

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 3rd APRIL 1978

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(46 TO 89)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

A copy of the Answers to Questions
of the House of Assembly held on 14
is attached.

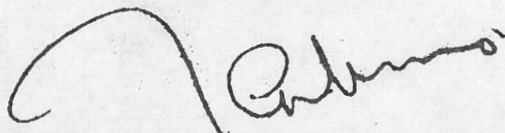
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
GIBRALTAR.

In case of any amendments Hon Members are kindly requested
to hand them in not later than Monday, the 8th May, 1978.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

A copy of the Answers to Questions asked at the Meeting
of the House of Assembly held on the 3rd April, 1978,
is attached.

In case of any amendments Hon Members are kindly requested
to hand them in not later than Monday, the 8th May, 1978.



CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

14.4.78.

QUESTIONS ASKED BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AT THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING HELD ON 3.4.78.

No.46 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what is the position regarding arrears of rates at the close of the Financial Years 1976/77 and 1977/78?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Arrears of general rates and brackish water charges at the end of the financial year 1976/77 amounted to £189,803. The latest figure available is now £226,733 as at 31st December 1977.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 46 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Hon Financial and Development Secretary whether, in fact, in the estimates these arrears are shown as receipts or whether they do not show up at all?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, I stand to be corrected when I consider in detail the Estimates but normally they are included in the total revenue due under the particular heads and they do not show up separately except, of course, in the statement of accounts which is published at the end of the financial year.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, will the Financial and Development Secretary say whether in the case of rates, as opposed, for example, in the case of electricity bills, the practice is still that the income shown is that of actual receipts or is the income shown that of amounts billed?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Mr Speaker, the amount shown is under the old practice, it is the amount of actual receipts and not the amount of bills issued as is now the case in the funded services.

HON J BOSSANO:

So therefore, Mr Speaker, it is true to say that the amounts shown in the estimates will not take into account the fact that £226,000 is owed to Government under this heading?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Sir, but of course if in the actual receipts for any given financial year, some of that was arrears, of course it will be incorporated in the total amount shown as received.

3.4.78.

No.47 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that electricity and water bills are still not provided with the date of the meter readings and that this makes it difficult for consumers to satisfy themselves as to the accuracy of such readings?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Yes Sir - the Government is of course aware that electricity and water bills have not yet been provided with the date of the meter readings. The need to give priority to clearing the backlog which existed in billing has prevented this being done, but I am glad to say that it is proposed to print the dates by hand on the bills issued in respect of March. As soon as the machines can be programmed bills will be dated automatically.

3.4.78.

No.48 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that a number of consumers have complained about abnormally high electricity and water bills for the month of January and can Government give an explanation for this situation?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Yes Sir, a number of such complaints were received by the Billing Section and answered by the explanation that the bills also covered the relatively high consumption period of Christmas and New Year, as well as the abnormally heavy consumption of electricity due to the prolonged cold spell we had in January, from the 12th to 24th to be more precise.

Consumers not satisfied with this explanation have had their meters tested at their request and I am assured that the readings shown on the bills have been proved correct.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 48 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Financial and Development Secretary say whether the bills in respect of these months cover a greater period than that of four weeks?

HON FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I would imagine, Mr Speaker, that in some cases they would do but that is a very generalised question and without a little more detail as to individual bills it is very difficult to say but I imagine quite certainly in some cases some bills did cover more than the 4-week period.

No 49 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the final figures for Revenue and Expenditure by Head for the Financial Year 1976/1977?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

The final figures for Revenue and Expenditure for the year 1976/77, to the nearest pound, are shown respectively in the Tables A and B which I am now circulating. The figures are, however, still subject to audit.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 49 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Financial and Development Secretary say, Mr Speaker, how it is that on this occasion the figures were not gazetted several months ago as was the case in the previous financial year?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, on this particular occasion, as I shall be explaining in due time, the accounts were not closed, unfortunately, by October.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it the Government's intention, Mr Speaker, to have these figures ready by October following the close of the financial year?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, the law allows nine months for the closing of the accounts and hence the extraction of the final figures, not six.

HON J BOSSANO:

But it is a fact, Mr Speaker, that in the case of the previous financial year the figures were published in October following the close of the financial year, is it not?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I do not know the answer of that precisely. I am quite prepared, if the Hon Member says so, to accept that. I can assure the Hon Member that there is no deliberate delay in these figures, they are published as soon as they are available.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can the Financial and Development Secretary give a few words

of explanation on the figures that he has circulated?

MR SPEAKER:

I would like to sound a word of warning. The practice has now arisen to circularise figures for the simple reason that questions are being asked on purely technical and factual matters which are cumbersome to give in an oral answer. The danger that we are experiencing now is that we are having supplementaries on the figures circularised but the actual figures do not go into Hansard. If I may suggest to the Opposition with a view to improve matters and nothing else since they are free to do what they consider right in the circumstances, perhaps, it would be better for this type of question to be asked for a written answer. I am saying this exclusively for the reasons I have mentioned and nothing else.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, it is simply clarification of the two items which appear as (New) Adjustment of Municipal Services £2,005,023 and (New) Reimbursements £3,035,935, appearing on the first page of the paper circulated by the Financial and Development Secretary.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, that is simply the adjustments which were carried out at the time with the establishment of the funded services.

The Hon G T Restano

In view of the press release by the Gibraltar Government Clerical Association stating that the reply given to Question number 8 of 1978 contained inaccuracies would the Financial and Development Secretary state whether his answer was correct or whether it contained inaccuracies as claimed?

Answer:The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

The Hon Member's Question No 8 which he asked at the beginning of February referred to a situation which then prevailed in which many electricity and water bills were not being sent out until as much as three to four months after the period to which they related. If that is not slow going, going slow or, in the ordinary meaning of the words, a go slow, I do not know what is.

Unfortunately this is an age in which the English language is becoming increasingly debased by jargon and many plain, simple words and expressions are being used to imply or infer something in addition to their ordinary, primary meaning. The expression "a go slow" in the jargon of industrial relations, has, I agree, a connotation which the ordinary meaning of the words does not have.

However, in answering Question No 8 I was not speaking in jargon but if by my use of the expression "a go slow" I misled the House into believing that the machine room operators had taken industrial action of this nature, I apologise.

As the Hon Members will, I am sure, be aware the issue of electricity and water bills has been greatly speeded up and I should like to take the opportunity to commend the efforts which have been made by all concerned.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 50 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I am glad that the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary has retracted that any of the Government Clerical Officers were on a "go slow" which was, in fact, inaccurate. There was also another inaccuracy which was claimed about dates. Was that also meant to mean something else or did he mean 1974 to 1976?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the first place I do not consider that my answer is a retraction, but if I misled the House into thinking that when I used that expression "a go slow" I implied its jargonised meaning then, indeed, I do apologise to the House because that is not what I said nor what those

words mean in my terms. As to the second point, I find nothing in the Hon Member's question at the moment about dates?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary used the word "jargonised". It is, with respect, a horrible word.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, on many occasions in answer to questions from this side of the House, it has been the practice of the Government to use possible go-slow action as a reason for work not having been done and on this occasion it was certainly taken as that. On the question of the dates, I think it is quite clear in my question that I say that certain inaccuracies were attributed to the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary and in the press release of the GGCA they say quite clearly that the proficiency allowance agreement was under the 1974/75 Pay Review and not the 1974/76 as stated. Therefore, I think it is quite in order within this particular question.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, if it is 1974/75 or 1974/76, I think we all know what we are talking about, but if the Hon Member pushes the point I am quite happy to accept that it could have been 1974/75, perhaps, it was a misprint.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, did the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary in fact get in touch with the GGCA after this press release or did he meet them in any way to assure them of the interpretation of the word that he gave in the answer to the reply, or was the Hon Member approached by the GGCA on this matter?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker, I was approached indirectly. I understood that they were upset by my use of the words "a go slow" but unfortunately I was not able and I was not specifically asked, as I recall it, to meet any representatives of the Association to discuss the matter. I was aware, however, that they were upset and I was aware that they would have liked to have discussed the whole position with me but I had no formal approach.

3.4.78.

No.51 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state when the Staff Inspection of grades covered by the Morgan Report will take place and who it will be conducted by?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The staff inspection of grades covered by the Morgan Report is now taking place and is being conducted by Mr T F Beech.

3.4.78.

No.52 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state why the appointment to the office of Accountant General has not yet been made bearing in mind that the previous incumbent retired at the end of December last year?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The post of Accountant General is one of those posts being staff inspected by Mr Beech. The post will be advertised when the staff inspection is completed.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state when it anticipates work will start on production of sand from natural resources and how it is proposed to carry it out?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Education and Public Works

It is anticipated that sand production will start in October 1978 and allowing for working up and "teething" problems, full production should be in operation by mid-November 1978.

Sand will be obtained by removing the natural deposits at the top of the Catchments between Sandy Bay and Catalan Bay with a tracked shovel, discharging through a grizzly, portable conveyors and conveying the material to road level by a rubber-lined chute.

