

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 8 MARCH 1977

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(74 TO 131)

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government say whether any claims have now been received from Unions and Associations in respect of the October 1976 stage of Scamp?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

No claims as such have yet been received from any Trade Union or Staff Association but the Gibraltar Teachers' Association have written asking for negotiations to start. They have been invited to submit a written claim if they so wish, and if they so do, it will receive consideration.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 74 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member care to qualify the words "as such" any further?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that the Hon Member has it in mind something which he may have heard in relation to the Gibraltar Government Clerical Association. The Gibraltar Clerical Association have not submitted a claim. What they have done is to ask as a precondition to any negotiations on Stage 3 for an assurance that the obsolescent scale which formed part of the 1974/75 Agreement will continue on the same basis in 1976. The Government has informed Gibraltar Government Clerical Association, in writing, that this is an issue which can only be considered in the context of the wider aspects of the 1976 Review.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I thank the Hon Member for that information. Would the Hon Member tell the House whether he has, in fact, passed on the substance of certain exchanges we had in relation to another similar question at the last meeting of the House to the effect that it was generally considered in the public interest that the October 1976 stage of Scamp should go into negotiation as early as possible?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, certainly I have reported back quite naturally on the tenor of questions and statements made by Members in this House.

No. 75 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Does Government propose to make provision to allow GBC to acquire video equipment?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Yes Sir. The sum of £14,800 has been included in the 1977/78 Draft Estimates for this purpose in the proposed contribution to GBC for 1977/78.

The Hon J Bossano

Will Government publish in the Gazette the names of successful tenderers for Government contracts and the total value of such contracts?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The Government is currently reviewing the tender procedure and publication of the names of successful tenderers for Government contracts will certainly be considered. However publication of the total value of all contracts awarded could in some cases present difficulties. I have in mind particularly running contracts for supplies where, because of price fluctuations during the term of the contract and because it is more often than not impossible when the tenders are called for to specify the quantities required the tender price is often expressed in terms of a discount on the price ruling at the time of supply. Problems of a different nature could also arise from publication of the value of fixed-price contracts. All I can say at the moment is that these matters will be considered in reviewing the present tender procedure.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will Government consider the granting of tax concessions to firms which due to high inflation have their profits absorbed by the necessary replenishments of stocks and thus alleviate the cash flow difficulties that trade generally is encountering?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

As things stand the Commissioner of Income Tax already has general discretion, which he uses in appropriate cases where cash flow difficulties are faced, to extend the time within which payment of tax instalments is to be made. There is also the concession that interest paid on moneys borrowed for capital employment on the acquisition of income is deductible from such income.

The Government is not prepared to go beyond this.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 77 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary state how this discretion is used. Is it based on a table of figures?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not the Commissioner of Income Tax and I am afraid that I cannot answer that question.

MR SPEAKER:

You are saying that is not within the province of the Financial and Development Secretary particularly in respect of Income Tax matters to state how the Income Tax Commissioner would exercise his discretion.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would the Government agree that it would be, I think, more fair and certainly I think the traders would know how to approach this matter, if some kind of guidelines could be stated by the Government so that the traders generally would know how to proceed if they had a case to claim for some sort of relief due to the circumstances of which the question is the subject?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I know the Income Tax Ordinance makes full provision for dissatisfied taxpayers to object and to make an appeal.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Wouldn't the Financial and Development Secretary agree that this question of making an appeal is something which the trader hasn't got a basis on what to work. If they feel that they have a problem then they come forward and perhaps put a case. That also involves, I suppose, a considerable amount of money. Wouldn't it be a much more practical way of doing it as I understand it is the case in Britain....

MR SPEAKER:

May I interrupt. I think you are speaking at cross purposes. You have asked whether Government would be prepared to grant tax concessions. The answer has been no but Government brings to the notice of taxpayers the fact that the Income Tax Commissioner has discretion to phase out the payment of income tax for certain purposes.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I am trying to say is that as I see it the attitude of the Government is not a proper or fair one.

MR SPEAKER:

And what are you asking?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I am asking is wouldn't it be fairer, rather than leaving it open as it is notwithstanding that there is a very wide and broad provision in the Ordinance, to bring it down to more definite sort of rulings which the ordinary trader in Gibraltar would know exactly what their rights would be rather than leave it so openly as it is at the moment. This is what I am trying to say.

MR SPEAKER:

I think I am getting involved but the answer is that there is no right under the Ordinance to grant concessions. There is a right in the Ordinance for the Income Tax Commissioner to exercise his discretion insofar as the payments are concerned, for staggering the payments, not for relief.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I am trying to get from Government is whether they are likely to change their mind on this based on the few points that I am bringing out. If they are not then of course I will probably take it up later on at the estimates time.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I take it that the Hon and Gallant Gentleman is asking me to reconsider the words that I used in answering the question, ie, that the Government is not prepared to go beyond this. If so, it is not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I to take it then that within the terms of the Ordinance the Commissioner of Income Tax's discretion is unsettled. In other words, that he can apply it to individual cases?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Certainly, that is why he is given discretion and that is why he is the Commissioner of Income Tax.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree that if there were to be guidelines of the sort suggested by my Hon and Gallant friend there would be no breach, in fact, of the Income Tax Ordinance.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, is the Hon Member asking me for an opinion?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am asking him for an improvement. What I am asking the Hon Member to say is whether he can give the public a general indication as to how the opposite officer of the Government will use...

MR SPEAKER:

I objected to that when the questioner asked that. It is not for the Financial and Development Secretary to give directions to the Income Tax Commissioner under the Ordinance as to how he is to use his discretion.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I don't think anybody is seeking directions under this Ordinance, one is seeking clarification, one is seeking guidelines of a general nature which are applied I am sure in other areas of Government.

MR SPEAKER:

No, I am afraid that I must bring it within the confines of the question. The Income Tax Ordinance gives the Income Tax Commissioner the right to exercise discretion under certain of the different provisions of that Ordinance. That discretion is given to the Income Tax Commissioner and not to the Financial and Development Secretary and so therefore the Financial and Development Secretary is not answerable as to how that discretion is used. That is the only objection I am raising to the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am thinking of parallel cases, for instance, in the case of certain payments made in the Labour and Social Security Department where the powers are given by the Ordinance to the Director as they are given in fact in most Ordinances to the Directors of the different Departments but there are generally accepted ways in which this discretion is applied and these are generally known to people involved. I think it an important point of principle, Mr Speaker, that one does not conflict with the other, in other words that general discretion can be subject to general explanatory guidelines for the use of people who are affected by these Ordinances.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will willingly pass on the general tenor of the Hon Member's remarks to the Commissioner of Income Tax but I would add this that the Commissioner himself is available to any taxpayer at any time within the normal confines of reason to give advice on the kind of matters which I think the Hon and Gallant gentleman and the Hon Mr Xiberras have in mind.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government consider altering existing legislation in order to allow the present additional personal allowance under the Income Tax Ordinance granted to people over the age of 65 to be granted to people over the age of 60?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The present allowances which have recently been made in respect of persons over the age of 65 are very generous and the Government does not intend to reduce the age at which they become effective.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.78 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, will Government consider altering the legislation if these people are no longer in employment?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Any suggestions relative to altering the provisions of the Income Tax Ordinance which appear to be reasonable will certainly be considered but no more.

No.79 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether a ruling has now been given in the outstanding cases heard last year by the Industrial Tribunal?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

Mr Speaker, in three cases the decision of the Chairman on the facts has been handed to the Secretary of the Industrial Tribunal for transmission to the parties. In two other cases the Chairman has, on a preliminary objection, agreed that he should not hear the case and another Chairman is being appointed. In the remaining case it is anticipated that the decision will be given next week.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.79 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon and Learned the Attorney General confirm whether these developments have taken place since notice was given of the questions?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Mr Speaker, the decisions according to my information were handed to the Secretary of the Tribunal last Thursday. Whether the Chairman had knowledge of the question beforehand is a matter for speculation which I think the Hon Questioner is in as good a position as I am to draw a conclusion.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned Member agree that in order to avoid the need for questions to accelerate decisions of the tribunal it might be desirable to lay down some guidelines as to the time limit within which a decision should be taken in normal cases unless there are very exceptional circumstances that in normal cases going to the tribunal the persons going to the tribunal should be entitled to expect an answer within a reasonable period of time. Would he agree that some sort of guidelines like that, perhaps by regulation, might be desirable?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

I sympathise with the suggestion put forward by the Hon Leader of the Opposition but I don't think it would be practical. This is a judicial tribunal and if we are going to lay down guidelines for such a tribunal then why not lay down guidelines for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Magistrates Court and the Court of First Instance. It is not possible. I accept that there has been, perhaps, a longer delay in these cases than is satisfactory, but it is to be hoped that it won't happen again, but guidelines, I think, no.

The Hon J B Perez

Can Government state what effect the proposed and expected introduction of a European Passport will have on Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

Mr Speaker, I understand that the proposals for the introduction of a uniform passport to be issued by the member states of the EEC are still under discussion. It is not known what suggestions will be made regarding Gibraltar but Gibraltar's interests are naturally being kept in mind.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.80 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, I think this is a very important question and I would like to follow this one up. Cannot the Hon the Attorney General give a more definite answer other than that the question of Gibraltar will be kept in mind. Isn't it a fact that we now have free movement in Europe as citizens of the Community and is there any doubt whatsoever either in the Attorney General's mind or the British Government that this is likely to change?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Put it this way, there is of course not entire free movement in Europe, it is only for labour purposes. There is no absolute right for any member of the EEC to come to Gibraltar unless he is coming to take up employment or to be self employed. I think this is a common misunderstanding of the position, I really don't think there is anything I can add on the point of passports.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, that is a very unsatisfactory answer if I may say so at this stage and I will probably take the matter up on the adjournment.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether he would agree that if in fact Gibraltar were to get any treatment different from other parts of the EEC the House should have an opportunity to discuss the matter?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Most certainly.

No.81 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Can Government state why certain Ordinances are not available for sale at the Government Secretariat?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

The short answer is because they are sold out. Approximately 100 copies of each Ordinance are available for sale after publication. But to carry a stock which would meet all demands for all Ordinances would entail a very great expense which in many cases would never be recovered, as there would be no demand. The percentage of Ordinances published since 1970 which are now out of stock is less than 12. In cases when all copies of a particular Ordinance have been sold and the number of further requests which cannot be met for copies justifies such a course, Government arranges a reprint.

No.82 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government state how many Gibraltarians were expelled from the United Kingdom in 1975 and 1976 and on what grounds?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney General

Our records show the number to be two. In both cases deportation orders were made after the person concerned had been convicted of drug offences and served a sentence of imprisonment.

The Hon M Xiberras

In view of the undue burden that can be placed on parents of certain income groups by the application of the present formula for assessing parental contributions to Government Scholarships, will Government consider assessing such contributions on the net, as opposed to the gross, income of the parent?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

The formula for assessing parental contributions to Government Scholarships is based upon that currently in force under the Local Education Authorities Awards Regulations in the United Kingdom and Government sees no reason to depart from it in the manner suggested by the Honourable Member.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 83 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree that there are a variety of factors that could change, in fact, the effect of the application of this formula even though in principle it is based upon the one operative in the UK?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the Hon Member is probably aware that one of the differences between our system and the UK is that under our Income Tax Ordinance persons get a far greater allowance for children studying in the UK than they get in the UK itself.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, has the Hon Member had any representations made to him by parents of the fact I mentioned in the question?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Only one, Sir, and that person is not under the current system of formula for parental contributions but the old system and the student is also receiving the award on the old system which is considerably higher than the new.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I have got at least two possibly one of them prompted this question. I can tell him of at least two who are not satisfied at all. Mr Speaker, the Minister said that Government was not prepared to depart from the existing formula in the manner suggested by the question. Do I take it that the Department is prepared to move away from this formula in any other manner?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No Sir, we are not willing to move away from the formula but we are willing to consider with the general inflation which goes on amending the figure from time to time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

When he does that and I hope he does that early, Mr Speaker, would he bear in mind that the application of various forms of Government taxation might very well hit the middle income group to a greater extent than groups even below them.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, I will bear that in mind. I would mention that the only case that has come to my notice is not what I would call a middle income group.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member be interested in my supplying information of two persons who I would describe as being in the middle income group who have children studying under this scheme?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I should be very happy to receive it, Sir.

The Hon J B Perez

Does Government intend to provide school buses for children living at the Varyl Begg Estate and who attend Bishop Fitzgerald School?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

No, Sir. The criterion for the provision of school transport is if children have to walk more than $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to attend school.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.84 OF 1977

HON J B PEREZ:

Would the Hon Minister then say why school buses are provided for children who live at Varyl Begg Estate and who attend other schools in Gibraltar, like St Anne's School?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I don't think there is a bus from Varyl Begg to St Anne's School, Sir.

HON J B PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that there are buses provided for children to attend other schools in Gibraltar?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Of course, but they go for more than $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to get to that school.

