

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

MEETING OF 26th FEBRUARY 1979

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(1 TO 64)

QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS AT THE HOUSE
OF ASSEMBLY MEETING HELD ON 26.2.79.

No. 1 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has the tender for the printing of the new telephone directory now been awarded?

Answer

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

Yes, Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO 1 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, to whom was the tender awarded?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, the tender was awarded to Charles G Trico Limited on the 9th of February by the Treasury Tender Board. Notice of the award appeared in last week's Official Gazette as Government Notice No 107 - Gazette No 1797 of the 22nd of February. It is therefore published information.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, the Gazette only appeared last Thursday and in fact only came to our hands this morning. May I ask, Mr Speaker, since the closing date for the tender was the 15th of December, why it took so long, until the 9th of February, for the tender to be awarded and then from the 9th of February to the 22nd of February for it to be announced. Can I have the reasons for that delay?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the tender Board is not concerned with evaluating the various tenders received, it merely acts on the tenders and the recommendations from the Head of Department which called the tenders. I cannot therefore offer any explanation as to why it took, in the words of the Honourable Member, from December until February for the Tender Board to receive the tender for adjudication. As regards the last part of the question, the fortnight, I would imagine that it was probably fortuitous but it just missed the closing date for the Gazette and therefore it was put back.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, if the Honourable Member is not in a position to say why the delay was so great, who, in fact, in the Government is in a position to give an answer to the question?

MR SPEAKER:

That is a supplementary which is completely and utterly relevant but I think the answer is explicit and the Hon Financial and Development Secretary is not responsible. Perhaps, it could be the subject matter of a further question at a later stage.

HON G T RESTANO:

Surely, Mr Speaker, the responsibility for the tender procedures is with the Honourable Financial and Development Secretary. Surely he should be in a position to know why it took so long for the Tender Board to come to a decision.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I did not say that it took so long for the Tender Board to come to a decision; what I said was that the Tender Board does not start to adjudicate until it has received the tenders together with the appropriate recommendations by the department which called for the tenders in the first place.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, if the Honourable Member makes himself responsible for answering the question the supplementary is relevant.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the answer has been very explicit.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But he doesn't know or he is not prepared to say.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. The Financial and Development Secretary said the Tender Board can only consider tenders when they are received. The delay must have been departmental, perhaps, on the part of the Telephone Department, and therefore he is not responsible for that answer.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the Honourable Member wishes to put a question on this matter we will answer it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The question has already been put already and you have just said yourself, Mr Speaker, that the supplementary was relevant.

MR SPEAKER:

I have not said that. I have not said anything of the sort. I have said that the Honourable Minister who is answering the question is not responsible for that particular aspect, which is the delay of the sending of the tenders to the Tender Board for consideration which is a departmental matter. That is what I am saying.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Minister concerned for the Telephone Department say, if there was a delay, why there was a delay?

HON P J ISOLA:

Is there a time limit for the publisher to deliver the goods?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I am afraid I do not have the information, I am not going to give any reply because I do not have that information personally at my disposal. I will, however, look into it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I asked what was the amount of the tender.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

£9,430.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Government not consider that the charge for the telephone directory made to subscribers of 45p a quarter is rather disproportional with the amount for the printing of the directory? On the assumption of about 8,000 subscribers that brings a yearly income of £14,400. The cost of the tender for presumably 3 or 4 years, which is what the directory normally is, is only for £9,430. Does the Government not consider that the telephone directory charge of 45p is rather high in view of the tender?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, I do not feel it is incumbent upon me to reply to that. That is entirely a departmental matter. The charging for the telephone directory once it is published is a departmental matter.

MR SPEAKER:

It is most certainly a relevant supplementary. Whether the Government is able to reply or not is a different matter.

HON G T RESTANO:

In the telephone accounts sent out to subscribers a charge is made of 45p per quarter for each subscriber, presumably to cover the expenses of the telephone directory, and that is why it is called telephone directory charge, and on the assumption of there being around about 8,000 subscribers, approximately, this would yield a revenue of £14,400 per year for four years when the cost of the directory is only £9,400.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I wonder whether the Honourable Member will specify where the question of 45p charge to each subscriber for the directory comes from.

HON G T RESTANO:

The 8th column in the telephone account sent out to subscribers. There are a number of columns and this is the eighth one.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

When that was made it was no doubt having regard to the cost the last time and an element for increase. If the money that comes over is less than that in one it is to the benefit of the subscribers, generally, on the other.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I can understand provision being made for an increase in costs but in this particular year it has been found that the cost is £9,400 and the revenue in one year will be £14,400. That being the case, will the Government not consider reducing this charge considerably?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Telephone Accounts at the present moment is operating at a deficit. I would have thought that the extra cost from the telephone directory might have gone to offset some of the deficit on the service.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I would entirely agree that if the Telephone Account is making a deficit, monies have to be recouped but certainly not under the specific charge of telephone directory.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Government find out the answer to my Honourable Friend's question and communicate it to this side in due course bearing in mind that they have not said that there was not a departmental delay in the production of the telephone directory. Will the Chief Minister make it his business to find out what the delay was?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I will make it my business to find out all the information possible and give it to the House whether they are entitled to it or not and whether it has been asked for or not. What is impossible is to be here for twenty minutes on a matter of detail which can easily be found by a Member.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, if the Honourable Member has offered to do this in the first place in answer to the question all these supplementaries would not have been necessary.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 2 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Is Government now able to give details of the savings it expects to make with the use of the computer?

Answer

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

If the Honourable Member had read his Hansard for the Meeting of this House on 2 November 1977 he would have seen that I indicated the extent of the savings which the Government, at that early stage, hoped to achieve by the installation of the computer.

I said then that in terms of posts "saved" it was hoped to reduce the combined establishment in the billing and wages section by possibly up to 17 and that at 1977 salary levels this would mean a saving of the order of £30,000 a year. I stressed, of course, that the saving in terms of posts meant no more than that those posts which it was hoped could be saved would be available for redeployment.

Now that we have the benefit of the Computer Manager's advice it is clear that the feasibility study overstated somewhat the extent of the staff saving. We now expect that the number of posts "saved" will be 9 or 10. The cost saving, given the increase in salaries, will still be around £30,000.

The benefits from computerisation cannot just be measured in terms of savings brought about by the redeployment of personnel, however, there will be other savings in terms of intangible benefits and increased efficiency, the value of which is impossible to quantify in cash.

26.2.79

No. 3 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will the Financial and Development Secretary state what has been done to eradicate the discrepancies which exist in the new tender procedures?

Answer

The Hon the Financial and Development Secretary

If the Honourable Member had scrutinised the Award of Tender Notices published since he asked his last question as assiduously as he apparently scrutinised them before, he would have noticed that the discrepancies or inconsistencies of which he complained no longer exist.

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government state whether it has now received the report of the committee of inquiry, which was set up to consider the Victoria Stadium dispute and if so, will Government make copies of the report available to the public or at least to Members of the House and can Government state whether this dispute has now been finally resolved?

AnswerThe Hon the Chief Minister

Yes, Sir. The report of the arbitration panel was received on 20 October, 1978 and the dispute has been finally resolved. Copies of the report will be made available to Members of the House on a confidential basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 4 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Chief Minister possibly explain why is it that disclosure of the report is not being made public given the fact that the issue was ventilated publicly in this House, that the discomfiture and inconvenience that was caused to the public living in the Laguna Estate at the time was considerable and does not the Chief Minister consider that the Government has the responsibility to tell the public that suffered the consequences of this dispute the whys and wherefores of the settlement and what the committee of enquiry, which we all trust was an independent committee, found on its investigation of the whole matter.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Government does not propose to make the report public because it is standard practice for reports on disputes submitted to arbitration to be confidential to the two parties and not normally made public other than by mutual agreement. If Government were to make the report public unilaterally it might be misconstrued as an attempt to revive the dispute with undesirable consequences for the maintenance of good industrial relations.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Honourable Chief Minister then tell the House that he is not making the report public because the other side to the dispute objects to its publication. Or is it the Government that objects?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am saying that it is not the practice unless both parties agree and we have not sought the agreement of the two parties concerned because we did not feel that it would be proper in any case to publish it in the circumstances of the case.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 5 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will the Minister for Municipal Services state what is the cost of replacing the old lead cables which represent 60% of the Telephone Distribution Network?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Municipal Services

The cost of replacing the old lead cables which represent 60% of the Telephone Distribution Network is estimated roughly at over £250,000.