At road level it will be screened into size and stored in bins for sale.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 53 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is Government intending to conduct the whole of this operation itself?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the project to win sand has been financed by ODM and Messrs Robertson Research International Ltd have a contract with Government to design, supervise, instal and commission the necessary installation to win sand.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the production, Mr Speaker, be based on the work going out to tender and private contractors being engaged to do it, or will the Government employ the workers and conduct the operation itself through direct labour?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think in the first instance, Sir, Messrs Robertson will carry it out and then in the light of the first year's working or so Government will consider whether to go to tender or to do the work itself as direct labour.

No 54 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether the repairs to the roof of Tovey Cottage in the Upper Rock, the home of the ex-Minister for Public Works, has in Government's view priority over repairs to the roof of the homes of the long suffering tenants of the Varyl Begg Estate?

Answer:The Hon the Minister for Education and Public Works

The question could imply that Government might consider giving priority to repairs to the roof of a property occupied by an ex-Minister in preference to other tenants occupying properties which also require roof repairs.

I would like to make it quite clear that Government does not base its priorities on individuals, and I am sure that Mr Bossano is not suggesting this as a possible basis for determining priorities, as the roof repairs at Tovey Cottage are quite unrelated to those at the Varyl Begg Estate.

The former is programmed in Government's general repairs and maintenance schedule whilst the latter is the subject of dispute with the Consultants. In the meantime Government cannot undertake to call a halt on all roof repairs until the separate issue of the Varyl Begg Estate is resolved.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 54 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Hon Minister for Public Works would like to explain how the priorities are decided by Government in order to establish which roofs should be repaired first?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the priorities are established by assessing the state of the roofs. If the roof is liable to collapse almost at any time then obviously it gets a higher priority than a roof that can last out for a reasonable period, perhaps, with the use of a tarpaulin.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Hon Member then saying, Mr Speaker, that the roof of Tovey Cottage is on the point of collapse?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

In fact, I think the whole of the house is almost on the point of collapse, it is in a very bad state indeed, yes.

No 55 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government make a statement on the present water situation and will Government state whether present stocks have necessitated limiting supplies to consumers generally?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Education and Public Works

The stocks of potable water at 9am on Monday 27 March stood at 44,886 M3 or 9.6 Mg.

The North Face Distiller has been undergoing extensive general maintenance after having completed eight years of working life. This plant has been out of action since the middle of December last year and it is anticipated that it will be back in operation early this month. The non-availability of this plant has forced Government to limit supplies of water to shipping but no other consumers have suffered restrictions.

The GUNGADIN, the small tanker which is used to import water on a regular basis, will be undergoing maintenance and inspection shortly. Once the NF plant is in operation, the VTE plant will be stopped for routine maintenance so that it will be ready to produce as much water as possible during the coming dry season. It is envisaged that it may be necessary to import water from UK some time before summer.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 55 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, have arrangements already been made to import or is it just envisaging?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The situation is, Sir, that we keep in contact with the Crown Agents who do the work for us to see what tankers are coming along and they keep us posted six or eight weeks in advance so that we know that if we need a tanker there will be one available.

HON J B PEREZ:

Will the Hon Minister state the exact limitation placed on shipping on the periods that this has been done and what effect, if any, has this had on the ships calling at Gibraltar?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, ships come in and ask for various quantities and if the quantity is around 50 tonnes it is supplied to them. If they ask for a very large quantity, sometimes they ask for 700 or 800 tonnes, then we suggest to them that we cannot give as much as that and we give them 100 tonnes, perhaps 150 tonnes. It also depends on where the next port of call is, the number of people in the crew, etc.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is restriction to shipping still in force?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, how do the stocks at the moment compare with stocks last year?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think we are just about at the same level.

3.4.78.

No.56 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government state why the repairs to Main Street from Church Lane to George's Lane have taken so long to complete?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Education & Public Works

The Section between Church Lane and Library Ramp was completed within a reasonable period. However, from Library Ramp to George's Lane the Contractor experienced considerable difficulties in laying the new sewer due to the multitude of existing services already buried beneath the road surface.

The existing house connections to the sewer were found to be much deeper than expected and the new sewer had to be laid some 18" -2' deeper than anticipated.

These two factors plus a salt water main burst have delayed the works which were completed on 22 March.

The Hon P J Isola

Why is it that Penney House remains uninhabited?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Education and Public Works

Penney House remains uninhabited because completion of the repairs to the roof was held up by the following:-

1. unavailability of insulating materia. This material had not been used before in Gibraltar and the contractor experienced some difficulties in finding a supplier in the United Kingdom.
2. blacking action by the Transport and General Workers' Union. The insulating material was held at the docks for eight weeks.
3. inclement weather that persisted during December 1977 and the beginning of 1978.

Now that the repairs to the roof have been effected, the contractor is completing minor items of work on the snagging list. It is anticipated that the building will be handed over to this Department in the course of the next two weeks.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 57 of 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister state whether it will be handed over to the Department for allocation in the course of the next two weeks?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, as soon as it is handed over to the Department we will hand it to the Housing Department who will allocate it.

HON P J ISOLA:

It will be handed over in that state, ready for allocation?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, we hope so, Sir.

HON P J ISOLA:

How many years has it been, Mr Speaker, as a matter of record, from the date tenants were told it would be a matter of nine months to give them their houses back?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think it is around four years, Sir.

The Hon M Xiberras

With reference to Question 302 of 1977 has Government now investigated the practices referred to therein and has an agreement been reached satisfactory to all the parties involved?

Answer:The Hon the Minister for Education and Public Works

The practice referred to in Question 302 has been investigated and the level of prices normally charged by the men has been ascertained to be currently as follows:-

VAULTS

Where vault has to be cleaned to admit new coffin:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| i. per coffin removed | £7 |
| ii. where vault is flooded | £30/35 |

GRAVES

- | | |
|---|---------|
| i. where brick or concrete surround has to be removed | £4 |
| ii. where slab over grave has to be removed | £10/£12 |
| iii. to remove and rearrange existing remain/s | £5 |

REINTERMENTS

For transporting remains from existing to new burial place	£10
--	-----

Due to the nature of the work involved and to the circumstances in which the need for such work occurs it is not easy to evolve an agreement satisfactory to everyone particularly to the bereaved families themselves. I therefore propose to seek the views of the Board of Visitors to the Cemetery on the matter before deciding what can best be done in the interest of all concerned.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 58 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying that when the Minister quotes these figures for these various jobs he is simply stating a fact, namely, that the rates have stabilised or is he implying Government agreement to the practice generally?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, these are the rates that the men who do this work on their own time and under their own volition have told the Government that they charge.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I see. So it does not imply Government agreement at this stage, at least, to the practice.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir.

No 59 of 1978The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that many flights to UK for the peak season are already fully booked and if so what steps does Government propose to take to ensure that traffic is not turned away from Gibraltar as a result?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade and
Economic Development

I am not quite sure if the questioner when referring to flights means schedule or charter flights.

In my answer I shall assume that it is both charter and schedule operations for summer 1978 peaks. We are aware that charter operations from Gatwick and Manchester are heavily booked not only in peak but in off peaks. Marshall Sutton are seriously considering the operation of another charter flight from Gatwick between May and September but have not yet taken a final decision. I may add that a decision has since been taken to put it on.

As to schedule operations we are informed that on 29 March 1978 four flights out of 124 scheduled flights for the months of July and August were fully booked subject to cancellations.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 59 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the second part of the question asks the Government what they propose to do to ensure that traffic is not sent away from Gibraltar. The Hon Minister has said what he thinks Marshall Sutton is going to do but what is the Government doing about it?

HON A W SERFATY:

We are supporting the third flight of Marshall Sutton. As to the scheduled flights there is nothing we can do but, anyhow, the figures I have given four out of 124 flights means that the problem is not as acute as would at first seem.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Government then satisfied that there is plenty of space capacity on the route at the moment?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, we are definitely not satisfied.

HON J BOSSANO:

And the Government simply intends to stay in a state of permanent dissatisfaction?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, of course we are not and as the Hon Questioner knows we have been pressing now for years for an increase in the frequency of the scheduled operation but one thing is to insist and another thing is to get what you want.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister implying that there is a policy on this matter which is the support of a particular charter flight, and is that the sum total of his policy so that traffic is not turned away from Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

The policy of the Government is not the support of one particular charter flight, the policy of the Government has been to support a number of applications for charter flights and to encourage charter flights to Gibraltar to the extent of advertising in the catchment areas which are served by those charter flights. As to the scheduled flights we all know and the Opposition knows, too, the difficulties we are faced with in trying to get the schedule airlines to increase the frequency.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So, Mr Speaker, in respect of the original question, the Minister is doing nothing at the moment to provide more seats on schedule operations.