HON J B PEREZ:

Do I take it that the Minister then is not sure or does not know whether a bus is provided for St Anne's School.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

sir, I am not sure whether the Hon Member knows exactly where St Anne's School is but it is about 100 yards from Varyl Begg Estate and I don't think we provide buses for 100 yards.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government make a progress Report on the flats at Varyl Begg Estate, which have still not been allocated?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Sir, on the 9th September 1976 a total of 105 flats were handed over to Government in three blocks of flats. On the 12th November 1976 the last remaining block of flats was handed over containing 35 flats. However, the roof problems have not been resolved and are under discussion between the consultants and the Contractors. Representations were made to the consultants but as no ready solution was put forward to put a stop to the roof leaks it was decided not to allocate any of the flats in question until such time as the whole matter is resolved.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 85 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

I thank the Hon Member for that answer. Dealing with the roofing difficulties, can the Hon Member be rather more explicit. Do the Contractors envisage doing the work themselves?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I think I gave some information of this at the last meeting. The present situation is that the consultants have told the contractors to get on with the work to repair the roofs, the contractors have accepted to do this work but have stated that it will not cure the roof leaks.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then the Contractors have not in fact started working on the roofs yet or are they doing so knowing that in their judgement the leaks are not going to be remedied by the procedure suggested by the consultants?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

They have not actually started but I understand they are willing to start but they are still, I believe, in discussion with the Consultants over whether the leaks will be cured or not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it then, Mr Speaker that there is no approximate date for the contractors starting to work on this.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, they said that if they were to start they would start in April because obviously they do not want to start while the weather is liable to bring a downpour while they have got the roof up.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can I ask the Minister whether his Department has expressed a view on the matter or will his Department in fact, await to see the results of this repair job before it makes its view known?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, we are advised that we should keep completely out of the discussion between the two parties and not express any view point at all.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, are there any safeguards to the Government of Gibraltar in respect of this matter?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I should imagine so. There is the normal safeguard of going to arbitration and letting the Court decide who is to shoulder the blame for this unhappy situation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that this is a far from satisfactory situation since it may very well be that the people carrying out the job cannot guarantee the success of the job. My concern is on the practical date of allocation and therefore I am asking whether there are any safeguards to the Gibraltar Government in this as obviously an interested party. Would the Hon Member not agree that it is a far from a satisfactory situation and that there should be some sort of safeguard to the Gibraltar Government and to the prospective members of the public who will get these flats since if the remedy adopted is not a good one, then there would be a further delay in allocation.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, we fully appreciate the seriousness of the situation. We are pressing the consultants with all haste that this must be remedied as soon as possible.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Have the contractors in their turn suggested an alternative method by which this might be tackled?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No Sir, I think that the contractors have suggested arbitration.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Department of Public Works asked the contractors to suggest a different form of dealing with the leaking roofs?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, this is really something which is not up to the Department to do. It is the Department's job to tell the contractor to remedy. It is the contractor's job to do the remedying.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in this unsatisfactory situation have the contractors agreed to some sort of time limit by which the roofs will be made good?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Not to my knowledge, Sir.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government confirm the possible risks of fire to adjacent premises when windy conditions are present at the new and smokeless refuse destructor and will Government take steps to reduce the possibility of fire extending to these adjacent premises?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

The Refuse Incinerator presents no risk to adjacent premises in windy or other conditions. Open burning, under controlled conditions, is carried out at that site, but these operations are stopped when the wind is unfavourable.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Sir, will Government state the number of gallons of fresh water produced by the Distillation Plant near Eastern Beach in the year 1976 and will Government state the number of gallons which such a plant should produce yearly?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Sir, during 1976 the North Face Distiller produced a total of 33,955,900 gallons. An annual production of 45 million gallons would be considered a very good performance for this plant which was commissioned 9 years ago.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 87 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

The Minister said an annual production of 45 million gallons would be a good figure. Could the Minister explain why? Could we expect a higher figure than the 45 million gallons?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

It would have been higher when the plant was new but the plant is now, as I say, nine years old and we consider 45 million is a reasonable figure for a plant of that age.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Therefore the Minister implies that as time goes by the number of gallons produced by that plant will decrease.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, this would happen with any plant, Sir.

No. 88 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

In periods when rain water is plentiful and beyond the storage capacity of the reservoirs cannot Government see its way to giving greater quantities of water to ships calling at our Ports as an added incentive for ships to make use of our Port facilities?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

In recent years there have been no occasions when available water was beyond the storage capacity of the reservoirs.

However, at present, with high stocks of water in storage, rationing to shipping has been discontinued.

The Hon J B Perez

Would Government state whether work has now started on the Varyl Begg Estate roofs?

MR SPEAKER:

Now before the answer is given I would like to say that now that there is for obvious reasons no coordination between the questions to be asked by the different members of the Opposition and not wishing to deny the right of any Member to ask a question on any matter, I am allowing questions which overstep each other. But I would like to remind Members that this will not be an excuse to extend at one particular answer supplementaries to get answers to the questions that they themselves have previously asked otherwise there would be a tremendous amount of duplication and repetition.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, on a point of order for the better running of the business of the House. I had thought, except that we don't want to deprive the initiative of all Members, that all questions relating to one matter should appear in the Order Paper consecutively so that each Member can ask questions and there can be general sort of supplementaries otherwise it is really duplicating the work quite a lot.

MR SPEAKER:

May I say, with due deference to the Chief Minister, that the numbering of the questions are done by the Government Secretariat.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not asking for anything. I was saying Mr Speaker that this might be a useful way in which to deal with questions. May I mention something on questions since we are dealing with that now for the guidance of members and so on and that is that on this occasion it is quite alright but if questions are going to be of the Order of 100 or so, we shall have to ask the House for a longer time because really what happens is that in the five days very little is done in many departments except to prepare answers to questions. Therefore I would encourage Members to put in their questions if they can earlier. I know that there are last minute questions and that people have to be rung up at the last moment and so on but the number of questions of course poses this problem to us and whilst it is quite true that it is in the discretion of the Government to put the order of the question, what actually happens for the guidance of Members is that when they are received in an evening and the civil servants start working they put them in the order in which they think they are likely to be answered but then other counsels prevail and some Ministers say; "This is not my question" as members opposite who have been in office know, and others say: "This is one that I will take." For example, the second question on the Order Paper was one which was finance, on the other hand I normally answer questions on GBC so I took it upon myself and that is why it came so early. But the point is that numbering them at such stage would be trying to get in for us ministers before we start getting the answer, that is the difficulty.

MR SPEAKER:

May I perhaps also say that whilst there is a limit as to the shortness of the notice to be given, in other words there is five days before a question can be asked, there is no limit as to when it can be sent in and there is nothing to prevent Members of the Opposition to send questions to the Speaker's Office for the following meeting even during the present meeting and this perhaps could facilitate matters, ie, by sending questions in not at the last moment but all through the time before the next meeting is being held.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, I fully agree and I think it is a very good idea but I think it might help, too, if the leader of the House could give more notice as to when a meeting is going to be held because if one gives notice of a question too early it might be out of date and perhaps even be irrelevant by the time the meeting takes place. I think that the earlier the advice that the Chief Minister can give of the date of the meeting the quicker he will be getting his questions.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, perhaps, some Members opposite have more difficulty than others, I appreciate that, about the time for the notice of questions and the way they are sent, I normally try and give as much time as possible to Hon Members of the next meeting but again that is also governed by the Government business and the nature of legislation and the stage at which it is when we want to bring it. But I would like to make it quite clear that nothing that I have said is to encourage more questions.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Minister for Public Works is going to answer this question which is very like Question No.85 which I asked earlier, I, for instance, as one of the two persons involved, would have no objection to the Minister answering both at the same time. On this occasion this might have been done except that Question No. 85 **might have been dealt with** by the Minister for Housing rather than the Minister for Public Works, it is a question of judgement on that one. But on other questions I think we can take two or even three questions together.

MR SPEAKER:

I will now call on the Minister to answer Question No. 89.

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Work has not commenced on the Varyl Begg roofs, although the 24 hour emergency service is being maintained by the main Contractor. The whole question is under negotiation between the consultants and the contractors.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.89 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

In his answer to question No.80 of 1977 he gave a time-table which read that the contractor had been given notice to start work on the 7th December and final notice on the 19th January and that the Government was at that stage contemplating legal action if they didn't have a rapid reply to the final notice. Can he give some indication of what has happened since the 19th January?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, I think it was the 22nd of January or the 23rd that the contractors replied stating they were willing to do the work but giving a number of reasons why this would not solve the problem. The letter of the contractors was sent to the consultants, the consultants took, I understand, certain legal opinions on this and stated that they considered that the contractors were not correct in saying it would not solve the problem and that is the position at the moment.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member clarify if the contractors agreed to do the work that they had been asked to do, would the responsibility for any subsequent thing then shift from the contractor to the consultant or from the contractor to the Government?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I should imagine, Sir, it would, yes, but I am not a legal expert in this matter.

HON J BOSSANO:

To the consultant or to the Government?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

To the consultants, Sir.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government confirm that the rubble from demolition projects such as St Jago's is being used for land reclamation and to what use will such land be put and under what conditions?

Answer:

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Rubble from the demolition work is disposed either by tipping at the approved tip at the Governor's Cottage area or at any approved reclamation site. The conditions applicable to the use of such reclaimed land would depend on the intended use of the reclamation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 90 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Can Government state to what use it is being put at present?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I believe, Sir, it is being tipped at Bayside Marina.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can Government say in that instance to what use the land will be put and under what conditions?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I understand it is going to be made into a Marina. I don't know the conditions.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would Government, by virtue of the fact that they have been responsible for providing the material for reclaiming the land, have a major say in the use to which the land is put?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, the St Jago's contract makes the contractor responsible for the disposal of all materials. The actual materials belong to the contractor.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does Government not agree that in view of the cost of reclaiming land and the difficulty in getting appropriate material, it is desirable that the Government should have a major say in how material suitable for reclamation is used?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I should imagine, Sir, if the contractor can sell the material that he gets from the demolition he puts a lower tender which benefits Government just the same.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does Government know whether in this case the material is being sold or not?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, I don't know, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would it have appeared in the contractor's tender had it been intended to sell the material?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

All I know, Sir is that in the actual contract that went out to tender it was stated that the material would be the property of the contractor and he had to dispose of it.

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Perhaps I can assist in this. If the tender provided that the rubble, put it that way, was to be the property of the tenderer, then Government would automatically reduce the price which it was prepared to pay and would assume that the tenderer would sell the rubble. But it would be entirely a matter for him and no concern of the Government provided that under the contract with Government the rubble became his property.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the tenderer put a price which in turn becomes a discount on the tender or not when he tenders?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, he gives an inclusive price. How he makes up his price is surely his own business. I don't think it is Government's concern to know how he has got his price. Government is only concerned on what the price is.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member state whether he is, in fact, certain of this because perhaps if he were to check he might find out that the tenderer puts in a price and then discounts from that price the value he puts on the materials. That certainly is the case in some tenders and I don't know whether it has been followed in this particular one, but would the Hon Member not agree that if this is the case then the Government, in looking at the value that the tenderer is putting on the material, should also assess the value that the material might

have to Government particularly when it is material that can be used for land reclamation which Government might be in need of for its own reclamation project. .

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, I am willing to look into that but I could tell the Hon Member that in the present situation Government had nowhere other than the general Governor's Cottage area, where there was any specific reclamation to be done.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what modifications are to be carried out to the porters Lodge at KGV Hospital, the cost of the same, the estimated completion date and the use to which it is intended to be put on completion?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

The modifications to be carried out to the Porter's Lodge at KGV Hospital consists of the enlargement of the dwelling from 451 sq ft gross superficial area to 902 sq ft gross superficial area. The building is a single storey building and the effect of the modification is the provision of an additional storey. The cost of the modification is estimated by the Public Works Department at £10,000. The completion date is the end of May 1977 and the use will continue to be a Government officer's quarter.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.91 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Government explain why it has found it necessary to spend £10,000 on an extension of this Government officer's quarter? Is it that in their present condition these premises are not suitable for a Government officer's quarters?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, there is a Government officer living there who is entitled to a far better standard of quarter than 451 sq ft. As no other quarter is immediately available one of the answers has been to enlarge this present quarter.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Hon Member saying then that the quarter in question is being, in fact, modified for its present occupant at a cost of £10,000?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Not necessarily for the present occupant because the present occupant when he leaves there will leave a quarter which is a superior quarter to Government than what it was at 451 sq ft. 451 sq ft is possibly just about 1 room and a kitchen or 2 rooms and a kitchen.

HON J BOSSANO:

The immediate beneficiary will be the existing occupant, is that right?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

It will have to be, yes.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say whether he knows if the officer in question has had any say in the design of the modifications?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I couldn't say that off hand, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Perhaps he would like to look into it, Mr Speaker, and find out whether in fact in his normal employment the officer has been designing the modifications or not?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

In his normal employment, Sir, he is not a designer.

No.92 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what is the present level of water stocks and how this level compares with storage capacity?

Answer:--

The Minister for Education and Public Works

Present stock at 1 March 1977 was 9,391,360 gallons which represents 58% of the total capacity of the reservoirs, which is of course constant.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the total production figures for water for the months of January and February this year giving a breakdown by source and the total consumption figures for each month?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Sir, the total production figures for water during the months of January and February of this year was 16,544,880 gallons. The breakdown by source is as follows:-

	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>Total</u>
Imported	2,747,800 gal	3,930,080 gal	6,677,880 gal
Wells	2,301,200 gal	44,660 gal	2,345,860 gal
Distillation	-	481,140 gal	481,140 gal
Rain	5,736,720 gal	1,303,280 gal	7,040,000 gal

The consumption for January and February of this year was 8,643,800 galls and 9,709,040 gallons, respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 93 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I won't ask the Hon Member why the rain went down in February, but perhaps I could ask him whether he can explain the very dramatic difference between the collection from Wells in January and February.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, there are two reasons. Firstly, when the rain is coming down in fairly good quantities we close the Wells down or use them less so that any essential work can be done. The second reason was that we found a crack in the tank into which the well water is pumped and we had to close down completely while this crack was actually repaired and the whole thing was refurbished and made ready for general pumping which is now taking place.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

According to the Minister's statement there was no water produced by the distillation plant in January. Now, if the present stocks are only at 58%, can the Minister state why the Distillation plant produced no water during the month of January?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, the distillation plants are scheduled really to produce water only in 40 weeks of the year, the other 12 weeks are for a general overhaul and obviously one tends to do this at a period when one is getting most rain. Since January was a pretty wet month we closed both the distillers down and gave them general overhauls.

No. 94 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Can Government state whether the proposed modification to Taylor Woodrow's offices at Varyl Begg Estate to provide school accommodation takes account of the potential fire hazard of this type of construction?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The plans of the proposed conversion of these offices, which are of single storey construction, into a temporary school were deemed to be satisfactory by the Chief Fire Officer. There will be ample means of escape and fire fighting equipment will also be installed in accordance with the Chief Fire Officer's recommendations.

