to me. I understand that as soon as a report comes through they attend to it very rapidly.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the Hon Member undertake to investigate specific cases that I have brought to his notice?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, with pleasure.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Is the Government intending to provide club premises in the Varyl Begg Estate for the tenants in the Estate, and if so, when?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

Government intends to provide club premises at the Varyl Begg Estate in line with Government's policy in providing amenities as in other Estates.

The requirement for a temporary school at this Estate has delayed positive consideration for club premises until a permanent school is constructed at this Estate.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.46 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Does the Minister suggest then that the tenants will not have a club until the permanent school has been constructed?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, I am afraid so, Mr Speaker.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I was thinking mostly of the senior citizens in that area who have in fact approached me, who are extremely eager to have a small place where they can meet and chat because apparently there are no other forms of amenity there. Could the Minister please reconsider the situation and see if some nook or corner could be found in the estate where something could be done? Surely, that is not beyond the imagination of this Government.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am glad that the Hon Questioner has asked that question, Sir. It is regrettable that no provision was made in the planning of Varyl Begg Estate for club amenities or even for a school. However, Government, Mr Speaker, has great concern for the senior citizens. There is a

very small room in the Estate where the more elderly can get together and have a little chat but Government is very concerned and we have held a number of meetings with the Varyl Begg Association to try and find club premises to suit all the amenities required in such an estate.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Could the Minister say how many more meetings he will have to hold before they have a place?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well, Mr Speaker, I don't know how many meetings we will have to have, quite honestly, but it is regrettable that it wasn't held at the time when Varyl Begg Estate was first designed or thought of and then we would not be answering this question today.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Is the Chief Minister aware that the Estate was designed and thought of in 1969 and perhaps it is the biggest estate that has been built in Gibraltar and could he say that they haven't had time since 1972 when they took over to think about a thing like this when it was brought to their attention?

HON F J ISOLA:

Could I ask the Minister for assurances that any facilities are provided, even if it is for Senior Citizens, will also contain a section for the youth of the area. I would have thought that there was a great need for that too.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Very much so, Mr Speaker, I think I incorporated that in a previous answer when I said it would be to take account not only of the senior citizens but for the general requirements of that particular estate.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Has Government ceased to dispose of derelict vehicles abandoned in public places, and if not, can it state why the carcass of a minibus has been lying in the Alameda Grand Parade for some weeks if not months?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

The Police have not ceased to dispose of derelict vehicles abandoned in public places.

The owner of the carcass of the minibus in question lying in the Alameda Grand Parade signed his consent for disposal on the 13 December 1976. The Police give priority to the removal of derelicts from public roads but this particular derelict will be removed very shortly.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.47 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware that the carcass has been removed already?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am not aware, Sir.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

And furthermore is the Minister aware that there is a heap of rubbish lying where the minibus was and can he tell us whether it will take about 6 months to remove that as it took to remove the carcass?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I can answer for derelict cars. I cannot answer for rubbish.

The Hon M Xiberras

Are the old zebra crossings in the area of Boyd Street to continue as such and, if so, will Government see to it that they are properly marked?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The road surface at Boyd Street became polished and slippery and as a temporary measure a thin surface dressing was applied to improve the conditions. Unfortunately fuel from vehicles destroyed this treatment. Remedial maintenance will be carried out as soon as weather conditions permit. The Police will ensure that their painting contractor mark the crossing as soon as possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.48 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm that these zebra crossings are outside the law and can Government confirm whether they intend passing legislation to include them within the law?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot say that they are outside the law. I think the Hon and Learned Attorney General would be the person to answer that. We have to consider bringing it in line with the United Kingdom.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Hon Questioner was implying that they are not marked in accordance with the requirements of the regulations.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am afraid that I cannot answer that question.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

How many of these zebra crossings are not within the law specified as such?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think that would be a matter for the Transport Commission to thrash out.

The Hon M Xiberras

Bearing in mind the increased movement of pedestrians across Queensway in the vicinity of the Viaduct roundabout, does Government intend to instal zebra crossings in the area?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

At the request of the Transport Commission a scheme has been drawn up for the provision of a new traffic island and a pedestrian crossing at the Waterport roundabout.

The scheme involves a considerable amount of new electrical work and the construction of the traffic island for which provision will be made in the 1977/78 Draft Estimates.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.49 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

When is the work going to be carried out?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

After the Estimates, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Very good, Mr Speaker, approximately when, two years?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well Sir after the estimates cannot be two years. At the most it will be one year.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Will the zebra crossings be within the law?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am sure, Sir, that if we provide zebra crossings I very much doubt that we would provide them outside the law.

The Hon M Xiberras

Is government prepared to constitute a separate committee having as its purpose the encouragement, coordination and promotion of cultural activity and will government consider introducing systematic financial support for such activity?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Government provides financial assistance to cultural organisations through the Committee for Financial Assistance to Cultural and Sporting Associations. At present the constitution of a separate committee for cultural activities is not considered necessary but I am prepared to consult on the matter with my colleague, the Minister for Education.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.50 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr speaker, does the Hon Member not recall a similar question which I put and I believe was answered perhaps during budget time by the Hon Mr Featherstone in which he showed considerable sympathy for the idea if not of a separate committee certainly of more intensive and more systematic financial support for cultural activity?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot recall that, in all honesty. I am told that something did occur in that line but if the hon member is concerned about the financial assistance to cultural activities, I can say that in 1974/75 a total of £510 was given, in 1975/76, £750 was given and in 1976/77, £1,410 were given for cultural activities.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Hon Member wish this House to believe that that is, in his considered opinion, enough to carry out what the question asks, the co-ordination and so forth of cultural activities in Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I don't think anybody, any member of this house, would ever agree any sum of money is enough. This is what we can give within our means.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Without in any way wishing to minimise the importance of sport and without in any way wishing to deprive sport of funds currently allocated to it, wouldn't the Hon Member, if he does have any interest in cultural revival in Gibraltar, not agree that it is a derisory sum of money that is allocated to culture in Gibraltar as compared with sport?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, pro rata I think the Hon Member would be surprised at what is given to sport in relation to culture. But as I said before I would very much like to give more to culture and, indeed, more to sport.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Hon Member means per capita then perhaps one might agree with him. Is that the criterion that is going to apply in these deliberations.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, sir, it is not the criteria. The criteria is the applications one receives and in every instance where there have been applications from the Community Centre, the Gibraltar Symphony Orchestra, the sea scout band, the drama group, Art Group 4, the girls choir, the Horticultural Society, Photography, Philatelic and the History of Gibraltar, we have considered and granted.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree that dividing some £900 or whatever it is he said was allocated to cultural activity, that if they are divided between as many entities as the Hon Member has mentioned, that the sum allocated to each is more than derisory.

MR SPEAKER:

I think you are talking at cross purposes. The Hon Minister has not said that there is a sum which is divided amongst these. I think the Minister said that the total amount of contributions have added up to this. In other words there is not a limit to the amount granted.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr speaker, the arguments in my question still applies. £900 apparently, have been allocated to cultural activity and I am asking the Minister whether he does not consider the amount allocated to each individual activity as derisory?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I may not have made myself quite clear. The list of entities that I listed is of course the number of bodies that have asked for aid during 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977. For instance, one would not divide the sum of £1,410 within the nine or ten that I listed. In 1976/77 there were 4 applications from cultural activities and they received £1,410. If the Hon Member wants to know exactly I am prepared to give details.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, this is not what I want. What I want is some acknowledgement or some evidence of responsiveness from the Government as regards the cultural needs of Gibraltar, this is what I want. Is the Minister satisfied that the committee that at present allocates sums of money both to cultural and sporting associations is responsive to the needs of culture in Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well sir apart from the direct financial aid provided to those who apply, it must be borne in mind that it is possible ~~that~~ some people/^{who} have never applied may think government should go around asking them if they want money. As I say there have been 4 applications this year from the cultural field and in addition I think I should remind the house that there is of course the educational government facilities and John Mackintosh hall, for instance, which is there to assist in whichever way it can.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member like me to show him some views as to the cultural level of Gibraltar published by outside authorities and would the Hon Member when perusing this bear in mind that we are considered by a number of outside authorities as being something of a cultural desert in Gibraltar, and is the Government satisfied that this should remain so?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, as in every particular case when one is asked to consider one is prepared to consider. I have had absolutely no complaints from any cultural group that we haven't met their demands. Whenever possible we do meet their demands.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would he not say a priori though that any cultural activities which need encouraging by the Gibraltar Government could best be catered for by the Department of Education rather than the Department of Sport? Would the Minister be prepared to answer that one?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think that is possibly correct, sir. I personally feel that the Department of Education should cater for culture.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer is, yes.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker I am glad of that answer. Could the Hon Member then inform me as to whether he had consultations with the Minister for Education in answering this question and apparently is turning down the original idea of the question for a separate committee for cultural activities?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot say that there should be a separate committee, that is another question the Hon Member is asking. The question of whether it should go under the education wing is a matter which I will be consulting with the Hon the Minister for Education.