HON A W SERFATY:

In another question I think we are giving the answer to the fact that we have come to an agreement as to the frequency of this summer's operations.

No 60 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether the new Girls' Comprehensive School is included in the proposed 1978-81 Development Programme and, if so, whether UK Aid Funds will be available for this project?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

The Girls' Comprehensive School is included in the proposed 1978-81 Development Programme. Until the forthcoming Development Programme is agreed with the Minister for Overseas Development, it will not be known which projects ODM is prepared to finance. As this project was among those projects accepted by the ODM for financing in the 1975-78 Development Programme it is hoped that it will be accepted for inclusion and Ministry of Overseas Development financing in the forthcoming programme.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 60 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the position then, Mr Speaker, that the Government to date has not yet got a clear indication one way or the other on this matter?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is the position but we may know better in a few days' time.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Member say whether the position as regards the talks or negotiations that are going to take place is that the Government will be discussing the overall level of aid or the specific projects?

HON A W SERFATY:

The overall level and the priorities covered by whatever sum is allocated to Gibraltar.

HON J BOSSANO:

This is, in fact, Mr Speaker, what I would like to have a clearer idea about. Is the position that given agreement on a particular sum with the ODM, it is up to the Government then to fix its own priorities or is the position that the priorities are also a matter for agreement between the Government and the ODM?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have our priorities and we have estimates of all we would like to do. These are the matters which we will be discussing with the Minister as from tomorrow and then we shall know her reactions and what her priorities are which, I hope, will coincide with our priorities.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In my visit to London prior to the visit that led to Strasbourg in November, I saw Mrs Hart and she showed very great interest and very great concern about the school and the indications are, I think it can be rightly said having regard to what she said then, is that she very much considers that if the boys have had a comprehensive school the girls should have one.

HON P J ISCLA:

If the Minister gives the required aid for the Girls' Comprehensive School, in view of the remarks just made by the Minister concerned, can he tell us when the first brick will be laid on the site since he has all his plans ready?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have not got all the plans ready. The working drawings and bills of quantities and specification which must be prepared before a work goes out to tender cannot be prepared before the ODM signifies their agreement to this being done and to the scheme being carried out unless in a particular job to gain time, as we have done with other projects, they approve on what is called an "if and when approval".

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, in view of the rather considerable time lapse there has been since it was decided to build a girls' comprehensive school in that particular spot, does not the Minister think that this might have been one of those projects in respect of which plans and specifications should have been prepared beforehand? Can he still tell me when is the first brick going to go down, in his estimation?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have gone a long way towards the preparation of drawings and we have architects here from the United Kingdom quite a number of times.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked when do you consider work will commence?

HON A W SERFATY:

Some time in October, 1979, the first brick will be laid.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister not consider this to be rather strange situation to say the least, October 1979, for work to commence on a school in respect of which it was decided to build there about three years' ago. Does the Minister not agree that he has received in the last two years increases in the Public Works Vote to provide specifically additional technical assistance to help the Department to get on with schemes that have been approved or about to be approved. Has this had no effect on the planning in respect of this school?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, if I can help by Hon Friend. The planning of the school has been done by architects in the United Kingdom. Their foreseeing of the future, if the scheme goes through, is that they will continue to do the work as consultants and make the working drawings which will take a period of some nine months. It is hoped, if the project is approved by the Projects Committee of the ODM in June, nine months to do the working drawings which will be done not by the Public Works Department but by the architects in the United Kingdom, it will then take three months to go out to tender and that is why we think it will be about one year and two months after the project is absolutely accepted which we hope will be some time in June this year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Did the Minister mention consultants? I thought the Government had some reservations about the appointment of consultants from the United Kingdom.

HON A W SERFATY:

The Government has no reservations on the appointment of consultants on a job like the Comprehensive School. That is a specialised job and it needs a specialist to design it.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state which of the projects included in the 1975/78 Development Programme will not have been a. completed by 31 March 1978; and b. started by this date, and can Government further state the total amount of UK Aid Funds involved in these projects and what is the position regarding the unspent sums?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and
Economic Development

- A. Projects included in the 1975/78 Development Programme started but not completed by 31 March 1978 are as follows:-
- i. New Housing: Rosia Dale - 38 housing units
Glacis bedsitters - 12 units
 - ii. Housing Modernisation: Against a target of 300 completed modernised units it is expected that 80 will be completed.
 - iii. Housing backlog repairs: Against a target expenditure of £650,000 it is estimated that £430,000 will be spent
 - iv. Resiting of Public Works
Garage and Workshop
- B. Projects included in the 1975/78 Development Programme but not started by 31 March 1978 are as follows:-
- i. Girls' Comprehensive School
 - ii. Varyl Begg Primary School
 - iii. Reclamation between Jetties 1 and 2
 - iv. The winning of sand from the Upper Catchment Area
 - v. 97 new housing units which would have brought the number of new housing up to the original target of 100 against the 83 achieved
 - vi. Area development schemes, Lime Kiln Steps, Tank Ramp which include an element of new housing
 - vii. New housing - Prince Edward's Road, St Joseph's Hospital
 - viii. Purchase of a new electricity generator
- C. Where projects have already been agreed by the ODM but not started or completed in the current programme period then it is customary for ODM to continue its already agreed commitment together with any new commitments to additional projects for the new programme which it agrees. Projects which have not been approved so far by the ODM carry no continuing commitment on their part. It is

hoped, however, that all projects not yet approved will be included in the next Development Programme. Projects not already approved but included in the current programme are the Girls' Comprehensive School and reclamation between Jetties 1 and 2.

The total value of projects approved in the course of the 1975/78 Development Programme was £7.3m. and a further £0.9m. will still be needed to meet the balance of bills and claims for the completion of the Varyl Begg Estate for work already carried out.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 61 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member, for example, in respect of one of the items that he has mentioned - repairs - where £430,000 is being spent instead of £630,000, is the Hon Member saying that the commitment to the original £630,000 continues and will be carried forward?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Hon Member has not yet seen the budget estimates but there will be a considerable sum, hopefully, included in the 1978/81 programme for repairs. I would presume that it does.

HON J BOSSANO:

I would presume that the Hon Member would be in a better position than just to presume, Mr Speaker. Can the Hon Member say whether, in fact, the unspent sums are lost and we have to start from scratch again when discussing the new development programme or whether, in fact, the discussions will be in addition to projects that have started but not finished?

HON A W SERFATY:

I would not like to lead the Hon. Member up the garden path but I would assume that the £220,000 is in addition to whatever we agree in the 1978/81 Programme on Repairs and Maintenance.

HON CHIEF MINISTERS:

I think the answer is that if it is a continuing itemised thing and it is committed and would not be finished if the balance was not paid then it is paid though whether it is made a part of the next year's overall grant is another matter but the commitment is there.

HON G T RESTANO:

The Minister mentioned the filling in between Nos 1 and 2 Jetties on a couple of occasions. Is it not now between other jetties?

HON A W SERFATY:

The filling in between Nos 2 and 3 Jetties is now being considered as a possible alternative.

No 62 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state why there was no Government objection to the recent application for air fare increases to the Civil Aviation Authority?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade and
Economic Development

The Government and Members of the Opposition who were consulted negotiated lower increases in air fares than were originally claimed if an agreed minimum number of frequencies were provided until 31 March 1979.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 62 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

So, in fact, the Hon Member is saying that he did a repeat exercise of what he did several years' ago when he agreed with British Airways not to object in exchange for being guaranteed a number of flights. Is that the position?

HON A W SERFATY:

We agreed to about half the increases that were being suggested so long as we got a guarantee that there would be a minimum number of flights from now until the end of March, 1979.

HON J BOSSANO:

Has it occurred to the Hon Member that British Airways may well be doubling the figure they want to achieve before they go to see him to have given the opportunity of cutting it down in half?

HON A W SERFATY:

This is what negotiations are all about and I am satisfied that the increases which we have agreed with some members of the Opposition and the Government and the airlines, is not unreasonable.

No 63 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the fact that an Opposition amendment to the Second Schedule of the Licensing and Fees Ordinance was withdrawn at the December 1977 meeting of the House on a Government assurance that the question of the parking of containers and fees would be reviewed in the first meeting of the year 1978 has Government been able to reconsider its attitude on the matter?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

We have had this matter under careful investigation since their aid request and have to say that the representations made by the Hon Questioner at the December meeting of the House of Assembly were made on a false premise. He referred to the different frequency of calls between ships of different lines and he made these variations the basis for a claim that the correct period free of rental within the Port should be fifteen days, which would give all shipping lines the opportunity of picking up their own containers on a subsequent call before container rental charges would be incurred; this argument can only be based on the premise that the correct place for containers to be kept between a ship's call is in the Port area, whereas, in fact, the responsibility for providing accommodation for containers is that on the consignee. The obligation of the Port is merely to provide quay space where containers may be discharged, loaded, sorted for despatch to the consignees, and assembled for loading.