No.95 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

What use, if any, does Government propose to make of disused air raid shelters?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Past investigations into possible alternative uses have established that the options are very small because of the inherent limitations imposed by excessive dampness, problems of ventilation and difficulties of access. A scheme for cultivating mushrooms in one of these shelters a few years ago also proved abortive. The current proposal which is now being considered is that which converts the Flat Bastion Road shelter into a car park.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 95 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, what about the other air raid shelters in Governor's Parade and in Engineer Lane? Is there any provision made or any intention to use those for car parking facilities?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not at the present moment of time. The shelter that really lends itself to conversion for car parking is Flat Bastion Road Shelter.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Minister say what are the disadvantages of using the Engineer Lane Shelter for car parking?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Engineer Lane is rather narrow and I understand it is being used by the Electricity Department as a store.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, with car parking at a premium the Electricity Department could have found a store elsewhere if those premises were good enough.

HON A W SERFATY:

It is not that easy to find storage accommodation but the exit or entry from the Engineer Lane/Turnbull's Lane shelter is not an easy one.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Couldn't the Minister overcome that difficulty by having some sort of a turn table whereby cars could go to the bottom of the other end and then turn round to come out by the way it came in?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is a possibility which can be considered but we are first tackling the Flat Bastion Road one.

HON G T RESTANO:

May I also ask whether the Governor's Parade one is being taken into account?

HON A W SERFATY:

Governor's Parade has been blocked up many years ago.

HON G T RESTANO:

That is no reason I would have thought, Mr Speaker, if there is space available to just leave it idle. Is it the Government's policy to leave possible space idle?

HON A W SERFATY:

As far as I am aware in my time that shelter has been non-existent. And as regards the storage an underground shelter does present complications, of course. If I remember rightly the one under John Mackintosh Square, under the Piazza, is also a series of relatively narrow tunnels. It is not that easy.

HON J BOSSANO:

I would just like to ask the Hon Member whether he would agree that if there are air raid shelters which the Government cannot think of putting to any good use, then the Government should look sympathetically at any request from private firms that might think of putting them into good use rather than just not use them at all?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have ^{are} looked sympathetically at that very much so and even at tunnels which ^{are} now in the hands of the Ministry of Defence.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will Government negotiate with British Airways an economy fare similar to that available in the London/Malaga route whereby a minimum of three adults or two adults and two children can travel on schedule flights without any enforced advanced booking for £72.50 per adult on a seven day return basis up to a maximum of forty nine days? Mr Speaker, could I just say that I think I got my figures wrong, in fact it is much less than £72.50.

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Sir, at the last formal meeting held with British Airways in Gibraltar on the 18 January 1977 the Group Three for Gibraltar fare was discussed. This fare was introduced in 1976 for Spain and Portugal primarily for British villa owners. British Airways indicated that this type of demand on the Gibraltar/London route could be absorbed by Apex and other fares.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 96 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, now that I am looking at the figures, does the Minister consider that if this brings a reduction in fare down to £57.50 as it is a night flight from Malaga to London it should be worth considering as it is quite a substantial saving?

HON A W SERFATY:

Questioner

I think the Hon is a bit unfair, if I may say so, in bringing out the night fare because we do not have any night flights in Gibraltar and the day fare is £72.50 whereas the Apex fare in Gibraltar now until the end of the month is £73.50.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I don't know where the Minister got his information. I got it from British Airways in the UK before I left but now I have discovered a paper which is an official one whereby it says that the day fare from Malaga is £66.00.

HON A W SERFATY:

That is correct, it is £72.50 until the 31st of March 1977.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Then it is coming down to £66

HON A W SERFATY:

Then it comes down to £66.00 from the 1st April to the 30th June and from the 1st October to the 1st June and during the period 1st July to 30th September, which is the peak period, it is £89.50.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister say if we are going to have a similar or proportionate reduction in our Apex fares here in Gibraltar for the period stated?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not for the period 1st April, 30th June and 1st October - 1st June. On the other hand for the period 1st July/30th September our Apex fare is lower than the Malaga Group Three fare.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Yes, but can the Minister say why if this can be done for Malaga it cannot be done for Gibraltar, a similar reduction for the period. I suppose there must be a very good reason for it.

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer is that I cannot say why during those particular weeks before and after the peak period the fare is going down to £66.00.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister try and find out because I think it is very important. It is quite a handsome sum of money. Apart from that is the Minister happy with the advance notice of a month and at the risk of losing 50% of the fare. I believe that under this system of the Group Three it is 14 days notice that you have got to give for reservation and also I understand there is no loss of the fare if there is a change at the last moment.

HON A W SERFATY:

I can't say whether it is correct to say that there would be no loss of the fare.

MR SPEAKER:

The Minister does not have to confirm the conditions that BA put on their fares, particularly when it is information which is available to the questioner. The Minister can confirm if he wishes to but he does not have to.

HON A W SERFATY:

No I am sure that the Hon Questioner can hand his information in the "Key News."

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I have no information that I know of that there is any loss of fare on the Malaga run on the Group Three fare, but I think we know for sure that there is a 50% loss of the fare on the Gibraltar/London route on the Apex fare and what I am saying is could the Minister do something to make the whole figure a little more flexible than it is now if he is not prepared to consider the Group Three fare?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is not for me to consider. I brought this matter up in our talks in January with British Airways and Gibraltar Airways. I brought this Group Three fare up in January and a member of the Opposition was present and the answer of British Airways was what I stated in the original answer to the question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, doesn't the Minister agree that in view of the constant and obvious discrimination of British Airways against Gibraltar, there is a need for the Government to take a much tougher line with British Airways?

HON A W SERFATY:

Surely the Hon Member knows if he reads the Report of the CAA meetings to which I myself and members of the Opposition have been present, that we have taken a tough line. As a result of that we have had for the first time official consultations with the Government of Gibraltar at which Members of the Opposition and myself have taken part and I think that there has been a breakthrough in this question of communication between the Government of Gibraltar and the airlines.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say then when he expects the breakthrough to start producing some results because at present the situation seems to be as unsatisfactory as it was a year ago when there was no consultation.

HON A W SERFATY:

I don't think it is correct to say that. Certain agreements were reached in the talks with the airlines and I am not dissatisfied. I don't know whether the Hon Member is dissatisfied or not but I am not dissatisfied.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could I just ask one more question, Mr Speaker. Is the Minister therefore in favour of the Group Three fare rather than the Apex but is it because BA will not concede this that we haven't got it in Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

I don't think I would prefer the Group Three fare to Apex.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I just ask the Hon Member, because he said in answer to a supplementary that it was unfair to compare night flights to Malaga with Gibraltar because we had no night flights, can he say what is the reason for Gibraltar not having night flights?

HON A W SERFATY:

They are technical reasons.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is he aware that the Exchange Travel Charter flight is going to be a night flight?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, I am aware. I don't remember now the exact time of arrival but I am aware.

HON J BOSSANO:

So is he saying then that the technical reasons apply only to BA but not to other airlines?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is a different type of plane.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Government satisfied with the time of departure of the plane from London?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, we are not satisfied with the time of departure so early in the morning and we have pressed and pressed with British Airways and we have not been able to make them change the time. It is a question of the availability of the planes and the availability of the British Airport Authority.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

They don't appear to have any difficulty with other planes like Malaga, for instance, where they have different hours, night flight, day flights and all sorts of arrangements. Is therefore the Minister happy with the situation with BA at the moment? Well, if he is not then the Government is making very little progress and I think they should admit it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say whether Gibraltar Airways is also under the same constraints as British Airways as regards their flights?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, apparently it is. They are using British Airways planes anyhow.

HON J BOSSANO:

So that in fact would the Hon Member not agree that it might be desirable for Government to encourage Gibraltar Airways to look elsewhere rather than to British Airways?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have tried.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government state what functions other than the promotion of tourism the Gibraltar Tourist Office in London is officially required to perform?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The functions of the Gibraltar Tourist Office in London are as follows:

- a. to supply information about tourist and travel facilities in Gibraltar to Travel Writers, Tour Operators, Travel Agents and the general public;
- b. to maintain contact with the Tourist Office in Gibraltar, the Advertising Agency and other bodies with official links with the Gibraltar Tourist Office in Gibraltar;
- c. generally to promote tourism in Gibraltar.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.97 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Sir, where does a Gibraltarian therefore, who finds himself in difficulties in Britain, turn to?

MR SPEAKER:

I am afraid I will have to ask you to rephrase the question and ask whether a Gibraltarian who is in difficulties in London is entitled to go to the Gibraltar Tourist Office in London.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is he entitled to go to the Tourist Office in London?

HON A W SERFATY:

They usually go and they are very well received by the Manager and the staff in the Gibraltar Tourist Office.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I know they are very well received and we must be very grateful and thankful to the staff of the Gibraltar Tourist Office in a personal capacity because apparently officially they are not supposed to do so. Will the Government therefore consider extending other functions to the Gibraltar Tourist Office so that matters like that can be tackled?

HON A W SERFATY:

This is a matter for consideration but we certainly help and I know that we do. The Hon Questioner may say it is done in a personal capacity by the Manager of the Tourist Office but we are well aware, and I have encouraged him, in fact, to help Gibraltarians in London when they go to the office.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

But is it fair that individuals employed there should do it out of the kindness of their heart and that Gibraltarians should just rely on their kindness? Is the Minister aware that, in fact, after I put this question there was a Gibraltarian stranded in England who needed money to come over and he was told by the Gibraltar Government that he could get it provided it was a personal loan from the members of the Gibraltar Tourist Office.

MR SPEAKER:

That is completely out of the orbit of the question. All you are entitled to ask is whether officially the Gibraltar Tourist Office in London is entitled to help Gibraltarians in distress. Where can people turn to if they are not entitled to is another matter.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

If, therefore, a Gibraltarian does not get the response that he is expecting personally from the members of the Gibraltar Tourist Office, where then can they turn to?

MR SPEAKER:

No, that is the question I am objecting to. You can ask whether since it appears that the Tourist Office in London is not the place for them to go would Government be prepared to make it so. That you are entitled to ask because your question seeks information about the functions of the Gibraltar Tourist Office in London.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, can I put it this way, is it true that in fact it is the Crown Agents who are responsible for Gibraltarians in England?

MR SPEAKER:

Order, order. I am objecting to any question being asked in relation to where Gibraltarians in distress should go to for help in the United Kingdom. That is out of the orbit of the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether Gibraltarians in distress, in fact, would be precluded by the terms of reference of the Tourist Office from going to the office for help?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, they are not precluded. In fact the staff of the Tourist Office in London deal with reasonable requests for assistance from Gibraltarians in London.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does this include such cases as the one mentioned by my Hon and Gallant Friend, cases where people are stranded there for lack of cash?

HON A W SERFATY:

I wouldn't like to commit myself as to the amount of cash that the Gibraltar Tourist Office gives any Gibraltarian who goes there for assistance.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I would not like to see an abuse of this either, but would the Hon Member not agree that a Gibraltarian could reasonably expect from an office of this kind that he should be offered facilities of the type mentioned? If the Minister cannot commit himself now, could he revise the interpretation of these terms of reference so that the Tourist Office in London is in no doubt that they are in a position to help if they think fit?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, could the Minister tell us then, since obviously this is accepted by the Government, the procedure which is adopted when a Gibraltarian calls at the Gibraltar Tourist Office asking for some help?

HON A W SERFATY:

Can I have that question again, please?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister state what is the procedure adopted by the Gibraltar Tourist Office when a Gibraltarian stranded in England calls for help.

HON A W SERFATY:

What kind of help?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I can give you an example. A Gibraltarian who is stranded who for example, has lost his wallet and he wants to get back to Gibraltar or wants to get accommodation for one night. What is the procedure?

HON A W SERFATY:

The first thing that the Manager should do is to telex the Gibraltar Office.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

And what is the reply that he would probably get from the Gibraltar Office?

MR SPEAKER:

That is completely and utterly out of order.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Well, Mr Speaker, the fact is that Gibraltarians cannot get help in England.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. I accept the circumstances which has warranted the questioner to ask this question. What I cannot accept and what I cannot allow is that a question should be asked the way it has been asked and that other matters should be brought into it. The rules do not allow me to do it and that is what I was objecting to.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Questioner knows very well that the Tourist Office do many things which are not within the province of the Tourist Office such as telexing his questions for this House at public expense.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

And why not? I will pay for it.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

You will have to pay for it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether he will consider, looking at the role of the office in London in view to maximise its use to Government by widening that role consistent with its ability to cope with the problem?

HON A W SERFATY:

We will consider it.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government make a statement about the future of the Gibraltar Song Festival, bearing in mind its Gibraltar scope and interest?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir, the Gibraltar Song Festival is a private venture managed by the Gibraltar Song Festival Committee. The Government is in no way involved with its organisation.

Hitherto, Government has assisted by making an annual contribution of £650 towards the prize money and the cost of the medallions presented to winners. In 1974, at the request of the Committee, a grant of £247.15 was made to cover the loss incurred in the 1973 Festival and last year Government granted in addition £900 to GBC to cover the costs of televising the festival, including £700 seat underwriting.

