

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 7th FEBRUARY 1978

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(1 TO 45)

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
GIBRALTAR.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

A copy of the Answers to Questions asked at the Meeting of the House of Assembly held on the 7th February, 1978, is attached.

2. In case of any amendments Hon Members are kindly requested to hand them in not later than Tuesday, the 7th March, 1978.



21.2.78.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

7.2.78.

No.1 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the total gross profits declared by businesses operating in Gibraltar, the total amount of tax paid on such profits and the number of businesses involved for the financial years 1975/76 and 1976/77?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

No Sir. The Income Tax Department does not compile statistics of the gross profits declared by businesses in Gibraltar nor does it maintain details of the number of businesses operating in Gibraltar.

As the House will be aware, in the case of a business, tax is assessed on the net profits and not on the gross profits of the undertaking. Moreover, tax on the net profit in respect of any one year does not become due and payable until after the expiration of 3 months from the date of issue of the assessment which itself is dependent on the accounting date of the business in question.

To obtain the information in the form which the Questioner is seeking would entail not only a search of individual tax records but a detailed analysis of assessments raised and dates of payments.

The Government regrets that it cannot agree that staff should be taken off normal duties in order to carry out this search and analysis.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 1 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary give the information in any other form than the one requested?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I regret that I was not able to obtain comparable information in respect of the year 1975/76, but in respect of the year 1976/77 Income Tax paid by companies which of course is different from income tax paid just by a business, the figure for companies for that year was £1,039,996.6p. For individuals other than PAYE, the figure for that year was £489,783.57p. That includes adjustments for over and underpayments of employees as well. The estimate for 1977/78 for companies has been put at around £1m. at the moment and individuals at around £400,000.

7.2.78.

No.2 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the latest estimated expenditure figures by head of expenditure for the current financial year?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

Mr Speaker, if the House will allow I shall deal with this question together with No 3 of 1978, as they both deal with the same subject, the revised estimates for the current financial year?

MR SPEAKER:

Is that acceptable?

HON J BOSSANO:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

No.3 of 1978

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the latest estimated revenue figures by Head of Revenue for the current financial year?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The revised figures for Revenue and Expenditure for the year 1977-78, to the nearest thousand pounds, are shown in the Tables A and B respectively which I am circulating. I should add that the figures I am giving will form an integral part of the budgetary presentation and that it is still possible for some of these figures to be further adjusted before they are incorporated in the details supporting the draft 1978-79 Estimates.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTIONS NOS. 2 AND 3 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say, as a result of these figures, what is the anticipated level of the Consolidated Fund as at the 31st March?

HON FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The anticipated balance at the year ending 31st March, 1978, on the basis broadly of these figures will be, again in round figures, £1.9m.

7.2.78.

No.4 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Has Government now completed its study in connection with the erosive effects due to inflation of personal allowances under the Income Tax Ordinance?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

As I stated in reply to question No.289 of 1977 from the Hon Mr Restano, this matter is one of the many factors which the Government is looking at in the course of preparing the 1978 - 79 Budget.

7.2.78.

No.5 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government state whether any pensions receivable from UK or local sources are subject to double taxation?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

A pension accruing in or derived from the United Kingdom and received in Gibraltar, which has suffered tax in the United Kingdom, qualifies for double taxation relief under the provisions of Section 30 of the Income Tax Ordinance.

In the case of a pension accruing in or derived from local sources and received in the United Kingdom it is understood that double taxation relief is similarly granted in the United Kingdom.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 5 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Financial and Development Secretary saying that there is no need for any pension to be subject to double taxation, that relief can be obtained in all cases?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, I didn't say that and that seems to me to be a technical question which I must be very careful in answering because I am not an expert on Income Tax Law. I can only state, as I have done in my answer, that there is provision in our law for double taxation relief on pensions which have already suffered United Kingdom Income Tax and I can only say that I understand that a reciprocal arrangement existsⁱⁿ relation to pensions accruing in Gibraltar but received in the United Kingdom through United Kingdom Tax Authorities. If the Hon Member would like to give me the exact question he has in mind I can provide him with an answer in due course.

7.2.78.

No.6 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Will Government state what is the procedure in dealing with tourists who arrive in Gibraltar with their cars but unknowingly do not have insurance cover for their cars?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The police informs the tourist that his car is not covered by insurance and cannot be allowed to enter Gibraltar until it is insured. The tourist is given the names and telephone numbers of those persons in Gibraltar who issue insurance so that they may obtain the necessary insurance. On occasions where it has been possible to do so the police have actually taken the tourist to the insurer's office.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.6 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Attorney-General aware of the premiums charged for driving in Gibraltar?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

No, I am afraid I am not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

My information was that they were not very small.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I am sorry, I cannot give the answer to this. I think it must depend on the insurance company. I imagine it varies from company to company but this of course is not a matter which is controlled by Government, it is a matter for the company itself on the premium which it charges.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Whilst appreciating that, Mr Speaker, would the Attorney-General not agree, especially in view of correspondence not so very long ago in the papers, will he not agree that it does reflect upon Gibraltar, generally, if people have to leave their cars on entry and that the Government have some sort of an interest in the matter?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I am afraid I cannot agree that it reflects on the Government. If a car comes here which is not covered by insurance, Government assists, but it can be in no way blamed if the tourist has been misled by whoever issued his insurance, Government can be in no way blamed and Government does what it can to help. There is a system known as the "Green Card

System". That does not apply to Gibraltar, not because Gibraltar is not willing to recognise the Green Card system but because the body, if I might put it that way, behind the system does not apply to Gibraltar. We are in correspondence and have been for some time with the Motor Insurers Bureau in the hope that the system can be extended to cover cars in Gibraltar. One of the problems is that the body, put it that way, behind the system normally demand that there should be a Motor Insurers Bureau in every country to which the system applies. The setting up of a Motor Insurers Bureau in Gibraltar would be a costly business not to Government but to the insurance companies concerned and would lead, I am told, to a very, very large increase in the premiums which the insurers charge to local vehicles. Premiums would go up almost astronomically as far as I understand. What we are trying to do at the moment is to find some compromise in view of the small size of Gibraltar and the small number of accidents which occur, but it is under active consideration.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the Hon Member keep the House informed of progress?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, couldn't the Government try to get some cooperation from the local insurers to have a simple system of satisfying the requirements as the tourist arrives.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

My understanding is that Government has been holding talks with local insurers and trying to work something out. Government is fully aware that this is an emotive issue. There was a gentleman I think by the name of Ralph Bunch who wrote a very angry letter to the Chronicle in 1976 entirely unjustified, with respect. Government is appreciative of the problem and is doing all it can to iron them out, and I do give an undertaking that the House be kept informed of any progress which is made.

will

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government reached any conclusions on the possible purchase of a computer?

Answer:The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

Mr Speaker, I should like to refer the Hon Leader of the Opposition to pages 36 and 37 of the Hansard of our proceedings on 2nd November 1977 which report the statement I made about the purchase of a computer and the mini-debate which followed that statement. A firm order has now been placed with IBM for the purchase of the computer unit. The purchase agreement also covers the supply of the necessary computer software eg memory discs etc., and the maintenance of the unit itself. The total estimated cost of the installation is £49,000 and provision for this amount will be included in the Government's estimates of expenditure for 1978-79. Provision is also being made for an emergency power supply which is estimated to cost a further £7,000.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 7 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

What kind of computer has been ordered, Mr Speaker?

HON FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

System 34.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon Member say who makes this system?

HON FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

IBM.

HON M XIBERRAS:

One more question, Mr Speaker. Are talks with the staff continuing on the introduction of the computer and the rates of manning and so forth?

HON FINANCIAL & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Not currently continuing but obviously there is going to be more talks with the staff and they will be very much involved in the training programme that will have to be set up.

7.2.78.

No.8 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

What are the reasons for the deplorable delay in sending out bills for electricity and water and what loss will result to the revenues of Gibraltar during the current financial year?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

The serious delay which have occurred in the issue of consumers' bills for electricity and water are a matter of great regret and no little concern to the Government. There is no single cause; the delays are the cumulative result of a number of different factors. There was already some residual backlog of billing; there have been machine breakdowns, three of the trained Machine Operators went on maternity leave more or less simultaneously, and two other were transferred on promotion to clerical officer. Replacements take time to train and for a period there was an effective strength of only three operators. To aggravate matters the delay in reaching agreement on the payment of the proficiency allowance under the 1974/76 Pay Review led to a go-slow by Machine Operators. The settlement of this question recently has made it possible to introduce a productivity bonus scheme and with this in operation and a complement which is now up to strength, there should be a significant improvement in the position between now and the end of the year.