The whole purpose of rental fees in all Ports, not only the Port of Gibraltar, is to keep containers out of the Port. Now that the various consignees have got into a routine the Port is operating as well as can be expected in the absence of an adequate handling area (which would be corrected by the proposed reclamation between two of the North Mole Jetties).

I am advised that currently it is, in fact, only containers which are brought by the conference lines which incur rental charges, in spite of the statement of the Hon P J Isola in December that it was locally-owned ships that "are being put at a serious disadvantage with those lines who for many years have imposed charges on Gibraltar".

The legislation is having the effect that it was designed to have: the container operation is going reasonably well and the containers are being kept out of the Port. If we were to introduce the fifteen-day rule it would mean that all the containers arriving in Gibraltar would be left in the Port all the time and the situation would become chaotic.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 63 OF 1978

MR SPEAKER:

May I say that that answer, perhaps, should have been the subject matter of a statement. All that was asked in the question was whether Government had already re-considered its attitude to which the reply could have been "yes" or "no" and either a motion or a statement could have been made. I say this because this contains a tremendous amount of Government policy and I will permit supplementaries provided it deals with the matter dealt with in the answer.

HON P J ISOLA:

You are quite right, Mr Speaker, if I may say so. This is a very lengthy answer and the Minister has thrown a number of facts and has stated that the amendments sought were based on the wrong premise. But is not the Minister, in fact, saying that it is of no relevance at all to this the fact that by having a specific period of time under which people can leave containers in the Port without rent, is he saying that has no relevance at all to the ship movement coming in and out of Gibraltar? I would have thought it was of great relevance. Is he now saying that it is not at all relevant? The main point in the debate, if I may say so, Mr Speaker, was that lines that have regular shipping coming in and have turn rounds with different periods of time were obviously affected, some more than others, by the amount of free time there is on the Port. Has that not been taken into consideration at all by the Minister?

HON A W SERFATY:

It has but the Hon and Learned Member made the point in December that the local lines would be more affected than the Conference lines who could perhaps more afford to pay the rental and that has not been the case. The local lines have not paid a single penny in March on these rentals. They only paid £35 last February and £340 in January whereas the Conference lines have paid £3,400 in January, £1,468 and £1,640 in March, when they were in a position to have taken those containers within the eight days. They did not do it for reasons unknown to me and they paid a rental charge, fair enough, but this is not affecting the local lines nor the arrival of ships to Gibraltar. I am satisfied of that.

HON P J ISOLA:

Could it be that the local lines that are not able to afford payments of these sums for excess stay have re-scheduled their shipping and could it also not be that the Conference lines being of much greater financial structure

or whatever one calls it, prefer to pay the charges in Gibraltar than move the containers, it suits them to leave it in Gibraltar on the Port area rather than move it around, and does this not mean, in effect, that the main purpose of clearing the Port is not being achieved?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, it does not. I have no evidence that the local lines have rescheduled the arrival of their ships to meet these demands and the only point I can add is that if the Conference Lines because it suits them are going to fill the Port with containers the charges are going to go up and up and up until they empty the Port of containers.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would it not be simpler, Mr Speaker, to prohibit containers being in a particular spot for longer than a particular time rather than charge rent?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, I do not think that would be fair. I think we can increase the rent and thereby achieve what we are looking for and establish some law and order in the Port as far as containers are concerned.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, I would like to reserve my position on this and take it on the adjournment of the House at a later date once I have had the full text of the Minister's question.

3.4.78.

No.64 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Can the Minister report on the progress if any with regard to the recommendation of the Select Committee on Air Communications?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

Arising out of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Air Communications the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have now confirmed their agreement to the formation of an Air Transport Advisory Board.

It is proposed to constitute the Board in the near future.

The Hon P J Isola

Will the Minister explain why the Government has not yet invited tenders for the construction of the new Public Works Garage at Slaughter House site and why has the demolition of the site not yet taken place?

Answer:The Hon the Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

The construction of the new Public Works Department workshop and garage has had to be preceded by the reprovisioning elsewhere of the existing single men's dormitory and of the stables. Work on these are well in hand and completion will be followed by invitation to tender. This is expected to take place at the beginning of July next.

Demolition of the existing buildings will be possible once the area has been vacated by all occupants.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.65 OF 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Does the Minister not recall having said, either himself or the Minister for Public Works, that the demolition would be commenced in early March and is there any reason why the demolition has not taken place during March of this year?

HON A W SERFATY:

I do not recall having said it or whether the Minister for Public Works said it but the technical advice we have is that perhaps it is better to include the demolition in the main tender for the construction of the garage.

The Hon P J Isola

ORAL

Has Government made any decisions restricting the area to be occupied by the Girls' Comprehensive School or is Government considering this and if so will Government make a statement?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

No Sir. Government has taken no decision to restrict the area to be occupied by the proposed Girls Comprehensive School.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 66 OF 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Does that mean that the Government doesn't propose to restrict the area as put forward in the plans with the school, or what?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not aware of any restrictions in the area of the plans put forward.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Minister saying that the plan that he is putting forward to the Minister for Overseas Development for the School and for the area it is to cover is the same plan, or not necessarily the same plan, but covering the same area as was considered, say, a year ago?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is it a fact that the Government has decided not to limit the area of the school?

HON A W SERFATY:

It has decided not to limit the area of the school. There may be some alterations in the actual design of the school but not to limit the area.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, has the Government considered doing so at some particular stage?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir.

HON P J ISOLA:

Does this announcement that the Government does not propose to limit the area of the school also cover the area of amenities for the school

2.

surrounding it and the general area around it?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not a single square foot of the area which was originally envisaged for the school has been touched, not a single square foot, including the recreational area.

HON J B PEREZ:

Could I ask the Hon Minister whether the re-accommodation or the re-allocation of the Mediterranean Rowing Club has any bearing on this issue?

HON A W SERFATY:

It has no bearing because the proposed area for the Mediterranean Rowing Club was never included in the area for the Girls Comprehensive School.

3.4.78.

No.67 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government state whether the lease for the Piazza bar has a condition that the same should be kept to certain standards and is Government satisfied that these standards are being met?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The lease of the Piazza Bar gives the Director of Tourism powers to supervise the standard of service of the bar and open air cafe and to require the lessees to maintain reasonable standards of service, cleanliness and furniture compatible with a first class establishment.

The Director has had no cause to invoke these powers.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 67 OF 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Can I ask the Minister then to pay a visit to the Piazza Bar and see whether there is any service at all other than self-service. Can I ask the Minister or the Director of Tourism to look at the state of the chairs and the tables outside and does not the Minister agree that the Piazza Bar, being right in the centre of town, that Government should ensure that the high standard that was meant to be kept is maintained in view of the fact, as I understand the position, that the lessee was given this in preference to other tenderers because they could be relied on to maintain it to a high standard.

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, the answer to the second part of the question is, yes, Sir, and the answer to the first part is that I will invite the Director of Tourism to visit the place.

3.4.78.

No.68 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has the Minister for Tourism now spoken with the operators of the Mons Calpe regarding certain improvements to the Terminal Building they hold on lease at Waterport?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

I have not yet spoken to the operators of the Mons Calpe regarding the suggested improvements to the Terminal Building at Waterport Wharf as the occasion has not yet arisen. As I have previously explained I intend to do so when the Public Works Department are in a position to undertake the works of renovation to the exterior of these premises.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.68 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Whilst not advocating, Mr Speaker, a joint working party or a joint study group of this area, would the Hon Member ensure that before anything is done all factors, new and otherwise, are taken into consideration?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir.

Can Government provide statistics of the increase in outgoing international telephone calls since the semi-automatic system was introduced?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Municipal Services

On average, taking the four months prior to the introduction of semi-automatic operation via the UK, the increase is estimated at 30.1% over the same period after its introduction.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.69 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, does this figure include telephone calls to Spain or does it not?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

This figure does not include telephone calls to Spain.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I think it is a reflection on the advantages of having had semi-automatic and does not the Minister feel that since semi-automatic has produced an increase in volume of 30.1% outwards does he not feel that it is now time seriously to look into the possibility of implementing fully automatic circuits?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, I don't think it is relevant to the question he has asked me but I am prepared to answer.

MR SPEAKER:

I think it is relevant. Whether you are in a position to answer or not is a different matter.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We are sending to the United Kingdom one of our representatives to look at prices and quotations on S.T.D. equipment.

HON P J ISOLA:

The House welcomes this. Is the Minister aware that obviously because of the very increased workload on the telephone exchange arising from the 30% increase to London that the continuation of telephone facilities, if I may call them that, to Spain, that calls to the telephone exchange find some considerable delay in replying and is this not really an added argument for taking up the question of automatic dialling as a matter of urgency?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

As explained we are already taking the matter up.