Any request that may be made by the Committee for financial assistance will be considered on its merits having regard to all the circumstances prevailing at the time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.98 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

I thank the Hon Member for this. Would the Government, in view of the fact that in other spheres for instance with the Gibraltar Football Association and other bodies substantial underwriting facilities are given and bearing in mind that the losses over a period of time of the Gibraltar Song Festival are not commensurate, in fact, with some of these examples certainly which I have given on the sporting side, that the underwriting facilities should be known to the organisers of the Festival so that a lot of unnecessary anxiety might be removed.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That was how it was done the other time. The Song Festival Committee would not agree to our televising the Song Festival unless we underwrote the empty seats and we had to underwrite it to the extent of £700. In fact, they asked for that figure and that was the figure we gave them. We are quite open, in any reconstituted committee on this matter, to try and help them as much as possible but that is as far as we are able to go.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I am trying to ensure, Mr Speaker, is fairer treatment for Sporting and Cultural Activities, broadly speaking, and I would like to see the same conditions applied to one as to the other if the scope and interest of the activity merit this. Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware - he gave me a figure of £247 - but in fact this year it was something like £220 or was that the official figure, £247?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The point is that when they had not prepared the Festival for 1974, they had passed on a loss of the previous year and they wanted us to make it up apart from the grant which we had given and that was done and therefore they closed their books on a balanced account. This year they were offered the amount that is normally provided and they were quite happy, apart from the cost of the medallions, and when the question of broadcasting was concerned they said they wanted a guarantee of an underwriting of £700 which we agreed. Let us put it this way, there has not been any request that I can remember - I am speaking off the cuff now but I have been more or less directly concerned with this because of the nature of the involvement of the underwriting of that which was on the cost of the GBC - there was nothing asked for this year that they didn't get from Government. Naturally, they would have liked to have had more but they did not ask for anything which was not given to them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is not the Hon and Learned Member aware of the strain under which the Committee of the Song Festival has been working which I think has been the subject matter of reports in the local press and would he not agree that if one put in the balance one activity, say a sporting activity as compared to this cultural activity, there is a case for applying the same kind of underwriting in advance to the Song Festival as applied to a number of the sporting ventures.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, of course. In fact, taking all other factors into account, yes, and I don't want to anticipate matters but there is another question on cultural activities and there will be an answer which I am sure will be well received by the Hon Member who is so keen on cultural undertakings recently.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, just for the sake of the people who are running this Song Festival, then I take it that on this the Government will be prepared to enter into talks with the organisers of the Song Festival?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the Hon questioner will remember the last part of my original answer says: "Any request that may be made by the Committee for financial assistance will be considered on its merits having regard to all the circumstances prevailing at the time." I would be quite happy to look at any request by the Committee.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, in the event of the Organising Committee being wound up, and there has been comment on this in the press, does the Government consider that this is a worthwhile enough event for the Government to take it over?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government certainly does not intend to take over the organisation of the Festival which requires a considerable amount of expertise and international knowledge and so on and I would rather that this matter be left in the hands of volunteers which the Government could help, otherwise it would become another institution, another item on the estimates and never ending commitments and discouraging the contribution of the people really who have this matter at heart.

HON G T RESTANO:

But in the event of volunteers not coming forward to continue this, what will the Government policy be then?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government has no expertise to run Song Festivals. We have expertise on many other things.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member take note that the strain on the committee is mostly a financial one and that is not that they are all ill disposed to continue with the running of the Festival, they are perfectly prepared to do it provided that they have some assurance.

The Hon G T Restano

Has any reply been received from MOD to the request by Government for additional space at the Port?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Sir, no reply has been received from MOD but MOD (Navy) Gibraltar has been actively pursuing the question in order to try and assist the Gibraltar Government in dealing with this problem.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 99 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

What space has Government in fact asked from the MOD?

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to raise the whole question again because that was the subject matter of a question in the last meeting. I allowed the question because a progress report was promised in the answer and it was only right that Members should find out whether any progress had been achieved but the answer being what it is one has to be careful with supplementaries.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, presumably there are negotiations taking place.

MR SPEAKER:

What I am trying to say is that this has been the subject matter of answers given to this House within the last six months and therefore anything to do following up on those answers are always allowed but we mustn't open the whole question again. The space available, I think, was discussed last time and the purpose for which the reclamation was wanted.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the fact is that the Hon Member said last time that the matter was under discussion with the MOD and, therefore, what we want to know is, for example, in the course of discussion whether he has asked for more space and been offered less or whether he has asked for space in one place and been offered space in another place.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer has been that no reply has been received.

HON J BOSSANO:

But when the matter was raised originally he said that the matter was under discussion with the MOD. Then we asked subsequently and he said he had no reply. Now, presumably, he has had some reply and we want to know how the discussion has gone?

HON A W SERFATY:

Negotiations have been going on with MOD (Navy) locally and I am hopeful that a good settlement is going to be reached, a satisfactory one. But, of course, this will eventually have to be approved by the MOD in London. So far there has been no question of reducing the space. I hope that when agreement is reached we shall have all the space that is available which we believe and the operators believe will be quite satisfactory for the present requirements.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware that the operators, in fact, may not be in a position to bring the equipment that is required unless a decision is given almost immediately. Is he aware of that?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am fully aware of the fact that they have to purchase the equipment and that they have to make up their minds within the next few days. I am fully aware of that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is he then expecting to be able to give them an answer within the next few days so that they can make up their mind?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am expecting it, yes, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Within the next few days?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to go back to the question on which you overruled me. In the last House the Minister was asked whether Government had consulted on a provisional solution, not on details, and the answer was that an approach had been made but not on the details of what had been asked for.

MR SPEAKER:

I was referring to the original question but in any event the question that has been asked now is: "Has any reply been received from MOD to the request by Government for additional space at the Port." The supplementaries must be directed to the answer given but in any event ask a question if you wish to and let us see how it goes. I think the answer has now been given to your question but if you want to ask another one do so. If there are no more supplementaries we will move to the next question.

No. 100 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

What measure of control does Government at present exercise over the operation of the Yacht Marina?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic development

The operation of the Yacht Marina at payside is, as a privately owned venture, the responsibility of its owners subject, of course, to the provisions of the Port Ordinance and rules made thereunder in so far as they apply. Government has, in addition, certain powers under the lease of the premises with regard to the level of berthing charges, shore facilities for visiting yachtsmen and grounds for eviction.

No.101 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Has Government conducted a survey of the launches used by the Port Department and if so what conclusions have been drawn as regards the cost of replacing the engines and the effect this would have on manning levels?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes Sir. The Government has conducted surveys of the launches but has not yet received a report. Should the report recommend that the hulls are in good condition and that only the engines need replacing, the saving on the Establishment with the Port Department's existing commitments would amount to 5 men and this would be effected by natural wastage.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Is Government aware of the unhealthy and unsatisfactory methods of refuse collection at the Alameda Housing Estate and how does Government intend to improve the situation?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

The refuse is collected daily and personnel from the Housing Department then flush the refuse chambers. This system has been in operation since 1968/69.

The refuse collection is considered quite satisfactory. Its disposal, however, is subject to constant supervision by the Housing Department who as I said flush the refuse chambers daily.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 102 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, is the Minister aware that the bins are taken out early in the morning and then they are left there, 3 to 4 hours, before they are collected?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, I understand the bins are taken out very early in the morning and are tipped straight into the refuse cart which goes round at about 6.30 or 7.00 in the morning. But if you have any knowledge of it being done later I am willing to look into it if you give me the information.

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government give an explanation as to why telephone lines so frequently come to be crossed?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

It is assumed that by "crossed lines" the Hon Member means overhearing of other peoples' conversations when the telephone handle is lifted or a number is dialled. I do not accept that this happens frequently although given the complexity of an automatic telephone system it can occur occasionally due to misoperation of individual or common equipment in the exchange or the failure of wire insulation in the line plant cables feeding a particular area.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.103 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

I couldn't possibly agree with the Minister's statement that this does not occur frequently. I think I can say it happens all the time, Mr Speaker. Since the Minister has given a few reasons as to why this does occur, could he say whether anything is being done to remedy these reasons?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, like the Hon Mr Restano has said it depends on the interpretation of what he means by "often". Does he mean that it happens to him every day or once a week, or every month? Does it happen to every telephone in Gibraltar every day? There are a few reasons and we are taking action. One of the reasons is that some of the cable lines in use at present are lead sheathed with a paper insulation and we are replacing them, by areas, with a PVC sheathing with a jelly to protect any leakage from one cable to the other. This is being done at the present moment.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Could the Minister explain why it is that every time I lift my telephone I get a racing commentary?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon Member take note that in my experience this happens rather more on certain telephones than with others. Would the Hon Member be able to suggest a reason for this except bad luck?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There are still about 600 lines of the old equipment. This is being changed we hope by the beginning of next year by more modern equipment.

2.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Can the Minister assure this House that it is not due to any form of bugging at all? I would very much like an assurance from the Minister. It is a serious question.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I can assure you that we are not having a mini-Watergate in Gibraltar.

NOTE

QUESTION NO%104 OF 1977 WAS WITHDRAWN
BY THE HON J.B. PEREZ

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Can Government state whether they are satisfied with existing conditions in the Port (including the Marina) and the land frontier between Gibraltar and Spain which would prevent an infected animal with rabies from coming to Gibraltar and introducing this deadly disease?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health services

Sir, on arrival of a vessel the Port Authorities enquire if there are animals on board. If there is a cat or a dog the Master is informed verbally and in writing that it is illegal to import or land such animals. The Health Department is also informed and members of this Department make two or three checks daily. The same procedure applies to the Marina except in cases of locally registered dogs. In such cases if the dog is taken out of Gibraltar the owner is informed that it would be illegal to import such animals back to Gibraltar and the Port Authorities keep a check on that.

The frontier control is exercised by the Services who co-operate by seizing dogs straying into Gibraltar as well as informing the Public Health Department. Recently two such dogs have been seized and disposed of humanely.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.105 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Could the Minister please say whether any notices have been posted at the Marina to inform the people coming in that they are committing an offence?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I can enquire into that. The only information I have got is that in such cases if the dog is taken out of Gibraltar the owner is informed, I don't know whether the information is by way of a notice or by way of handing in some leaflet or something but I will enquire into that.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

I would like to say on this one that rabies is a very severe disease and I hope the Government will do its utmost to prevent rabies from coming into Gibraltar.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Minister really satisfied that dogs don't come ashore from yachts despite the fact that there may be notices? Are there any preventive measures at the Marina or at the Destroyer Pens?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The prevention measures are there and I assume that they are carried out,

The Hon M Xiberras

How much of the funds available for distribution to the Sporting and Cultural Activities Committee have been dedicated to Cultural Activities in the last three years? Can Government furthermore give an indication of the total amount spent by the Government on the promotion or encouragement of Cultural Activities, excluding such funds as are spent in connection with Government schools?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

£2635 have been dedicated to cultural associations during the last three years out of a total of £15,000. The break-down is as follows:

- a. 1974/75 - £510 from £3500
- b. 1975/76 - £715 from £4500
- c. 1976/77 -£1410 from £7000

The grants represent 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the total funds.

With regard to the second part of the question, it is not possible to give any exact figure as, for instance, the cost of John Mackintosh Hall as regards cultural activities would be difficult to deduct from the total cost of the entire Hall which also caters for other recreational functions.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.106 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst the House has always welcomed the promotion of sporting activities, and I am sure we would not like to see a diminishing of these, would the Hon Member not agree that the points of the various questions I have been asking on this matter is proved by the figures he has given?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it may be by way of implication but I can assure the Hon Member opposite and I can assure this House that every single application that has been received from any cultural association has been received with great sympathy. In fact, whereas there have been many sporting organisations that have been turned down, absolutely no cultural institution has been given a blatant no. If the Hon Member would like a further breakdown as to how monies have been disposed of, - I can rush through this quite quickly, Mr Speaker - in 1974/75 the Music Centre got £200, the Gibraltar Symphony Orchestra another £200, the Drama Group, I think this is the Art Group 56, if I remember correctly, Sir, got £60, and the Art Group 4 got £50. In 1975/76, the Gibraltar Symphony Orchestra obtained a further £300, Art Group 4 a further £50, the Girls Choir £250, Horticultural Society £50, Photography £25, Philatelic £40. In 1976/77, Sir, the Music Centre £550, the Gibraltar Symphony Orchestra £600.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, but as the Minister goes on does he not agree the minimal amounts being made available to these various cultural societies, in fact, is coming to the fore. Does the Minister not recall a request for some £60, I think it was, from the Photographic Society being turned down in connection with the exhibition? I remember being in a somewhat embarrassing position because I opened the exhibition at some time and I didn't realise that there was, in fact, a letter from the Photographic Society in the Chronicle of that morning which in fact I still haven't read but I believe it was something to the effect that Government had not given the Society £60 which they had asked for.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I cannot remember a request for £60 being turned down by the Committee. I will certainly check it, Sir, but I cannot recall it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member, in view of the figures he has given the House, not agree that the amount which is spent on culture even including that part of the Mackintosh Hall which is devoted to activities akin to those of the Sporting and Cultural Committee on the Cultural side, would he not agree that the amounts given to culture are really minimal and does he not agree that there is room for substantial improvement in these grants?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, very much so, Sir. I think I can reply yes to both questions. I agree that the donations have been quite minimal. I equally agree that we should do more and I think that the Hon Member will be pleased to know that we are making provision in next year's estimates for the particular inclusion of culture.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am very grateful to the Minister for that answer. Mr Speaker would the Hon Member bear in mind - perhaps this can be discussed, of course, at Budget time - that my concern is not only for the amount of money being granted to separate bodies but also to the way in which the activities are coordinated and encouraged. Will the Hon Member have proposals about this to make at Budget time?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, there will be specific proposals about this which I think will further please the Honourable Member.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am very grateful, Mr Speaker.

The Hon M Xiberras

What has been the annual rate of construction of new flats in the last four years and what is the anticipated rate in the next three?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The annual rate of construction of new flats averaged over the last four years ie March 1973 to March 1977 is 159.

The anticipated rate in the next three years, subject to ODM approval and assuming that a continuation of development aid funds for new housing will be approved beyond 1978, will be 77. This figure, of course, excludes the number of flats which have been or are planned to be modernised.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.107 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

The figure is a bit more hopeful, Mr Speaker, if I may say so. Bearing in mind that the House has been given no indication that there is any new construction beyond the 38 flats at Rosia Dale, how does the Minister arrive at this figure of 77 in the next three years?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, because the basis of the present philosophy of providing more houses is what we call area redevelopment. This means choosing certain areas in Gibraltar which need development and giving preference to those which do not present great problems of decanting. Area redevelopment includes repairs to old houses, it includes modernisation of houses which are suitable for modernisation and includes demolition of old houses, of houses which cannot be repaired or modernised and it is in these areas where houses are going to be demolished that new houses will be built.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I to take it then that area redevelopment will provide something in the region of just short of 200 flats between now and 1980? I am excluding from that 38 of Rosia Dale.