2. The cost of replacing the 10% of these old cables which are the ones that are continuously breaking down is estimated in the region of £70,000. These are the cables which the Department want to change as soon as possible.

3. The apparent discrepancy between the two figures is due to differences in cable sizes and lengths.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 5 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

May I take it, Mr Speaker, that a decision has been taken to replace the 10%?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

A decision has been taken and in fact part of the work has already started and provision will be made for next year.

HON G T RESTANO:

When is it expected that all the 10% will be completed?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, hopefully, within the coming year.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 6 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Since the repairs to telephone faults continue to be in a chronic state, what justification does Government have for continuing to charge subscribers during the periods when their telephones have been out of order?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Municipal Services

Under paragraph 23 of the General Conditions a subscriber is not entitled to any abatement in connection with any interruption or failure of communication or suspension of service.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 6 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, that surely relates to the period of time when there were no telephone faults and telephone faults were corrected rapidly by the Government. Nowadays I am sure those conditions surely require amendment at this period of time when subscribers have to suffer these tremendously long delays. Does the Minister consider the present situation to be a fair one?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

As a legal practitioner the Honourable Member must realise that we must go by the law.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

We are not talking about the law now. What is the policy of the department? Do they intend this chronic situation to continue indefinitely and subscribers to have to carry on paying for telephones that don't work where you get the wrong number every time you ring? Is that the situation? Is the Minister happy with that?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, I have already answered part of the question; it surprises me that the Hon Major Peliza should bring it up considering that he spends very little time in Gibraltar and doesn't know what the service is like.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Does that mean that the Minister is not prepared to look into the matter because I am not in Gibraltar for a long time? Am I so important?

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister not realise that apart from the telephones themselves a lot of telexes are also out of order on account of these telephone faults and that this results in a considerable loss of business time to firms in Gibraltar who are experiencing these faults.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, a few of the telexes are out of order but the Department is making every effort to get both the telexes and telephone faults repaired as quickly as possible.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, the Minister must surely be aware that much as we praise the efforts that are being made to get things put right quickly, the actual result is just not that. The actual result is that many subscribers have to suffer very long and serious delays in the repairs of their telephones or their telexes and does Government not consider that in the present circumstances there is a case to review the Government regulations about charging subscribers for the use of telephones that they cannot use. Is the Minister not prepared to consider this, Mr Speaker?

MR SPEAKER:

Is an answer forthcoming from the Minister?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

I have already mentioned the policy of the Government, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Government not agree that if there is this long delay, the cost of running the service would still be the same and the people to be charged would have to be either the general taxpayer or the people whose telephones had not broken down and therefore the thing to do is to try and find out whether it is possible to create an additional service for people who are perhaps for commercial reasons prepared to pay an additional payment to have the thing repaired on a Sunday or on a Saturday when people's overtime have been cut down.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, would the Government consider charging extra to those subscribers whose telephones work?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Honourable Member not able to give subscribers any kind of concrete indication as to when there is going to be an improvement and will he stop making these generally hopeful statements about repairs being made. Could he, for instance, tell the House what is the delay - I know what the delays are in some cases - but could he tell the House what kind of delays are being experienced in repairs and what concrete evidence of alleviation of the situation the Minister can offer to subscribers.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all I think we are going away from the original question and I cannot see how there can be supplementaries to that question, but let me say that the weather throughout Europe has been increasingly bad and in Gibraltar we are doing our best to remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can he tell the House whether there has been any concrete improvement in terms of the rate at which telephones are being repaired?

HON DR R G VALARINO:

I cannot give you any concrete facts because I was not asked about these at the beginning but there has been a considerable increase in the number of telephones that have been repaired.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 7 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state what are the times available to the general public to book trunk calls at the City Hall?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Municipal Services

A Hall Porter is on duty at the City Hall every day from 8.00 a.m. until midnight for the booking of trunk calls. Bookings are, however, only accepted up to 11.30 p.m. to allow the Exchange time to connect the call through before the City Hall closes. Any person who may require an urgent trunk call after midnight can effect the call from the Police Station at Waterport.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 7 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister satisfied that in fact the City Hall is available to the general public until 11.30 p.m. every day because my information is that it is not.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Sir, during most of January this year one of the two Hall Porters was on leave in the United Kingdom and the other on sick leave. The stand-by porter who was called in as a relief could not cope with the 8.00 p.m. to midnight shift and therefore during this period the trunk call office was closed at 7.30 p.m. The Government is currently looking into this and proposals are being considered on possible ways of streamlining the service as part of a general revision of the security arrangements at the City Hall in view of the continued addition of equipment to the telephone exchange and the housing of the new computer within the building.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that reply. I am sorry that it didn't come in his first reply because had I not asked a supplementary I think the House would have gone away with a quite erroneous impression.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the frequent and sometimes long traffic jams caused by the Public Works Department Refuse Collection Vans on their 08.30 and 14.00 hours runs coming as they do at the time many people are going to work or taking children to school, could Government rearrange the time of these particular collection runs so as to avoid unnecessary traffic congestion at peak traffic times?

AnswerThe Hon the Minister for Public Works

No, Sir.

It is the Government's aim to collect household refuse from all the town area as early as possible to remove obnoxious and unsightly material from both public highways and residences and to be able to withdraw the refuse vehicles from circulation quickly and thus minimize traffic congestion.

Because of the increase in parked cars in narrow streets, it is becoming even more difficult for refuse lorries to manoeuvre in some areas and these conditions add to delays and makes re-routing difficult.

Collection of bulky refuse however must perforce continue throughout the working day.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 8 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, the Minister seems to agree that there should be collections when there is least congestion, does he not agree that these particular runs do come at peak traffic periods. Does he not agree that?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, they start at around 6.30 in the morning, they could not start very much earlier or we would have complaints from people that they were starting too early and as I have said the object is to get it done as quickly as possible. If we were to withdraw them during these peak periods they would be running well into midday and we do not want the lorries going through at midday when the tourists are around which is also, perhaps, a peak period as well.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, if one forgets the early round, what about the 2 p.m. run which collects trade refuse, could it not begin earlier or later? Why at that particular time, at

2 o'clock, when everybody is going to work and the school children are going to school?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the trade refuse lorries go round different areas at different times. If the Honourable Member will tell me at which area he would like a lorry to be removed so that perhaps we could put it into a different area we might try to do so. If we were to withdraw it completely it would run us into overtime which is something we do not wish.

26.2.79

No. 9 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state what steps it has taken to ensure that adequate repairs have been carried out at Landport Cottage?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

Landport Cottage was handed to the Gibraltar Government on 1 August 1975. Requisitions for repairs were received shortly after and extensive repairs were carried out to the bathroom and the slate pitched roof was also repaired.