MR SPEAKER:

You have been asked whether before you prepared this reply you consulted with the Minister for Education?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member please refer to Hansard in certain exchanges with the Minister for Education and myself in which the Minister for Education invited me to go to him and put forward my ideas which clearly is a government responsibility but which I am willing to do provided that there is recognition on the government side which I am seeking by this supplementary that it could be possible for cultural activities to come under the Minister for Education. Is the Minister prepared to surrender control of that part of the Sporting and Cultural Committee which appertains to culture and to pass it on to the Minister for Education, which I think is the first step to be taken?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir if the government consider that it should be so it will be so. What I would like to remind the Hon questioner is that in the past the responsibility of sport was always with education. I would be delighted to part with that responsibility if it is so considered.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the government then be prepared in the coming budget to make good the words of the Minister by an allocation of money which would reflect this attitude on the part of the Minister?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, that is for government to consider.

No.51 of 1977

Q&A

The Hon M Xiberras

How many applications are there currently for government housing?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

1600.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 51 OF 1977

HON M KIBERRAS:

How many of these applications does the minister consider will be attended to satisfactorily over the next, let us say, 12 months?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it is quite difficult. I don't think it would be fair to me to give an exact figure. I can say that if the four vacant blocks at Varyl Begg Estate are allocated within the year that would mean something like 140 families. Penney House I think we may have something like 7, the remodernisation programme is another 9 and whatever else may come up as a result of the decanting, if any, on account of Varyl Begg Estate.

MR SPEAKER:

156.

HON H J ZAMMITT

Something in that region, Sir.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I then ask the Minister if only 156 applications out of 1600 approximately are going to be dealt with in the next year, in the next two years does he expect an improvement of the position?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I certainly hope to see an improvement. I cannot obviously in all conscience accept that the problem will be solved within the next two years.

HON M XIBERRAS:

No, of course not, Mr Speaker, I don't expect him to produce 1,600 flats. But does the Hon Member have any idea, and surely he must have in his present responsibilities, as to how many other applications are going to be dealt with in two years from now. He has given me 156 and taken into account varyl Begg and so forth. In 2 years from now how many of these 1600 families can reasonably hope to have their cases dealt with?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot again commit myself to a particular figure but I think the Hon Member well knows that the possibility exists that if one is talking of....

MR SPEAKER:

Let us not speculate. If you can give an estimate, fair enough, but if you say you don't know anything else is superfluous.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I am afraid I cannot answer that question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does that mean to say that the Hon Member and the Government, generally, cannot tell the people of Gibraltar how many families, despite their calculations and so forth and their predictions which have already been made in fact this House but I am asking now in a specific form, how many families are going to be accommodated from the Housing List in the next 2 years. Is that a fact that he does not have the information available or he doesn't want to tell the House?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I am sorry I do not withhold any information from this House. I am not able to answer that question. It is not that I am withholding information in the slightest, I am not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Hon Member hopeful that there will be accommodation from somewhere in the next two years which the House is not aware of besides Rosia Dale and modernisation and so forth, surely the Department of Housing does have some indication of what units will become available in the next 2 years.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, we have not a direct indication. The whole situation will we hope result in a decline in the number of applications and I think what does occur on some of these instances is that more than one application from one particular family in an attempt to see who comes out with most points. That exists and the Hon Member well knows that that exists, Sir, and therefore I am not saying again that that is going to solve the problem. Of course the remainder apart from Varyl Begg that will alleviate the situation is whatever can be done in modernisation, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that is what I am trying to get from the Minister in view of this great figure. Is the Minister saying that because of two or more applications coming from one family this figure which he has given the House of 1600 is not a realistic figure of the number of families in need of housing?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

It may be a realistic figure, Sir, of the number of people requiring accommodation but I seem to remember that when Varyl Begg Estate was planned it was said that it would solve Gibraltar's housing needs and we now find that we have more applications today than when Varyl Begg Estate was built.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I didn't want to ask him how many clubs he was going to build for estates I am asking about the basics, how many flats if the government going to build or modernise and how many people is it going to house? Could I ask the Minister the question whether he recalls this side of the House drawing the government's attention to the grave crisis in housing that would arise in these coming 2 or 3 years, perhaps even 4. Does the Minister recall that and what has he done in the meantime in order to meet more of these 1600 applications than apparently is going to be the case?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I can assure the Hon Member and indeed the House that the housing problem is probably number one priority within any government or any development programme. We are doing our utmost to try and solve as much as we can. Again I regret I cannot give the Hon Member a detailed account of what will occur in the next two years.

HON M XIBERRAS:

It is not the Minister's responsibility at all, or that particular Minister's responsibility, it is the responsibility of the Government as a whole and of the Minister for Development or the Chief Minister or what have you. But the Minister I think has shown, does he not agree, that there is a grave crisis in housing.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, has the Hon Member any idea of the number of new houses that are needed on average in a year just to keep the situation static, that is, to stop it deteriorating? Has anybody made any estimate of that figure?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I haven't. What I can say is that on average we receive some 10 applications per week. Therefore, Mr Speaker, on the basis of the 150 that he is going to be able to allocate we should be 350 worse off in a years time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Government in negotiation at all with MOD as regards Chilton Court?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. Next question.

the Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state when the remaining flats at varyl Begg Estate will be allocated; will they further state what minimum pointage will qualify applicants to obtain the various sizes of flats available?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Government cannot state when the remaining 4 blocks at the Varyl Begg Estate will be allocated. Accordingly it is impossible to state, at this stage, the minimum pointages which will be required to qualify for accommodation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 52 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Minister not agree, however, that taking today as a line that it would be possible to give the House an indication of what minimum pointages would be required for the various sizes of accommodation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, it would not be possible for a number of reasons. One is that one would have to know exactly what the percentage of the medical category cases, Civil Service quarters and the rest of things to know exactly what could move in to varyl Begg Estate to give out with exactitude the minimum number of points required.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I didn't ask the Minister for exactitude I asked him for an indication. Would the Hon Member not say that today for a 4-room flat 270 points is considered insufficient?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, completely insufficient. That would be extremely low.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Minister not agree that this again in the rough indication of the pointages needed for the various types of houses, this again points to a crisis in housing in Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not necessarily, Sir. I am not saying that there isn't a crisis in Gibraltar on housing. The problem of housing has been with us for many years and no doubt it will be with us for many more years. I think there is a great amount of false hopes that can arise sometimes from this very own House, Sir, when we have in the past given out minimum number of pointages required.

Some people unfortunately, fail to make it and then, of course, one has to adjust or try to make it good by way of explanation which is not at all easy. The reason why these pointages have been inflated so tremendously I think the Hon Member well knows is as a result of the delay particularly in Phase 6 and Block 18 being allocated and they are of course increasing.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst entirely agreeing with that as a factor in this matter, namely, the delay in the completion of the last stage of Varyl Begg Estate, would the Hon Member not agree that since there is nothing to follow then we are in for a rapidly deteriorating situation in housing?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it would be futile of me to say that there isn't a problem, there certainly is a problem. The only hope we have, apart from Rosia Dale in the immediate future, would be the modernisation programme which is now speeding up at Flat Bastion Road. It is beginning to move and we hope that it will alleviate the situation, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I think he mentioned a figure of 9. Well, I don't know perhaps I am wrong. How does the Minister in view of the fact that he does agree that we are heading for a rapidly deteriorating situation.