Will Government state why it is no longer possible to make advance international telephone bookings?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Municipal Services

Advance International Telephone bookings are made during the Christmas and New Year periods. This has been and still is the practice with the Government Telephone Department.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 70 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I don't think the Minister quite understood what I meant, perhaps, by advance international telephone bookings. I have certainly on many occasions asked for a telephone call to, perhaps, the United Kingdom for 3 hours after my booking and this was quite in order and it was a service that was being given before. It is no longer possible to do this and I want to know why.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Advance booking is the description I have given you before, that is, at Christmas and the New Year. However, the term is sometimes erroneously used as meaning the booking of a call on a particular day. This practice was sometimes necessary due to the long delays existing before semi-automatic operation was introduced. The situation now is that there is a minimum delay and consequently no advance bookings are required. This is the same procedure as used in the United Kingdom, in fact.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, in view of the fact that there is an hour's difference between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom and in fact most of western Europe, it is sometimes useful to have this service available. Would the Minister reconsider making this service available?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I will look into your request. I think there might be some technical problems involved but I will certainly look into your request.

3.4.78.

No.71 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government inform the House of any additional factors influencing a decision to transfer operations of international telephone services to Cable and Wireless?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The whole matter is still under consideration.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.71 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask whether Government considers the earth station to be an additional factor?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It could be one of them, yes.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Chief Minister then say whether the facilities that have been offered through Spain are also additional factors?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, this answer could well have been prepared before the 15th of this month.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in view of the interest which the House and no doubt the whole of Gibraltar showed in the plans of Cable and Wireless to establish a dialling system involving the earth satellite, is the Minister in a position to assure the House that he is in full and constant consultation with Cable and Wireless as regards any new factors that may evolve as a result of the Paris talks?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can give that assurance and, in fact, I have given that assurance to Cable and Wireless.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Hon Member in a position to say that the plans of Cable and Wireless to continue with the earth satellite communications, and I understand that these plans are well advanced after the

visit of Lord Glenamara to Gibraltar, is the Chief Minister in a position to say that the Government, generally, favours the continuation or the implementation of those plans?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government encourages the continuation of those plans.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, the Government encourages those plans but does the Government give any assurances that those plans will be given the support of the Government.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I don't know what encouragement otherwise means but anyhow all I can say is that the matter is somewhat complicated and difficult and I would not like to go beyond saying that we do welcome the idea but that there are quite a number of difficulties that have to be overcome, generally, in connection with the whole question of international connections with telephones.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is it not a fact that depending on the enlarging of communications or the betterment of communications through the earth satellite, the Government would because of the Telephone Department and some functions that may be taken over by Cable and Wireless pending the Minister's consideration, that the Government has a very definite interest as to what is decided eventually?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course it has a definite interest and it is dealing with it at every moment that it is necessary.

3.4.78.

No.72 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Would Government consider implementing a system aimed at reducing the waiting time of patients at the Health Centre making use of Group Practice Medical Scheme?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Medical & Health Services

We have on various occasions given thought to possible ways and means of reducing waiting time. The main problem envisaged is the difficulties that would arise, with the large numbers involved, in running an appointments system. We shall nevertheless discuss the problem again with the doctors.

No.73 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

In view of the petition signed by so many women of Gibraltar asking Government to retain the services of the present Gynaecologist, would Government state what is the current position in this matter?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Medical & Health Services

The present Gynaecologist has decided to stay.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 73 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask whether the present Gynaecologist has agreed to stay on the terms originally offered to him or have those terms changed in any way?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

In the first place let me say that he decided to stay and we were negotiating with him before the petition was delivered to the Government. I understand that he is staying on the same terms as at present for two years and then becoming pensionable.

The Hon G T Restano

ORAL

Will Government state what steps have now been taken to recruit an Ophthalmologist?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Medical & Health Services

Medical Schools were contacted, other contacts were made further afield and adverts placed in The Optician, British Medical Journal and The Lancet and as a result the Ministry of Overseas Development has been able to select one of the candidates who will be arriving in Gibraltar some time in July.

In the meantime we had already engaged the firm of consultants who visited Gibraltar for one week in May last year followed by further 3-weekly visits in July and August, just in case the other one fails again.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 74 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member give an assurance that the working together with the Naval Hospital will continue in this period?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Not only that but we are bringing, as we brought recently, one of the three consultants that came last year and this visit that took place about a month ago will be followed by a three weekly visit in July and another three weekly visit in August just in case Dr Clark, who is the one who is coming, fails as Dr Evans failed.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is Dr Clark's appointment now fairly final?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am saying what Dr Clark told us. We even got hold of him on the telephone directly to confirm that he was coming and he said he was.

3.4.78.

ORAL

No.75 of 1978

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what is the estimated cost to the Housing account of the loss of rent as a result of the non-availability of the final phase of Varyl Begg Estate?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Housing & Sport

The loss in rent inclusive of rates in respect of Phase 6 (3 blocks) and Block 18 at the Varyl Begg Estate, handed over on the 27 August 1976 and 12 November 1976 respectively, amounts to £33000 annually and to £50,900 up to 31 March 1978.

3.4.78.

No.76 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government entered into any commitments with regard to the allocation of the remaining unoccupied flats at Varyl Begg Estate?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Housing & Sport

Government has entered into no commitment for the remaining unoccupied flats at Varyl Begg Estate other than in accordance with the Housing Allocation Scheme on pointage value as at 30 September 1976 together with corresponding percentage provision for Medically Categorized cases and other categories.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 76 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I to take it from the Minister's answer that Government has entered into a commitment on the basis of the pointage allocation scheme in respect of Varyl Begg at that particular date, 1976?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Government has not entered into a commitment as such other than it is knowledge to those people who qualify on pointage value as on the 30th September, 1976, that upon allocation of Varyl Begg they will certainly qualify.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could the Minister then explain why he was unable to give the House an indication at an earlier meeting of what the qualifying pointage was for those remaining flats at Varyl Begg since it now appears that it is general knowledge that a certain pointage will qualify an applicant for one of these flats?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is not completely correct, Mr Speaker, because the Hon Member is well aware that because we have a number of threes divisible into fours and we do not know exactly what percentage could be rejected, if any, one cannot of course give a definite pointage value. Although we do know personally and the department knows who will qualify we cannot give a figure at this particular stage as to the value of pointage.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member said that other than the three cases

which he mentioned namely, pointage, the medical category and other categories as yet not elucidated on, there was no commitment. In respect of those categories in which there is a commitment, could Government give at least at this stage an indication of what pointage would be necessary in respect of these flats?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I cannot answer with accuracy. I would say that any person who didn't have something in the region of 370 or 380 points as at 30th September will certainly be in doubt as to allocation of something like 4 rooms in the coming phase and 3 rooms are basically in the same number of points, but certainly over 360.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister confirm therefore that there has been a slippage of over 100 points in respect of 4-roomed flats as compared with the last allocation at Varyl Begg?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

There certainly has been an uplifting of points inversely, a slippage brought about, Mr Speaker, I think, by the amount of people who have been waiting for accommodation for some time and who have resorted to obtaining medical certificates to increase their pointage to those who didn't have medical certificates prior.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, turning to the question of these medical certificates, could the Minister say what proportion of the flats would go, in general terms, to medically categorised cases?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, this has been mentioned here before, it is 15%.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member say offhand how many medically categorised cases at present on this list would not be accommodated in Varyl Begg?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I think I am right in saying that we have something like 78 or 80 categorised cases at the moment. It would mean that out of 140 some 20 odd would make it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I apologise, Mr Speaker, since that question doesn't really arise from the original. Could I ask the Minister what other

3.

categories he was referring to in his original answer?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, for the other categories, of course, we have a commitment for the purpose of the Government Quarters Agreement, 8%; decanting of pensioners, police and tied houses 6%; 6% for the commitment of condemned premises and the houses for general rehabilitation, not the modernisation programme, may I say. We have 5% for the purposes of decanting the transit centres and then, of course, the remaining 60% is what goes to the general housing waiting list.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So 60% of the remaining flats at Varyl Begg are going to be allocated on general pointage.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is so, Sir.

3.4.78.