During December 1977 the roof suffered storm damage and the necessary repairs were carried out a few months later. A requisition dated October 1977 reporting a roof leak was attended to at the time. Records show that another requisition dated 31 October 1978 reported leaks in the roof and defective gutters. The defects have been investigated and it is agreed that the gutters along the corridor eaves will have to be replaced. The roof leaks are localised and repairs are outstanding. They will be done in due course when this job reaches the top of a long list of similar requisitions.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 9 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister say what steps his Department took to ensure that the repairs carried out by the PSA were adequate?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the normal inspection was done after the repairs were completed and the persons concerned were satisfied that they were adequate. As I say, the later damage came from a storm.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am talking about the damage as a result of the storm, that is not the later damage. Would the Honourable Member not agree that the repairs carried out by the PSA was as a result of PSA accepting responsibility for the storm damage and I am asking how does Government know, given that it was not inspected subsequent to the storm damage, that PSA is still not responsible for the repairs that the building requires today.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I cannot answer that at the moment, Sir, but I am willing to look into it for the Honourable Member.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 10 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Will Government support their own Keep Gibraltar Tidy Campaign by making sure that the Public Works vehicles collecting refuse in their open lorries are provided with suitable rope nets which can be cast over the load and thus prevent fly outs of cartons and other debris from their lorries on their way to dump the same?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

Government is aware of this problem and rope nets and wire mesh have already been tried. These have not proved successful mainly because of the many different types of refuse collected by these lorries and the numerous pick up points, some situated in very awkward corners.

The possibility of partially enclosing these open lorries is being investigated.

26.2.79

No. 11 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the fact that the playground at Laguna Waste Ground is now operational, will Government consider the installation of steel tubular hand rails along the pavement of Sir Winston Churchill Avenue in order to prevent traffic accidents to the large numbers of children in the area?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

It is proposed to erect a short length of pedestrian barrier outside the entrance to the Playground with a notice directing children to use the pedestrian crossing. The work will be started in the near future.

26.2.79

No. 12 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government state whether the lifts at the Tower Blocks are now fully operational?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

One lift at Constitution House and another at Referendum House have faulty magnetic switches with the result that when the lift is required to ascend to a particular floor it will travel to the 15th floor then descend to the required level. This defect does not affect the lift when it is required to descend to a lower floor. Spare parts are not available and a new system is on order. Delivery is expected during the next four weeks. These new switches are of a different type and are not expected to suffer from the same fault.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 12 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I take it then that the answer as far as Referendum House is concerned, is that the lifts are in working order?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, one of the lifts is satisfactory in Referendum House and one has this faulty system in which when you want to go up to the 5th floor you are taken to the 15th floor, then brought down to the 5th floor. The position is exactly the same in Constitution House.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does the Minister have any reason why both magnetic switches in two completely different blocks are out of order at more or less the same time? Does he have any reason why at this particular moment both switches have broken down?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it happened that one of the lifts in Referendum House developed this fault in mid-October and the second lift developed the same fault within a few days. In order to ensure that at least one lift was in operation, the switches from Constitution House were transferred to Referendum House, to give in each house one satisfactory lift and one less unsatisfactory lift otherwise Referendum House would have had two unsatisfactory lifts and Constitution House would have been completely alright.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 13 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Can Government confirm whether there has been widespread infiltration of rainwater at the Tower Blocks recently?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

It is confirmed that there has been infiltration of rainwater at the Tower Blocks recently.

Infiltration and/or dampness has been reported in 32 flats during the period November to February which has experienced particularly severe weather.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 13 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

What repairs does Government propose to have carried out there to stop this infiltration in the future?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, with a view to alleviating the dampness problem at these blocks every effort will be made to effect remedial external repairs and redecoration when weather conditions are favourable for the treatment to be applied. In the long term, however, extensive investigations will have to be carried out to assess the extent of permanent repairs necessary.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister know what are the reasons for these infiltrations, what has gone wrong that there should be infiltration in so many flats?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, as I think I said when we had a motion on the Tower Blocks, the rendering on the outside for some reason or other in the building was reduced from $\frac{3}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " and we think this is one of the main causes why there is the leakage of water into these flats. At the same time there are certain cavities that were allowed to be effected in the concreting and these fill with water and the water runs through and penetrates possibly at a considerable distance from its point of entry.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I take it Government still maintain, as it did at the time of the motion, that there are no structural defects at the Tower Blocks?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked exclusively whether the leakage has any connection with the structural defects which have been referred to in this House before.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, there are no structural defects in the Tower Blocks; we have done, as I promised also in the previous motion, an investigation on the....

MR SPEAKER:

All I am allowing you to say is that the filtration of water has no connection with structural defects for the simple reason that there are no structural defects. No more and no less.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Right, Sir. Your words are good enough, Sir. There are no structural defects and the penetration of water goes on for other reasons than that.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 14 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Is Government making provision for a skate-boarding area at the new Adventure Playground?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Education

At the present time there are no specific plans for a skate-board area at the new Adventure Playground as the planned kick-about area, originally intended as a multi-use project, could be used for this particular activity. The idea of a special skate-board area is, however, felt to be a worthwhile project for the future but it may be expensive to construct artificial slopes on the flat side of the new Adventure Playground and this project, together with other projects, will consequently have to be closely studied and a feasibility exercise carried out as to the best possible use of the limited space available generally when the playground has been in use for some time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 14 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, did not the Minister for Education already in November 1977 say that the Government would consider providing a skate-boarding area then. Is the Minister saying that no plans have been looked at since November, 1977?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Sir, the matter is still being looked at, it is an expensive project, we have spent some £10,000 on this already, it has been proved to be very successful, I do not want to create white elephants when things are working properly, things will be done.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Minister saying that in fact no plans have been drawn up?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The Adventure Playground concept is not a static thing, it is a thing that grows. It grows by the use the children make of it and it is channelled by Play Leaders. As things develop we shall plan accordingly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Minister whether plans have been drawn up in connection with this Adventure Playground, even if it is at a future date, or not, bearing in mind that in November, 1977, the Government said they would be considering the project.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We are still considering this project and other projects but no plans have been drawn up. We do not want any white elephants.

26.2.79

No. 15 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government give the figures for water production from available sources for the months of October, November, December and January and state the stocks held on the 31st January, 1979?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

The figures for water production from available sources for the months of October, November, December and January are as shown on the table which I am circulating.

If there are any questions I shall be happy to clarify.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.15 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask why the VTE Distiller produced no water in December and January?

HON M R FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it was having its annual overhaul.

HON M XIBERRAS:

How long, Mr Speaker, does it take for the annual overhaul? I see there is no production for December/January, has production been resumed?

HON M R FEATHERSTONE:

Normally, Sir, it takes from 10-12 weeks. It came back on stream about six days ago and we are still doing the run-up tests.

26.2.79

No. 15 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government give the figures for water production from available sources for the months of October, November, December and January and state the stocks held on the 31st January, 1979?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

The figures for water production from available sources for the months of October, November, December and January are as shown on the table which I am circulating.

If there are any questions I shall be happy to clarify.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.15 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, may I ask why the VTE Distiller produced no water in December and January?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it was having its annual overhaul.

HON M XIBERRAS:

How long, Mr Speaker, does it take for the annual overhaul? I see there is no production for December/January, has production been resumed?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Normally, Sir, it takes from 10-12 weeks. It came back on stream about six days ago and we are still doing the run-up tests.

26.2.79

No. 16 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has the detailed analysis on the results of tests for the deep drilling for water now been completed?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Public Works

A report on the detailed analysis of the results obtained from the preliminary tests is currently being prepared in UK and it is expected that it will be received in March 1979. This analysis, however, cannot be taken in isolation and it is part of the overall exercise of which the actual deep drilling (now out to tender) and subsequent pumping tests form the major part.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 16 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, has the analysis been made by the same people who carried out the tests here in Gibraltar?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, they are being done by the Institute of Geological Sciences.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Sir, is there payment involved in these studies and, if so, are they made ad hoc by instalments or is it a lump sum for a certain work to be completed?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

There will be payment involved but this is being done partly by technical aid and partly by an ODM grant.

HON M XIBERRAS:

On the basis of a lump sum? I know it is rather a difficult question to answer that without preparation.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think the actual work that has been done up to the moment which has been the scientists coming out here and investigating, and this analysis, is done under technical aid and therefore is an on-going process. The lump sums, of course, will be when we are paying somebody who has won the tender for the actual drilling work they are doing.

HON G T RESTANO:

May I ask, Mr Speaker, what is the analysis for, for the quality of the water or for the amount of the water?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mainly the quality of the water.