MR SPEAKER:

He does not agree.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well perhaps Mr Speaker, he is at variance with most of Gibraltar on this. But how can the Minister justify his statement then that Government has housing as its top priority? What can the Minister advance in support of that statement?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked questions which you don't have to answer. You are being asked questions to justify your position and not seeking information.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I don't mind answering them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, if I may put it this way. How many in support and as evidence of the Government's attention towards housing, being its top priority, what is the Minister producing in terms of concrete flats?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it is not for me to produce concrete flats, Sir, so long as they are waterproof I think I would be quite happy. It is of course my responsibility as Minister of Housing to report to my colleagues in Government the day to day need and try to focus the future. Without any doubt I am convinced that whenever my colleagues go on development talks to the United Kingdom housing will be given the priority it very well deserves.

The Hon J B Perez

Does Government intend to impose a £10 annual fee for those using the facilities at the Victoria stadium?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

government is considering the implementation of a Membership Fee for those using the facilities at the Victoria stadium Sports centre.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.53 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr speaker, does not the Hon Member consider the fact that this fee would discourage those less fortunate to participate in Sport in Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is government considering any alternative plans?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir. For the past 6 years government has been able to resist charging for the use of sporting facilities. With the completion of Phase 2 Government feels that the time has now come for the sports Centre to part pay for itself as is the practice with Sports centres in the UK open for use by Education Authorities and the community. The implementation of a centre membership scheme and the rates to be charged is at present under consideration. It should be borne in mind that in order that consideration may be given to the provision of additional sporting facilities or much needed extensions as the existing ones, it is essential to establish the facilities can substantially part pay for themselves.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does that mean that, in fact, the government is considering alternative means for this £10 annual fee?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I have not mentioned that figure, sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Or for an annual fee. Is government considering a turnstile approach to it with a minimum fee as people come into the stadium?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

There will be two questions, sir. The Hon Member opposite has mentioned a fee of £10 which would mean, if my mathematics are right 3.65p a day.

MR SPEAKER:

I would like you to say whether you are going to implement the £10 fee or not. If you are not that is the end of the £10, because otherwise you are talking on matters that do not concern the House. If you are not going to charge the £10 then that is the end of that matter.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

We don't know what we are going to charge, sir.

MR SPEAKER:

If you want to explain that you are going to charge something else you are free to do so.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

With respect, sir, the question was whether we had considered an alternative system. We find it would be impractical to charge anything less than 3p per day.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, since the Minister seems to have very little information on this yet can he promise this House that before imposing any fees he will bring it to this House to discuss further?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, sir, I am afraid I am not prepared to commit myself on that.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Doesn't the Minister consider that this is a matter of public interest, generally, since lots of people participate in sport and it is vital, I think, for the welfare and morale of Gibraltar, doesn't he consider it a

matter particularly since the Opposition has shown so much interest, that he should bring it to this House to have it further discussed so that we may be able to contribute to the discussion? Why has it got to be so secretly done?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I can assure the Hon and gallant Major Peliza that there is certainly no secrecy, this has already been brought to the attention of the Sports Advisory Committee for their views. There have been absolutely no objections from the Sports Advisory Committee. It has yet not come to my colleagues for their consideration but I think it is a matter for the Government to decide.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, could I assure the Minister that I am not by any means saying that this matter has got to be decided by the Opposition. But doesn't he think it worthy of this House that this matter should be put to the House and discussed by the Opposition which I think has shown so much interest? What is wrong with that?

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I just ask the Hon Member whether he will confirm that he has just said that there has been no objection in the Sports Advisory Committee, that is, no single member of the Sports Advisory Committee has expressed a view against the £10 or any annual fee for that matter?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, there has been no objection from any member.

HON J BOSSANO:

Has there been any alternative suggestion put forward, for example, such as using advertising revenue?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The question of advertising revenue was not put as an alternative, Sir, it was mentioned as has been mentioned in the past on many occasions to try and obtain revenue but not in lieu of this.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is Government prepared to consider that means of raising money if they want to raise money from the Stadium rather than an annual fee?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, government has considered that in the past and I think I should reiterate the difficulties one finds there. If one is to think of a particular advert one finds that the company concerned would distribute...

MR SPEAKER:

I think what you are saying is that whilst government is considering gaining revenue from advertising, it is not going to be in lieu of this and therefore it is not relevant to the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In lieu of what?

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Minister has been very helpful on this one. He has been asked whether government is prepared to consider raising revenue from advertising in lieu of the annual fee and the answer has been that government has been considering advertising in addition to but not in lieu of and therefore advertising is not relevant.

HON M XIBERRAS:

May I ask a fresh question to the Minister. On what has he consulted the Sport Advisory Committee, is it on the principle, or has he put any specific proposal before them?

MR SPEAKER:

No, the Minister doesn't have to answer that question. We are only here to answer whether it is government's intention to impose an annual fee of £10.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can I put the question then, has the Minister put the proposition to the Sports Advisory Committee that there should be a £10 annual fee for those using the facilities at the Victoria Stadium?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, the figure of £10 is a matter for government to decide, if and when the whole thing is agreed to in principle. The Sports Advisory Committee have been consulted on the general basis of payment by users at the Victoria Stadium.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So there hasn't been any formal proposition for £10?

MR SPEAKER:

The Hon Minister is saying that the Committee has discussed the principle of making a charge for the use of the Stadium and that there has been no objection. I think that is completely and utterly clear.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am asking whether he has put the proposition of £10 annual fee.

MR SPEAKER:

No, he has said that there has never been a question as far as government is concerned of a charge of £10 that is the question which was asked and the answer was that government was considering the implementation of a membership fee for those using the facilities at the Victoria stadium Sports Centre.

HON M XIBERRAS:

They have not proposed £10?

MR SPEAKER:

No.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, how much does government expect to raise, or how much does Government require to raise from the Stadium? what figure?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, no figure has been pinpointed. It is, I think, no secret that the running of the stadium today will be something like £80,000 per annum. If we can get whatever revenue we can get and pour back by way of further development for that facility or any other facility then, of course, we are progressing. But we are not earmarking to try and get £10,000 or £50,000 out of the centre at all.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker didn't the Hon Member say previously that the objective would be to see at this stage whether the centre could part pay for itself and if that is so what sort of level of part payment does the government consider desirable, 50%, or 25% or 10% or what? They must have some idea, how else can they approach the figure of £10 or any other figure?

MR SPEAKER:

they have not approached the figure of £10. Let us be clear on that one.

HON J BOSSANO:

They haven't got the foggiest idea how much they want. They don't know whether they want £10 or £100.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, this matter has not yet been brought, as I said earlier on, to my colleagues for their consideration. The question has been aired now for considerable time and it is now thought that it is high time.....

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a simple question. Has government estimated the amount of revenue which they wish to raise with this measure? It is as simple as that.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not as yet, sir.

MR SPEAKER:

That is the answer.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, that is not precisely what I was asking, Mr Speaker, if you will allow me to say so. I was saying if the government policy which will eventually be translated into an estimate is to achieve a certain level of part payment, what sort of part payment do they consider desirable? Do they think that the stadium should provide for 50% of its running cost, or 25% of its running cost or all its running cost, or 10% or what? They must have some basis as the starting point otherwise unless they have already reached that first very preliminary stage they are no way near considering it, I would have thought, in Council of Ministers or anywhere else. That is the most initial and simple stage that the matter must have reached.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I must say again that government has not yet considered this Paper, Sir. It has been only aired between management and myself and the Sports Advisory Committee. Once the Paper is formulated it will go to government for their consideration.

HON J BOSSANO:

But has the Minister got the faintest idea of what he would like to see in terms of part payment of the Stadium through charging of fees, the remotest idea?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well, Sir, I am certainly not out to try to get the stadium to pay for itself. One knows that one can't derive the sum I mentioned earlier on for the upkeep of the Stadium to be paid by the 7,000 users of the stadium. Some contribution is what I am looking for but I cannot give a percentage.

MR SPEAKER:

You are saying that the Advisory committee feels that some contribution should be made but that no decision has been taken as to what it is going to be exactly. Next question.