As to the second part of the question, there will not be any loss of revenue as such; receipts from electricity and water charges are credited to the respective Special Funds the income of which for the current year will undoubtedly be affected to some extent.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.8 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, if consumers are billed now consecutive months very quickly wouldn't Government make allowances on payment of these bills?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker, Government will certainly make allowance for the fact that consumers are receiving two and three bills virtually together, certainly they will.

HON G T RESTANO:

What sort of allowances, Mr Speaker?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Time to pay.

HON G T RESTANO:

How long, Mr Speaker? I think this is important because people may well be getting in a period of two or three months six months bills to pay and I think they should know in advance what sort of time limit they will have to pay these bills.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, each case will have to be judged on its own merits and if a particular consumer has got six months virtually all at once quite clearly he will have a lot longer to pay than the man who has just got a solitary bill.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, have there been any delays in reading the meters?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Personally I don't know of any, none has specifically been reported to me but my impression, Mr Speaker, is that there are delays and always have been delays in reading meters.

HON G T RESTANO:

If that is the case, Mr Speaker, is Government not aware that the primary units in any delays in reading meters are taken over by secondary units and therefore consumers have to pay more because their primary units are not passed on from one month to the next.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

My understanding is that in every year a consumer will receive 12 bills, one for each month of the year and each bill will give him a certain number of primary units. He will get twelve lots of maximum number of primary units in the year. I admit that I have not looked into this but I have discussed this previously and I believe it to be true. If I am wrong then I will find out and certainly apologise to the House.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member check his facts because I know from personal experience that even though that rule might exist it is not always applied and one has to go and protest about bills before the necessary adjustment is made. It is not automatic.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, neither my Hon and Learned colleague nor I are

technically competent to answer questions about this kind of thing but we will certainly cause an investigation to be made to ensure that the correct position is being followed and if, as my Hon and Learned colleague has said, what he has already told the House is not in fact correct we will naturally apologise and inform the House of the exact position.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask also when it is anticipated that the last column on bills which is the date of the actual reading of the meters will be filled in?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I will now put my head on the block. When the computer is operating.

HON G T RESTANO:

In the past it has been said that the machine was not working properly but, for example, the September accounts were sent out handwritten so there was no necessity for the non-completion of that particular column because of any fault in the machine.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I accept that point, Mr Speaker, and all I can say is that the work which is being done there is not as good as it ought to be. I cannot go beyond that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary take steps to ensure that the public gets better service in this respect in the future?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink.

7.2.78.

No.9 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government explain why no replacement for the Assistant Industrial Relations Officer has been appointed?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The Assistant Industrial Relations Officer's post was circulated to the Civil Service in the Bulletin of Circulars at the end of June 1977. Five candidates submitted applications but the Public Service Commission did not make any recommendations.

2. In the circumstances the Ministry of Overseas Development were asked to recruit an officer from the UK on a two-year contract. At the same time it was agreed with the Gibraltar Government Clerical Association from whose members this post is filled, that as soon as the officer was in post a local understudy would be selected to work closely with him with a view to taking over on completion of his contract. We have now been informed by ODM that it could take at least another two or three months to recruit. In the circumstances, and in view of the pressing need to re-inforce the IRO's section, we agreed with the GGCA on Monday the 30th January that we would not proceed with the appointment from outside Gibraltar and ask the Public Service Commission to reconsider local candidates including candidates who might apply in response to a circular which was published in the Bulletin last Thursday.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 9 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the decision to try and obtain a local applicant for the post was taken after notice of the question was given? Can Government say that?

HON A J CANEPA:

Before.

7.2.78.

No.10 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state for each year since 1971 the average household consumption of water in gallons per annum, the cost per household and the number of households involved?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial & Development Secretary

No, Sir. The information sought is not immediately available but given time it will be provided in due course to the Hon Member in writing. I would add this, which is not in my written answer, that we have taken the Hon Member literally since he is asking for figures since 1971, so that it will be 1972 inclusive, the last year 1977 naturally being an estimate.

7.2.78.

No.11 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

What help has been given to the Varyl Begg Young Persons Club since November 1977?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

Since the date mentioned by the Honourable Member, we have made available a grant for the purchase of furniture and, of course, our Youth and Careers Officers are always available for discussion and advice in youth matters.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.11 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member will recall that there was a question on this before. Does the Hon Member not recall undertaking that certain clearing up work would be done in the area? At the same time may I stress that the people involved are grateful for the grant for the furniture but has anything been done in clearing up the site as the Hon Member undertook to do in answer to a previous question?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I am not sure if the clearing up has been done yet but I will look into it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could an officer in the Public Works Department, specially persons to do with Varyl Begg, not liaise a little more closely with the people running the club because there is a great deal of work to be done there and I am sure the Hon Member would like to see it done as much as Hon Members on this side.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, I will see what I can do about that.

7.2.78.

No.12 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government confirm whether or not reports that one of the Casemates Gates has been mislaid, are accurate?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

No Sir, the Gate has not been mislaid.

Though the Public Works Department is not responsible for Ancient Monuments, I would explain that this particular Gate was found missing when the recent renovation works at the Casemates were commenced. Nobody at present in the service of FWD recollects when the missing Gate was last seen in situ or removed. The Gates were included in a land transfer from MOD to Government in 1969. It could well be that the Gate was by then missing as this Department has certainly not removed it for repairs.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.12 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is MOD responsible, Mr Speaker?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, it used to be MOD, it was then transferred to the Gibraltar Government but at the time of transfer nobody knows whether the Gate was included in the transfer or not.

7.2.78.

No.13 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Is Government satisfied that road users in Gibraltar are getting a fair return for taxes paid in the way of parking facilities and would Government not agree that the situation at Moorish Castle Estate is particularly in need of immediate improvement?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

Over the past 5 - 6 years Government has spent a considerable sum in providing car parking facilities at Laguna Estate, Arengo's Palace, Fishmarket, Town Range, Reclamation Road, Governor's Parade etc which have helped relieve the problem of traffic congestion.

The Hon Member will recall that a properly laid out car park was constructed in November 1972 (30 spaces) at Moorish Castle Area and with the limited land available in the area it would be difficult to provide additional car parking spaces.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.13 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that whereas on the one hand Government has provided considerable amount of parking space, taxpayers have spent a considerable amount of money as well. Could he tell me whether he is satisfied or not satisfied with the situation at Moorish Castle Estate where 30 parking bays is hardly sufficient and is he not further aware that there are a number of very justified complaints from people in that area, particularly since a number of new tenants have moved in, Gibraltar Regiment tenants, and the parking spaces are really at a premium.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, one is only too well aware that the Moorish Castle Area presents a tremendous amount of problems for parking as they do elsewhere. However, when I referred to these 30 spaces provided at Moorish Castle area, it is not that there are 30 spaces in Moorish Castle, they were an additional 30 spaces found at the Flater Youth Club immediately below Tankerville. We are very concerned, Mr Speaker, about the situation at Moorish Castle which has been brought to Government attention on more than one occasion but unfortunately because of land space there is little we can do in that area.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is my information correct that a request from a number of tenants at Moorish Castle Estate that the area should be more clearly marked and that the parking bays should be re-arranged, was

turned down because of lack of funds?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is not correct, Mr Speaker. In fact, if they were to be marked out properly then we would find that about 30% of the cars that today park up there improperly would not be able to do so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that is a rather odd philosophy for the Minister to adopt because they are marked everywhere else, why should they not be marked in that particular area? Even taking that point, Mr Speaker, has the Minister tried to introduce some sort of improvement, I know that he knows the area well himself, hasn't he tried to limit vehicles of a certain size being parked there permanently?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, I take the Hon Member's point. It has been brought to my attention and in fact I have witnessed this on certain visits to Moorish Castle area, that there are a number of lorries and goods vehicles that park up there for convenience of drivers that do take up much more space than an ordinary car, that could well be looked into, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I know the Hon Member is not responsible for the Police yet but perhaps he will have a word with the Commissioner on this. Mr Speaker, could I further ask the Hon Member what is happening in the area of Flat Bastion Road. It is the only other area I am going to touch on, Mr Speaker, I believe money was voted there for the conversion of a shelter for extra parking facilities and I believe the money has been there for a year now. Could the Hon Member give the neighbours at Flat Bastion Road some hope that the works will begin soon?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Hon Member is quite right. We did vote £30,000 last year for the conversion of the Air Raid Shelter at Flat Bastion Road. However, there have been difficulties of a technical nature in that area and although I very much doubt that we will be able to spend £30,000 in what is left of the financial year, it certainly isn't shelved and there is going to be a re-look from the technical aspect. I think the Hon Member will understand that there are not merely construction difficulties, there are other difficulties of fire risk and requirements from certain departments which make, at first hand, £30,000 become completely and utterly inadequate. But it is going to be looked at, Mr Speaker and it certainly isn't shelved.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Do I take it that the Government is considering whether to go ahead with this car park or not? The story that has gone out is that none

was voted but Government has changed its mind about it.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, Government has not changed its mind about the car park there at all. It is purely that we have had to hold back because of technical advice given to us from various departments and we hope to be able to fulfill this and overcome the more sophisticated requirements of some departments.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In other words, the Hon Member needs more money. Is this the point?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think I need something more but not what has been given as an estimate for the cost of conversion.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Is it that the Hon Member requires the bending of some rules to be able to build this?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not the bending of some rules, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Hon Member saying, in fact, that he disagrees with certain provisions or certain requirements affecting the car park?