HON A W SERFATY:

I don't quite follow the question.

MR SPEAKER:

You multiply 77 by 3 and subtract 38, you get the answer.

HON A W SERFATY:

Well, 235 modernised flats giving an average of 78 units and the 77 new ones per year which is 155 units. If the Ministry of Overseas Development and the FCO deal expeditiously with our project applications we should achieve an average of 155 per annum of new and modernised houses.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will these flats excluding the 38 at Rosia Dale, is it anticipated that they will be built at the end of this period or will they be spread out over the 3 years?

HON A W SERFATY:

They will very definitely be spread out including this next financial year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would I be right in saying that in this coming year there will be something in the region of 77 flats available?

HON A W SERFATY:

In this coming year we could if we get approval. We have Rosia Dale, we have got bedsitters in Prince Edwards Road and Glacis

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, let us not complicate life. You have been asked whether if you get the development aid do you anticipate to be able to built 77 flats this year.

HON A W SERFATY:

What we anticipate is to have 119 either completed or in course of construction by March 1978.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is this in accordance, Mr Speaker, with the completion date of Rosia Dale which the Minister has given to the House?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not aware of the completion date of Rosia Dale but this takes into account the 38 flats in Rosia Dale. I am sure the construction of Rosia Dale will take more than another year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am interested in two things. One is the average rate of construction, the other thing is whether in the 3 years we will have an equal output of houses?

3.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether over and above the average of 77, do you anticipate that you will complete your average for the first year.

HON A W SERFATY:

I cannot commit myself to the completion of 77 in any one year period.

MR SPEAKER:

That's the answer then. Next question.

The Hon M Xiberras

How many applications for Government accommodation have been received per year in the last three years?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

1974 = 340 Applications

1975 = 395 Applications

1976 = 367 Applications

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 108 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, on this trend does the Hon Member expect a very big reduction in the number of applicants in the coming year and the year after?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, it is a very broad question. I think the Hon Member is well aware that one can't really pin this down.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, there is a motion on this but it was in anticipation of this motion that I wanted to get this information. Does the Hon Member not have some statistical information about all this which would enable him to draw some sort of advance requirement.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

We have had a survey recently. There are a number of factors that have been considered globally so again it becomes very difficult to pin point down to a particular answer.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I put it another way, Mr Speaker. Does the Minister have any reason for saying that there will be a reduction in the number of applicants per year?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, as I foresaw before the survey does bring out certain anomalies to light. The number of applications - and I am not trying to prejudge the future motion of the Hon Member - are not as bad as they appear, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is this Hon Member not concerned that he has got over the last three years something like 350 or so average new applications on the figures he has given me. Is he not concerned with the situation compared with the figures that the Hon Mr Serfaty has given?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, and I think the Hon Member is well aware of this. When we talk of, for instance, 367 applications in 1976, it must be noted and it must be seen with clarity that they may not be applications for new housing. It is established that they could well be applications for exchange of accommodation. It is one of the anomalies that the survey has brought to light, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member then be able to tell me what proportion, roughly, the survey has brought to light?

MR SPEAKER:

Now we are extending beyond the orbit of the question. Next question.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government give an indication of the general level of points now necessary to secure a flat in the next allocation phase at Varyl Begg Estate?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Allocation lists for Phase 6 and Block 18 at the Varyl Begg Estate have not yet been drawn up. It is therefore impossible to give an indication of the general level of points necessary to qualify until such time as these blocks become available for allocation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.109 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

I seem to remember, Mr Speaker, the Hon Member using exactly the same words in answer to a question I put before. I think it was the last meeting. Has the Hon Member recognised the words "general level of points now necessary" and would he not be able to give me a rough indication of what this might be?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well, Sir, one can't say this because I think it would be raising false hopes of anticipation to people who have now been waiting I think since sometime last September, I don't think it is fair to give anybody undue hope by quoting a figure of points.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That's what I recognised from his last answer to my last question, Mr Speaker. Would the Hon Member, however, still hold by the answer he gave me lasttime that it would certainly be well above 270 points for a 4 roomed flat?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

270 for Phase 6 for 4 rooms stands absolutely no chance.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not say, therefore, that there has been a worsening of the situation in this respect?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir. I don't think it is right to say a worsening of the situation. What has occurred is that there is a percentage of the remnants of the allocation of Varyl Begg that the points have increased. I should say, Sir, that once one allocates Phase 6 and Block 18 of Varyl Begg, there will be very few people with the high pointages that will be required to qualify on Phase 6.

No. 110 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government make available to Hon Members the report on Housing Survey recently carried out by the Statistician's office?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The report is now under consideration but I would not object to its release to Hon Members in due course.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.110 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Before the motion or after the motion?

The Hon M Xiberras

How many Government dwellings, not of new construction, are at present unoccupied?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

If the Hon Member refers to Pre-War Dwellings, there are no vacant dwellings other than those scheduled for modernisation or demolition.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 111 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not referring to that. I am referring to Government dwellings as the question says, Mr Speaker.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not of new construction.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, but not necessarily to pre-war. I am referring to not of new construction. In other words, not Varyl Begg but not pre-war.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Then I am afraid, Sir, I am sorry, I do apologise. To me "not of new construction" meant pre-war accommodation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member be able to give me an answer to this in the course of the day, perhaps?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir I can't promise to give an answer during the course of the day. I will certainly give the Hon Member an answer as quickly as I can.

No. 112 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government now in a position to fulfil its undertaking to publish the allocation list for Glacis Estate?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

No Sir. The position remains as stated in my reply to your question No.119 of December 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 112 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, in view of the fact that I have been asking for this information since October, 1972, how much longer does the Hon Member think I will have to wait?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, as I replied to the Hon Member's question in December 1976, one cannot draw up a list until there is the redistribution of Penney House as the Hon Member, I think, is well aware of.

No.113 of 1977

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Is government prepared to offer alternative accommodation to the tenants of those flats at Varyl Begg which are worst affected by constructional defects?

Answer:

the Minister for Housing and Sport

Those tenants whose presence impedes necessary remedial repairs to be carried out to the flats they occupy, will be moved within the Varyl Begg estate, after full particulars are received from the Contractors and/or the Public Works department.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will Government consider allowing rent reduction or extra points for rehousing applications to tenants in Kings Bastion since the noise vibration and obnoxious fumes emanating from the Electricity Generating Station are nuisances that the tenants suffer because of the location of their dwelling?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The Housing Department has not, so far, received any representations or complaints from tenants at King's Bastion.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 114 OF 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is the Minister suggesting that if he did receive complaints he might consider the suggestion?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, Government will consider the question of pointages if and when representations are made.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

On pointage, fine, but on the question of reduction of rent isn't this something that the Government should consider whether there are applications or not? Are the tenants of that area paying a fair rent in comparison with tenants of other areas who do not suffer these nuisances, nuisances that apparently the Government have no intention of abating?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, I think the question is much more complicated than the Hon Member considers. I think that if Government was to consider the question of reduction in rent, I think the whole aspect of rent would have to be looked at in Gibraltar, and I think it is much more dangerous. I think what Government would be prepared to do, in all fairness, is to have a re-appraisal of the pointages, or point system, within the Housing Allocation Scheme that will alleviate tenants in being housed in more suitable accommodation.

The Hon G T Restano

Mr Speaker, how many unallocated habitable flats are at present in Government's possession and where are these flats located?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

There are only two unallocated habitable flats and these are at the Glacis Estate.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.115 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I understand that there are empty flats in other areas, Schomberg, for example. Could I have confirmation of that?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, that is so, Sir, but they require rehabilitation and therefore they are not habitable.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, is Government doing anything to make them habitable?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I sincerely hope so, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say how many uninhabitable flats we have?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Uninhabitable at the moment, Sir, excluding Varyl Begg there are about 16.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, going back to the two that the Minister said were habitable. Why are these, in fact, unallocated when there is such a long housing list. Even two should immediately be allocated.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

These flats are earmarked for the decanting of pensioners. They are not allocated by the Housing Department but by the Establishment and it is a question of bringing pensioners out from Government quarters which means another quarter in return.

The Hon J Bossano

In view of the monopoly enjoyed by Cable and Wireless does Government propose to price control the services rendered by this firm?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

Sir, Clause 14(ii) of the operating licence granted to Cable and Wireless states that the Company shall 'not increase the rates of charges for the transmission of messages over its telecommunication system without prior consultation with the Governor.' Government thus exercises effective control over the charges levied by Cable and Wireless and does not therefore consider it necessary to apply the Price Control Ordinance in this matter.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.116 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say whether Government is being consulted about the latest prices announced by the company for the use of telexes at its premises advertised something like a couple of weeks ago?

HON A J CANEPA:

My information, Sir, is that the Government is generally consulted that there are applications for increases whenever these are envisaged and I can also add, in fact, that the process of consultation is not just a rubber stamping exercise on the part of Government. We go into the matter fairly deeply.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could the Hon Member say whether this, in fact, comes to him?

HON A J CANEPA:

It doesn't come to me at all. I think it goes to Secretariat and the Treasury.

The Hon J B Perez

Is Government aware of the restricted visiting conditions and letter writing facilities at the Prison and does Government intend to improve these conditions?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

The visiting and letter writing facilities available to prisoners are governed by Regulation 19(a) (b) (c) and (d), Regulation 21(a) (b) and (c), Regulation 22(a) (b) and Regulation 23(1) (b) (c) and (d) and Regulations 28, 29, 30 and 31 in their entirety, of the Prison Regulations Chapter 129.

These Regulations provide for prisoners in first second and third divisions, civil and trial prisoners, in addition to visits by police and legal advisers. Regulation 28(1) prescribes the conditions in relation to visits and letters, and the powers of the Superintendent in this respect. One letter from each prisoner per week is allowed at public expense and such additional free letters as may be permitted by the Superintendent. Regulation 29(1) and (2) provides for special extra visits of not more than four persons on, or within seven days, of Christmas Day and Easter Sunday.

Sub-paragraph 2, provides for a prisoner to be allowed special extra visits or letters with the prior approval of the Chairman of the Prison Board, in case of the death or serious illness of a near relative or in any case of a special importance or urgency, or for any purpose which in the opinion of the Chairman is likely to promote the best interest of the prisoner or of his family either during his sentence or after discharge. Visits can be conducted in open or close conditions, subject to the maintenance of the security, order and good government of the Prison. The open visit system is the one mainly employed in our Prison and allows for a maximum of four prisoners to be visited simultaneously by their families and friends. It is considered that this system makes visits rather more sociable to the extent that light beverages for prisoners and visitors are sold at a nominal fee to the visitors, the profits going into a Prisoners Fund. The system was introduced in August 1975 and is working very successfully. Each prisoner is allowed one such visit per week as a privilege.

The close visit is employed whenever circumstances so dictate. Written information for the guidance of visitors is provided.

It must be borne in mind that prisoners in second and third divisions, that is convicted prisoners may forfeit these facilities which are considered to be privileges if they contravene the misconduct section. However, this occurs very seldom since it is recognised that it is of paramount importance that the family relationship should be encouraged and promoted both in the best interest of the family and the rehabilitation of the prisoner. Although the Prison Ordinance and Regulations may require reviewing in some respects it is considered that the conditions relating to visits and letter writing are adequate.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state how many workers from abroad are currently in receipt of unemployment benefit?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

On 2 March 1977, when this answer was prepared, there were 34 non-Gibraltarians drawing unemployment benefit.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.118 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that is under Social Insurance Legislation. Does the Department have any other non-Gibraltarians on its books who are not in receipt of unemployment benefit in the Social Insurance?

HON A J CANEPA:

I wonder whether the Hon Member, Sir, means who are registered as unemployed. Yes, that could well be the case. I can't give the numbers offhand but it does happen that there are occasionally non-Gibraltarians who are not in receipt of unemployment benefit because they may not satisfy the conditions.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would it be more than 34 or less than 34?

HON A J CANEPA:

Less, I would say.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the number of work permits that have been issued during January 1977 giving breakdown (a) by industry (b) by trade and (c) by nationality?

Answer:The Minister for Labour and Social Security

34 employment permits were issued by the Director of Labour and Social Security during January, 1977. The breakdown requested is as follows:-

<u>By Industry</u>			
	Males -	Construction	11
		Hotel and Catering	3
		Distributive Trade	1
		Bakeries	5
		Garages	2
		Public Sector	3
		Miscellaneous	5
	Females -	Domestic Service	4
			<u>34</u>

<u>By Occupation</u>			
	Males -	Masons	9
		Bakers/Confectioners	5
		Mechanics	2
		Chefs	2
		Printing machine operators	2
		Hairdresser	1
		Carpenter	1
		Electrician	1
		Painter	1
		Laundryman	1
		Night Porter	1
		Labourers	4
	Females -	Housemaids	4
			<u>34</u>

<u>By Nationality</u>			
	Males -	Citizens of Morocco	21
		" " Spain	4
		" " Japan	1
		" " India	1
		" " Brazil	1
		" " Cyprus	1
		" " Pakistan	1
	Females -	Citizens of Morocco	3
		" " Portugal	1
			<u>34</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.119 OF 1977

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member of the total of 34 whether this were all new permits or whether some of them were renewals of existing permits to persons who have not left Gibraltar?

HON A J CANEPA:

I think, Sir, that these were new permits, not renewals, but new would include replacements.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member explain how 4 new permits were issued to male labourers in the list he has given by occupation, in view of the avowed policy of his Department not to give permits to immigrant workers who have no particular skill for as long as there are unemployed labourers in Gibraltar?

HON A J CANEPA:

Well, Sir, the reason is that it is not always possible to persuade Gibraltarians who are unemployed and registered as labourers to take up certain employment as labourers. That is the reason why.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Hon Member know how many labourers he has in the 34 that he has mentioned as alien workers who are obtaining unemployment benefit?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, Sir, I cannot cross check. I would like to add something to what the Chief Minister had to say which might, perhaps, be of guidance to Members opposite with regard to the preparation of answers. A great deal of research has to be done in preparing answers to the sort of questions on labour permits and other employment or unemployment statistics. We don't have 5 days, the Department doesn't have 5 days in which to prepare an answer. The Department may have one or two days because I myself then have to go and clear answers at Secretariat with the Chief Minister. So we are working under enormous pressure and it is not easy to obtain all the information that the Hon Members opposite would want.