The Hon J B Perez

Will Government consider organising an annual Sports Week?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Yes Sir, if and when possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 54 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, may I suggest to the Hon Member that possibly May 14th may be a very appropriate date to organise the Annual Sports Week since there is a team from Switzerland playing an international match against Gibraltar. Would the Hon Member consider May 14th as an appropriate date?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, in past years Government has organised various international sporting events and this year plans to organise a Sports Festival during the month of May. However, past experience has shown that it is not practicable to organise several different sporting events during the course of the same week and the Festival may, therefore, have to spread over the months of May and June.

The hon J B Perez

Does Government intend to bring any English soccer teams to play in Gibraltar this year?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

In connection with the Silver Jubilee Celebrations Government has made tentative approaches to two English Soccer Teams with a view to exploring the possibility of visiting Gibraltar for a Sports Festival in May.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.55 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, may I ask the Hon Member at what cost?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, the cost is not known with exactitude. I can give a rough estimate if the Hon Member would like to know. The air passages today for a football team and a 5 or 6 day stay at a hotel would be in the region of about £3000 per team.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does this mean that we can expect the total expenditure to be in the region of £6000 eventually?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, if it is a tournament, possibly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I was referring Mr Speaker, to the £6000 or so that the House voted in favour of the last tournament the Minister organised. Would the Minister give a categorical assurance to the House, however, that on this occasion if as we did hope that this tournament does come off, that he will make absolutely certain that Hon Members on this side of the House will be not be let in for a big £6000 surprise at the end of the proceedings.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot assure Hon Members. I can't assure anybody. If the public fail to turn up then of course Government will have to face the underwriting or part of the underwriting if we are to organise a Silver Jubilee Sports Week. If, on the other hand, Mr Speaker, it proves to be the success I would like it to be, then, of course, we may find we may make a profit.

HON M ZIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member is misconstruing my question. What I am asking him to do is to make sure that the conditions under which these teams are brought to Gibraltar are made clear to the public, generally, so that this House later does not have to meet a commitment that the Government had not entered into when the thing was being planned. In other words that we should know what the conditions are to be. Who is to pay if it is a success or if it is not a success?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, on this particular occasion I can commit myself to say that Government has agreed to an underwriting of up to £5000 on this particular venture.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, will the Minister ensure that local teams participate in this tournament?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I am sorry I didn't hear that.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Will the Minister ensure that local teams will participate in this tournament?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Certainly not with football, Sir.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how successful the new Warden Structure in the Housing Section is proving and whether they propose to expand the maintenance gang in order to be able to deal with a volume of minor maintenance jobs?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The Warden Structure has proved to be a great success and Government is considering the further expansion of the Maintenance Gang to deal with minor maintenance jobs.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 56 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member agree that this maintenance gang should be, in fact, an integral part of the Housing Section if the momentum is to be kept?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it is obvious that the expansion of a maintenance gang within the Housing Unit or Department would obviously best suit housing needs because it would be obvious that our priorities would be done according to our priorities.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Hon Member also not consider that in view of the constraints that the PWD is suffering from in maintaining its own programme of other maintenance work, it is desirable that further strain should not be put on the PWD staff by putting this work under the PWD umbrella rather than under the Housing Department.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, the small maintenance gang that the Housing Unit already has has been found to be working very well. One has to be careful, Mr Speaker, of how much one can foresee a maintenance gang within the Housing Section. Today there is probably a need for the minor repairs that the Hon Leader of the Opposition is asking about but I don't really know if the long term policy of having a work gang permanently with the Housing Unit would be of that value.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that certainly for the next 3 or 4 years there is clearly sufficient volume of work in connection with making, for example, pre-war dwellings that are handed into Government as a result of the allocation of new accommodation bringing this up to standard, in other words that there is a sufficient volume of work within the existing housing programme to keep an enlarged gang fully occupied.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, the pre-war accommodation situation has altered slightly because of the modernisation programme. Invariably pre-war accommodation that is vacated is possibly modernised which is work a little beyond I think what a maintenance gang would be expected to do. So we would not have a tremendous amount of the smaller tasks required in pre-war accommodation. However, I am not saying that an expansion has not got its virtue.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say whether he is in fact thinking of making provisions for such an expansion in the forthcoming estimates?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I think the matter is one for consideration in the form of a Paper to the Council of Ministers for consideration before one can commit oneself to incorporate this in the forthcoming estimates.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can he, in fact, confirm that the proposal would have his support as Minister for Housing? Does he support the expansion of this particular part of the Housing Section?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, obviously the Warden Structure is a new baby. It has only been functioning for a year and so far of course one has to admit that it has worked very well. One's sympathy may well be with a particular course of action and I personally feel that it could have its virtues and it should be looked at.

MR SPEAKER:

In other words the answer is, yes. We will go to the next question.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether they are assuming responsibility for the rehousing of tenants of Trafalgar House who have been given notice to quit?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

No, Sir. The applications of those tenants who have been given Notice to Quit have been assessed under the relevant Dispossession Clause contained in the Housing Allocation Scheme (Revised) 1974 and the applicants will be offered accommodation when their respective pointages qualify them for accommodation in accordance with their family's requirement.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 57 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that the fact that they have been given notice to quit will improve their chances of getting a house?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I have said that they have been assessed under the relevant dispossession Clause contained within the Housing Allocation Scheme therefore that boosts them up but it does not mean that they qualify. They may well qualify or they may well not qualify.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member say whether the Government is considering any change in legislation that may be required to prevent a continuing burden of this nature being imposed on the Housing List where people do move quite rapidly up the pointage as a result of the action of private landlords?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I can say that Government intends revising and locking at very closely housing policy as a result of what is occurring.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In the absence of legislation which apparently desired by all sides of the House has the Minister had any discussion of the problem with the new landlords of Trafalgar House and.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. This is opening the orbit of the question. The question was: "Can Government say whether they are assuming responsibility of the rehousing of tenants of Trafalgar House who have been given notice to quit?"

HON M XIBERRAS:

The Hon Member opposite has said that he is not but then he has said that the persons concerned will be assessed under the dispossession clause which, Mr Speaker, puts their pointage up very considerably. I am asking the Hon Member, as it has been the practice in the Housing Department over a number of cases, whether discussions have been held with the landlords concerned.

MR SPEAKER:

I will allow the question to the extent that the Minister can answer "yes" or "no", as to whether he has had conversations with the landlords, but no more.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Sir, we have had conversations with the landlords.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member what will happen to any tenants that are actually physically evicted from Trafalgar House, apart from their pointage going up. Will they be allowed to camp on the street until the pointage rises to the appropriate level?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I cannot answer that question the way I think the Hon Member would like me to answer it. I am afraid I have not a solution for that. We will have to look at the situation very carefully if and when it arises. One cannot accept responsibility of a landlord evicting a person and expecting Government to rehouse them with any sort of advantage or privilege over those who have been waiting for many years. I can foresee an abuse of this.

No.58 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether the decanting of either Nos 15 or 41 Town Range has been completed and if so on what date?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

No Sir. Some of the families who still remain there will be rehoused when the remaining 4 Blocks at the Varyl Begg Estate are allocated.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.58 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say how many families there are in either 15 or 41 Town Range?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think Sir, there are nine families at No.15 and eight families in No.41 and one squatter.

No.59 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Can Government state what percentage of Gibraltarians in the age group 16-20 years are without employment?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

Slightly over 4%.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.59 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

In actual numbers could the Minister tell me how many, please?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, these are the numbers on the 19th January this year - 70 Gibraltarians of both sexes within this particular age group.

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government state the number of work permit holders who have given up their jobs in Gibraltar in the distributive trade quota since March 1976?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

41, Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 60 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Have any new permits been issued to take the quota of those 41 who have given up their jobs?

HON A J CANEPA:

That I cannot answer I regret, Sir, because the way the question is phrased did not indicate about any supplementary on the action that the Department was taking. It was just a question of people giving up their work permits. I can give further information about the people that give up these work permits.

MR SPEAKER:

I entirely agree.

HON A J CANEPA:

I have got breakdowns and so on but that is all.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member recall having said in a previous question that he had made a statement at budget time that as a result of unemployment in this particular area the department was not issuing new permits when others were given up. So that, in fact, consistent with that answer you should have expected the department to issue no new permits in respect of these 41.

MR SPEAKER:

What the Hon Gerald Restano was asking was not that, whether new entry permits had been given, it was as to how many have been employed to replace these from, perhaps, within Gibraltar itself.