MR SPEAKER:

I think we must put this in its proper perspective. I think the Hon Member has said: "We voted money, we have gone into the technicalities of converting this place into a garage, there are certain regulations we have had to comply with which will necessitate extra expenditure and we are going into the matter."

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not sure whether the Hon Member said regulations or the requirements of other departments. There is a difference between one and the other.

MR SPEAKER:

I think he did mention fire regulations and such like.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member said £30,000 was a ridiculous sum.

7.2.78.

No. 14 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

In view of the initial success of the Cultural Activities Committee will Government consider increasing the funds at its disposal to £10,000 in the Estimates of Expenditure 1978/79?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

In the preparation of the draft estimates we shall of course be considering the expansion of grants for cultural activities in common with all services but I would not wish to pre-judge this consideration or to commit the House to any level of expenditure in advance of the budgetary procedure.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 14 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

I was sure, Mr Speaker, when I asked the question the Minister would not. I am just offering him encouragement for him to fight the battle. Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member agree with the first part of my question, namely, that there has been initial success of the Cultural Activities Committee?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

If the Hon Member says so I am very pleased to hear it. As far as my side of the House is concerned we are quite happy with it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

You are quite happy. Therefore, the Hon Member would not think it is money down the drain to increase this particular sum?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I take his point, Sir, and we will look into it when the time comes along.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

7.2.78.

No.15 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government state how many streets and roads that have been dug up for repairs within the last two years have been re-dug and will Government give the reasons why it has been necessary to dig up the roads again in each case in such a short period of time?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

If the Hon Member could specify to which particular roads he is referring, a more detailed explanation could be given.

Priorities for the replacement of services do not always coincide, nor is it possible to predict when or where breakdowns are likely to occur particularly as some of these services date from Victorian times. Since usually most services follow approximately the same route, it sometimes happens that a particular road or street has to be dug up more than once to deal with breakdowns of different services at different times.

In the case of services under the road it is normal practice for the various Departments concerned to liaise so as to make joint use of any trenchwork.

This is the case in Main Street where the new sewer trench is being used by the Electricity & Telephone Departments who are laying new ducts for this service.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.15 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I think my question is quite clear. I asked how many streets and roads had been dug up and what is the reason in each case. I don't think that that answer has covered the question.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, where you get a small break in a water main and you dig it up, one wants to appreciate whether it is considered as digging up a street or a road or whether it is a big work like the present one that is currently being undertaken in Main Street. I am afraid it is a little bit beyond our capacity to know each and every little piece of road that has been dug up over the last two years where we get a considerable number of breaks in fresh water mains, salt water mains, etc.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, whilst this is true in the case of inevitable accidental breakdowns when it comes to the laying of specific mains and

telephone lines and electricity cables and so on, is there a kind of coordinating committee which looks into how the thing is worked out so that there is no double digging?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, the usual procedure is that at the beginning of the year, the Public Works Department circularises the Electricity and Telephone Departments with a list of the main roadworks that are going to be undertaken during the year and these other departments then liaise and fit in theirs as much as they can. Sometimes this can also work the other way, that it may be the Electricity Department is going to do a major work and they will ask the Public Works Department if they have anything to do there but, of course, even with the best will in the world where one does share facilities of digging up, if you get a sudden break in any area this means digging the road up irrespective.

HON G T RESTANO:

Whilst appreciating that it would be difficult to enumerate minor works could the Minister prepare a list of the major repairs, major diggings, that there have been over the past two years and give us that information. If he doesn't have it now, perhaps, he can give it later.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, I will try to do that for him. I think the major one that everybody has seen is the digging up of Main Street to replace the sewers.

7.2.78.

No.16 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will the Minister of Education and Public Works explain why the Committee which was set up on 8th March 1977 to enquire into potable water losses, and of which he is the Chairman, has not had a meeting for over six months?

Answer:

The Minister for Education & Public Works

One of the reasons for delay has been the difficulty of arranging a promised visit to the distillers - firstly because of the industrial action and secondly owing to a distiller being shut down for annual maintenance.

The delay in holding a meeting is regretted but unfortunately a meeting scheduled over the last fortnight had to be cancelled owing to the indisposition of the Chairman. An early meeting will, however, be held.

7.2.78.

No.17 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state whether the negotiations in connection with Engineer House referred to in their Answer to Question No.320 of 1977 have been put in hand?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes, Sir. Government's intentions were communicated to the Company's solicitor in Gibraltar on 2 November, 1977. A reply is awaited.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.17 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, was there a date to that letter?

HON A W SERFATY:

The 2nd November 1977.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, 2nd November 1977. We are today on the 7th February, it is 3 months ago. Is Government satisfied that there hasn't been any reply to that letter?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, negotiations are bound to take some time given the complicated situation arising from the fact that all the original shareholders of the company are dead. One of these died insolvent and his shares are now invested in the Official Receiver in London and this complicates matters.

HON G T RESTANO:

Could I suggest that a further letter be written, Mr Speaker?

HON A W SERFATY:

There is no harm in writing another letter but the representative is here in Gibraltar so I will make quite sure that the matter is pursued further.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Isn't Government pursuing this at a rather leisurely pace, Mr Speaker?

HON A W SERFATY:

These are complicated matters, as I said before.

7.2.78.

No.18 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Have the proposed improvements to disembarkation procedure at the Mons Calpe Berth now been introduced and has Government approached the lessors of the terminal offices at the Port in this connection?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Discussions have been held between Customs, Port, Police and Public Works Departments on ways and means of improving disembarkation procedures at the Mons Calpe and Hydrofoil berths.

Funds are available for the erection of barriers and penfold fencing at the western edge of the covered area east of the Customs Hall and it is hoped that the work will be carried out in the near future. The resulting "No Parking areas" west of these barriers will avoid congestion of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic which is the main cause of the existing difficulties.

Government will when possible repair generally and redecorate the exterior of the terminal building and the operators have indicated that they will then be prepared to enhance the interior of the building and carry out necessary alterations to meet the requirements of the Immigration Department.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.18 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am very glad, Mr Speaker, that we seem to have mobilised a considerable number of people into doing something. Did the Hon Member say that the barriers had gone up or were going up?

HON A W SERFATY:

They will go up in the near future.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I asked this because in his answer to the last question on this subject he also said that the barriers were going up in the near future and I was wondering whether they were up already. I am grateful for the work the Minister has done in this connection and the number of departments he has tried to get to coordinate action and also with the lessors. Could the Hon Member give an assurance that by the time the tourist season proper really starts that the whole area will be in a better condition?

HON A W SERFATY:

I cannot give that assurance. It all depends on the amount of work that the Public Works Department has to carry out and the question of funds, too.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it a major work that the Hon Member is envisaging? I thought it was a question of simply putting barriers of a movable kind.

HON A W SERFATY:

I thought that the question included the redecoration and repairs to the terminal building. The barriers and the penfold fence should not take that time. Even then as I am not responsible myself, I wouldn't like to give that assurance but I hope the Public Works Department will get on with the job.

HON M XIBERRAS:

As the Hon Mr William Isola used to say on many occasions to the Hon Member, is he not aware that it is bad to have in the middle of the tourist season these works in progress in a place like this and would the Hon Member try to prevail upon his colleague on his right to see to it that the works are done before the commencement of the tourist season?

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer is in the affirmative, Sir.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree that the biggest problem is passengers using the vehicular exit of the ship and causing a tremendous scramble as soon as the ramp is down, rather than using the gangway?