HON G T RESTANO:

Have there been any results on the tests to find out whether there are sufficient amounts of water?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

That we will know when we have done the actual deep drilling. The checks that are being done at the moment were water that we were obtaining from a pool inside the Rock.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Are there any disbursements of local funds involved?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The only local funds that have really been disbursed have been the people of the Water Department who have helped the scientists in their job.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is there a target date in fact for some sort of an opinion to be given? Is that the March date?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Could you please repeat that, I did not hear quite clearly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is there a target date by which some sort of report will be produced? Is that the March date the Minister quoted?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, Sir, we hope to have the first reports of the deep drilling by July or August this year but, of course, after that we will have to do pumping tests, the deep drilling will show us whether we have found water, we will then have to install pumps and start pumping at specified rates to see if the water is therefor a constant production. This will take at least another year.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 17 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Has Government now reached any conclusions with regard to the review it is carrying out in relation to the transshipment of liquid gas in the Bay?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

As yet the results of the discussions on this matter by the Dangerous Goods and Research Section of the Department of Trade to which I referred in answer to Question No. 256 have not been received.

A reminder was forwarded to the Department of Trade by the Captain of the Port on 6 February, 1979, an answer to which is expected shortly.

Until the United Kingdom safety requirements are known it would be unwise to take any decision locally.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 17 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Will the Minister keep this matter under constant review because it seems to us that this could become quite an important activity for the Port if it was thought safe to allow it.

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, I agree with that thought and we are keeping the matter under constant review.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 18 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state whether it is intended to create a post of Urban Renewal Officer in connection with the Development Programme?

Answer

The Hon the Attorney-General

The proposal to create a post of Urban Renewal Officer in connection with the Development Programme is being considered in the context of proposals which have been made by the Director of Public Works on the structure of his department.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 18 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

So the matter, Mr Speaker, as I understand it, is still under consideration, a final decision has not been taken.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Yes, Sir, that is certainly the position. The proposals were made some time ago but the Government is not yet satisfied that the post is necessary.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is it not normal to take into account the views of the Staff Inspector in deciding whether a post is necessary or not?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Yes, Sir, that would be a factor but the decision is one for Government.

HON J BOSSANO:

Has the Staff Inspector been asked to comment on the possibility of the need for such a post in the Development Programme?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Sir, I understand he has.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask whether the functions of the proposed post would be covered by a different type of post if it was decided not to proceed with the creation of this post, the functions in terms of the work that is required of surveying houses for possible modernisation which I understand is essentially what the job was about.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Sir, I think I can give the answer to that as being yes although the actual method of organisation as to how to handle this particular matter is something which, as I have said, Government has not yet decided.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 19 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

In view of the fact that it is now nearly one year since the visit of Mrs Judith Hart to Gibraltar when she announced the British Government approval of £14 million towards the Development Programme, will Government give the precise state of progress in the Development Plan broken down into:

1. Housing
2. Education
3. Port
4. Public Utilities
5. Miscellaneous?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

At the Aid Talks held in April 1978, it was agreed that British aid towards the 1978/81 Development Programme would be £14m of which £13m was for capital aid and £1m for technical cooperation. As regards capital aid, it was agreed that £1m would be reserved for allocation after October 1979 when progress of the programme would be reviewed. Out of a total of £12m of capital aid available for allocation by October 1979, grants totalling £10.2m have already been approved broken down by sector as follows:

Housing £3,858,161 of which £974,828 have been spent
for 1978/79

Education £4,664,209 of which £534,420 have been spent
for 1978/79

Port, Public Utilities and
Miscellaneous

£1,719,591 of which £621,216 will have been
spent for 1978/79

TOTAL £10,241,961

Approval is awaited for a grant of £1,127,700 for the Port Reclamation Scheme. This will leave a balance of £630,339 out of the £12m to meet applications for supplementaries on approved projects. The final allocation of the £1m reserve will be agreed upon by the Government and the ODM when the programme is reviewed in October 1979.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 19 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

May I ask, Mr Speaker, on the money that has been spent already £974,828 on Housing, £534,420 on Education and £621,216 in the other three for 1978/79, can I know in what areas, where, in fact, this money has been spent, towards what projects?

HON A W SERFATY:

Rosia Dale £400,500; Lopez Ramp £35,000; Lime Kiln Steps £120,000; Tank Ramp £85,000; Modernisation £21,628; Prince Edward's Road bedsitters £100,000; Glacis bedsitters £62,700; Naval Hospital Hill £30,000; White Stores £80,000; St Joseph's £40,000; Education: Varyl Begg First School £90,066; College of Further Education £29,553; School for Handicapped £14,801; Girls' Comprehensive School £400,000. Sport, Public Utilities, etc. Airport Terminal Extension £10,000; restoration of Moorish Castle £6,000; Public Works Department workshop and garage £168,240; winning of sand £152,188; Hostel Accommodation £20,000; Sewage system £23,844; mains renewals, salt water £50,000; mains renewals, sewers £50,000; Reclamation between jetties £4,200; generating tools, spares, etc. £116,744; deep drilling for water £10,000.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister satisfied with the progress in view of the fact that working on average it seems there is already 100% slippage on the programme because roughly in the first year in a 3-year aid plan the Minister should have been aiming for expenditure of £4.5m and he has only got £2m.

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, I am not dissatisfied, the problem is that we are now gathering the momentum in order to spend that money so, naturally, we should spend much more in 1979/80 that we have spent in 1978/79. It takes a long time to prepare schemes, to get them out to tender and in fact a 3-year period is too short a period to spend that money.

HON P J ISOLA:

Sir, the Minister is admitting that he will not spend that money in the time and is the Minister aware that this sort of statement we have heard time and time again in the House and is he not aware that this House has voted considerable sums of money in improving the establishment - I use the word improving advisedly - in improving the establishment of the Public Works Department precisely to do the things that he is saying are required to be done to get it under way. We did this years ago.

HON A W SERFATY:

The programme was discussed only a year ago and even then we had already made some progress with some of the projects but it does take time. The Girls' Comprehensive School has not yet gone out to tender and it will be a few months before it does. I am not dissatisfied with the progress so far.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, since the Girls' Comprehensive School project has not yet gone out to tender what has the £100,000 been spent on?

HON A W SERFATY:

Mainly on fees, Professional fees to Architects, Quantity Surveyors and Structural Engineers.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Minister be a bit more explicit about this Comprehensive School which has been gathering momentum for many years now. Could the Honourable Member say whether the amount spent on fees is, let us say, over £350,000 when he says "mainly on fees"?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir. The Public Works Department negotiates with the Architects but I am not surprised that a £5m job will justify fees of over £350,000 and more.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I just did not want the erroneous impression to be conveyed, Mr Speaker, that actual building had in fact taken place in the Comprehensive School. Mr Speaker, could I ask about this specific project when actual physical work is due to start?

HON A W SERFATY:

If the information I have is kept to, it should start before the end of this year.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member said at one time that he would make available to me a list of the projects and starting dates for building and completion dates and so forth. Would the Honourable Member be in a position to give me such a list of the projects now?

HON A W SERFATY:

I have already told the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition on a couple of occasions when I have seen

him that I have not forgotten that I promised to send him a list of the projects. The trouble is that some of the projects - and we are talking of the Development Programme as a whole - some of these projects are locally funded and I would plead with the Leader of the Opposition to give me time in fact for Government to take a decision on the 1979/80 Budget which includes the Improvement and Development Fund, before I can commit myself. I would rather do that than send a list now which I may not be able to implement if I start making promises before we discuss the Budget.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Honourable Member would be kind enough to send it with the Estimates of Expenditure I would be very grateful. Mr Speaker, reverting to the question of the Comprehensive School, could I ask the Honourable Member by who these £350,000 of fees are due to be paid and whether the Architects doing the job were nominated by ODA or locally?