MR SPEAKER:

May I also say that the Speaker has to clear all questions before they are sent to Government. I am proud to be able to state that with the assistance of the Speaker's Office questions are sent to Government within an hour or two hours of their receipt but may I further add that if questions are going to get into the region of 100 that will not be possible.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I think that point has been taken. We appreciated that when it was mentioned before. I think the point of the Hon Mr Canepa is a slightly different one with which I sympathise as well and that is one of the preparation of detailed statistics of this kind. I think, Mr Speaker, the Hon Members opposite have reason to be concerned with the volume of questions but I do think that there is an indication already that an all time high has been reached.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I don't know if the Hon Minister can answer the question but if he does not of course I accept that it is not all that easy to find all these figures. But could he say within his knowledge if any of these renewals are for shop assistants in any way, and how many?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, Sir. There is a definite policy which the Government accepted on the very strong recommendation of the Manpower Planning Committee in January with regard to shop assistants. I mentioned one in the distributive trade, this was in fact something, I am sure, that will interest the Hon Major Peliza himself - a refrigeration mechanic. That was the only one.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I ask the Hon Member - if he doesn't know the answer or hasn't got the answer available of course I will understand - but what about in the permits he has given as issued in answer to this question, were there permits given to unemployed non-Gibraltarians as new? As the Hon Member is aware after a while a workman from abroad who has not been working in Gibraltar is considered as a new one. In answer to a previous question No. 118, he said that there were 34 people unemployed. My question is, does he get a number of these people coming back in as new contracts?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, Sir, we do and, in fact, of the 4 labourers in question, 2 came under that category. Two were Moroccans who were considered to be good workers by their former employers, they had been absent from Gibraltar for longer than 3 months though they did have a long record of employment going back for very many years and these applications were therefore of a special nature and that is why they were granted. We do get such cases, yes.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Is Government aware of the risks of asbestosis and is Government satisfied with present conditions regarding handling and possible inhalation of this highly dangerous material at Government establishments?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

Government is aware of the risks of asbestosis, particularly where there is continuous or frequent exposure to asbestos dust, and especially so if this takes place in a confined space. I am not aware of any employees in Government Departments being required to work with asbestos to that extent. If such cases were to come to notice the Factory Inspector would, if necessary, advise on the precautions to be taken.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 120 OF 1977

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, are these men working with asbestosis examined periodically?

HON A J CANEPA:

I have said that I am not aware that there are any employees in Government Departments who are working under these conditions.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

So the Minister can say categorically that there are no Government employees working with asbestosis?

HON A J CANEPA:

That is the information that I have.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Or with anything that contains asbestos fibres?

MR SPEAKER:

I think the answer has been that Government is not aware of any employee who works in conditions which risks asbestosis. Is that right?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, Sir.

The Hon G T Restano

How many new work permits have been issued since March 1976 for jobs under the retail and distributive trade quota to replace the permit holders who have given up their employment in Gibraltar since that date?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

47 such permits have been issued since March 1976 within the quota for the Distributive Trade, which covers both wholesale and retail businesses.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.121 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, could we have a breakdown of nationality of those 47 employees?

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't have a breakdown of the whole 47 of them, I regret, Sir. I am afraid I haven't got the information.

HON G T RESTANO:

Perhaps the Minister could get that information for me later on?

HON A J CANEPA:

I can't give him a breakdown for the 47. I can give him some that I do have which I thought he might have been specially interested in. For instance, there were 9 Indian branch managers and 7 Indian shop assistants, but I can't say how many others there were, Sir. I can undertake to give the information to the Hon Member as soon as possible.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, since the figures for persons who had left their employment was 41, and now a figure for replacement which is 47 which is a difference of six and we have heard the Government policy not to increase the quota of the distributive trade, could we have a reason why there has been this increase?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, Sir, I was anticipating that, in fact, I brought the answer to question No.60 with me. The first point I ought to mention is that it isn't just the policy not to increase but in fact from now on it is going to be the policy if a work permit becomes available in respect of somebody who has been in employment in Gibraltar for less than three years, no work permit may be issued for a replacement. And the

other thing that is going to happen is that we are going to be adjusting the quota in a downward direction as per the number of actual work permits in issue. So, for instance, if at the moment it is 318 and 3 or 4 work permits were to become available by the end of April, then the quota would be adjusted down to that level. As to the reason why it is that 47 were given when only 41 were handed in, the reason is that at the time, back in March 1976, there was some leeway in the quota, the Department always had 8 or 10 work permits available. That is not the case now. I would imagine that that must be the reason though I cannot specify that it is that.

The Hon M Xiberras

Is the Chief Minister now in a position to inform the House about the degree of retrospection paid to the permanent Cadre of the Gibraltar Regiment parallel to the Scamp Awards; and can he state whether the Cadre is satisfied with what they have received?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

In reply to the first part of the question, as I informed this House in December 1976, there are two factors which make it difficult to draw comparisons between the pay of the Permanent Cadre of the Gibraltar Regiment and employees in Official Employment. Firstly the date of revision for the Regiment differs from that of the Official Employers. The Gibraltar Regiment's pay has been reviewed annually with effect from 1 March each year. Secondly some of the awards granted since 1 March 1974 have included COLA payments which were consolidated into interim awards at a later date.

The latest pay award for the Regiment of March 1976 took account of the interim awards of March 1975 and revised the salary level retrospective to ~~that~~ date and with further increases to take effect from March 1976. Therefore one can see that since the pay of the Regiment has been reviewed a greater number of times than, and at different dates from, the pay in Official Employment, it is not possible to make comparisons of the degree of retrospection.

With reference to the second part of the question, bearing in mind that at the December meeting of the House I expressed my readiness to listen, I can now say that no representations have been brought to my notice. I would, however, say that the pay of the Regiment is not a matter for the Gibraltar Government to decide but rather a matter between the Officers and men and the MOD and any representations to MOD should be made through the appropriate military channels.

and I would like to add that of course if they do make representations and they are brought to my notice I will listen to them with care.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.122 of 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is not the Chief Minister aware that when I put that question to him in December, 1976, I was making myself responsible for the fact that there was dissatisfaction with the rates of retrocession in the Gibraltar Regiment and did he not undertake to make the enquiries himself?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not know whether I undertook to make enquiries or not, I am not going to dispute that, but let me say that I put feelers shortly after because of the question. Perhaps the people who were asked the questions didn't know what information I was looking for or whether I was trying to find whether they were satisfied or not for any purpose but to be quite frank and I say so in all sincerity and I have plenty of opportunities from time to time to talk to members of the Gibraltar Regiment, both the officers and the other ranks, and I have not sensed any element of dissatisfaction by the Regiment in relation to their pay or in relation to the pay of Government employees. You can hear comments about the increases in the cost of living at any place you are at whatever level you may be.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Chief Minister not agree that being a uniformed body it is difficult for the members of the Permanent Cadre to openly voice any grievance or any disagreement they may have with their conditions of pay. But by the same token would not the Hon Member agree that this House has some responsibility in this respect since reports about the Gibraltar Regiment are made in this House and the Ordinance governing the Gibraltar Regiment comes within the powers of this House. Would not the Chief Minister expect there be a certain reticence amongst men of the Regiment in putting forward their case?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Certainly not with me. I hope that they are as easy to speak to me as everybody else is in this matter and I haven't noticed that. I do remember on the last but one occasion where I made a very direct approach of inquiry regarding certain proposals which were accepted to be quite reasonable at the time, I accept that though we are not responsible for the pay for the Gibraltar Regiment we should have a fatherly interest in their welfare or a brotherly interest, whichever way you want to look at it - the younger you are the more brother you are - but, anyhow, I accept that and I should add that, without in any way being the spokesman of anything, we have in the Government a person who takes great interest in the Gibraltar Regiment and who has always taken a great interest in the Gibraltar Regiment. Perhaps I might use him to better purpose than I have used him before in that respect.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Hon and Learned Member made an investigation since this question was tabled?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have said that I have made investigations but I have not made official investigations because I thought that that would be embarrassing to some and perhaps not liked by others but I did say quite openly and it was publicised I remember, that I would be quite happy to receive any unofficial representation but I cannot accept that I can go out of my way other than making a public statement saying that if anybody approaches me I will deal with it in confidence, there is no question of negotiating rights for anything, they can approach direct and in full confidence that if they have any grievance I would look at them and pass them on. I don't know, Mr Speaker, to what extent you have also got an interest or an indirect interest in this matter as Chairman of the Gibraltar Regiment Association but I think we are all concerned with the welfare of The Gibraltar Regiment but I really can't go any further than that and I repeat that I have not heard, I have not had brought to my notice by people who have on previous occasions spoken to me freely about this matter, and have had plenty of opportunities, I have not had brought to my notice any concern about their pay. I am not saying that they are happy all I am saying is that if they are not happy they haven't told me.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member take this question as evidence that there is dissatisfaction about this. In fact I hope the Hon Member will take note that there is dissatisfaction with this and that there continues to be since the Scamp negotiations and the visit of the MOD negotiating team to Gibraltar. I have been pressing the Hon Member to find out more about it precisely because these are uniformed people who cannot make their views clear. It is a fact and I have it from all echelons of the Permanent Cadre that there is dissatisfaction.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Much as I value the sentiments and the extent of the interest shown by the Hon Questioner, I do not take his question as evidence at all. I take it as an expression of his view on the matter as a result, perhaps, of speaking to one or two, three, four or five or six, but I am afraid that if there is a general dissatisfaction that would have been brought to my notice and I do not accept that, I do accept to look into the matter and perhaps to be more forthcoming in finding out but I do not accept any remarks from the Hon Member as speaking for the Regiment no more than I speak for the Regiment myself.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree - and I put two questions on the same subject as little apart as December, 1976, and now and raised the matter on other occasions - would he not agree that there must be something in what I am trying to put to him.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is the Chief Minister aware that complaints by a soldier must go through the proper channels and that it is bad, in fact, to approach anybody outside in confidence or no confidence and could therefore the Chief Minister tell me first of all if he knows that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the Hon Questioner looks to the last part of my answer he will see that that is precisely what I told him.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Then why does he expect, Mr Speaker, soldiers or officers of the Regiment to come and approach him in confidence when that is completely against the attitude of any soldier.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If they go to speak to Mr Xiberras I don't know why they shouldn't speak to me.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

There is a great difference, if I may say so, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

We are now debating something which is completely and utterly out of the orbit of the question. Whether someone believes that someone should go to another one in confidence or not is not the subject matter of the question and we are not going to try to convince each other that it is.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I think is that the Chief Minister is making a judgement on a wrong premise.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but this is not the time to debate this, this is question time.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

He says that he has not done anything about it because no one has come to complain to him even in confidence. What I am saying, Mr Speaker, is that a uniformed body like the Gibraltar Regiment cannot be expected to approach.

MR SPEAKER:

You are entitled to ask the Chief Minister whether he is prepared to make investigations. That is the proper question.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, I don't think he realises that this is the position of a uniformed man.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. We are not going to debate the rights and wrongs and the responsibilities and entitlement of a uniformed person under the guise of this question. That is all I am objecting to.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, having found myself in the same predicament I think I know what I am talking about and, secondly, if this Government is responsible isn't it the duty of the Chief Minister above every other Minister in his Government, not someone who has got an interest in the Gibraltar Regiment, but his own responsibility as being the Minister responsible for the Gibraltar Regiment, to find out if this is so, and there are many ways of doing this.

MR SPEAKER:

Will you ask him whether he is prepared to do this.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Whether he is prepared to do this once and for all officially and not rely on soldiers coming along creeping behind him to tell him something secretly in the ear.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As usual the Hon and Gallant Member has completely misdirected his mind to what I have said or has failed to understand, or his mental ability has deteriorated badly, not as a result of his time in the army perhaps since then, in order to have missed the point of my answer. Everything that he has said I have done. I have made enquiries, discreet enquiries, I have not urged anybody to break any military rule of discipline and I have made enquiries at all levels from time to time and the answer is that I have found no complaints. If there is a complaint let it be made. I also will say with regard to all the secrecy and all the regulations that the Hon former Major of the Gibraltar Regiment has said, that I have had officers of

the Permanent Cadre in the Gibraltar Regiment approach me in the past when they have been unhappy and they have not done so now.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member bear in mind as at least one source of information, bearing in mind the difficulties of getting information from the people affected themselves, that there has been to my knowledge dissatisfaction among the officers and other ranks of the Gibraltar Regiment about this matter and it has lasted since the beginning of the Scamp negotiations.

MR SPEAKER:

What are you asking?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would he bear it in mind.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I said I will.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon the Chief Minister has made such a thorough enquiry and my mentality cannot see to the extent that he has because apparently it has deteriorated, why is it that the only definite, categorical answer the Chief Minister can say is "Well, I don't know if they are happy or unhappy, all I know is that I have had no complaints". Could he now tell us after his investigation whether he is satisfied himself that the pay they are getting is alright. That is what we want to know.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is not for me to decide.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

You don't know.

MR SPEAKER:

Order, let us not speak across the House.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned the Chief Minister consider in view of the apparent difficulties being experienced by members of the Gibraltar Regiment, introducing legislation to enable them to join a trade union so that they can have their wages properly negotiated?

MR SPEAKER:

Is the Chief Minister answering this question?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

First of all I would like this opportunity to say that this House makes a contribution to The Gibraltar Regiment and has an interest but pay, conditions of service and so on is not the responsibility of the House, nor is discipline the responsibility of this House and therefore the question of joining a trade union or not is a matter that should be referred by the Hon Member's other hat's headquarters in the United Kingdom to a bigger brotherhood than just a few people of The Gibraltar Regiment.