HON A W SERFATY:

What I said before in answer to the question was that the main problem is that too many people and vehicles congregate outside that area. When these barriers are set up under the covered area to the east of the Customs Hall, this should in a big way solve the problem. I don't know whether that is what the Hon Member is referring to.

HON G T RESTANO:

What I was referring to, Mr Speaker, was that when a vessel comes alongside, passengers disembark at the vehicular exit rather than at the passenger exit and this causes a tremendous scramble because instead of having one passenger at a time going down the gangway and then using the barriers and what have you, you have about twenty or thirty scrambling out of the vessel as soon as it arrives.

HON A W SERFATY:

They have to go to the Customs Hall anyhow so I don't imagine that that would be one of the major causes of the trouble. They have to go to the Customs Hall whether they come out through the pedestrian or the vehicular exit.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree with my colleague that it would be an improvement if he could prevail on the people running the Mons Calpe to limit exit of passengers.....

MR SPEAKER:

Let us not go into the remedial measures that could be taken.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Couldn't the Hon Member try to persuade the operators of the vessel.

HON A W SERFATY:

I will put in a word and see whether we can improve on that.

7.2.78.

No.19 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government completed its review in connection with the renewal of leases in multiple occupation and has Government fulfilled its undertaking given in answer to question 314 of 1977 to be very careful of decisions made in the immediate future whilst consideration of the matter was proceeding?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The review in connection with the renewal of leases in multiple occupation has not yet been completed.

The need to fulfil the undertaking given in answer to question 314 has not arisen meanwhile.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.19 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member not aware of one such lease somewhere in the area of Prince Edwards Road, and is the Hon Member not aware further that some assignation has been made in the intervening period between now and when the first question was asked?

HON A W SERFATY:

As far as I am aware there has been no application to assign in this property in Prince Edwards Road so the point doesn't arise, really.

HON P J ISOLA:

Isn't the position that there was going to be given a lease in respect of some area in Prince Edwards Road in which there was some business premises? The nature of the question was why wasn't a separate lease given to the business premises in separate occupation in view of the fact that the Government was the landlord. Has there been any development in that direction?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is alleged that there was an agreement to sell that lease but this has been categorically denied so the point doesn't really arise. It has been alleged, I agree, but it has been denied.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The Government, therefore, is in a position to state all these things because I am sure the Government has carried out a full investigation of this. Is that the case?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have tried to find out what is going on behind the scenes. We try to find out the facts about every case and we had a hunch that this was the case behind the question. There is no application to assign, as far as I am aware, or to sell.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the original purpose of the question is to ensure that if somebody was going to get a lease renewed it was not with the purpose of selling out immediately afterwards, especially where there was somebody else who needed the premises for themselves. I took the point, Mr Speaker, in the earlier answers that this was a matter requiring study and I therefore asked the Government, the House will recall, to pay particular attention to a number of cases and I hinted at this case in Prince Edwards Road. From my knowledge of the matter I am certainly not satisfied that the Government has been very careful at all in dealing with this problem. Would the Minister tell me what steps were taken to ensure that the matter was being dealt with correctly?

HON A W SERFATY:

There has been no application to assign or to sell the lease or any other subsequent lease of that nature so the Government feels it has no steps to take in the matter until the matter arises.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So as far as Government is concerned no matter has arisen so far?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is correct.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I see.

7.2.78.

No.20 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government confirm that it proposes to change the location of the Tourist Office in London and explain the necessity for this move and describe the type of accommodation that is being taken up?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes Sir, I confirm that we are changing the location of the Tourist Office in London from Trafalgar Square to the Strand opposite Australia House. This has been necessary because the lease on our present premises expired on the 31 January 1978, and its renewal rent was too high.

The new premises which comprises of a ground floor and basement will be twice the area of our present offices and have a shop frontage of 6 metres to the Strand and 15 metres facing the entrance to the courtyard of the new building known as Chemical Bank House.

7.2.78.

No.21 of 1978

CRAL

The Hon P J Isola

Following the reply by the Financial and Development Secretary to Question No.311 of 1977, would Government state whether they have now considered any projects of local development that might qualify for EEC Regional Aid, and is it in any event willing to consider the development of the Port as qualifying for such aid?

Answer:

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

The criteria for eligibility for Regional Aid from the EEC were outlined in my answer to Question 311 of 1977, when it was pointed out that so far as the development of future power and water supplies are concerned Gibraltar did not qualify. That position remains unchanged and there are no other projects under consideration at present which would appear to meet the criteria laid down.

As regards the development of the port, a project application has been made for the grant of UK development aid funds. The Government does not consider that any advantage is to be gained by testing whether this project might qualify for EEC Regional Aid unless the present application were to fail.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.21 OF 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Sir, would it not be advisable to look more into this question of Regional Aid because I think in the circumstances of Gibraltar do we not have some sort of imbalances here resulting from changes that have occurred over the years and is not funds from the United Kingdom fairly limited in this day and age. Would it not be wise for Gibraltar to get itself on the European map by making an application testing the situation even though a similar application may have been made to the UK Government.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As I have said previously in my answer to the question to which the Hon and Learned Member has referred, the Government will certainly investigate the possibility of tapping such a fund as exists under the European Community whenever it appears that the Community's own criteria can be met by an application from Gibraltar. As the Government sees the position at the moment there is no project on the stocks which would qualify for Regional Aid from the EEC.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is there any project conceivable for Gibraltar that could qualify

for Regional Aid? We have undertaken, Mr Speaker, a number of obligations from the EEC in relation to our life in Gibraltar, trade, immigration and so forth so is it not time that we tried to get something in return?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

These criteria set by the EEC are extremely difficult to apply to a place like Gibraltar. For example, the principal aim of the Fund, to which the Hon Member has referred, is to help correcting principal regional imbalances which result from industrial change, the effect of obsolescent industries, over-reliance on agriculture, and structural unemployment. It is not easy to see any project which would be applicable to Gibraltar meeting those basic criteria.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I think the Hon the Financial and Development Secretary has left his imagination at home, Mr Speaker. Is the Hon Member aware of the sort of projects regularly published by the European Community's authority....

MR SPEAKER:

Let us not debate that. The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary must not use his imagination to answer questions, he must use information.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am asking the Financial and Development Secretary, Mr Speaker, whether he is aware of the type of project, say, in the United Kingdom which qualifies for such aid, projects in the region of, say, £10,000 to, say, £75,000. I am asking this question, Mr Speaker, particularly in view of another criterion which he mentioned the last time he was asked the question, that of geographical isolation. Would he not be interested to know that some of the little roads that are being improved in the wilds of Scotland and so forth, Mr Speaker, appear to have at least as weak a case as we appear to have in the Financial and Development Secretary's mind.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Certainly I am aware of that and a great deal more but it does not help Gibraltar. We have pointed it out and it has made no difference to the Bank's response to the applications and soundings that we have made.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not consider other aspects of Port development, not just the filling in between two jetties, as being of substantial importance to Europe bearing in mind our geographical position?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

What other projects, Mr Speaker?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Financial and Development Secretary wants this side to do the work for him and not just give him a clue that is a different matter. Would the Hon Member not agree, in principle, that the geographical position of Gibraltar is important to Europe and could be of use, generally, to European countries and would he not, in his own mind, let alone the Community, agree that such an investment might be as relevant to the future of Europe as some of the other projects which are now being paid for in the United Kingdom and elsewhere?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Hon Leader of the Opposition is asking me for a personal opinion.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, Mr Speaker, because he is the Financial and Development Secretary. I am asking him, as Financial and Development Secretary, who is looking after Gibraltar's finances, along with his colleagues in the Government, would he not agree that he does need a little bit of imagination.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, that is asking personal matters. Next question.

7.2.78.

No.22 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Further to the reply to Question No.312/77 with regard to the filling in between Nos 1 and 2 Jetties at the Fort can Government now state whether the ODM expert has been sent out to Gibraltar and if not has Government any idea as to when he is coming out?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

The expert appointed by the Ministry of Overseas Development, a Mr Stringer of the British Transport Docks Board, arrived in Gibraltar on 27 November on a three day visit to study the proposed reclamation in the light of the port facilities as they exist.

His report has now been forwarded by ODM to the Gibraltar Government for comments.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 22 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Minister give an indication as to whether the report is favourable to the development of that area?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, Mr Stringer came to the conclusion that additional land for supporting container working is essential and that the scheme for reclamation was considered to be fully justified in terms of operational necessity although not necessarily on the basis proposed by the Gibraltar Government.