No.77 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government not agree that, as a result of the latest increases in social insurance contributions and benefits, there are some cases where the percentage increase in contributions is completely disproportionate to the percentage increase in benefits?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Labour & Social Security

No, Sir, since there is in fact no direct relativity between the actual rate of the weekly contribution payable in any given year to the value of the pensions awarded after the necessary conditions have been met. For example, the increase in the value of contributions under the Social Insurance Ordinance payable as from January 1978 was equivalent to 47% over the value of such contributions payable in 1977. On the other hand, the increase in the old age pension for a married couple at the full rate (that is because the entitled person had a record of contributions of not less than 50 per year) was 50% over the 1977 rate; and for a single person, on his own contribution record, the increase represented 58%. As the Hon Member is no doubt aware, where the yearly average of contributions paid and credited to an insured person is lower than that prescribed for entitlement to an old age pension at the full rate, the pension diminishes in value according to the yearly average of contributions which range from 49 to 13 contributions. In the latter case the percentage increase of pension, in 1978, has been 17%. The reason for this is that since 1975, when annual reviews were introduced, attempts have been made to rationalise the position generally, and to reduce gradually the number of rates of benefit in order to equate the rate of pension to the number of contributions on which the pension is based. In 1978 the rate payable on an average of 13 to 17 contributions, which represents up to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the number of contributions required to establish title to a full pension, is £11.70 for a couple and £7.50 for a single person - just over 50% of the full pension of £22.50 and £14.50 respectively. More equitably, it should have been $\frac{1}{3}$ of the full rate, that is £7.50 and £4.80. It is therefore intended in the course of further annual reviews to continue to apply the lower percentages to the reduced rates of pensions until the overall anomalous situation has been corrected through a closer correlation between the average number of actual contributions and the reduced rates of pensions.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.77 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am grateful to the Minister for that long and detailed answer and I think, Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree, that he has advanced somewhat the position in respect of what he has called

the anomalous situation in respect of people getting now a very decent pension, a very good pension, and others who through no fault of their own are getting, in fact, only half of that pension, £22.50 as compared to £11.70 or something like that and £14.50 as opposed to £7.50. Whilst I welcome his statement, would the Minister not agree that bearing in mind particularly the progressive policy of the Government of relating pensions to earnings, that it is felt very much as an unfair situation, in human terms if not in insurance terms, by those people who receive a very much lower pension and would he not agree that there is a need to accelerate the process insofar as it is possible whereby the two are brought closer in the shortest possible time.

HON A J CANEPA:

I realise that in human terms, Mr Speaker, obviously a person who has not achieved entitlement to the maximum level of pension would very dearly have wished to have done so. On the other hand we have to be just and equitable about it and there may be a perfectly good reason as to why he has not achieved entitlement. For instance, whereas an individual throughout his working life of 40 years may have been contributing religiously to the Social Insurance Fund because he has been working in Gibraltar, another individual may have been working elsewhere and could arrive in Gibraltar at the age of 55 and only contribute for 10 years. Are we to give the latter person in human terms the same pension as the other one? Obviously, the answer is no. What has happened, Mr Speaker, is that in the past you have had a totally anomalous situation where a person with an average of 13 contributions was getting in 1976 as much as 80% of the full pension. Under any situation be it in insurance terms or even in human terms, what about human terms as far as a person who has contributed to the maximum, look at it from that point of view. Under any situation that was clearly anomalous and we have been attempting to correct that. Where I do agree with the Hon Member is that if pensions are going to be linked to earnings, you do want the lowest rate of pension to be reasonably high.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his assurance. Would the Minister in view of his good predisposition to the matter ensure that in those cases where contributions have not been made for reasons entirely unrelated to absence from Gibraltar, in other words because the person was excluded from making a contribution, he will turn very sympathetically to these cases and apply the general desiderata which he has mentioned, namely, that he is going to try to narrow the differences between benefits of one kind, people on one category, and people in another category, bearing in mind particularly the fact that his very generous increase in pensions has brought about a very substantial gap which can hardly be justified the way the cost of living is today.

HON A J CANEPA:

No, Mr Speaker, whilst appreciative of the point that he is making I am not sure about the extent to which that can be done in a Social Insurance Scheme of this nature or of any nature. I do not

see how it is possible through legislation and after all the Social Insurance Scheme is legislation and it is amended through legislation, I do not see how that consideration can be taken into account. I cannot see how it is possible to make allowances for the sort of case which the Hon Member has in mind without general detriment to other people.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I put one more question to the Minister, namely, that if he considers it necessary to link pensions benefits with increases in earnings, would he not agree that there is an obligation of one sort or another to those people who get less than the pension which the Minister considers desirable?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, that can be done through Supplementary Benefits. Whereas the tendency in the last few years has been to take people out of the supplementary benefits scheme because the Social Insurance Pension has been increasing far more rapidly than Supplementary Benefits, we may now, over a period of time, have to take retrograde steps to look at hardship cases on a sympathetic basis by once again bringing them within the ambit of the Supplementary Benefits Scheme thereby making up the difference. That is how we propose to do it.

No 78 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

In view of the fact that two Gibraltarian families are in residence in two of the flats at Mercury House is Government insisting on vacant possession of these two flats?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The two families in question are understood to occupy furnished accommodation on weekly tenancies. The purchase of Mercury House has been agreed on the basis of vacant possession and I have no doubt that Cable and Wireless intend to proceed with the sale on this basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY ON QUESTION 78 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does Government recognise no responsibilities, having taken over, having bought the premises, in these two instances, or at least in one of them?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Not in respect of the tenancies as such. The occupation of these flats date to July 1977 and it was on a temporary basis. It is known that one of the families at least were offered a furnished flat in Mount Pleasant at £30 a week but that this offer was refused because of the rent. The other tenant is believed to be looking for alternative accommodation. Government is unable to provide accommodation for these two families at this moment.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does Government consider it is acting as well as it would expect a private landlord to act in the same circumstances or a private developer, for instance?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

This is the same as in the case of a private landlord that dispossesses anyone and the normal procedures would follow.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, but is it not a fact that when there is a change of ownership in the private sector, the Government is reluctant to take on a responsibility on behalf of displaced tenants arguing that the private landlord or the new landlord....

MR SPEAKER:

The nature of the answer, as I have understood it, is that Government is purchasing Mercury House with vacant possession and therefore they are not taking on any tenants.

HON M XIBERRAS:

This is a fact. I am questioning the agreement itself, Mr Speaker. Not what follows from the agreement and what I am saying is would Government not expect in the case of a transaction in the private sector, would it not expect one or the other of the parties to see that the tenants there are accommodated and would not be reluctant to take on that burden itself arguing, as it has often argued that it is up to either of the two parties involved in the transaction to re-accommodate the people there.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think the Government in this case should be in no different position dealing with these tenants as if there has been a transaction in respect of a purchase by any other person.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is there not a frequent attempt made by developers in the private sector to pass on tenants to the Government in such transactions and does the Government not resist these attempts on the grounds that it is up to the people involved in the transaction to reprovide accommodation for the tenants?

MR SPEAKER:

I think what the Hon Questioner is trying to say is, that in certain circumstances private landlords expect Government to rehouse tenants but that is beyond the scope of this question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I am trying to say is that when the shoe is on the other foot, Mr Speaker, should not the Government be expected to do otherwise than what apparently it is going to do.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am advised that the Government does nothing in respect of furnished accommodation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But in this case, Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that Government is one of the parties in this transaction, Cable and Wireless being the other, would it not consider that it should apply to itself the same condition that it would expect when there

is a transaction between two private parties, namely, that the Government, as Government, is not prepared to re-accommodate people who have lost their accommodation as a result of a transaction between two private parties. In this particular case since Government is one of the parties involved and not as Government, ensure in reaching the agreement, that there is provision for housing for those people in the premises at the time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We have made a contract with Cable and Wireless for the acquisition of Mercury House with vacant possession without any anticipated information of anything, it was a clear contractual liability. What happens after that is of course a different part of Government having regard to different standards in respect of whatever way things are done in situations similar to this in the private sector.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has not the Chief Minister seen a letter written by the other party in this transaction in respect of one of the cases involved, one of the tenants in Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can I ask the Chief Minister to find out whether there is such a letter asking that favourable consideration be given to one of the tenants in Mercury House

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am dealing in this matter purely because it is the acquisition of Mercury House. What application there may have been for housing I have not seen.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And finally, Mr Speaker, is the Chief Minister saying that there was in fact no knowledge by the Government while the transaction was being concluded, that there were tenants in Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

My understanding of the situation is that Government was assured at all times that Mercury House would be given with vacant possession.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that was not my question. My question was, was Government not aware that there were tenants there?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government was aware that there were two or three people living there, no doubt, but the vendor also obviously had other accommodation and we did not anticipate that there was going to be any difficulty.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Chief Minister at least find out what the position is now in regard to this letter and consider the matter carefully as one of the contracting parties?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course, I will look at the letter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And, secondly, as Government.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I will look at the letter and the repercussions it may have on the individuals concerned because one is always trying to see what can be done to help people who find themselves in a difficult situation.

No 79 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Would the Chief Minister state whether he has now taken a decision on the possible imposition of some reasonable degree of control over the expatriation of bank profits and insurance premia?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

No, Sir. The matter is still under consideration. As I mentioned in my reply to the Hon Questioner's previous question No 348/77, it is not easy to arrive at a formula which is both equitable and reasonable; one which will strike a balance between the need to encourage the growth of the financial sector and the need to ensure that a reasonable part of that growth becomes available for investment locally for development.