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government confirm that new and better premises have been found for the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation, state which are those premises and the likely date of these premises being taken over by GBC?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

No Sir. No decision has been taken to provide new premises but tentative enquiries about possible alternatives are being made by the Lands Department.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.123 of 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, since the question was tabled we have had of course a copy of the report of Mr Berry and I would ask the Chief Minister whether in fact the introduction of colour television would require new premises for GBC?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well I will be answering other questions later on. It is a very moot point whether they do, ideally they would prefer better premises than Wellington Front or the extension of Wellington Front particularly because the difficulty of extending Wellington Front, even if some of the empty casemates are given, is that they are divided by very heavy walls which will be very expensive to bring them down if there is going to be bigger studio space, but having regard to the extent of the cost which we will discuss later on perhaps in the Budget of colour television, my view is that a very good look should be had at the possibility of continuing in Wellington Front under better conditions because if we are going to look for a site and we are going to have a new building and so on I imagine that the cost is going to be very considerably more but that the introduction of colour television will be very seriously delayed. But the House will have an opportunity of discussing all those matters in a much more general way at a later stage. If he is asking for my views, my views are that we would have to have a very good look before it is decided to move away from Wellington Front.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, since of course television is such an important factor in the day to day life of Gibraltar, the essence being that those who are working in the television premises should be working in reasonable conditions, I wonder whether the Chief Minister has, in fact consulted with those members who do work at GBC as to the desirability of a new site or even the desirability of continuing where they are?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course the feeling of the staff at Television House has been brought to my notice and their desire to work in the best conditions possible is fully understood. That is why I said that if Television is to remain at Wellington Front we would have to spend considerable sums of money in putting it in a way where it would be very fit for everybody to work there and that is the alternative to another site and relative cost on these two matters will be put to the House at a later stage and we will have to consider the pros and the cons of it. Of course it is necessary that people should work in good conditions and of course it is important that television should continue but also the question of costs and relative positions in one way or the other is one that has to be looked at very carefully because we are in for a big capital expenditure.

HON G T RESTANO:

I agree, Mr Speaker, that there may be a great capital expenditure but I thought I heard correctly the Chief Minister saying that Wellington Front could not be reconditioned in such a way as to make the premises adequate for the staff and for Gibraltar as a whole to get better service.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the Hon Member thought that I said that, he has misheard me. What I said was that I appreciate that in order to stay at Television House a considerable amount of money will have to be spent to put it in a fit condition and what I say is that it will be matter of priorities and of comparisons of expenditure as to whether by spending X at Wellington Front you can make a really good centre there with good conditions to work or whether we have to spend 3 X to go somewhere else. These are the options that we have to decide later on in these proceedings.

HON G T RESTANO:

Therefore do I take it that we will have the opportunity of discussing that in this House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Certainly at the stage when we are discussing the question of colour television it will be very much to the fore and I hope to have some information of relative costs, I haven't got them now. The question about sites has been mooted in the press and so on but as I said in my substantive reply it is only the Lands Department that has been looking at one or two sites in Gibraltar and all Hon Members in this House know how difficult it is to find a new place for something new.

HON G T RESTANO:

Would the Chief Minister like to say which sites, in fact, have been looked at? If we are going to consider what the Chief Minister has said **at a later stage** in the budget and make comparisons, I think it might be useful to know what sites have been looked at by the Lands Department otherwise there is no point in discussing any comparisons when we don't know the sites which are involved.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think the Hon Questioner is as keen to get up as I was to answer him because he would have heard that I said before that the Lands Department were looking at some sites and when we come to discuss this matter I would hope to have alternatives and costs. I do not know them.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Chief Minister saying that when we discuss this at the Budget we will, by that time, have the different possible sites available to discuss?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I hope so. I hope to have a report on what the sites are, I have not seen a report, there has been a directive that alternative sites should be considered by the Lands Department and they should report back to Council. They have not reported back and I do not know. Only today at lunch time somebody rung me up to say that I was going to be asked whether it was in a particular site which I had not been asked, so that is a new site that I have never thought of and somebody rung me up at lunch time to say so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, have GBC suggested any sites and are these included in the possibilities?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

GBC have looked at one or two sites on their own and in some cases they thought they were going to find something better, this is my recollection. I think it is quite common knowledge that there was a site offered at the old Cable and Wireless Office. I understand that it would cost a considerable amount to make it up to proper standard and that was one of those that attracted Management to go and see it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member make sure that the sites which are suggested by GBC, if any, are enquired into also by the Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course. The more available sites to consider the better.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is it fair to assume then from the Chief Minister's answer, Mr Speaker, and not withstanding my small brain, that no site has been rejected yet?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No sites have been accepted or rejected.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government consider providing facilities to enable GBC to conduct selective live broadcasting of House of Assembly proceedings?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The broadcasting of parts of the proceedings of the House of Assembly was one of the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Broadcasting. The proposal was discussed with the Board of GBC on the 11th February when it was agreed that GBC would give the matter further consideration and report their findings in due course.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.124 OF 1977

MR SPEAKER:

May I say that insofar as broadcasting the proceedings of this House are concerned it would be ultimately the exclusive prerogative of this House to decide whether they want the proceedings broadcast or not and, if so, which part of the proceedings. We would have to go into the very careful and complicated situation whether we are entitled to broadcast particularly part of the proceedings which deal with Select Committees, with Committees of Inquiry and such like. It is one thing for GBC to be prepared and willing to broadcast the proceedings and it is another matter whether the House itself considers it to be expedient and right that it should be so. I think, as Speaker, I must make that remark.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think it was implicit in my answer and I found it implicit in the question. I would like to add, though I have not had a supplementary, I would like to add some information I have here and that is that during this discussion that I had with the Board it was ascertained that GBC could broadcast - of course if the House decided, naturally, and the House is prepared to vote the money required and all that - could broadcast the entire proceedings of the House on a separate radio wavelength. This would mean that GBC radio programmes would not be affected and that GBC could never be accused of bias in its selection.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Chief Minister say if he has got any views on that, that is, whether he goes with that or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am waiting to see what the cost is and what the possibilities are and then I will report to the House and I will take advice from the House on this matter. I am neither in favour nor against.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government give its reactions to the Report on the BBC expert on colour television?

Can Government give the House an idea of the time schedule it intends to follow to implement the Report's recommendations, if they are acceptable?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The recommendation made in the Report is that all the suppliers of colour television equipment who originally submitted quotations should be asked to submit re-validated quotations against a common specification. As the Hon Member was informed by letter dated the 25th February, the five firms concerned have been invited to do so.

In reply to the second part of the question I can say that the closing date for the revised quotations is the 31st March. It is not possible at this stage to assess the time scale beyond that date but the Hon Member may be assured that the matter will be dealt with expeditiously.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.125 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

Have any quotations, in fact, been received by any of the firms?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That really is a matter for the Tender Board because in this case the quotations have been invited by Government and when received by the Tender Board they will consider them and report. Now that the Government is going to outlay the capital it is a matter for the Government Tender Board to go through it. Mr Berry of the BBC, the author of the Report, has been asked whether he will provide expert advice when the quotations are received.

HON G T RESTANO:

My question, Mr Speaker, was whether any tenders had been received. I am not asking what the tenders are, I am asking whether any have been received?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I wouldn't know even if they have. If it goes to the Tender Board all the proceedings are secret until they report.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would the Chief Minister bear in mind that the sooner this decision is taken the better otherwise it will cost the taxpayer quite a lot more money.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I bear that very much in mind because, in fact, the quotations from the time we started looking at this to now have gone up considerably.

The Hon J Bossano

Does Government propose to recommend the printing of the Hansards of the House of Assembly?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir, as you yourself said before with regard to the question of broadcasting, this is a matter to be considered by the House as a whole. The Government's view is that, as Hansards in stencilled form are readily available to all who need to refer to them, the cost of printing, which would be substantial, would not be justified.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.126 OF 1977

MR SPEAKER:

May I again as the person ultimately responsible, of course on the instructions of the House, to see that the Hansards should be printed if it is so wished, that about 3 years ago we obtained quotations and the cost of printing of the Hansards would be literally prohibitive.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course we would reduce the cost by half if we undertook to speak half the time we speak:

MR SPEAKER:

I am saying that if we are going to produce a printed/^{bound}hansard, in other words if we are going to produce something better than we are producing now which is a stencilled one and which serves the object and purpose for which we want it, if we want to produce it for posterity then we have got to produce something which is going to stand the test of time and if we are going to achieve that then of course the cost would be prohibitive.

HON J BOSSANO:

I think in the context of what you said, Mr Speaker, about it being prohibitive I think the House will have to consider if it gets an opportunity to give consideration to this matter that whether the cost is prohibitive or not is a value judgement depending on the value one attaches to keeping records of the House and I certainly attach great importance to having records of the House.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Perhaps I might say that if we wait a little it may well be that there are systems of reproduction of a much more permanent nature than the stencilled one which might well be useful. As you, Mr Speaker, and an Honourable and Learned Member on the other side knows, it is proposed to use another kind of reproduction system of a more permanent nature for purposes of the legal profession and it could well be that - I don't want to give any commercials here - but it could well be that there is a method of reproducing which is much cheaper than printing and of a much more permanent nature than stencilled.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, I am very glad to hear the Chief Minister say that. It is nice to think that we will have our freedom of speech as we have had it up to now and not be conscious as to whether it is going to cost more to produce a Hansard as he suggested before.

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, let us be clear about this. It is not a question of producing a hansard, this is being done. It is a question of whether the Hansard is to be printed.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, but since the Chief Minister says that this is something on which he would like to seek the advice of this House, could he tell us when he proposes to bring this so that in fact matters like the one he has suggested now that there are cheaper ways to producing something of a more permanent nature could be discussed. I wonder whether the Chief Minister could give some urgency to this.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well I did mention that because I understand from another source that there is a system about to be installed in Gibraltar which will be used for the filing of documents and so on and it could well be that it is much cheaper. When that happens I will invite the Speaker's Office to look into them and get assessment of costs and then it will be for the House to decide and for the Government to say if the money is to be made available, how we are going to obtain it.

MR SPEAKER:

If it is the wish of the House I can most certainly make the necessary enquiries both as to the cost of the printing of Hansards and the reproduction of Hansards in the form that the Chief Minister is referring to which I think is guaranteed to last for a period of about 800 years. I think our words of wisdom if they stand the test of 800 years, I think will have served the purpose.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, this new system that the Chief Minister has mentioned which he

doesn't want to commercialise is a bit vague. What, in fact, is he thinking of?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not thinking of anything. It is just a new system of reproduction which is very prevalent particularly in America and which is going to be introduced here.

MR SPEAKER:

There is a requirement under local legislation for every document which relates to land to be registered in the Supreme Court Registry. The way it is being done now and up to now for over 100 years is by making a typewritten copy. This of course is a tiresome and tedious way of doing it because you have to reproduce the document of whatever length and then you have got to check it and then it has got to be filed. They have found a system in the Supreme Court now whereby it can be done by photocopying on a special paper with a special machine which is guaranteed to last for 800 years. I am sure that the Chief Minister is referring to this system as one which can be made applicable to the reproduction of the Hansards.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I understand the firm had a claim but it was 801 years old and they would make themselves responsible.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I just ask the Hon Member when was the last time that we had printed Hansards. Does he know how long ago?

MR SPEAKER:

I can answer that one. As far as I have been able to find out the last time that they were printed was 1964 but definitely no Hansard has been printed since the new Constitution.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, seeing that the documents which are now circulated are at least theoretically of a temporary nature, would Members of the House be free to make use of these as Hansards? There are two points, in fact. One is the question of keeping records of the House and, secondly, of keeping the public generally informed of having a point of reference for the public about the proceedings of the House which is perhaps just as valuable a function of this. Am I right in saying that these documents can be treated as Hansards after a given date?

MR SPEAKER:

My answer to that one is that however much I have searched the Standing Orders there are no provisions in our Standing Orders for the production of Hansards. There is a Standing Order of course - Standing Order 56 -

which says that the practice of Parliament will apply to the Gibraltar House of Assembly if there is no special provision and to the extent that this rule can be made applicable the Hansards that we produce are the official copy of the proceedings of the House and they are not of a temporary nature. The only temporary thing about it is the form in which it is reproduced. As to the veracity of the contents of the hansard these are the official records of the proceedings of the House and must be accepted as such.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that, I think, solves one part of my question. The other half is are they available to members of the public? I don't think we are going to get a flood of enquiries about this but could a member of the public be entitled to ask for the hansard.

MR SPEAKER:

Most certainly. Not only are they available to the members of the public but we send a number of copies to the Secretariat for use by all Government Departments.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, they are available in the reference section of the Mackintosh Hall library.

MR SPEAKER:

It is not just an interim report of proceedings for the use of Members, it is the official record of the proceedings of the House for all intents and purposes.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, may I just ask you in the context of your previous investigations when you said you obtained a prohibitive quotation whether on this occasion in fact, in order not get just quotations from one source, an opportunity will be made for anybody who might be interested in quoting for the printing.

MR SPEAKER:

I have been refreshing my memory. When we asked for quotations which was about 4 years ago when the proceedings were much shorter the quotations came to about just under £10,000.

HON J BOSSANO:

And this was just from one source?

MR SPEAKER:

It wasn't a quotation in the true sense of the word, it was an enquiry. No tender, no commitment was entered with anyone, it was just a general enquiry to see whether it was feasible or not for the purposes of reporting to the House and finding out whether it could be done and then of course it would have gone to tender both locally and elsewhere. But let me say that nothing other than an investigation as to the possibilities of printing hansards was gone into, a preliminary investigation which horrified me to the extent that I felt I wasn't justified in proceeding further but now that the matter has been raised I thought I would bring it out.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Could Government make representations to Her Majesty's Government to the effect that when going through Immigration in the United Kingdom Gibraltarians feel deeply insulted when misinformed Immigration Officers question their British Nationality and ask for the procedure to be adapted to prevent this occurring?