HON G T RESTANO:

Has this particular project then been overruled by the expert, this particular project of filling in between Nos 1 and 2 jetties?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, it has not been overruled but other suggestions made by Mr Stringer are being investigated.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does this entail any filling in anywhere else?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, it entails filling in instead of between Nos 1 and 2 Jetties between somewhere else and somewhere else.

HON G T RESTANO:

Could the Minister say where this filling in is thought to be the right place to fill in.

HON A W SERFATY:

I would not like at this stage to give details because there are other parties involved.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, since we have lived with the illusion that space between Nos 1 and 2 jetties was going to be filled in, would the Hon Member not consider it fair to Hon Members on this side of the House to inform them more or less where Mr Stringer thinks the filling in should be done?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is reclaiming between Nos 2 and 3 jetties instead of between Nos 1 and 2.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether Mr Stringer saw anybody outside Government to obtain their opinions?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am sure he saw all people affected. I do not think I have a list of the names here. Normally these reports start with the people who have been interviewed. Yes, I have a list here: the Chief Minister, myself, the Financial and Development Secretary, the Captain of the Port, the Chairman of the Gibraltar Shipping Association and the Manager of the Stevedoring and Cargo Handling Company.

HON J BOSSANO:

So, in fact, apart from Government it was just the Shipping Association and the Stevedoring Company. Other port users were not asked for an opinion?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is a matter for Mr Stringer.

HON J BOSSANO:

Did the Hon Member expect Mr Stringer to know before he arrived in Gibraltar? Did Government make any attempt to inform him of who uses the Port?

HON A W SERFATY:

Mr Stringer, of course, must have taken advice from the Captain of

the Port and others and he saw, as I said before, the Shipping Association and the Stevedoring and Cargo Handling Company and the Shipping Association includes many operators.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does Government not consider that before anything is finally decided at the Port it might be an idea to find what ideas other people using the port have on the subject.

HON A W SERFATY:

When a decision is taken of course we will consult the different parties as I usually do.

HON J BOSSANO:

Doesn't the Government think that it is possible, if Mr Stringer was exposed to just one point of view on the best way to go about improving the utilisation of the port, that he might have come to a conclusion which, unwittingly, reflects a bias. Is there not danger of that?

HON A W SERFATY:

I do not think so. The calibre of Mr Stringer is very high. He is the Director of the Port of Southampton and he knows his job.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the area reclaimed between Nos 2 and 3 jetties greater or smaller than the filling in would have been between Nos 1 and 2 jetties?

HON A W SERFATY:

It could be exactly the same or it could be smaller, depending on how the work is done.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, returning to the point of consultation. Did Mr Stringer consult the people using the Port by virtue of the fact of the use that they made of the port? In other words, the Shipping Association and the Stevedoring Company were consulted because they are, say, tonnage-wise the main users of the Port?

HON A W SERFATY:

I do not know why he consulted the Shipping Association. It is up to Mr Stringer as to who he consults. He had been sent by the Ministry of Overseas Development and I do not think it would be for me, for example, or anybody in the Government to tell Mr Stringer who he had to consult. We might be accused then.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Minister not consider laying down guidelines in his

Department so that when anybody comes on a major project and the thought goes of consultation with port users, that the attention is drawn to the person concerned that there are other port users other than, for example, the Stevedoring Company, because it seems to me this one goes back many, many years and there are, undoubtedly, today other users probably almost as important as the Stevedoring Company. Doesn't the Minister agree that it is a pity if these facts are not brought to the attention of a visiting expert? Will he give us an assurance that when consultations take place in the port the attention of the person making these consultations is drawn to the fact that the Government considers it desirable that he should meet a cross-section of, for example, port users.

HON A W SERFATY:

I give that assurance.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member say whether he, in representing or making points to Mr Stringer, whether he had previously consulted the major port users in the Port of Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

I believe I have. I would not like to mislead the House but I have discussed this matter not only with the Stevedoring Company and the Shipping Association but with other users of the Port.

7.2.78.

No.23 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has any reply been received from the Ministry of Overseas Development to Government's application for funds to carry out the deep-drilling project at North Front and in the Rock area and would Government state the expected cost of the project?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Yes Sir.

The application for development aid funds for exploratory deep-drilling for the abstraction of water from the Rock has been approved by the Ministry of Overseas Development. The estimated cost of the project is £200,000.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 23 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Government have any idea as to when this project will commence?

HON A W SEREFATY:

The Institute of Geological Sciences will provide consultancy services for the project which will be let by tender to a suitable specialist contractor. Drilling is expected to commence in mid-year after hydro-geological surveys have been carried out to determine the most promising area for deep-drilling. Work on the hydro-geological survey will start this month.

7.2.78.

No.24 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state what are its intentions in connection with development at Catalan Bay and with special regard to old unoccupied buildings there?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

It is Government's intention to demolish in the near future the two unoccupied buildings at the north end of Catalan Bay Village. Further investigations are being carried out with the object of determining whether other adjoining buildings could similarly be demolished but this will depend on a solution being found to the associated problems of decanting.

Subject to funds being made available and to the question of decanting being solved it is further proposed to use the cleared area which has a potential in its entirety of 14-16 dwellings, for residential development.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.24 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, how many floors would that entail?

HON A W SERFATY:

This will be the same type of construction as you can see in Catalan Bay Village itself, 3/4 floors, not more.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Minister satisfied that 16 extra dwellings at Catalan Bay are sufficient for the applicants for housing there?

MR SPEAKER:

No, I am not allowing any questions on the solution of the housing problem at Catalan Bay. I will allow questions which will elucidate any further information on what is going to happen to the derelict buildings.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, in view of the small area available for development, is the Minister satisfied that he is getting maximum use of the area with the small number of dwellings that he is producing?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am satisfied. I don't think that there is any question of a multi-storey building going up in Catalan Bay Village. I am satisfied that we are getting the best possible density of the available area.

7.2.78.

No.25 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G. T Restano

Will Government state when it is proposed that its take-over of the Key and Anchor Club is to be effected?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism Trade & Economic Development

The transfer of the Key and Anchor Club premises is dependent on certain reprovisioning works being carried out by PSA/DOE for which the Gibraltar Government has been asked to assume financial responsibility in accordance with accepted principles. A revised estimate of cost has been received and this is under consideration in the context of Government's draft Estimates of Expenditure for 1978/79.

I may add that the whole of the first floor of the north wing of the building is already in the occupation of the Education Department as an annexe to Bishop Fitzgerald School.

7.2.78.

No.26 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state what progress has been reached in its application to O.D.M. for the demolition of the old St Joseph's Hospital and the redevelopment of that area?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade & Economic Development

Approval on an 'if and when' basis was received on 11 August 1977 from the Ministry of Overseas Development for the demolition of existing buildings at the St Joseph's Hospital site. A project application for the redevelopment of the site was sent to the Ministry on 3 January 1978.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.26 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, why was there a delay of five months before putting in the development project to ODM?

HON A W SERFATY:

There are several reasons. One of them is that there have been discussions, I believe, with the union on a job price contract for the demolition of the building and then of course if the work has to go out to tender there are questions of priorities on the matter of the preparation of bills of quantities. In any case the little delay in pulling down this building does not worry me at the present moment of time because actual constructional work, always supposing that the cost of the new building is approved, will commence in November, 1978.

HON G T RESTANO:

Did the Minister say that it has been put out to tender?

HON A W SERFATY:

The demolition has to be put out to tender.

HON G T RESTANO:

I don't see the relativity between one and the other. However long it takes to demolish, surely the plan for the new development should have been put in ages ago.

HON A W SERFATY:

Not really. A project application which includes plans was sent on the 3rd January to the Ministry of Overseas Development. As regards working drawings and plans this will only be prepared when the project application is approved.

7.2.78.

No.27 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state for each year since 1971 the average household consumption of electricity in units per annum, the cost per household and the number of households involved?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

The average household consumption in units per annum, the cost per household and the number of households involved since the year 1971 has been as follows:-

	Average Consumption per household units	Cost per household £	Average number of households connected
1971	3320	£44.03	7262
1972	3356	£44.41	7338
1973	3249	£61.68	7452
1974	3247	£72.64	7619
1975	2978	£72.61	7902
1976	3000	£73.08	8152
1977	3028	£97.41	8256

7.2.78.

No.28 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government received the additional facts it required from Cable and Wireless in order to take a decision on the proposal of that company to run the international telephone operation and if so what are Government's intentions in this matter?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

No further information has been received from Cable and Wireless regarding the running of the International Telephone Service.

7.2.78.