HON A W SERFATY:

I didn't get the first part of the question but the Girls' Comprehensive School was not approved in the last Development Programme but I well remember that we were given a list of these Architects who were specialists in educational buildings.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether these Architects are local architects.

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, this is a firm from the United Kingdom. It happens to be the same firm that designed and supervised the work of the John Mackintosh Hall.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the point of the question was whether ODM suggested, in fact, the nomination of United Kingdom firms or whether ODM left it to the Government here to decide who should do the drawings and architectural side, generally.

HON A W SERFATY:

ODM gave the three names and we decided on which we preferred.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Did the Minister in fact argue that our own staff here should in fact design the school at the time?

HON A W SERFATY:

I never suggested that because this is a specialist job.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister say how the £2m odd that he has given for expenditure for 1978/79 for the Development Project, how that compares with the estimate he gave the House a year ago when discussing Mrs Hart's visit to Gibraltar. How do they compare with that amount then?

HON A W SERFATY:

I wouldn't like to attempt to answer that complicated question without having a close study at the Estimates.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister ensure that he will give us these answers in the Budget session?

HON A W SERFATY:

I will do my best.

HON J BOSSANO:

Surely the Minister is able to say now, only a month before the end of the Financial year, whether the £7,142,191 is actually going to be spent or not? Doesn't he know that?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am afraid I wouldn't like to give the answer at this moment of time.

HON J BOSSANO:

So he doesn't know the answer.

HON A W SERFATY:

Not before without breaking a comprehensive study.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, did the Minister say that £1.27m, roughly, would be spent on Port Development in 1978/79? Is that what he said?

HON A W SERFATY:

If the Project of the Reclamation is approved, and we expect an answer within the next few weeks, it should be carried out in the year 1979/80. That is my information.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could the Honourable Member, in view of the many changes in Government policy as to what development was to take place in the Port, would the Honourable Member make a definitive statement with regard to the Port before he embarks on any expenditure? I gather the plans have been submitted already.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer must be Yes or No.

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, but I would like to correct myself on something. The amount spent this year on Reclamation was £4,200; next year we hope it will be £899,580 and in 1980/81 the completion of £251,000. I can say most definitely that the Reclamation will be between Jetties No. 2 and No. 3.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So that this sum of money which the Minister is talking about is in fact for Reclamation between Jetties 2 and 3, or are there other improvements like sheds, etc?

HON A W SERFATY:

Well, there is a shed also included in the project but the biggest amount of course is for the reclamation itself.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, while all expenditure on the Port is obviously welcome, would the Minister not agree that this is rather a large amount for reclamation and a shed?

HON A W SERFATY:

I think we will get value for money.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 20 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the fact that the Old Slaughter House area has now been put out to tender, what arrangements are the Government making to re-accommodate the stables situated in that area?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

There are two buildings at the Old Slaughter House site used for stabling two horses. One of the buildings will not be affected by the current development proposals.

It will not be possible to provide alternative accommodation for the second stable as financial, siting, physical and hygienic considerations rule out the possibility of any stables being reprovided.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 20 of 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Can I get this clear, Sir, does that mean that one stable will stay, despite development, and I trust the Minister can assure the House this will not affect the amenities of the area, and the other stable will disappear. Is that the position?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is the position, Mr Speaker.

HON P J ISOLA:

And the incumbent of the stables will not be re-accommodated?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is the position as far as can be seen at present.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is that, Mr Speaker, a sort of punishment for the incumbent not having moved to the stables that the Government provided for him at a cost of £17,000 to the Gibraltar taxpayer?

HON A W SERFATY:

We may have all sorts of faults in this Government but we are not vindictive.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister say what considerations apply now for not providing alternative accommodation for the stables that applied before in providing alternative accommodation for the stables. What has been the change?

HON A W SERFATY:

The change has been that the owners of the two horses, one of which is 25 years old and the other 30, did not accept those stables. We are hoping that time will solve this problem.

HON P J ISOLA:

Does the Government now consider itself no longer to be under a moral obligation to provide alternative accommodation for the stables because in fact it did provide some at great public expense?

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer to that is in the affirmative.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state why the views and welfare of the tenants of 9/A Crutchett's Ramp have not been taken into consideration in authorising the Casemates Development, how the decision to allow the building in its present form was arrived at and who by?

AnswerThe Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

The site was put out to tender in February 1972 for the construction of a building up to four storeys high.

It is not true, however, to say, as the question implies, that the welfare of the tenants of 9/A Crutchett's Ramp was ignored. The Public Health Ordinance and Building Rules safeguard the position of adjoining buildings and the scheme was scrutinised by the Departments concerned to ensure that the building complied with the Building Rules. These lay down the minimum distance and space between buildings and the builders' proposals were found to be within the standards specified in the Rules. The loss of view, however regrettable, was inevitable and was implicit when the site was put out for tender. There is no right in law to a view, nor is there any provision in the Public Health Ordinance requiring the views of neighbouring residents to be sought when building proposals are submitted to the Development and Planning Commission.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 21 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Honourable Member satisfied that the nearness between the existing building and the new building is a perfectly normal one and that that is the sort of state in which new buildings can be erected next to existing buildings without infringing any regulations.

HON A W SERFATY:

That is absolutely correct, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the other part of the question, could the Honourable Member say how the decision was arrived at, the one as to the adequacy of the proposed building structure in terms of the effect it might have on the lighting and so on of the existing building? Who took the decision?

HON A W SERFATY:

I don't quite get the question.

HON J BOSSANO:

I am referring to the last part of the original question, Mr Speaker.

HON A W SERFATY:

All these building applications go to different departments of Government and if they agree, that is that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Was the decision that the proposed building was in fact alright in terms of what we consider to be alright in Gibraltar in erecting new buildings alongside existing ones, was that decision taken by the Public Health Department or the Public Works Department, Mr Speaker?

HON A W SERFATY:

By both the Public Health and the Public Works Departments and the Fire Brigade Department.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 22 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Does Government have any intentions to develop, or have developed, Parsons Lodge, Rosia?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

Parsons Lodge is designated in the City Town Plan as a site for hotel development. Government has no intention to develop the site itself nor has it ever had any such intention. Government, however, expects to consider shortly proposals from the private sector for the hotel development of the site.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 22 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Proposals have been made by the private sector already, is that what the Minister is saying?

HON A W SERFATY:

We have been talking to two different companies in the private sector who have shown an interest in developing Parsons Lodge, this is what I am following up now. It was put out to tender some years ago and there were no takers.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I believe there are two firms who have shown an interest. Are these two firms from Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

The people I have been talking to are local people. Whether they will require any financial aid from outside, I really do not know at this moment of time.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 23 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Where does Government propose to house the Varyl Begg Youth Club on a permanent basis?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

As the House will recall from the answers given in reply to Question No. 46 of 1977 it is Government's intention to provide club premises at the Varyl Begg Estate which would cater for the general requirements of that Estate and not just a particular sector or sectors of the residents.

It was clearly understood, when the old nissen hut was permitted to be used as a club house for the children of the Estate under the supervision of the Community Constable, that this arrangement would be a temporary measure whilst the site on which it stood was not required for other purposes.

Government is not yet in a position to make premises available for this purpose.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 23 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Would the Minister confirm that it is Government's intention to provide permanent facilities at the Estate?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir, it is.

HON G T RESTANO:

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, where does the Government propose that the children should go if the nissen hut is taken away?

HON A W SERFATY:

In the meantime no provision can be made for the use that was made of the nissen hut, I am afraid I have no answer to that one.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

We have a room which I think will be ready this week which we are actually giving to the people on a temporary basis.

HON G T RESTANO:

Will it be a sufficiently big room for them to carry out the activities that they have been carrying out up to now?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The Community Constable says it is not as much as he would like but he is quite satisfied that he can use it quite satisfactorily.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I remember the Minister for Education saying that the Government was not keen to duplicate the facilities available at Montagu Bastion and that therefore the Government's policy would be to provide a Youth Club for those under the age at which they would normally be admitted into Montagu Bastion. Am I to take it that the Minister for Development is saying that only a general club is going to be provided for the use of people, generally, at Varyl Begg and, if so, is this not a change from the policy enunciated by the Minister for Education.