However, I am glad to have the opportunity provided by this question to make a correction to my previous statements on the matter. Whereas I mentioned only the repatriation of bank profits - and indeed these are not necessarily excluded - the Government has more in mind, and I should have made this clear, some requirement for local banks and any other authorised deposit-taking institutions to retain in Gibraltar a reasonable proportion of the funds deposited with them. I regret that I overlooked the need to make this correction when I answered the Hon Member's previous question on this subject and I apologise to the House for the omission.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 79 OF 1978HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister in his answer has said that it is very difficult to make legislation which would strike a fair balance but surely he knew this when he made his statement in the budget last year. He has had one year knowing the difficulties in the first place so how is it that now, one year later, he still does not know which way a fair balance can be struck.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There are many things that take more than one year to decide. When I made the statement in the budget session this was an idea. Subsequently we have been looking at the matter and I have found, if I may take this opportunity to say so, the bank quite favourably inclined to this matter and there have been consultations. I do not think I can go any further at this stage.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst acknowledging the many years the Hon Member has of experience in the House, would he not say that before he made a statement on an important matter such as this, he should at least have an idea of how that fair balance might have been struck before he made the statement.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have an idea of what the fair balance is but the point is what is fair to me may not be fair to the other side.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would he not have said that there was a need for consultation with the various interests concerned before a statement of such gravity was made to the House?

MR SPEAKER:

You are now beginning to question the propriety of the statement that the Chief Minister made on the matter at Budget time.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That, certainly, we are not questioning, Mr Speaker. I think the answer is already obvious.

MR SPEAKER:

To the extent that he should have done certain things before making it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That I think we have established in our own minds. Mr Speaker, could I ask the Chief Minister then whether he would make a careful statement as regards Government intentions in this area so that the House, and anyone affected by it, will know exactly how far the Chief Minister and the Government intend to go or not to go.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That was exactly what I was preparing.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is not there some conflict, in fact, between being able to control the flow of funds from Gibraltar to the United Kingdom, for example, and the concept of being inside the inner sterling area where there is a free movement of funds in both directions?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Perhaps the background to that might make it clear to the Hon Member what it is, and that is that considerable funds that are deposited in Gibraltar for local deposit are transferred to England for deposit there by the institutions in which the money has been deposited and some times the flow of funds for investment and so on in Gibraltar is low and I do not think that it is fair that there should be a great sum of money in, say, current accounts in banks a great bulk of which is transferred by the bank to place it on the market in England for its own profit.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, isn't it a fact that where the banks are branches of international banks the resources surely of the parent company are available for loans in Gibraltar, or is the bank here limited to what people deposit in Gibraltar?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The bank would certainly not be limited to what people deposit but what is not fair, I put it in a negative way, is that all the deposits of people in Gibraltar should be drained away from Gibraltar to be deposited in more profitable places in which the bank itself takes a bigger share of the profit that is given to the depositors.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In view of the fact that the Chief Minister has said now that this is a considered re-statement of Government policy, can I ask the Chief Minister whether, in fact, he has taken advice as regards his present statement and whether it is, in fact, to be considered a statement of policy in the matter?

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Chief Minister said that he is considering a statement of policy.

HON CHIEF MINISTER :

I said that I am considering a statement of policy. I tried to explain to the Hon Mr Bossano what the intention behind the idea that we want to develop is in order that there would be sufficient cash for investment in Gibraltar.

HON M XIBERRAS:

With regard to the re-statement of the position as made by the Chief Minister, are we to take it that the Government now in advice intend to study or either intend to proceed with at some stage legislation in order to ensure that a percentage of funds is kept here by banks and other kindred organisations.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I never indicated that legislation would necessarily be required for the purpose.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I wish to avoid, Mr Speaker, is another re-statement at some time to come so therefore I am asking whether the Chief Minister's statement can be taken at the level of a statement of intent, a statement of policy, or mere desirability of doing this.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The statement made in last year's budget speech was a statement of intent in respect of a matter which on the advice then given and on the ideas then discussed seemed to be desirable and it still seems to be desirable to limit the amount or rather to ensure that sufficient flow of funds are in Gibraltar. How to achieve that is what has been the subject of some discussion both internally and with those who might be interested. When the Government is ready I shall make a statement of what we propose to do because it will affect the banks and it will affect all the institutions. If it is then advised that legislation is required we will announce the legislation.

3.4.78.

No.80 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state whether the purchase price of Mercury House has now been agreed, and have the estimates for renovation been worked out?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Yes, Sir. The purchase price of Mercury House has been agreed. A preliminary estimate of the cost of the renovation works involved has been prepared but the definitive estimate will not be available until the contract drawings are ready.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.80 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Would the Chief Minister say what was the purchase price?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, £100,000.

HON M XIBERRAS:

This is for the whole of Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

For the whole of Mercury House with vacant possession.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, when does the Chief Minister expect that GBC can begin to move into Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It all very much depends on the progress that is being made on the working drawings in order to put out the work to tender. On present estimates, in order to give you an idea of the kind of work that is required preliminary to it, on present very preliminary estimates, the work that has to be carried out there will be in the nature of £125,000 and I would just like to add one point about the drawings. I am advised that it is much more difficult or rather much more lengthy to prepare drawings to adjust an existing building to a different user than to design a new building.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does the Chief Minister have any approximate idea as to how long this project will take?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am not taking any chances with approximations.

3.4.78.

No.81 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Further to Question No 412 of 1977 and in view of rising public expenditure will Government not agree that the establishing of a Public Accounts Committee is a matter of very great priority and importance if the interests of tax payers large and small are to be adequately safeguarded?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Control of public expenditure is, of course, a matter of public importance but, as I have indicated on previous occasions, I am not convinced that a Public Accounts Committee is necessarily the best way of dealing with this matter in the circumstances of Gibraltar. I will invite the Hon Leader of the Opposition and others to come and discuss the matter with me at as early a date as possible as I hope, as stated previously, to devise a simple procedure, as a start, to identify particular departments for examination. This could be done in connection with some aspects of the 1977/78 Budget.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.81 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst recognising certain difficulties in the establishment of a fully fledged Public Accounts Committee and whilst welcoming the renewed, yet once more, indication from the Chief Minister that something might be done of a similar nature without going the whole way, would the Chief Minister take note that there is considerable dissatisfaction amongst some Members on this side of the House as to the opportunity that they have of dealing in depth with items of expenditure which because of inflation and so forth, are increasing and will no doubt increase quite substantially.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I appreciate that and it is because I appreciate that I am prepared to go the way I am going about this matter but I will warn Hon Members of the long hours required to do the work properly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member at this stage, since I have asked the question on a good number of occasions already, would he be prepared to give an indication as to by when he will be able to call this meeting to which he has referred.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As early as possible.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can I ask him whether, in fact, it will be before not this coming

2.

budget, I wouldn't expect the Minister to behave like Speedy Gonzalez on this matter, but could I ask the Hon Member whether in fact it would be before the next budget so that our enthusiasm has not waned by then, by the following budget, that is 1979/80.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, if Hon Members will only listen carefully they could learn a lot. The last sentence of my original reply was: "This could be done in connection with some aspects of the 1977/78 Budget."

3.4.78.

No.82 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Was Government consulted on the recent increases in telex and telegram charges before these were introduced?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Yes Sir.

Cable and Wireless, under the terms of its operating licence, may not increase the rates of charge for the transmission of messages over its telecommunications system without prior consultation with the Governor. However, the legal advice received is that consultation does not mean approval, and government is not therefore in a position to resist the increases.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.82 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

I see, Mr Speaker. I take it that advice says that Governor on this occasion is the Government.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, and I would like to say that the Government was given ample information and opportunity for consultation and did not consider that the increases were unjustified. Telex and telegraph charges were last increased in January 1965 and November 1974, respectively. The need for the current increases is mainly attributable to

(1) a large rise in staff costs brought about by inflation and,

(2) a general devaluation in sterling and therefore the decline in the value of Cable and Wireless public collection charges compared with the currencies in which out-payments were made to foreign administration. This has meant that in some cases Cable and Wireless out-payments exceed their collection charges.

3.4.78.

No.83 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government give the production figures for water for 1976 and 1977 showing a breakdown by source as follows

- (a) rainfall and wells
- (b) desalination
- (c) importation

and the cost of each of these sources?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Education & Public Works

SOURCE	PRODUCTION YEAR 1976 M ³	MG	PRODUCTION YEAR 1977 M ³	MG
Rainfall	71,345	15.7	64,888	14.3
Wells	164,673	36.2	107,995	23.8
NF Distiller	137,738	30.3	156,336	34.4
KB Distiller	16,228	3.6	NIL	
VTE Distiller	140,390	30.9	120,580	26.5
Importation	62,877	13.8	170,005	37.4

The actual cost of each of these sources will rise after the 1976 wage review is settled. Tentative costs for financial year 1976/77 are as follows:-

	COST PER M ³ FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1976/1977	APPROX COST/100 GALS
Rainfall	£0.16	£0.07
Wells	£0.23	£0.11
NF Distiller	£1.67	£0.76
VTE Distiller	£2.65	£1.20
KB Distiller	£2.27	£1.03
Importation	£1.96	£0.89

It should be noted that:

- a. cost figures do not take into account the effect of any wage settlement.
- b. costs include both running costs and capital charges. The costs are for production only and do not include distribution costs.
- c. cost for distillers will vary according to their output. VTE Distiller was out of action for six months during 1976/77 financial year and this accounts for the high cost/m³.
- d. KB Distiller was phased out in September 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 83 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is it Government policy, in trying to exercise some control over the cost of water, to attempt to increase the output from less expensive sources as opposed to more expensive sources?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, we pray religiously for rainfall and we pump the wells as much as it is safe to do so but you cannot over pump them otherwise they tend to go saline.