No.29 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Is Government now in a position to state when the limited number of fully automatic telephone circuits with the UK will be installed?

Answer:

The Minister for Municipal Services

No. The Government is still pursuing this possibility.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.29 OF 1978

HON P J ISOLA:

Is there any particular reason for the delay.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The question of whether to introduce limited automatic circuits via the United Kingdom depends largely on the available circuits and such factors as metering, etc. This question is being considered as part of the overall investigation being conducted by Government regarding the automating of the international service as a whole. With the number of circuits which we have available for international calls, if we introduce the limited trunk service you would get an engaged tone all the time because we are not getting the additional circuits which we were going to have from Morocco as the Moroccans were not interested and now we are now depending on other bigger schemes of which you are no doubt aware.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, when did Morocco decline to give us this service?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There is no question of declining, they were just not interested. They didn't want to go ahead with it.

HON G T RESTANO:

But I would like to know when the Government was informed of this?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It is not a question of when the Government was informed. This kind of work is done by Cable and Wireless through the Moroccan Government.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, the Minister committed himself in Question 325 of 1977 that this would be implemented in the not too distant future.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, when we thought that the circuits were coming.

HON G T RESTANO:

When did the Minister realise that the circuits were not coming?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Since then.

HON G T RESTANO:

I would like a date, please.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

On the 6th December, 1977.

7.2.78.

No.30 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has there been any progress in the discussions regarding the possible merger of St Bernards and the Naval Hospital and if so would Government give an indication of the stage reached in the discussions?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical & Health Services

Mr Speaker, as you are aware, I have already given notice that I propose to make a statement on the Medical Department which will include the information sought by the Hon G Restano.

MR SPEAKER:

As usual I will give a fair amount of latitude for questions since it has been the subject matter of a question.

7.2.78.

No.31 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Will Government state when they intend to re-surface the Victoria Stadium with Nortex?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The Nortex playing fields at the Victoria Stadium are divided in two areas. Resurfacing of the larger area, which is used for football, athletics and cricket, started on the 6th February, and depending on weather conditions it is envisaged that work will be completed towards the end of March. The smaller area which is used for hockey and cricket net practice will be resurfaced during the month of September.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.31 OF 1978

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, in view of the blacking being lifted, I am glad to learn that Government has taken a decision to act quickly before there can be any chance of any further industrial action at the stadium.

7.2.78.

No. 32 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Has Government considered further the possibility of building a swimming pool in Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing and Sport

Government has held a number of meetings with the GASA and a suggestion of constructing a 33½ metre covered pool at the Stadium is being considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 32 OF 1978

HON J B PEREZ:

May I ask the Hon Member if in fact he knows whether the Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association are happy with this?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, they had originally asked Government to consider a much smaller pool and have asked for Government assistance financially on this and it is considered that an uncovered pool of a smaller dimension could be of benefit to absolutely no-one but those who swim during the summer months so we are considering a covered pool which is larger than what they wanted and which will accommodate, if possible, much more activity for swimming facilities than what they originally wanted. They are quite satisfied.

HON J B PEREZ:

Can I ask the Hon Member if he has considered any particular area in Gibraltar in which this can be situated?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

We thought of the stadium. There is an area lying east of the old stand which is unused and the dimensions provided fit in within that particular area.

7.2.78.

No.33 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J B Perez

Has Government now carried out the necessary investigation into the complaints by the tenants of the ground floor flats at Varyl Begg Estate as stated in answer to Question No.335 of 1977?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

The main complaint by ground floor tenants at the Varyl Begg Estate was one of possible flooding and rising dampness. This is related to the question of the general defects of this estate which is subject to discussion between the Consultants and Contractors.

The representations for lower rents because of lack of balcony could not be met because the rents are assessed on actual floor area.

The representation for windows to open outwards was considered but found impossible because of contraction difficulties.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.33 OF 1978

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, would I be right in saying that the answer is that it is still being considered, or has Government taken a final decision on this?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Sir, we are certainly considering the question of the flooding that takes place on some of the ground floor flats at Varyl Begg and also the question of rising dampness. What we cannot consider any further is the question of reduction in rents, as requested by the tenants, and windows to open outwards as opposed to opening inwards.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would the Minister state when they will stop considering and start doing something about it?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am sorry, I didn't hear?

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would the Minister state when they are going to stop considering and start doing something about it?

MR SPEAKER:

You don't have to answer that. The Government has replied that they have already done something about the reduction of rent and the opening of the windows and that the question of the defects and dampness cannot be done until such time as the legal tangle is sorted out.

HON J B PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, would I be correct in saying that the whole problem concerning the ground floor tenants comes together with the problem of the roofs. It has got to do with the same thing, is that it?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I was intrigued by this contraction. Perhaps when the Government finishes evaluating the progress that has been made in this respect could they explain, Mr Speaker, what they mean by contraction difficulties in the windows opening outwards?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, the problem there is that the ground floor flats have shutters that run up and down the exterior of the glass windows. It would therefore be impossible to have them on the other side. I am not saying that it is impossible, no doubt it would be possible but at a tremendous cost.

MR SPEAKER:

May I interrupt the Minister. May I ask whether the word "contraction" is the right word or is it "construction"?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think it is contraction, Mr Speaker, although one can say that the word "contraction" difficulties would not be misleading either.

MR SPEAKER:

You are then being asked what are the contraction difficulties.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Well, Mr Speaker, the windows would have to be moved elsewhere and it would mean a complete renewal of the actual window frames.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Minister mean that there are financial impediments? There are windows in Gibraltar, I think, that do open outwards. I am loath to take, Mr Speaker, this word "contraction" as being an insuperable obstacle to progress.

3.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am not an expert in any form of building or design but I would take it, Mr Speaker, that to be able to meet the ground floor tenants' request on the question of the windows opening inwards or outwards, I am sure there could be a solution but, of course, it is one of tremendous financial implications. I say that because there is bound to be a solution if we were prepared to pay for it.

HON J B PEREZ:

Would the Hon Member say whether, in fact, the matter has been investigated by an expert or not?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Of course, Mr Speaker, it has been investigated by our engineers at this stage in particular and there are a number of complications.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Have the people who complained been informed of these matters?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

They have certainly been informed, Mr Speaker, of the question of the windows and they have also been informed that we cannot consider a lowering in rent.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Were they informed by the Minister or were they informed by letter? I have heard complaints that the Minister has not informed the people who complained in the first place.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I don't think I held a meeting with them, Mr Speaker. I think they were informed by Mr Massias from the Public Works Department.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon Member, perhaps, accord them the courtesy of informing them. Since the matter has been raised in the House and he has promised to investigate, would he discuss the matter with the people who complained originally?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I cannot recall if I have told them personally, I may have done it verbally. I will check this and if they have not been informed I will cause them to be informed.

4.

HON J B PEREZ:

Can I ask the Hon Member whether, in fact, the ground floor tenants have stopped paying their rent?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not as far as I know, Mr Speaker.

7.2.78.

No.34 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the number of applications for rehousing received during 1977, the number of applicants re-accommodated during the year and the size of the Housing Waiting List at the end of the year and the comparable figure for end 1976?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

Yes Sir.

In 1977, 251 new applications were received.

During 1977 a number of applicants were re-accommodated in connection with the Modernisation Programme and as a result 93 applications were dealt with.

At the end of 1977 there were 1758 applications. There were 1600 at the end of 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.34 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member say whether in his plans for Housing allocation during the current year he expects the list to increase or decrease during 1978?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, if one can take an average for 1977 of 251 new applications being received, the whole prospect of an increase in applications or decrease would depend entirely upon the impending allocation of the vacant flats at the Varyl Begg Estate.