HON J BOSSANO:

No, I think the Hon Member....

MR SPEAKER:

Well, let us make the position clear on that one first.

HON G T RESTANO:

I asked how many people had given up their employment and as a supplementary I am asking how many new permits have been issued to make up those 41?

HON A J CANEPA:

I have not got the answer to that question, Mr speaker, because I didn't anticipate that question. I anticipated, perhaps, supplementaries about the breakdown by nationality, the breakdown by employment. I can tell him who the 41 were and what they were employed at and so on.

HON G T RESTANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, since the Minister obviously has gone to some length to prepare his work, can we ask him to let us know what he has prepared.

HON A J CANEPA:

No, I am not interested in wasting the time of the House, Mr Speaker, I am interested in providing information on any bona fide supplementary that I can answer.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could you give us a breakdown of the 41.

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, out of the 41, 32 were Moroccan citizens, 9 were Indian citizens.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, returning to the information which the Hon Member does not have available, notwithstanding the fact that he did not expect a supplementary, would he agree that there should have been no new permits issued consistent with the policy that he has explained before to the House?

HON A J CANEPA:

May I say what I mean by new now and what I meant by new during the budget time last year. If a particular employer has, say, 3 shop assistants and he makes an application for a fourth shop assistant, the department interprets that as being a new work permit. If one of the 3 shop assistants leaves gibraltar and he requires nevertheless that work permit to be renewed for a replacement, that is not a new work permit. That was the policy that I was enunciating nine months ago and of course since then there has been a lot of water under the bridge, a flood, in fact, during the last week or so.

MR SPEAKER:

I would like to clear a point, so that we will save a lot of time. From your argument it follows that if an employer has 4 and one leaves and he has not asked for a replacement he loses that one for ever.

HON A J CANEPA:

At the time, Mr Speaker, 9 months ago, that would not have been regarded as a new work permit. It is still not being regarded as a new work permit though a new policy has been adopted in the last fortnight or so with regard to this about which the Hon Mr Bossano knows a lot because he is a member of the Manpower planning committee which I now chair and about which Mr Restano may also know a little bit from Mr Bossano.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, no doubt the Hon Member will know if he cares to look back over what has been happening now that he is Chairman of the Committee over what has been happening over the last two years, he will realise that that definition has not been in fact put inside the Manpower Planning committee for at least 2 years since I have been there. But would the Hon Member, and I think if there is some doubt about that we can go back to the records perhaps at the next meeting of the House when I shall give him notice of other questions in this respect, would the Hon Member not agree that if there is a fixed quota and if the quota is taken up then, in fact, a new permit in the sense of an increase in the quota is impossible. It doesn't require any new policy statement from him at Budget time if there are say 400 permits allowed under that quota, 400 permits on issue and somebody who has got 3 of those 400 permits comes along and asks for a fourth one which would raise the total to 401, it would be impossible for him to obtain it regardless of what policy there was about new permits. Would he not agree with that?

HON A J CANEPA:

I agree 100%. The only thing is that until the last 2 or 3 weeks the quota has never been fully taken up. They have always been at least a handful of work permits available.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member would confirm this would he care to look at the last year and a half of quotas and will he confirm perhaps at a later stage to the House that for the last 4 meetings at least of the Manpower Planning Committee the quota has been fixed at the actual number of existing permits so as to allow no free unissued permits available.

HON A J CANEPA:

That is not right Mr Speaker, but in between the number of work permits actually in issue may fluctuate and therefore 3 or 4 may become available. I realise that at the time the recommendation of the Manpower Planning Committee has been now for some periods of review to actually adjust the quota to the number of work permits currently in issue. But that doesn't mean that the fact that the number of work permits may drop below the quota at any given time in the intervening period.

HON J BOSSANO:

So in fact, Mr Speaker, the position is that notwithstanding the decision, for example, in March 1976 in the Manpower Planning Committee to restrict the number of permits in the quota to those in issue in order to gradually reduce the quota as permits were given up, this has not happened since March 1976.

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't think that that recommendation or decision was spelt out then as clearly as the Hon Member has spelt it now and as clearly as the Committee and the Government now understand the policy to be. Now it has been spelt out in no doubt and we know what wavelength we are on.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Am I right in understanding that the practice result of the present policy is that suppose for instance that of the permits that were handed in there were involved 12 shop assistants and that out of those 70 young people in Gibraltar who are unemployed there were, say, 20 persons who were prepared to take jobs as shop assistants, because of the present policy if those particular employers decide to bring from outside

gibraltar new shop assistants the local people still remain unemployed. Is that the result of the policy of the Government?

HON A J CANEPA:

The policy has been changed, Mr Speaker. It has been changed in the last fortnight or so.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

So that in fact that will be restricted, that will not be the case.

HON A J CANEPA:

That is so.

The Hon J Bossano

Has Government any information as to whether D.O.E. has now agreed to re-imburse its contractors for increased costs as a result of the wage increases recently agreed in the construction industry?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

No, Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.61 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does Government intend to inquire whether this is the case or not?

HON A J CANEPA:

We have already made enquiries, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

I take it, Mr Speaker, that the answer meant that the Government does not have information not that the DOE has not agreed. Which of the two is it?

HON A J CANEPA:

Obviously in preparing the answer to the question we made enquiries from the Regional Director of DOE but I wasn't able to get information to incorporate into a reply.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if and when the Hon Member does get an answer would he be good enough to communicate it, perhaps, in a written reply?

HON A J CANEPA:

The position, Mr Speaker, at the moment is, and I want to be fair to all concerned and certainly to the DOE, is that the information that the Regional Director could make available to me for today would have been such that he thought that he could have placed me in an embarrassing position in dealing with supplementary questions on a matter which I am not directly responsible and about which I could not be fully versed on points of detail. In fairness to me he didn't

MR SPEAKER:

May I interrupt you. May I say that perhaps the question is worded in the way it is worded for that very reason because you are not responsible or answerable for the actions of DOE. That is why you are being asked whether you had any information. Please do not say anything which will now breach that rule which prevented me from allowing Mr Bossano from asking the question he really wanted to ask.

HON A J CANEPA:

Could I just add, Mr Speaker, that I do not have any indication that the DOE would be in any way averse to getting an inquiry to that effect from the Hon Member opposite and particularly in his capacity as a Branch Officer in the TGWU.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, but the Hon Member must agree that he has in his previous answers in the last meeting of the House indicated the effect of the wage increases on the clients and the consultation that there has been between the Gibraltar Government and the DOE as a client. Would he further agree that if one of the clients were, for example, not to meet these extra costs and this were to result in industrial action it would be a matter of concern to him as Minister of Labour.

HON A J CANEPA:

It is, Mr Speaker, and this is why I have been as helpful as I could in the reply that I have given and I haven't stood on ceremony and cited the Standing Order in question. I hope that when the full information is available that I will be told. If I am told I will certainly pass it on to the Hon Member opposite.

The Hon J Bossano

Can government confirm that the recent wage increase agreed in the construction industry with Government approval establishes a rate of pay for labourers in excess of 82% of the rate of pay in force for labourers in the employment of M.O.D. in U.K. and if so is it government's policy to offer these rates to their own employees?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & social security

The agreement recently reached in the private construction industry provides for a rate of pay for labourers of 79p an hour, which is equivalent to £31.60 for a 40-hour week. If account is taken of the £6 supplement and £2 efficiency bonus, both payable for a 40-hour week to labourers employed by MOD in UK, then the rate recently agreed between the Gibraltar Master Builders Association and the transport and general Workers Union is 78% and not 82%.

However, the government does not necessarily accept that the work of a labourer in the employment of the Gibraltar Master Builders Association can be equated to a band O Labourer in the employment of the Official Employers either in Gibraltar or in the UK. In view of what I have stated the last part of the question does not arise.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 62 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say in working out the percentage that he has given whether he has taken account of the fact that the rate that he has given for the labourer in the construction industry is a consolidated rate which counts for overtime whereas the sum that he has mentioned in respect of the MOD consists of a basic wage plus supplements which do not count for overtime.