HON A W SERFATY:

The plans have not yet been prepared for the provision of facilities on the site which we are ear-marking for that purpose next to the Varyl Begg Estate because we are not ready and the thing is a bit of a jigsaw puzzle. I can say at this stage what facilities are going to be provided. I would have thought, and maybe I am sticking my neck out, that facilities will be provided for children and for grown-ups also and for the old.

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to go into that now.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the point about this is that the answer quoted by the Minister for Economic Development, Mr Serfaty, seems to be at variance with what the Minister for Education said about the Youth Club. The Minister for Education said that Government would consider providing a Youth Club for the under 13's.

MR SPEAKER:

There was an answer to a supplementary to the effect that whatever else and whatever facilities Government is going to give to other sectors of the community in that particular area it would not affect the amenities of the Youth Club already established. The question is: "Where does Government propose to house the Varyl Begg Youth Club on a permanent basis" and any supplementary which is relevant to that I will allow.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the supplementary which I have made already in fact is, is a general club going to be provided which will accommodate the older people, adults, and young people together.

MR SPEAKER:

With due respect to the questioner, what the Minister has said is that the amenities for the Youth Club will be included in the general amenities to be provided in the Estate.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The point about this, Mr Speaker, is that the Government has clearly changed its policy about this and I would like to get clear, for the benefit of the public and of the House, what exactly the policy is.

MR SPEAKER:

In so far as you have been given an answer to say that the activities of the Youth Club are going to be mixed with the activities of the general community, you are entitled to ask how this is going to affect the Youth Club and nothing else.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask what happens to the plans of the then Minister for Education, Mr Featherstone, who said that the Government was willing to consider providing only for the 12-year olds and under, that is, those people not provided for at Mortagu Bastion.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The policy of youth clubs in Gibraltar is not geared for people under 15 years old. The policy of youth clubs is for young people who have left school already. In that context any facilities which are offered in Varyl Begg will be for the general view of Varyl Begg Estate and not exclusively for children under the age of 12 because that does not exist in any other housing estate.

HON M XIBERRAS:

This is the point of my question. The answer is that apparently there has been a change in Government policy about this. Bearing in mind that Mr Featherstone, then Minister for Education, said that he would meet Mr Joe Jurado and the Community Constable about this and appeared to be committed to the view that there should be a separate club for youth, I am asking what has happened to this stated Government policy. Has there been a change of Minister and a change of policy about this?

MR SPEAKER:

Could we have an answer to that.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

As far as my ministry is concerned there hasn't been any change of policy because we never had a youth club for the under 12, so there hasn't been any change of policy.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker may I refer to Question No. 308 in November, 1977, when the Hon Mr Featherstone said: "I believe that the policeman in charge of the Estate is running some sort of club for very young persons from 7 to 12 year olds. This is rather prior to the scope of the youth club movement which start from about 13, and goes up to about 20 odd. While I agree that the Policeman is doing good work I think that by the time that they come to the Youth Club stage they could quite easily go to Montagu Bastion." And the general tenor of the answer which I don't want to quote, Mr Speaker, is that the Minister was certainly considering separate facilities for the Youth Club there. Could I ask the present Minister for Education whether he has consulted the Youth Officer as regards the housing of a youth club together with the adult club, is that the policy of that section of his department?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The policy of my department is to have youth clubs as near as possible to different estates to cater for youths, and by youths I mean 15 year olds and older.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In respect of the under 12's to which there is a commitment, to which some people have given a lot of work, could I ask whether the Minister for Education or the Minister for Economic Development are planning to house the people referred to in Question No. 308, the 7 to 12 who are being moved out of the nissen hut now. Are they going to be put in with the adults at Varyl Begg Estate?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Sir, I am not planning to start a youth service now for 12-year olds and under because this would snowball all over the different Estates and it is just impossible. What I am prepared to do in cooperation with my other colleagues is to provide facilities where a room could be made multi-purpose and used for other activities.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Honourable Member seek the advice of the Youth and Careers Officer in these matters which is a matter which has been covered by the Corben Report, for instance?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 24 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state how exactly the Old Slaughter House area is proposed to be developed?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

Persons interested in the development of the Old Slaughter House north of the water distiller can submit tenders on the basis of comprehensive schemes for the whole site or in respect of one or a combination of individual plots of which there would be five. Preference would be given to schemes for the comprehensive development of the site for recreational purposes; should no acceptable proposals be received on these lines consideration would also be given to schemes for the construction of flats and/or offices or light industrial buildings.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 24 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, if the intention is to devote this area to recreational purposes and if proposals for recreational purposes are not forthcoming, should the Government itself not consider developing the area for recreational purposes?

HON A W SERFATY:

I think the Government should consider that when the time comes. When we have received or not received the tenders, the Government will have to make up its mind what to do with the site but I would not like to commit the Government at this stage.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in considering all this would the Honourable Member bear in mind, and I made myself responsible at the time for what I said, that there was a particular developer willing to spend £300,000 for recreational purposes. Would the Minister bear that in mind?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, I was going to say, Mr Speaker, that if the gentleman was available will the Honourable Leader of the Opposition send him on to me.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is it not likely that developers will opt for flats and offices and it is very unlikely that anyone will suggest anything about recreational purposes unless the Minister

comes up with some suggestion as to what recreational purposes the site could be put to and show a little bit of firmness that that is more or less the thing that would be allowed to be developed there.

HON A W SERFATY:

I am sure that the Government will give preference to proposals for developing this site for recreational purposes.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is not the Minister well aware that money lies in the building of flats and not in recreational development such as he suggests unless the Government is very firm on that issue.

HON A W SERFATY:

I am very well aware of that but I insist that I for one will give preference to recreational purposes. The tenders are coming in May so let us wait until then.

26.2.79

No. 25 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Has the Government been able to make arrangements so that more windows in the Post Office can be manned throughout the day and thus relieve the continuing congestion at the Post Office?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Tourism and Postal Services

In my written reply to Question No. 261 of 1978, I stated, inter alia, that the matter of the manning position at the Main Counter of the Post Office was generally and actively being looked into by the Administration and it has now been established by the process of Staff Inspection that four positions dealing with postal matters and one position dealing with Savings Bank transactions and Post Restroom, are sufficient to meet the requirements of the public at the Main Counter. The Department will, of course, endeavour to ensure that not only are such levels maintained but that the public will continue to be offered, as hitherto, the best possible services.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 25 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Minister aware that his last remark is an euphemism because this is precisely the complaint that has been made, that the public is not offered the best service, the public is meant to queue for a long period of time to buy a postage stamp. So is it the Minister's answer that the present manning levels are considered to be sufficient? Is that the answer?

HON I ABECASIS:

It is the answer.

HON P J ISOLA:

So that the position of the Government is that long queues at the Post Office is the best situation for the Post Office?

HON I ABECASIS:

I don't think there are long queues all the time. There are some queues on occasions between 10 o'clock in the morning and noon. Sometimes there are queues if there is a cruise ship calling at Gibraltar but not necessarily all the time. I have been going there to observe and I am satisfied that the queues are only there on occasions as is the case in any bank or any office of that nature.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Government aware that with the restricted number of flights to England the queues will precisely be during the times 2 or 3 hours before a flight is due to go and the last time for posting. That is the position, isn't it?

HON I ABECASIS:

I don't see the connection, Sir.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Couldn't the Minister consider opening another window when there is this rush and therefore avoid the queueing at that time. The person manning the extra position could be a part-timer or engaged in other activities within the Post Office. Would the Minister use a little bit of imagination.