May I just make one point Mr Speaker, on this. My experience is that this has never happened to me and I only have words of praise for those who have handled my passport as I have gone through but I know it has happened to other people, perhaps occasionally, and it is probably worthwhile looking into.

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Representations on this matter were made last year. The position is that there is a statutory requirement for the completion of landing and embarkation cards from whom only patrial holders of passports issued by the UK Government are exempt.

Immigration Officers have instructions not to delete the word "British" from cards completed by Gibraltarians. If the Hon Member is able to give me full details, including dates and flight numbers, of any cases in which difficulties have occurred, these will be investigated. I would like to add to the prepared answer something that happens which I think is equally important. The word "Gib" is added after British for statistical purposes. It does not of course have any implications of any kind so far as nationality is concerned.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.127 OF 1977

HON G T RESTANO:

When a Gibraltarian goes through immigration at London Airport he has the right of course to go through two channels. He has the right to go through the Commonwealth channel and he has also the right to go through the Common Market channel. When one goes through the Common Market channel there is a poster in front of it giving the nationals and the countries whose nationals can go through that barrier and the word "Gibraltar" is sadly lacking. I wonder whether representations could be made so that Gibraltar could be added on to Holland, Belgium, France etc.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The point is whether you are a member in England of the EEC for that purpose or whether you are supposed to be there already. The notice is not for people who do not belong to the UK and should not enter as of right in the UK. I will certainly put this matter up but I have here a long letter which the last investigation show in which two cases were identified and disciplinary action taken and two cases could not be followed because

there was not enough particulars to identify them. But I think in fairness I should repeat what somebody who is not very popular these days in Gibraltar told us when he was here and that is that it is not the fault of Immigration Officers if Parliament has burdened the Immigration Officers with a huge amount of very complicated legislation which some of them can scarcely master in connection with very big territories let alone with a territory the size of Gibraltar, I would have thought that this movement which I believe was launched over the weekend could do a lot in that respect.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, when the Chief Minister says whether it is in fact necessary for Gibraltar to be there because we are either in or out of the UK, I think if we had a UK passport possibly then his argument would hold water but whilst we do not have a UK passport I don't think that particular argument holds water.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am very proud to have a Gibraltar Passport.

HON G T RESTANO:

So am I, Mr Speaker, but what I am asking is that since we do not have a UK passport and that is the reason why the Chief Minister says that Gibraltar should not be put on that list then I say that whilst we have a Gibraltarian passport, and very proud of it I know we all are, then we should be on that list.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I did say that I was just wondering that, I wasn't giving that as a serious answer and I said I would take it up.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

May I ask the Chief Minister, for the purpose of information to the House, if Gibraltarians are treated any differently to a UK subject when they arrive in Gibraltar Airport?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I will tell him about it, I am not prepared to answer questions from Ministers, I take it it was a rhetorical question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Isn't it a fact that the inclusion of the word "Gibraltar" on the notice board was ruled out?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have no recollection but I am sure the Hon Member has a better memory for these matters than I have and I am not prepared to dispute it.

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Can Government state why after the Chief Minister agreed to head a delegation of the elected members of the House of Assembly in connection with the MOD/CPSA dispute the delegation has not left yet for the United Kingdom?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

As I stated in a letter to the Hon Leader of the Opposition which was published on the 21st February, Dr Gilbert had suggested, in reply to my request for a meeting with a delegation of the House, that it would be preferable to await the outcome of any further discussions between the MOD and the CPSA before making arrangements for such a meeting.

Further meetings were held by Dr Gilbert and, as the House is aware, the MOD has suggested that a Board of Enquiry should be set up. I understand that this suggestion was rejected by the local Branch just before we adjourned. This creates an entirely new situation and it is my belief that this matter should be the subject of further and careful consideration. I certainly want an opportunity to consult my colleagues.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.128 of 1977

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Does this mean then that the Chief Minister has not given up the idea of heading a delegation should the negotiations going on at present - I don't know if they are still on - will he head a delegation?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I really don't want to say too much now that would either prejudice or create despondency on people but we have to consider the matter afresh. The request made to me for a delegation to go to London was to intercede, purely without taking any participation in any talks in connection with details of pay, to intercede for the Minister to take some positive action in relation to the pay claim and the difficulties that the CPSA have. He has suggested after the last round of talks the question of a Board of Inquiry in terms which have been published and these have been turned down I think on a majority of a 60 to 40 basis before lunch, this is the information I got. So really the point is if we are going to go to the UK what are we going to go there for if one had got there before and had persuaded them to set up an inquiry or set up some kind of arbitration and then it is not acceptable to the members of the CPSA here? At this stage I would not like to say anything that would prejudice one way or another further consideration on this matter on which I would be in consultation with members on the opposite side. I think it is rather a delicate situation and I really don't want to say much more at this stage.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am sure that the Hon Member is right in saying that it is a delicate situation and I hope that consultations will in fact materialise. But would he not agree that when we debated this matter in the House before it was never suggested that the purpose of the delegation would be to bring about an inquiry, that this is something that transpired in his consultations with the MOD and not in his consultations with the House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am very glad that the Hon Member has put that question in order that I should make something quite clear because I think though the TGWU did use the word apparently in a communique over the weekend I am glad of the opportunity of giving the lie to certain allegations that were made there. Certainly we were not going to go to ask for a Board of inquiry, but I was saying hypothetically before this last question was put that if we had gone to intercede for them as we had been asked to do without getting into the merits of it and they had told us: "Alright, I am prepared to set up a Board of Inquiry, we might, I don't say we would, we might have said: "Well, this is a fair way of investigating so long as this is acceptable to the members of the CPSA." I am not

responsible for what the MOD tell the people in England, I am only responsible for the advice that I give here when I am asked and the statements I make on this matter. It was not a question of consultation with the other side because it had nothing to do with the delegation. I was informed that following on something I said in the adjournment debate when the Hon Major Peliza raised this matter amongst the other things I said, and Members will appreciate I was speaking purely spontaneously, I did say and I quote: "I am surprised that there has been no attempt at bringing in conciliation services for which there are such excellent examples in UK to bring about a settlement of this matter." Amongst other things this is what I said. I was told later on that they picked up this idea and they were going to make an offer of conciliation and I was asked for my reaction. My reaction having said it here and thinking that it was a good idea, my reaction was that I didn't see anything against it. It was not a question of carrying my support or carrying, I am not responsible for the ways that other people have put it. All I said was that I did not see anything against it. I thought it was a good idea at the time that it was put to me and therefore the question of going to the UK was not part of that consultation it wasn't in lieu of that, it was one of the things that preceded that. If it had been instead of going to the UK then I would certainly have consulted the Hon the Leader of the Opposition and other Members in order to decide whether he was agreeable. I would certainly not undertake to speak for him in these matters. But I hope he will appreciate the difference and the use that it could have well been put to by other people. All I said was that I didn't see anything wrong in the matter I thought it was a good idea and, in fact, that is why I said that it was not an attempt, as it was suggested, of imposing this on the members and that the members were free to do what they like as in fact they have done so and events shall prove that it was nothing imposed on them. It was a suggestion which they have refused. I regret that there is an impasse again and it is a matter that I think we ought to consider seriously because there are quite a number of people affected.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is the Chief Minister aware that there seems to be some misunderstanding up to the level of Ministers there in that apparently one of the points that they use for their stand at the moment is that the MOD/PSA were not consulted by the Government of Gibraltar on this. Is he aware that this is in fact what the Minister has told at least one Member of Parliament who took the case up and that, perhaps, it would be a good idea to go there to clear that point?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am aware that the Hon Member told his colleague on his left that that was what he was told. I am aware also that the Hon Member raised it here

and God knows how this can ever be clarified. All I can say and I say this very seriously and I have said it many times and the Government has not been informed at any level that the Government took decisions without consultation with the MOD. We say solemnly that there were continuous consultations at the relevant time of the negotiations with the GGCA of the steps that we were taking and there were consultations at the level of the Industrial Relations Officer. I really am not responsible for what other people may say about this matter and if there is any question of clarifying the Gibraltar Government point of view, I will clarify it anywhere.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would the Chief Minister bearing in mind that apparently this is one of the reasons, that it would be a good idea for the Chief Minister to take the initiative and clear up the matter once and for all?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I beg your pardon?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Since, apparently, this is one of the stumbling blocks, one of the obstacles, I don't know the details, but this is one of the arguments being used for the present impasse, couldn't the Chief Minister clear that up?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I cannot see how that alters the merits of the case or alters the nature of the matter to be inquired. I think if that had been the case of course we would have been told that we had brought this matter about and we have not been told that and we are satisfied as I told the House before that we had full consultation and there it remains as far as this House is concerned and I hope that will be accepted from the point of view of this House, whatever anybody says outside that that is the position of the Government.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is it a fact that there was an invitation for the Chief Minister to head a delegation to London on this matter, subsequent to the letter received through the Governor from Dr Gilbert?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Could the Hon Member please repeat the question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it a fact that there was an invitation for the Chief Minister to head a delegation to London subsequent to the letter to which the Hon Member has referred which was conveyed to him and to us by the Governor?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course not, if there had been an invitation to London I would have informed other members of the delegation and we would have arranged about it. The Hon the Leader of the Opposition told me in a letter that we ought to start getting ready and I said that we could do that at short notice whilst talks were going on in London. I hope that the question is just for the purpose of clarification.

HON M XIBERRAS:

For the purpose of clarifying the CPSA communique which was issued quite a long time after that letter was made public in which it was said that there had been an invitation. The Hon and Learned Member will recall, does he not, that I made a good number of inquiries at the Secretariat to see whether the invitation had in fact been received by him?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am grateful to the Hon Member for reminding me of the reference. All that we had in respect to that was one of the bulletins of the CPSA where they stated that Dr Gilbert had told Mr Wrigglesworth that he was inviting us. We have received nothing, the file is here and I can assure Members that if we had I would have informed Members. At least give me the credit of not misleading the House in matters of this importance.

HON M XIBERRAS:

A public statement was made by the CPSA on this matter and that led to my enquiry of the Chief Minister about this and I thought the public should know exactly what had happened from the Secretariat point of view.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I would just like to follow up the question of the statement made by the MOD to the effect that their proposed enquiry enjoyed the support of both the Chief Minister and His Excellency the Governor. I would ask the Chief Minister whether he would agree that if in fact he was neutral in respect of the enquiry, it was very wrong of the MOD to use his name in support of a proposal in a situation where obviously the fact that the Chief Minister was apparently urging acceptance of that proposal was bound to have an influence on the members of the CPSA many of whom are also members of his Party?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think that I have said in the case that I was neutral. I said that I thought it was a good idea and in fact it followed the wording of what I had used here and I was asked and I said that I agreed with it but the proposal was put to the members. It was not mine, it was not even the decision of this House as to whether the inquiry should be held. It was the members' privilege to decide whether they wanted the enquiry and they have so decided that they don't want it. The phraseology used by the MOD in putting it across is, as I say, not a matter for which I am responsible for. I wasn't asked whether they could say they had my support because when I am asked to advise normally I am asked to advise in confidence and I don't mind if it is released because in these matters I like to make my position clear but I was not asked; "Can we say that we have your support," I might have said yes and I might have said no, that did not arise. What arose was that I was not against it, I thought it was a good idea and in fact they picked it up from what I had said here.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that the terms in which it was put to CPSA HQ and to members here were such that in effect the MOD appeared to be saying that this was a proposal that carried with it a recommendation from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar for acceptance? Would he not agree that it was put in those terms both to CPSA HQ and to the membership here and that if in fact those terms were not an accurate reflection of reality, in order to enable democratically the members of CPSA to take a decision in the full possession of the facts, the true facts and the true picture should have been relayed to them and not a misleading one?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I was asked to use my influence for the members to accept the offer made of the lump sum and so on and all I said was; "Well, there it is, put it to the members." That was the extent to which I used my influence and I told the National Executive of the Union that I had been asked to tell them to put it and in fact I think my influence didn't carry any weight at all because they already came here with the decision of putting it to the members. As I say I am not responsible for the wording of the MOD to putting it that way, all I can tell you is that it had no authority to use my name in that way.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I accept that the Hon Member was not responsible for writing the letter from MOD but if in fact the MOD had no authority to put down what they put down I am asking him whether he will agree with me that it was misleading to use his apparent support and apparent recommendation for acceptance in that context because it was obviously designed to produce a certain result and if so I would ask him ..

why he did nothing to correct the incorrect impression created by something that was stated publicly.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I did everything possible. I heard it on the 9.00 o'clock news for the first time on radio other than what the Hon Member told me on the way from the airport from another kind of business and I promptly rang up the Chronicle and they published a true statement of the facts as I saw them. I don't know if you can work much faster than that in Gibraltar.

The Hon Dr R G Valarino

Will Government, mindful of the increasing costs of oil and electricity and so as to benefit Gibraltar with regards to tourism, put forward the measure to advance clocks by one hour in Gibraltar throughout the period covered by British Summer Time?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

No Sir. The suggestion to advance clocks by one hour in Gibraltar throughout the period covered by British summer time was considered in 1974 when the Government was advised that the saving in fuel and electricity would be insignificant. As far as tourism is concerned, while some might prefer an extra hour of sunshine, others, particularly in the hotter months, might not. It was therefore decided not to proceed with the matter. The position is reviewed annually and further consideration will be given to the suggestion if good and sufficient reasons are adduced.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will the Chief Minister say when he intends to effect the appointment of the enquiry into the potable water deficits; will he further say whether the enquiry will be public; and can he inform the House of the proposed terms of reference and composition of the enquiring body ?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

I shall be making a statement on this matter during the course of the budget session later this month and the terms of reference will be announced in that statement.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 130 OF 1977

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can the Hon Member say whether it will be a public enquiry or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The results of the enquiry will certainly be made public.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is there anything else which the Hon Member can tell us now?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can say that the Committee will consist of Hon Members from both sides of the House.

No.131 of 1977

FOR WRITTEN ANSWER

The Hon M Xiberras

Is the Chief Minister aware of any move on the part of Her Majesty's Government to agree to negotiations on British Sovereignty over Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

No Sir.