HON A J CANEPA:

This is true, it is a consolidated rate and it is a consolidated rate because the employers prefer that it should be a consolidated rate because it takes account of problems of retrospection and so on which do not necessarily arise with the Official Employers. This is the case but I should also say that conditions, generally, in the building industry in the private sector cannot be equated to official employers.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept that, Mr Speaker, I am not talking about conditions. What I am asking is whether in arriving at the percentage that he has produced he has taken into account in the mathematics the fact that he is expressing a sum of money payable for 40 hours a week which in turn will produce a

higher overtime rate with a sum of money which is in fact only partly payable for the 40 hour week and consists of a lump sum payment that doesn't count for overtime.

HON A J CANEPA:

My calculation is purely based on the 40 hour week. The more we go beyond the 40 hour week the more overtime is taken into account then, of course, the more beneficial the settlement in the private sector becomes. But then there are vast fluctuations with regard to overtime amongst the official employers. The Gibraltar Government, for instance, tends to pay a great deal more overtime than the DOE. I don't think therefore, Mr Speaker, it is proper to make a comparison on any basis other than a 40-hour week, in which case consolidation hardly matters.

HON J BOSSANO:

But would the Hon Member not agree that if the calculation is made on the 40-hour week any level of overtime at all produces, in fact, a higher percentage?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, this is the case, Mr Speaker.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government state whether there are many persons who did not exercise their right at the appropriate time to payment of arrears of contributions under Social Insurance Legislation and are now desirous of doing so?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

The Department of Labour and Social Security is not aware that there are many persons who in 1975, when the opportunity was given, did not exercise their option to pay arrears of contribution and who may now be regretting their decision. There could be a handful of such cases.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.63 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst not in any way exonerating the persons concerned from their duty to take the appropriate steps at the appropriate time and paying their arrears and bearing in mind the fact that the House in fact extended the time limit by I believe something like 3 months through legislation in this House and also bearing in mind the fact that the House would have to take considerable trouble if it were to open up the whole question again, would the Hon Member not agree that since this is a very important decision for the people concerned, however they have chosen to regard it themselves, would he not agree that there is room for examination, a re-examination of the whole question with a view to giving them one more opportunity of doing so.

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't think so, Mr Speaker, because, as I say, I have made extensive enquiries throughout the Department of Labour and Social Security at the level of the Director, at the level of the people employed in the Social Insurance Section and they cannot recall having had any representations for any re-opening of these facilities. I don't think, Mr Speaker, that there is a demand for this though I do accept that there may be a handful of cases of people who perhaps have not approached anybody. I myself, for instance, can recall having been approached by just one person only. So

I do accept that there are a few but I think that the numbers are such as ^{not} to warrant re-opening the whole thing.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That is precisely, Mr Speaker, what I was hoping not to hear from the Minister. Would the Hon Member not agree that if there were, say for the sake of argument, 10 such persons, we are talking about 10 persons who have contributed some money towards the fund and are deprived of a very substantial benefit by way of their pension and wouldn't the Hon Member out of consideration not only of the persons concerned but possibly of any dependents, not be prepared to reconsider this matter in view of the numbers that might emerge eventually?

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't know the extent of the problem, Mr Speaker, but there is another consideration. One must also think about those who did exercise the option to pay arrears and those who at the time paid full arrears immediately....

MR SPEAKER:

Both of you are now beginning to debate the question. I think the answer has been clear. You know of no representations other than one case and you don't think that in the circumstances the matter should be reviewed.

HON A J CANEPA:

Additionally, Mr Speaker, I think it would be inequitable to do so now, inequitable to those who exercised the option at the time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I heard the Hon Member use that word again before the House and I would ask him whether he would not be prepared to refrain from arriving at a very definite decision on this matter until I have had a chance to produce some evidence of the number of cases involved.

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, Mr Speaker, I am always open to persuasion but I must warn the Hon Member opposite and Members, generally, that this business cannot be an ^a never-ending exercise, it must come to an end sometime.

The Hon M Xiberras

Have Government considered including funeral expenses as one of the benefits to be derived from Government's Social Insurance Legislation?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

About 3 years ago, as a result of representations received, Government gave consideration to the suggestion that the provisions of the Social Insurance Ordinance should be widened to cover fully the cost of funeral expenses of the whole community, and decided against such a change.

There is already provision under the Social Insurance Ordinance for payment of a Death Grant of £60 as of right to a person who incurs the cost of the funeral or other appreciable expenses connected with the death of an insured person (which includes an old age pensioner) or of the wife, widow, husband, widower or child of such person. No grant is payable if the contribution condition is not satisfied by the person on whose contributions the grant is claimed. The position is exactly the same in UK where the Death Grant is only £30.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.64 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in view of the quite expensive funerals that we have here in the sense that they cost a lot, would the Hon Member not be prepared in any forthcoming review to increase the Death Grant payable taking as one of the criteria the cost of funerals?

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, the expenses in England are much higher than they are here. We have been keeping the benefit under constant review but I am always afraid that no matter to what extent we were to increase Death Grants, you would always have the situation that no matter what the level was relatives would still opt for better funerals. At the time I got very revealing statistics from the funeral directors about the extent to which this happens. I still have the figures available and it is amazing the extent to which people go for the first class sort of funeral with all sorts of trimmings and that is why unless a standard funeral were to be agreed upon - and I couldn't persuade the funeral directors at the time that this should be the case - we are going to have the situation

that a certain amount of money will be provided under the Social Insurance Scheme or under the Supplementary Benefits Scheme, as is the case also, and yet there would always be the extra trimmings that will put up the cost of the funeral.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member nonetheless answer my previous question and that is, would he be prepared to revise in an upward direction if it were not covering the full cost of a 1st, 2nd or 3rd class funeral, the already quite substantial sum of £60 in view of the cost of funerals here.

HON A J CANEPA:

I am prepared to keep the matter under review but we have other priorities in the field of social insurance.

the Hon M Xiberras

Will government say whether it is prepared to consider a lowering of the age of entitlement for the receipt of Social Insurance Pensions and, if so, how soon does it judge it will be possible to introduce such an improvement?

Answer:

the Minister for Labour and Social Security

This matter was last given close study in January 1976 following representations made by the Gibraltar Pensioners Association that the pensionable age for men under the Social Insurance Ordinance be reduced from 65 to 60. Similar representations had also been made in the past, by other organisations, and the matter also arose in connection with International Women's Year in 1975.

Last year the approximate cost of such a change, taking account of the additional 5-year group of younger pensioners and the corresponding loss of contribution income, was estimated at over £280,000 per annum at the then prevailing rates of contributions and benefits. The annual cost at this year's rates would be about £340,000 and this figure would naturally increase considerably with each yearly review. The increased burden on those who remained at work and would have to contribute to meet this cost would therefore be tremendous and I cannot honestly see this as a pressing priority in the foreseeable future.

I should mention that my views on this matter coincide with those of HM Government in the UK on the same subject, which were put unequivocally by the Secretary of State for Social Services at a press conference which he held last September on the Department of Health and Social Security's evidence to the Equal Opportunities Commission on the review of pension ages for men and women.

I have a copy of the Minister's statement in which he gives the reasons for making no move in the foreseeable future on reducing pensionable age for men, and I will be very glad to show it to the Hon Member opposite. Some of the arguments may carry more or less weight in Gibraltar, but by and large the same considerations apply in Gibraltar.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 65 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am grateful Mr Speaker, for that detailed answer. Would the Hon Member, however, not agree that fortuitously there are a number of circumstances in Gibraltar which make towards the buoyancy of our Social Insurance fund and would he not agree that if this community has to suffer certain disadvantages because of its place and general circumstance, it should also be allowed to enjoy certain advantages which accrue also from these circumstances?

HON A J CANEPA:

I must challenge the word buoyancy, Mr Speaker. We are awaiting the actuarial review for the year ending 1975. The Hon Mr Bossano obviously already has some idea of what the level of pensions is going to be like in a year's time when the government implements its policy relating to social insurance pensions to average earnings and I am not sure the extent to which the fund is going to remain buoyant to meet that commitment alone, let alone this increasing burden. No, Mr Speaker, I don't think that these other considerations apply. I know what he is getting at, primarily a movement of labour that there is in Gibraltar but this doesn't go all the way and if that consideration were to be taken into account another one that he has not mentioned and I haven't referred to and I will not, should, perhaps, also be taken into account.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am glad to hear about that, Mr Speaker. Would the Hon Member nevertheless please note that it is something of a social aspiration amongst a good sector of the community that they should become pensionable at 60 rather than 65 or any less than 65, and would the Minister not agree that this is something which is desirable and is considered desirable outside this House and would he not agree that in the peculiar circumstances of Gibraltar we should weigh up, since he has referred to policy, exactly how much the working population really contributes to that which is on point of retirement.