HON P J ISOLA:

In view of the costing the Minister has given has Government any plans to substitute desalination plants or distillers by regular importation of water? It seems to me, Mr Speaker, there would be a considerable saving if they did that?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

From the figures quoted you will notice that the North Face Distiller is considerably cheaper than importation.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is it?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, the NF Distiller was 1.67 per metric ton, importation was 1.96.

HON P J ISOLA:

I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I was going per hundred gallons. I have a note here that it is 89p per hundred gallons to import water and I had £1.20 in 1976 is that right?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

That is correct. 1976 is the North Face. The VTE was the expensive one that year which was £1.20.

HON P J ISOLA:

Working it out on average it seems that it is cheaper to import water on a regular basis than to produce through the distillers, taking into account the fact that you have got to use them both.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

As we stated, Sir, the VTE distiller that year was out of action because of breakdowns for a considerable period and of course over all that time one is paying the capital cost, etc. If the VTE works reasonably well for a year then its cost are just about the same as importation. The North Face Distiller is cheaper than importation.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, are the importation figures in respect of water imported from the United Kingdom or from Morocco?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, most of the water is imported from other sources than the United Kingdom.

HON G T RESTANO:

In answer to an earlier question the Minister said that he was envisaging the possibility of importing a tanker of water. Does he have the approximate comparisons of what it costs to bring in a tanker as opposed to regular importation from Morocco?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, the regular importation costs approximately £1.60 to £1.70 per tonne. The importation from the United Kingdom can cost anything from £2.50 to £3.00 per tonne.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is, in fact, the amount produced from the Wells determined by the rainfall or not, because it seems odd that there should have been a drop in the Wells and not in the rainfall?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

There is a relationship between the rainfall and the Wells. If you are commenting on the lower figure in 1977, for one month the Wells were out of action as we found a crack in the tank where the water is stored so we had to repair that and it is also possible that the figure was lower than in the previous months as some water may have leaked through that crack and given us a lower figure.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the number of new employment permits issued in February and March giving a breakdown by trade, industry and nationality?

Answer:The Hon the Minister for Labour & Social Security

Sir,

The New Employment Permits issued in February 1978 were as follows:-

BY INDUSTRY

Hotel and Catering	3
Building	3
Distributive Trade	3
Miscellaneous	1
	<u>10</u>

BY TRADE

Craftsmen	3
Catering Trades	3
Butchers, Bakers etc	1
Manager	2
Industrial Cleaner	1
	<u>10</u>

The March figures are not yet available, but will be provided in a written answer.

No.85 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government give the end of the month unemployment figures for the months of February and March giving a breakdown by sex and nationality?

Answer:The Hon the Minister for Labour & Social Security

Sir, the figures for February 1978 are as follows:-

	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL (BRITISH)	ALIENS		GRAND TOTAL
	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Juv.</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Juv.</u>		<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	
1978 FEB.	66	9	27	25	127	47	5	179

The March figures are not yet available, but I will be providing them for the Hon Member.

3.4.78.

No.86 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that some senior citizens are paying as much as £9.50 per week out of an old age pension of some £14 for residence at Mount Alvernia and can Government state how these charges are arrived at?

Answer:

The Hon the Minister for Labour & Social Security

Yes Sir.

Towards the latter half of 1976, in the light of the great financial difficulties which the John Mackintosh Homes were encountering, consideration was given by the Board of Governors to obtaining some contribution from the residents and/or their relatives. In order, therefore, to try and ensure the financial viability of the Homes, and thereby their continued existence, the Board decided that, where possible, residents should be expected to pay a charge to the extent of their means subject to the reservation suggested by the Director of Labour and Social Security that a resident should, at least, be allowed to retain for himself a sum, from all sources, equal to the current Elderly Person's Pension weekly rate of £5, which is the same as the non-householder's rate payable under the Supplementary Benefits Scheme.

The application of this formula means that at present a resident whose only income is, say, an Old Age Pension at the maximum rate of £14.50, pays £9.50 (thereby retaining £5) whilst one whose only income is Elderly Persons Pension at the standard rate pays nothing.

It will be appreciated that these charges compare very favourably, when taking into account the facilities offered at the Homes, with the circumstances of a person with similar income who resides alone.

It will also be of interest to the House to learn that there is evidence that some charges in UK are assessed by way of a formula which allows the resident to retain only £3 per week.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.86 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Government then saying that the charges are the result of his advise on the matter. Is the Hon Member accepting responsibility for the fact that the charges have been fixed at the level they have been fixed?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, I would not say as a result of my advice. Let us say that the Department of Labour and Social Security was closely consulted in the matter and on being consulted did tender certain advice and it was accepted to the extent that I have indicated.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Hon Member not agree it might have been desirable to consult the residents or consult other bodies besides the Director of Labour before the charges were fixed at the level they have been fixed?

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't know what the Hon Member means by other bodies. I don't know whether he means the families, for instance, of the residents. The answer to that is, no, because one is aware of the fact that very many families, I regret to say, do tend to, if they are able to, keep a very large proportion of the income of some of the residents, so obviously they would not be interested to coming to any arrangement whereby those relatives who were resident in the John Mackintosh Home contributed to the very high cost of running those homes, they contributed to the extent that they could. May I inform the House that the cost per resident is £28 a week.

No.87 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can the Chief Minister state whether he was consulted on the decision to recruit a UK Deputy Governor and what his views on the subject are?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The question of the successor to Sir Howard Davis was obviously discussed with me. I expressed the view that the person selected should not be one at the end of his career or already retired.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.87 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, subject to these two qualifications, is the Chief Minister then of the view that nobody can be found in the Gibraltar Civil Service able to occupy this post that is not either on the point of retiring or who has retired already?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think it would be wrong to discuss potential local candidates with the service. As far as I am concerned I am totally committed and, in fact, one of the instigators many years ago of Gibraltarisation but each situation must be looked at on its own merits.

The Hon J Bossano

Is the Chief Minister now in a position to provide the information requested in December 1977 as regards Departmental lists of approved contractors?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The list of approved contractors has already been published. I would direct the Hon Members attention to Government Notice No 21 and 79 which were published in the Gazettes of 12 January (No.1728) and 23rd February (No.1735) respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.88 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon the Chief Minister will look at his answer in December, 1977, he will no doubt recall that he made a statement at the time to the effect that there would be a list published for approved building contractors based on their ability to tender within a figure and that he undertook at the time to consider the question of contractors rendering a variety of services to Government. Is he now in a position, in the light of that undertaking, to tell the House whether the list of contractors in other lines of business other than building contracting are available?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As far as I am concerned, Mr Speaker, the list and the question, as I took it, were contractors for building works and these are the lists which have been published in the Gazette. If I did make some other comment on the matter, I will certainly look at them. They have not been brought to my notice.

3.4.78.

No.89 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that in HMG's view there is no longer an economic case for Development Aid to Gibraltar other than the "Support and Sustain" policy because of the Spanish restrictions and does Government share this view?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The answer to the first part of the question is no, Sir. The second part does not arise.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.89 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, will the Chief Minister avail himself of the opportunities that will occur tomorrow to establish whether, in fact, this is H.M.G.'s view or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have no reason to doubt it that it is not the case and I wonder where the Hon Member has got his information on which to base his question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister inform the House whether he had an opportunity to discuss this matter with a recent high ranking civil servant from the Foreign Office who was in Gibraltar on a visit and were these views put to him by such an official or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, otherwise I would not have given the reply I gave earlier.

HON J BOSSANO:

Did the Chief Minister, in fact, not meet a civil servant who took over the Gibraltar Desk or something in the Foreign Office not very long ago and was in Gibraltar and can the Chief Minister say whether a statement to this effect was made to him by such a civil servant or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No statement of that kind of policy on behalf of the British Government has been made to me by anybody. I do see quite a lot of people who come out here from time to time but I cannot recall anybody being in charge of the Gibraltar Desk being of such high ranking status to be able to enunciate a policy which has been enunciated as high as the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

HON A J CANEPA:

May I help the House by informing them that the gentleman in question was here in the second half of the week beginning Monday the 13th March, the gentleman who is taking over the Gibraltar Desk at the Foreign Office. He called on me on the 16th March and I do not believe that the Chief Minister was in Gibraltar on that date.

HON J BOSSANO:

Perhaps the Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security can inform the House whether the gentleman in question made any statement to him to this effect?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, we discussed something else, not that.