HON I ABECASIS:

The Director of Postal Services will deploy members of the staff from other departments within the Post Office to cater for that particular occasion but I must insist that it is not as often as the Hon Questioner implies.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I think the Minister himself admitted, Mr Speaker, that certainly between 10 and 12 this appears to be a daily occurrence. Couldn't something be done during those hours?

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Honourable Member know whether the people who work behind the counter share his views about the adequacy of the numbers employed to do this work?

HON I ABECASIS:

I have not heard any representations from them, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will he investigate, Mr Speaker, whether the Postmaster and the IRO have had representations on this subject.

HON I ABECASIS:

I will find out, Sir.

HON A J CANEPA:

I would like to make one thing clear and that is the question of staff inspection. The Government is committed to abide by the result and the findings of staff inspection and a very in-depth staff inspection has been made of the

manning levels at the Post Office. The Staff Inspector very recently spent every morning for a whole week there looking into this question. Rather more time I am sure than the Honourable Mr Isola or my Honourable Colleague the Minister would be able to afford to spend and this is the result of the findings of staff inspection and the Government is committed to abide by that.

HON P J ISOLA:

May I suggest, Mr Speaker, that the Staff Inspector should spend more time at the Post Office at other periods of the year and not precisely in February which must surely be the period when there are least people. Can I ask the Minister how it is that these staff inspections are carried out, how is it that the public that knows the position and has to queue up is told you have enough staff there and the same public who has to foot the bill is suddenly told that lots of departments in Government require extra staff and they don't see the results. What is the criteria? Has the public, which pays considerable revenue to the Post Office Department, is the public not entitled to a decent service because the staff inspector says there are sufficient windows?

HON A J CANEPA:

Precisely because the first staff inspection was carried out at a different time of the year, the second staff inspection has been carried out more recently. I am also a member of the public, Mr Speaker, and I have had reason to go to the Post Office on three or four occasions in the last few weeks precisely at what has been quoted here this morning as being the peak period and I was attended to immediately. I didn't have to queue up for any long period of time and it was in the morning when it is supposed to be busy. I can present a completely different point of view.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Government explain why it spent money in re-Going the Post Office main office with such a large number of windows when it now tells us they only require two to be manned.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can I ask whether in fact the members of the staff were given an opportunity to explain to the Staff Inspector why they considered that the conclusions he came to in the first report were incorrect as to the required manning level?

HON I ABECASIS:

I presume the Staff Inspector must have consulted the Director and the staff. I am not aware of any details. It is not my concern to get myself involved in that sort of sphere, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

The Minister is saying that the only reason why he believes that the Post Office is adequately staffed is because the Staff Inspector has told him so, is that it?

HON I ABECASIS:

I said that I have gone myself there to witness it and I am satisfied that with a few exceptions the Post Office Main counter is properly manned.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister clarify whether the position is that the Government itself considers that the manning level is adequate and has had this confirmed by the Staff Inspector, or that the Government is so committed to upholding staff inspection results that regardless of its own views in the matter it feels it cannot change the manning level without sanction by the Staff Inspector. Which of the two is an accurate explanation of Government policy on this matter?

HON I ABECASIS:

When this new manning level is implemented we will see during the course of the next four or five weeks whether the Staff Inspectors were correct in assessing the number of people required or not.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked which view prevails, the Staff Inspector's views or your views. That is what you are being asked.

HON A J CANEPA:

The views of the Staff Inspector otherwise, Mr Speaker, what is the purpose of the Staff Inspector?

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Honourable Member explain then how is it that the Staff Inspector's view prevails and nevertheless it isn't because of the Staff Inspector's views that he is not prepared to increase the staffing?

HON I ABECASIS:

I have just said, Mr Speaker, that the Staff Inspector has submitted a report that the Government has considered and accepted. Time will tell whether they are right or wrong. I cannot say now.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Honourable Member would confirm that it would appear that the Minister for Labour appears to be suggesting that Government is committed to accepting whatever the Staff Inspector confirms. Therefore, can the Honourable Member explain how it is that they have considered that and taken a decision to accept which implies an option to consider and take a decision not to accept when the position is that the Government is committed beforehand to accept whatever the Staff Inspector recommends. I am asking the Honourable Member to explain what he means when he says to the House that they have considered the report and decided to accept it which implies that they could have decided not to accept it, if in fact the policy of the Government is that whatever the report says will automatically be implemented.

HON I ABECASIS:

The Staff Inspector has been asked to have a closer look at a different time of the year, a more detailed look than he had in the first place because the first staff inspection was carried out during the summer months and perhaps it might have been thought that the demand at the Post Office then was not that great and that that was the reason why he, in his view, considered that the manning levels were adequate. As a result of the matter being given a public airing both inside and outside this House the Government - Ministers - asked the Staff Inspector to have another look, an in-depth look, at the matter. He has had an in-depth look and we are satisfied that as a result of his having a second look, that his findings appear to be reasonable and appear to confirm his previous findings. Therefore we feel that there is no reason why the report should not be accepted.

HON J BOSSANO:

May I ask one more question. In fact the findings of both the first and second report implied a reduction in the number of people employed at the counter. Is that right?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, minus one.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying that the terms of reference of the Staff Inspector included consultations with the consumers there?

MR SPEAKER:

That is outside the orbit of the original question. The question is: "Has the Government been able to make arrangements so that more windows at the Post Office can be manned throughout the day and thus relieve the

continuing congestion at the Post Office", not the terms of reference of the Staff Inspector.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask whether the consumers have, in fact, been consulted by the man who has obviously made the decision, namely, the Staff Inspector? Or has he assumed that a certain level of service is in fact desirable?

MR SPEAKER:

We are not investigating whether the Staff Inspector did his job properly. We are investigating whether Government is satisfied with the manning of windows and whether they will do something about it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am asking in fact whether the public, who were the object of the question whether good service was being given or not, have been consulted by the person who it transpires had been influential in making the decision on the matter, namely, the Staff Inspector.

MR SPEAKER:

We are not investigating how the Staff Inspector came to his conclusions.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, how can we determine what is a fair level of service?

MR SPEAKER:

You are not asking what is a fair level of service, with due respect to the Leader of the Opposition. Government is being asked whether they are satisfied with the arrangements and they have said that they are. I am saying after having allowed the matter to be ventilated for twenty minutes.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Twenty minutes, Mr Speaker, of talking about the Staff Inspector. I would like to ask a question about the public in this matter if the Chief Minister will allow me. I am asking about the members of the public, Mr Speaker, have they in fact been consulted on this matter?

MR SPEAKER:

By whom?

HON M XIBERRAS:

By anybody, and certainly by the Staff Inspector who appears to be the most important person in this matter.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. You are entitled to ask the Minister whether he has had the views of the public on this matter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am asking whether anybody has sought the views of the public.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the Minister cannot answer for anyone else but himself and his Department.

HON I ABECASIS:

I have not carried out any investigation myself as to the reaction of the general public. It is not my intention to go outside the Post Office and ask everyone who comes in whether he is satisfied or not satisfied with the service in order to satisfy the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Of course not, Mr Speaker, you wouldn't expect the Honourable Member to do anything else except stand and say that the situation might, hopefully, be better some time. That is about as much as you could expect of him. What I am asking is, have the interests of the public been taken into account and the answer is obviously no.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 26 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

In view of the fact that Iberia Airlines is to be allowed to continue to use Heathrow will Government press for similar facilities for Gibraltar Airways?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

No, Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 26 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Honourable Member think that Gibraltar Airways is entitled to inferior treatment to Iberia Airways?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is a little more complicated than that because Gibraltar Airways and British Airways are changing over to BOEINGS 737 which are based at Gatwick and to begin with it would be more costly to base these planes, so I am told I am not an expert, at Heathrow.

HON J BOSSANO:

So, in fact, there is a perfectly simple explanation for the wish on the part of British Airways to run a service to Gibraltar from Gatwick which has nothing to do with their initial desire to force Iberia to Gatwick against their will.