HON A J CANEPA:

I agree, Mr Speaker, it is a very desirable aim of policy but one which I think is going to have to be put into cold storage for quite a few years.

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government received the report of the studio engineer who has been studying the introduction of colour television and if so what recommendations have been given?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

sir, with permission I propose to answer questions Nos. 66 and 67 together.

Mr A E Berry of the studio Capital Projects Department of the BBC visited Gibraltar from the 13 to the 20 December 1976 to examine and advise on quotations submitted for the provision of colour television equipment. On the 20 December he submitted an interim report and stated that further consultations in London would be necessary before final conclusions on the quotations could be drawn. No firm recommendations have therefore been made as yet. It is not possible, until these have been received and considered, to forecast an approximate date for conversion. The House may, however be assured that the whole matter will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. I might add that Mr Berry stated that he hoped to submit his final report during January.

& 67

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 66 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member referred to a quotation. What quotation is that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

To examine and advise quotations submitted for the provision of colour television equipment. The expert came to Gibraltar from the Studio Projects department of the BBC to examine and advise on quotations submitted for the provision of colour television equipment.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Quotations from whom, Mr Speaker?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

quotations which had been received by the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation which was the subject matter before the select committee. No other quotations.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does that mean then, Mr Speaker, that the expert, Mr Perry, has advised again even a restricted issue of tender?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, he has not given any definite advice. In fact, the substance of his interim report was that he wanted to go back and consider certain aspects of the tenders.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In other words - and this will have a bearing obviously as regards the date of eventual conversion - is Mr Perry going to consider whether there should be tenders invited generally or in a restricted fashion.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He may come to that conclusion. I cannot anticipate what he is going to report.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

As I understand it the quotations are already with us.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There were quotations and these quotations were submitted to him for consideration.

MR SPEAKER:

If I remember well, these quotations are included in the Report of the Select Committee which was laid on the table of the House.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, in the Select Committee report on broadcasting.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I am asking the Chief Minister is something different, though, whether these quotations were submitted for Mr Perry to judge as between them or as whether Mr Perry was going to decide on the general level of these quotations as to whether it was necessary to invite tenders or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I think, generally speaking, unless he wants to depart from it because he finds it necessary, the main purpose of the visit was to examine and advise on quotations submitted for the provision of colour television equipment for operation by GBC.

HON M XIBERRAS:

When did the Hon Member make these terms of reference on the visit of Mr perry available to the House, or is this the first time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I had mentioned it here in this House and that is why the Hon Mr Restano has put the question because I have made reference that we were bringing out somebody from the BBC to look at the quotations.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, Mr Speaker, but has the Hon Member made available to the House before now the exact terms of reference of Mr perry?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I see. Could I ask the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister whether he has therefore ignored the feeling amongst certain members of the Select Committee on this subject that there should have been, in principle, quotation invited, either on a restricted net or generally, in order to establish whether the existing quotations were reasonable or not reasonable?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr perry was provided with a copy of the select Committee's report.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that is not my question. My question is; in phrasing the terms of reference for Mr perry's investigation, did the Government, generally, ignore the feeling in the select Committee that one of the more important issues to be decided was that whether there should be a general tender invited or a restricted tender invited before the existing quotations were actually examined as to feasibility and desirability?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As I seem to remember that was the feeling of the Hon Questioner at the time, but that was not a recommendation of the Select Committee.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In the evidence given by Mr Pumas, then Chairman, before the select Committee, the matter was put to him. The Hon Member has not made available the terms of reference of Mr Berry, would he not agree that it would have been at least wise as far as the Government was concerned, to appear to be fair in the eventual allocation of tender and not to ask Mr Berry to judge as between tenders which the public, generally, were not informed about and which were to my understanding gathered by GBC and not by the government itself.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not concerned to appear to be fair, I am concerned to be fair and, therefore, I will not say anything just for the sake of appearances. The question is that at this stage, as I understood it, the re-opening of the whole question having regard to the preliminary work done in order to obtain the tenders, the reopening of the whole question would have put in considerable delays into the matter. Perhaps, I think we may be anticipating, perhaps if Mr Berry doesn't consider that there is enough compare or that there could be competitive tenders from other firms - he has gone back precisely to study the situation - he may well recommend that. It is not excluded.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Chief Minister not agree that it would be unfair, having presented the quotations almost as a fait accompli....

MR SPEAKER:

The Hon and Learned the Chief Minister does not have to answer it. You are asking for a personal opinion as to whether it would be or would not be unfair.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am asking the Chief Minister about something which may cost in the region of hundreds of thousands of pounds and I am sure that the public, generally, would like to be assured that the matter has been gone in the proper fashion.

MR SPEAKER:

And to that extent you are entitled to ask any questions you wish.

HON M XIBERRAS:

therefore, Mr Speaker, my question is would the Government not consider it unfair that in a matter involving so much expenditure for the government eventually and to be made up no doubt with television licences and so forth, there should be at least some semblance of tender procedure, a public tender procedure in this fashion, and does he further not think that the terms of reference of Mr Berry do inhibit his freedom of action somewhat?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I don't think it would inhibit his scope of action and having seen him I am sure that nothing will inhibit him from doing what he thinks is right but I should like to mention that he was dealing with five tenders which had been received. We in the select committee were mainly concerned with two but he was looking at five tenders so he has had the whole spectrum of the bulk of what can be produced in England. If from such a wide variety, and there are not so many people doing television colour television equipment in the UK, he thinks he should go outside that, there is nothing to stop him from doing so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, how were the extra tenders obtained? Were they obtained because Mr Berry publicised the matter, or the Government publicised the matter, or GBC publicised the matter?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Hon Member is well aware that the GBC had obtained these tenders and had submitted it, the five.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So there were no extra tenders in fact over and above that. Well, Mr Speaker, would the Hon Chief Minister convey to Mr Berry the fact that it is not necessary, despite the need for a quick conversion to colour, nonetheless there is no need to choose any of those 5 tenders, and there is a section of opinion, certainly within this House, who felt that some tender procedure should be adopted, some public tender procedure.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can easily say yes but it may well be that it is too late now for him if he hasn't taken that into account because he has promised a report during the month of January and if he carries out his promise he has got little time in which to do it but I am quite sure that when we see the report, having regard to the calibre of the person who was brought out, that we will see that he has dealt with the whole spectrum of the television equipment for going colour in Gibraltar.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Chief Minister undertake to convey for information that report of Mr Perry to this side of the House when it becomes available?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course. It will be public property and we will have to discuss it. There is a lot of money involved.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, is the Chief Minister aware that this is going to cost the public of Gibraltar, or whoever is giving the money, very nearly in the region of £1m.

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to discuss that.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is the Chief Minister aware that there is at least another member of this House who feels strongly as my friend here on my left that matters like this should go to tender?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I become aware now.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister must be aware that my Hon and gallant friend feels this way. As regards the date of conversion, could the Chief Minister not agree that if the principle of tender had been accepted much earlier then we would not have that as a possible delay in the future?

MR SPEAKER:

That is a hypothetical question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course if we had agreed about this two years ago we would be two years ahead now.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does Government propose to carry out a survey to find out how many Gibraltarians watch Gibraltar television before we spend money on colour?

7.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Whether we can carry out a survey or not we will certainly have to carry out a survey one way or the other to see how many television sets there are and how many TV licences are paid for one which is very important. On the other hand I think it is only fair to say that if we want to keep Gibraltar television for the purposes of keeping up the first line of defence from brainwashing and so on, the sooner we get colour the better.

No. 67 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government now give an approximate date for conversion to colour television in Gibraltar?

(Answered by the Hon the Chief Minister together with question No. 66 of 1977.)

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Chief Minister state whether the Government intends to hold high-level talks with Her Majesty's Government in the near future on the present and future Development Programme?