HON J BOSSANO:

The number of applications is 251. Is this a fairly high figure or the sort of rate at which he has been having applications in recent years?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, it is about average, I think. Between 300 and 250 has been normal for the past nine years or so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member not agree that these figures show a deterioration of the housing position?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not necessarily, Mr Speaker. I think what it has shown is that people obviously want a betterment and because, and rightly so, people are

not prepared to live as they used to live many years ago, there are a number of applications from people who want to better their living standard.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in 1969 the number of people on the housing list was in the region of 1,400 and now the figure is 1,758. He attributes this increase in the number of people on the list to the desire of people to better their standard of living rather than to a deterioration in the housing situation, generally, namely, that the Government housing is not coping with demand.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I think we could argue on the question of figures and theories till doomsday. If the Hon Member has rightly said that in 1971 there was 1,400 applications and if one considers that between 1974 and 1976, 600 flats at Varyl Begg were allocated, there should have been a reduction to something like 800 or so applications. The fact that there are more applications stems from a number of factors. It stems from the private sector. People in the private sector who have been accustomed to living in the private sector basically all their lives have found it necessary now to apply for government housing because landlords have been sub-letting vacant flats out to people that are considered to be difficult to live with. We also find the situation where young couples no longer wish to tolerate living with in-laws and hence we find a terrific amount of applications coming, as I say, from young couples that are no longer prepared to live with their in-laws or fathers and mothers. As I mentioned here before the figure of some 400 new houses would break the back of the problem.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree that his present comments are in no way reconcilable with the contribution he made to a recent debate on housing where he expressed concern at the housing situation. Will the Minister say, therefore, that there has been a very sudden and drastic improvement in the situation bearing in mind that this motion was heard in the House only some six months ago?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I do not wish for one moment to withdraw anything I said. I think that the housing situation in Gibraltar is worthy of the highest consideration. What I am saying is...

MR SPEAKER:

No, you are not being asked to withdraw anything. You are being asked whether the position is better or worse or the same.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Exactly the same, Mr Speaker, as it was six months ago. We have had no allocation for over a year.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

7.2.78

No.35 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

How many flats have been used to decant Government tenants in connection with the modernisation scheme since the scheme began and how many are as at present earmarked for that purpose?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

From 1975 to date 97 families have been decanted and rehoused in post-war accommodation.

Every dwelling of a post-war standard becoming available other than at the Varyl Begg Estate has been earmarked to meet the requirements of the current modernisation of pre-war dwellings Programme.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.35 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I take it that there have been no allocations other than in connection with the modernisation programme outside Varyl Begg?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, if I said no it would be completely false. We have accommodated two medical categorised cases.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Fair enough.

7.2.78.

No.36 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state what are the current qualifying pointages under the Housing Allocation List?

Answer:

The Minister for Housing & Sport

Allocation lists for phase 6 and Block 18 have not been drawn up as the remaining vacant flats at Varyl Begg Estate are not as yet ready for allocation and subsequent occupation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.36 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I gather that the pointage system is now lying dormant since the Hon Member has said that only allocations in connection with modernisation are being made and Phase 6 and so forth at Varyl Begg are not ready for allocation.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

They are not lying dormant, Mr Speaker. As regards the four vacant blocks at Varyl Begg Estate they will of course be assessed at the point value standing at September, 1976. Other than that there will be nothing else coming for the time being until the modernisation programme begins to give us a return.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does it mean that outside Varyl Begg and outside the 37 flats at Rosia Dale, the pointage system has no use?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, yes, I think that would be the case. In fact, I think it even included Rosia Dale which may also have to be used in connection with the modernisation programme.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not consider it wise to make a statement bearing in mind the fact that most housing applicants think of the pointage scheme as being the main criterion, or the main rules, under which Government housing is allocated.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have not made a statement on this policy dependent upon the aid talks which are to take place in the very near future. Once it is known exactly what the programme will be all about then, of course, it will be a matter for Government to make a policy statement on the question of housing.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member include this aspect which I think is absolutely transcendental as far as housing is concerned because for the first time obviously there are criteria other than the pointage scheme which have come into operation along which the whole allocation of Government housing was based which now has no applicability or relevance.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is not the case, Mr Speaker. It is a question of policy which I say I cannot prejudge at this stage but it can well be that Government could decide, say, a 50% for modernisation and 50% for allocation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I ask the Minister whether in respect of the remaining phases of Varyl Begg the allocations will take place on the basis of pointage, or what percentage of those flats will be allocated in order to accommodate the modernisation programme.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Varyl Begg will not be used at all for modernisation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Not for decanting?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, Varyl Begg will be used exclusively for those people who qualify as on the 30th September, 1976, on the pointage system.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would I be right in saying, dealing with individual cases, that there has been a deterioration in many cases of over 100 points in the last year, in other words that whereas before, say, September, 1975, one needed 250 points to qualify for a 4-roomed flat, now the qualification is at least 350.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

As it stands today, Sir, to qualify for Phase 6 at Varyl Begg you would require at least 400 points for a 4-roomed kitchen/bathroom flat, at least 400 points for a 3RKB, at least 380 for a 2RKB and 300, Mr Speaker, for a bedsitter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree now that there has been a marked deterioration in the housing situation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is not so, Mr Speaker. I think that the Hon Member who has been Minister for Housing knows very well that it isn't so. Points can be increased within the scheme which may not necessarily reflect the housing situation. It has been static for a year without allocations. By getting rid of these 140 vacant flats we may well find that the points have dropped down to the 250 that was the case back in 1975.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, so the Minister is no longer concerned, do I take it, that the rate of production of new houses or flats of any kind has had a marked effect on the housing situation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Of course I am concerned, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member whether he is saying now that the non allocation of Varyl Begg has had no effect at all on the housing modernisation programme, that is, that none of the delay is attributable to the non-allocation of Varyl Begg which I think was suggested at one time?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, no doubt those people who have qualified for Varyl Begg, no doubt a number of them would be people we would have to decant anyway.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying therefore that people who were about to qualify, as I recall, on 250 points let us say two years ago that would be getting Varyl Begg flats - I am not saying individual people, but generally speaking - when they are ready for allocation on a higher pointage, is that what the Minister is saying, or do we have a different category of applicant who has jumped over the applicants who had 250 at that particular point two years ago?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Mr Speaker, that would not be so, that is why I said the points would be evaluated as at the 30th September 1976. We may find today that we have applications with 450 points but they wouldn't qualify unless they would qualify in September 1976. We are evaluating the allocation of Phase 6 on the pointage value of September 1976.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the date of September 1976, in fact, due to the fact

4.

that that was when the original allocation was anticipated to take place and, secondly, could I ask the Minister how will he deal with those people who would have qualified in the original date and who have subsequently been dealt with either through the modernisation programme or for some reason have left the housing list, will those vacancies also be as at September 1976 or will a different date be taken for that?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, if the people who qualify for Varyl Begg have been rehoused through the modernisation programme then the application could well be cancelled because they have been reaccommodated and therefore no longer is there an application in existence. The vacancy left by that kind of individual will of course be taken by the person closer to the 400 mark being required as a minimum.

HON J BOSSANO:

What I am asking, Mr Speaker, is will the queue be the queue as it stood in September 1976 or the queue as it stands now?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir, it will have to be September 1976, because that is when people would have qualified. The fact that we have not allocated them is not their fault.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Minister in view of the fact that unfairness could result unless these things are explained properly or could be interpreted by applicants, for instance, an applicant who was 10 points away from a house at a particular date, does he consider that the date September, 1976, is a fair date for all the applicants involved?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

That is the fairest date, Mr Speaker, because that is when Phase 6 and Block 18 were handed over to Government for allocation. In other words, we were prepared to put that nucleus of applicants into Phase 6 and as I said the fact that they haven't been allocated is far from being their fault.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer is, yes. Next Question.

7.2.78.

No.37 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the unemployment figures for the months of October to December 1977 and January 1978 giving a breakdown by sex and nationality?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

The end-of-the-month figures of persons registered as unemployed either with the Department of Labour and Social Security or the Youth and Careers Office of the Education Department are shown in the table which I am circulating.

Once again, I must point out the monthly figures include a hard core of about 40 Gibraltarians whom, for varying reasons, it is almost impossible to place in employment.

MR SPEAKER:

May I remind the Minister that unless he reads the table it will not go in the Hansard.

HON A J CANEPA:

I don't mind reading it Sir. Now that Hon Members have the table in front of them I will read it.

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES

by sex and nationality

		BRITISH				TOTAL (BRITISH)	ALIENS		GRAND TOTAL
		MALES		FEMALES			Males	Females	
		<u>Adults</u>	<u>Juveniles</u>	<u>Adults</u>	<u>Juveniles</u>				
1977	OCT.	55	28	33	57	173	71	4	248
	NOV.	48	16	32	44	140	60	2	202
	DEC.	55	13	34	42	144	82	3	229
1978	JAN.	62	12	34	35	143	79	6	228

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.37 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, with regard to the British Females Juveniles, 57, 44, 42, 35. Does that reflect a better situation ie more jobs being available?

HON A J CANEPA:

It certainly reflects a better situation. The department concerned, in this case the Youth and Careers Office, have been able to place in the last four or five months quite a number of young females in employment.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Related to the same months last year is it possible to make a comparison because this, as you know, goes by cycles very much related to certain seasons of the year. Is it possible?

HON A J CANEPA:

I haven't got the figures here with me, Sir, but I would say that except for the peak summer months, July, August and September which reflected the increases in unemployment because of school-leavers, other than that, I don't think the position has deteriorated in the last 12 months.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, has the Minister an explanation why most trends seem to be favourable except the male British adult where we have something of an increase.

HON A J CANEPA:

It is primarily here, Sir, where the hard core of about 40 unemployable that I have referred to are to be found. I would say that almost entirely those 40 Gibraltarians that we have on our books on a recurring basis almost all belong to this particular category. There has been some redundancy in the last few months which has affected a few Gibraltarians, not very many, but certainly five or six. For instance, the redundancy in the Stevedoring Handling Company, a few Gibraltarians were involved in that and some of them are still looking for employment.

7.2.78.

No.38 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state the number of work permits issued in each of the months October, November and December 1977 and January 1978 giving a breakdown by trade, industry, sex and nationality?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour & Social Security

The numbers of new employment permits issued by the Director of Labour and Social Security were 31 in October 1977, 21 in November 1977, 18 in December 1977 and 24 in January 1978. The breakdown as requested, by trade, industry, sex and nationality is shown in the list which I am circulating.

7.2.78.

No.39 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Has Government now completed its proposals for the next development programme and if so will these be made available to members of the House?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir,

Government has now completed its proposals for the next development programme. These will be the subject of discussion with the Minister for Overseas Development and I regret that these cannot be made available to members of the House at this stage.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.39 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, did the Government not say at an earlier stage that they would inform Members of the House of what their proposals were? Has there been a change of policy in this respect?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not saying that I do not propose to tell the House what the proposals are, but in fairness they should first be known to the person who has got to decide whether they are acceptable or not.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the House know the whole of the proposals even though some eventually may not be acceptable?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In due course we shall certainly make a statement on them and I hope there will be very few that are not acceptable.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will we get to know all of them and not just the successful ones?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I would have to see what the reasons are for non-approval of some of them and I don't know whether there may be any aspects which are not for publication but I will certainly not refrain from giving information which the House should have. There may be some proposals that have got other difficulties other than the question of money but otherwise I will give a general account of what has been asked and what has been obtained.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Hon the Chief Minister give an indication of the sums involved?

2.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The sums are very high and much higher than last year but that is all I can say.

7.2.78.

No.40 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what is its position regarding the grade of Senior Clerical Officer?

Answer:

The Minister for Labour and Social Security

This matter is under discussion with the Staff Association concerned.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.40 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker is the answer that the Government cannot state what its position is or that it doesn't have a position?

HON A J CANEPA:

We do have a position, Sir, but I don't think that it would be the correct thing to do to discuss the matter in the House at present.

7.2.78.

No.41 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government make a statement on the current position as regards the wages and salaries negotiations in the public sector and is Government aware of the hardship occasioned to employees generally as a result of undue delays in arriving at a settlement?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The Government is of course conscious of the desirability of reaching an early settlement of the pay claim. As will be appreciated, this is a complex matter which has required very careful and detailed examination. I am however, glad to say that proposals will be made shortly to the Unions and Staff Associations concerned for formal discussions to begin during the week commencing on the 27th February.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.41 OF 1978

HON J BOSSANO:

Is there any particular reason why a start cannot be ^{made} before the 27th February?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, because the matter has still got to be cleared with Ministers in the United Kingdom.

7.2.78.

No.42 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Bearing in mind the scope and interest locally and internationally of the Gibraltar Song Festival would Government not agree that its discontinuation has been a great loss to Gibraltar and will Government make a special effort to ensure that the festival takes place this year?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

Sir

The Gibraltar Song Festival was a private venture managed by the Gibraltar Song Festival Committee. Although government provided an element of financial assistance in the past, it was in no way involved with its organisation.

I agree that the discontinuation of the festival has been a loss to Gibraltar and government would therefore be prepared, as in the past, to consider any request for assistance, financial or otherwise. However, other than this, it would not be possible to become involved to any greater extent.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.42 OF 1978

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, whilst I appreciate that Government is well disposed to the continuation of the Festival, will the Government not agree that a special effort, in view of the difficulties faced by the organisers, should be made by the Government without in any way committing the Government to running any of the technical aspects of the festival?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Government has neither the organisation nor the knowhow to even start thinking about this and to undertake the Song Festival. The Gibraltar Tourist Office have considered internally the possibility of organising the Festival but for a number of reasons, that is, lack of expertise in this field it was considered that the task was beyond the scope and resources of the office. If it will be of any help my calling those concerned and urging them to do so I shall gladly do that, I shall make an effort on that, but, unfortunately, there seems to have been a deterioration within the committee in enthusiasm and without that no amount of Government involvement will make it a success.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I agree with that, Mr Speaker, but bearing in mind the fact that there are a number of activities in which the Tourist Office, for instance, liaises very closely with private organisations, would the Hon and Learned Member not agree that this is of such importance to Gibraltar that a lot of the day to day help could be given so that the Committee might get itself on its feet again.

2.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I will certainly give them every encouragement possible but it is to be made quite clear that if there is not the enthusiasm on the part of people to organise it, it is just that we don't deserve one.

7.2.78.

No.43 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Would the Chief Minister not agree, even bearing in mind Government's commitments in other fields, the proposed meeting of elected members to discuss H.M.G.'s reply on points of clarification regarding the Green Paper is now overdue and will the Chief Minister give a firm undertaking that he will call this meeting within the next two weeks?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

A meeting has been tentatively fixed for Thursday the 16th February.

7.2.78.

No.44 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Would Government consider providing members of the Opposition with copies of the Laws of Gibraltar?

Answer:

The Hon the Attorney-General

The last complete edition of the Revised Laws of Gibraltar was printed in 1964 with a supplement up to the year 1970 which was published in 1974. All copies have been sold and there are no copies available to be able to meet the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's request.

There is a possibility of having a new Revised edition printed and if Government were to decide to go ahead with it, consideration would be given to making copies available to each member of the opposition.

7.2.78.

No.45 of 1978

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government confirm whether a final decision has been taken to purchase Mercury House for GBC and if so what is the cost of the project and when can GBC become operational therefrom? Should Mercury House not be practical for this purpose, for whatever reason, will Government make a statement of its intentions regarding any change of premises for GBC?

Answer:

The Hon the Chief Minister

The Government received confirmation a few days ago that Mercury House could be acquired by Government at its market value. I regret, however, that it is not possible to say precisely how much the project will cost since all the estimates have not yet been worked out.

As to the question of timing the indications are that if work of conversion could start this April GBC could become operational in the new premises early in 1979.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.45 OF 1978

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister confirm that the whole of Mercury House will be purchased by Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, the whole of it but it will not all be used for GBC. There are four flats available which will come in very handy to Government for its various commitments.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask where the equipment which is reported to have been recently received for the colour television is being placed at the moment.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have no detailed information but the arrangement was that it was going to be housed at Wellington Front in two or three stores that have recently become available and which are dry and waterproof.

HON M XIBERRAS:

There is a large room at Mercury House which has a peculiar name which I can't recall at the moment, it is a very large hall. I understood that there was some difficulty over the use of that for GBC. Would the Chief Minister confirm that this is not, in fact, the case?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not aware. In fact, one of the great advantages of Mercury House

which was the difficulty that arose in respect of the other premises, is that it has very tall ceilings and therefore no structural changes are required but just divisional and administrative changes and partitions. There is no truth in that suggestion at all.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can I ask the Hon and Learned Chief Minister what would be the effect on colour transmission of the date that he has given? Is he saying that until the move takes place there will be no colour transmission?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am grateful for that question because I did not want people to understand that when I said that Mercury House would become operational early in 1979, it means that colour is not going to be available until 1979. Trials in colour will become much more regular and increase in time in the course of the next few weeks. I would like to take this opportunity of saying that the reports are that the equipment is absolutely first class and that the people who have to manage it are delighted with it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I know what was the purchase price of Mercury House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We haven't agreed on that yet. We know more or less the sum that has been offered but certain arrangements are being discussed at this stage. I should like to say that other than the hold up that there was over whether it was available or not because of possible requirements for other purposes, Cable and Wireless have been most cooperative because there have been one or two private enterprises who have been touting for this and they have always said if they had to transfer the property they would of course rather have the Government purchase it for a public purpose.

HON MAJOR R J FELIZA:

Could the Chief Minister state by when he reckons colour transmission will be complete?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

By January 1979 but that does not mean that in the meantime there will not be colour and that it should not be good except that it may not be continuous.