Answer:

the Chief Minister

The broad context of the present development programme was settled in talks between the Gibraltar Government and Her Majesty's Government in 1974. There is therefore no need for the Government to hold high level talks with Her Majesty's Government on this programme. There is of course a continuing dialogue at official level with HMG in relation to actual projects to be financed in the current Aid Programme.

With regard to the development programme for the following 3 year period, the answer given by the Minister for Economic Development to Question No 36 earlier today clearly indicates the Government's intention to finalise its proposals as early as possible in the next financial year and will naturally seek talks with Her Majesty's Government on development aid for the programme.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 68 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister not agree that the figures revealed earlier in the meeting as regards the rate of expenditure for the present development programme does give grounds for grave concern and would he not agree that if there is any reason other than the capacity for us in Gibraltar to spend the money, if there is any other reason or any other impediment, then it would be good for the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister and his colleagues to visit the United Kingdom at the earliest opportunity.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, Sir, I entirely agree and share the sentiments. I want to build a case, if there is one, on that basis of which there are some indications, I am sorry to say, of the delays, in the approval of projects, and certainly I am waiting for one or two developments to bring up a case and take the matter up at the highest level.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister when the occasion arises, and it might be some months from now I don't know, but when the occasion arises, do his best with the help of his colleagues to minimise this argument that was used in this House before about capacity to build and to put it into his proper perspective.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, in fact as Hon Members opposite who have been on delegations well know, it will have to be a very prepared case and the prepared case will be that we could have done much more if some of the projects had been approved earlier.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would one of the points which the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister would hope to make be the fact that certain large projects which involve even at this stage quite substantial expenditure of money during this year have been the subject matter of a certain amount of reticence on the part of ODM. I am referring, perhaps, to the secondary school.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is perhaps the most difficult one to tackle because unfortunately the difference between the original estimate and after all the trimmings and all the time that has elapsed the expenditure has reached a stage where it has to be defended throughout particularly having regard to constraints in the cost of schools and so on in the UK. I am very much concerned with that and the other delays in some of the projects as was revealed in questions this morning and I propose to make up a case and take the matter up if I am satisfied that there has been undue delay in the approval of the projects.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister take this opportunity of putting on the record of the House the fact that it is not so much the capacity to build here in Gibraltar as delays in approval of funds which is the cause of so little money being spent in the current Development Programme.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If I say that I want to build a case in order to make one I wouldn't like to pass judgement before I have my brief prepared. But let me say that I am seriously concerned that that is one of the aspects which helps delay the progress of the Development Programme.

3.

HON M KIBERRAS:

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member see to it that if such an effort is made that allegation cannot be made of Gibraltar Government Ministers?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I would certainly defend my Ministers and myself.

HON M KIBERRAS:

In respect, Mr Speaker, of the coming Development Programme, that is the one which starts, I believe, in 1978, would the Hon Member consider giving this House a general indication of what the Government's priorities are to be?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

They were given this morning by the Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. He mentioned housing, education and public utilities.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree that it has been almost axiomatic that if the House has been agreed on a proposition then it usually fares not so badly in London and wouldn't he say that this was, in fact, the reason behind the consultations that were carried out by Professor Clayton when he came in respect of the last Development Programme?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, Professor Clayton is continuing to come to Gibraltar and advising us on the development programme. What happened in 1972 is not going to happen again and whatever administration is elected in 1980 will find an on-going programme to carry on like that. I am not necessarily looking at the Hon the Leader of the Opposition I am looking generally there. I know he has hopes but, anyhow, other people may also have hopes.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, can the Honourable Chief Minister say why he is talking so long to start building a case and allow the slippage, to use my Hon Friend Mr Bossano's words, to turn into a landslide. Couldn't he, perhaps, have started building a case long before so that, in fact, instead of spending what I believe, if I have got my figures right, £500,000, the amount I believe should have been £3m. Why has he allowed no

less than £2½ million available for development in Gibraltar not to have taken place and why has it taken so long to build up a case to defend those £2½ million?

HON CHIEF MINISTER: The Government decided to meet these projects on the 1st October 1972.

It is £1.5 million of aid on £2.7m. But, anyhow, those are the figures. I have made representations and we have raised the matter. It is precisely because there have been delays despite those representations that the case can be built up now.

HON MAJOR R. J. PETIZA: Under the Government's development aid programme...

Can't you say then that this is a failure on the part of this Government not to get those things done?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Everything is a failure on the part of this Government for every visit that the Hon Member makes from London to Gibraltar.

HON M XIBERRAS: Mr Speaker, my question is...

Would the Hon Member consider also raising the question as part of the development Programme, I think in the past it has been done as part of the development Programme, the question of other funds towards the Budget of Gibraltar?

HON CHIEF MINISTER: Applications have been made...

I am sorry I didn't get the question.

HON M XIBERRAS: This Government has...

Would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister give an indication as to whether he does intend to raise the question of Budgetary Aid with British Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER: Under the Government's development aid programme...

Not at this stage.

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED ON 13 OCT 1972

ORAL

Mr Speaker, my question is... (The following text is a mirror image of the questions and answers from the top half of the page, appearing as bleed-through from the reverse side of the document.)

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Chief Minister state when he will call the meeting on the future of Gibraltar, which he proposed in his speech at the Opening Ceremony of this House?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

In the near future.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.69 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Are we to take the smile on the Chief Minister's face as meaning that the future will be near or far?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It is now over three months since the Ceremonial Opening of the House and therefore I would like to remind Members that letters asking various Hon Members and a number of representative bodies whether they would agree to attend a meeting were sent two weeks after the Ceremonial Opening. All but two replies were received by the 9th December when reminders were sent to two representative bodies who had not replied. One reply was received on the 29th December, a further reminder was sent to the other on the 6th January, no reply had been received when this was prepared but it has been received today as a result of some pressure which I made yesterday and I propose to call a meeting as soon as the meeting of the House is over.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am very grateful, Mr Speaker. It certainly helps to fill in the future a little bit better. Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member say whether all the parties invited have, in fact, accepted?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Now I can say, yes. I couldn't have said that this morning.

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government received any representations from the Partido Socialista Popular from within Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

No, Sir, nor from within, nor from without.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 70 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS

Well, Mr Speaker, we do receive occasionally letters from other political entities from without, Am I to take it therefore, Mr Speaker, that there has been no identification, if I may put it that way, of any particular group as far as Hon Members opposite in their official capacity are concerned, under this particular label of Partido Socialista Popular?

HON CHIEF MINISTER

I am not aware of the existence, with due deference to them, of the Partido Socialista Popular from within Gibraltar. I understand there is one across the way.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Chief Minister state, in view of his various statements on the subject, whether he still favours the Committee System of Government and, if so, when will he make a formal proposal on the matter?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Yes, Sir. The GLP/AACR, which is noted for its consistency, continues to favour the Committee System of Government, given the right political conditions. I do not propose to make a formal proposal on the matter for the present since, in my Party's view, these conditions do not exist. By this I mean that, to the best of our knowledge, Hon Members on the other side of the House would not support, nor participate in, such a system. Should there, however, be a general desire in this House to pursue the matter we should be glad to hold discussions at any time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.71 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Mr Speaker, do I understand that the GLP/AACR would find an appropriate time to consider this matter - not in fact that I agree with Government by Committee - when they do not have an overall majority for this House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We said we were prepared to consider it in our manifesto. We were elected, we said so after, I have made certain gestures in order to see whether it would catch on but I have had no takers and, therefore, I do not think that the climate is appropriate for the purpose.

No. 72 of 1977

FOR WRITTEN ANSWER.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Chief Minister state, in view of press reports on the subject, whether he intends to propose that talks should be held between HMG and the Government of Spain on the Gibraltar problem, with or without Gibraltar representation, during 1977, once democratic elections have been held in Spain?

ANSWER:

The Chief Minister

No, Sir. Once elections are held and an elected democratic government expresses its attitude to the people of Gibraltar it would be a question of judgement whether a useful purpose would be served in having talks.

No. 73 of 1977
the Hon M xiberras

FOR WRITTEN ANSWER

Is the Chief Minister aware of any recent proposals made by or on behalf of the government of Spain for the relaxation of the frontier restrictions?

Answer:
the Chief Minister

No, Sir.