HON A W SERFATY:

This is not a question of British Airways. This is a question that British Airways is changing over to a larger plane and I entirely agree with British Airways and Gibraltar Airways that they should change to a larger plane with 142 seats instead of 104.

HON J BOSSANO:

Yes, Mr Speaker, but in fact is the Honourable Member telling the House that the reason why the service from Gibraltar to the United Kingdom is going to be through Gatwick is that it has been decided to change over to BOEINGS or is it in fact the other way round that because it has been decided to move to Gatwick, BOEINGS are going to be used?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not saying what reasons the Civil Aviation Authority or the British Government may have for the Iberian

Peninsula to use Gatwick. What I am saying is that from our point of view the BOEING 737 which is based at Gatwick is a more suitable plane than the Trident 104 seater based at Heathrow.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, nobody is disputing that but is the Honourable Member saying then that the only reason for flying to Gatwick is because if the services were continued to Heathrow it would not be possible to use BOEINGS and if that is the case that it is so beneficial, can the Honourable Member say why they didn't move to Gatwick earlier?

HON A W SERFATY:

I have been trying for more than a couple of years to convince Gibraltar Airways and even British Airways to use larger planes, in fact, the BOEING 727 or the BOEING 737.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is not this a general change in policy decided at high level that flights from Portugal, Spain and Gibraltar should go to Gatwick, or is the Minister, in fact, suggesting that the reason why planes from Gibraltar will now go to Gatwick is because it is more convenient for Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

I cannot give the reasons why the British Government has decided that planes to Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar should leave from Gatwick instead of from Heathrow. What I am saying is that Gibraltar Airways, and perhaps I didn't say so before, because they are using BOEINGS would anyhow have used Gatwick, that is a fact.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So in fact the introduction of the BOEING 727 was in fact timed to coincide with the change in policy by the Government of Gibraltar.

HON A W SERFATY:

It must have been a pure coincidence, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Then, Mr Speaker, the view would not be justified in Gibraltar that the British Government has treated Gibraltar less favourably than it will now treat, in fact, Spain and, I gather, Portugal as well.

HON A W SERFATY:

I really do not know at this moment of time whether planes

to Portugal and Spain are going to leave in the future from Gatwick or Heathrow.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Perhaps I know a little bit more than the Honourable Member does.

HON A W SERFATY:

Maybe.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But I gather, in fact, that this is accepted, that Spain will fly from Heathrow.

HON P J ISOLA:

It is a fact, Mr Speaker, is it not, that Gibraltar Airways were planning in any event to go to Gatwick on 1st April, 1979, but with regard to British Airways is there not a case for suggesting to British Airways that their flights should be maintained from Heathrow so long as the other Airlines fly from there and that gives a choice of airports to the travelling public.

HON A W SERFATY:

I am not very convinced, if I may say so quite frankly, that it would be a good thing for 3 planes to fly from Gatwick apart from all the charters that fly from Gatwick, that 3 should fly from Gatwick and 3 from Heathrow but I am sure this suggestion would lead to complications for the Dutch Transair 737's that British Airways is leasing to enable them to fly a larger plane to Gibraltar.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, are these planes in fact based at Gatwick and there are no available 737's at Heathrow, is that the position?

HON A W SERFATY:

As far as I am aware that is the position.

HON M XIBERRAS:

As far as you are aware?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, Sir.

26.2.79

No. 27 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Is Government aware that British Airways will be discontinuing the flights to Madrid and does Government know whether the Spanish Government refuses to permit Gibraltar Airways to continue the service?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Trade and Economic Development

// Yes, Sir. Government is aware that British Airways will discontinue the flights to Madrid as from 1st April next. The Spanish Government have not agreed to allow British Airways with locally leased aircraft to link Gibraltar/Madrid flights with their own scheduled London/Madrid flights.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 27 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

The position, Mr Speaker, is that the Spanish Government has refused to allow this to happen on what basis, on the basis of restrictions against Gibraltar?

HON A W SERFATY:

I do not know but they do take the view that the service Madrid/Gibraltar is a domestic service.

MR SPEAKER:

I must warn the Minister that there are matters here which, perhaps, do not concern his Ministry.

HON J BOSSANO:

What I am seeking is information and is in fact information available to the Minister on this matter.

HON A W SERFATY:

The answer is that we do not know.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Government intend to press this matter at all with the British Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The matter has been pressed to the very limit at every stage, certainly from this side, from the Gibraltar side.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could this be considered as another restriction imposed by the Spanish Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It is not another restriction because in fact the present existing service has been stopped by British Airways and by nobody else.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

But the fact that they do not allow another airline to operate the same route as is normal with all routes that have been allocated, wouldn't the Chief Minister consider it to be another restriction?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think it is not a friendly act. My view is that it is an unfriendly attitude not to allow Gibraltar Airways to operate the service.

HON M XIBERRAS:

It is not a matter of opinion, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Minister is being asked for an expression of opinion as to whether it is a restriction or not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then could I ask the question whether the Chief Minister or the Government is aware on what grounds, and not to give an opinion.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The answer is that we don't.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Minister not in a position to state or the Honourable Member is not aware?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not aware and if I was aware and I was not in a position to say so I would have kept my mouth shut.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But surely, Mr Speaker, it is the Chief Minister's business at least to be aware of what the reason is for this rather important development.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It is the Chief Minister's business to try and be aware and sometimes he succeeds and sometimes he does not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Honourable Member is saying, in fact, that the matter has been taken to the highest level, surely he must be aware on what grounds the flights are going to be discontinued?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, that doesn't follow necessarily.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Chief Minister aware of any plans to replace the service as was being given now?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, the only one that I was aware was an attempt at replacing what was being lost by the allegedly non-commercial or unprofitable route of the Madrid run had been turned down, that is all I am aware of, which is to make, as the Honourable Minister has said, a locally leased aircraft by British Airways to link Gibraltar/Madrid with their own scheduled London/Madrid flight.

HON J BOSSANO:

So it is British Airways that have been refused.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is right.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 28 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has the Government now at last looked into the possibility of finding a solution to the general state of cleanliness at the Air Terminal?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Tourism and Postal Services

The Air Terminal is cleaned daily. The problem to which the Hon Member referred in his previous question arose as a result of night charter flights which have, since the end of last year, ceased to operate. Nevertheless, should there be a resumption of night flights, arrangements have been made to keep the Air Terminal clean in such circumstances.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 28 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, the Minister is obviously aware that in the coming summer it is projected to have many more charter flights than we have had in the past. What provision he is making, as far as staff is concerned, in order to keep the Terminal as clean as possible?

HON I ABECASIS:

We shall continue to clean it daily.

HON G T RESTANO:

What staff is used in the cleaning of the Air Terminal?

MR SPEAKER:

We have had that last time.

HON G T RESTANO:

Yes, but I am talking about the coming summer, Mr Speaker. The coming summer when there will be a great increase in traffic.

MR SPEAKER:

You have asked what staff they have at present. If you are asking about the future due to increase of traffic I will allow the supplementary.

HON G T RESTANO:

Does the Minister consider that more staff will be required in the coming season?

HON I ABECASIS:

Time will tell, Sir. I do not know whether more people will be required to clean the Air Terminal next summer. Presumably, it will be as many people as we had before.

HON G T RESTANO:

Time will tell. By the time the Minister is telling the summer charters will have gone away already.

HON I ABECASIS:

No, Sir, because the Air Terminal is cleaned daily.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 29 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has the Government now taken a firm decision to subsidise school transport for children living at Varyl Begg Estate of the first and second year middle school age?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Education

The Government has not taken a firm decision to subsidise school transport for Varyl Begg children of the first and second year middle school age. However, a paper is now being finalised for submission to the Council of Ministers at an early opportunity, dealing with the whole question of subsidised school transport in Gibraltar which is a complex one.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 29 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I agree it is complex but is the Honourable Member thinking of including financial provision in the coming Budget in respect of this paper?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Sir, that has to be discussed in the context of the Budget when the Council of Ministers paper is presented.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member not agree that by the time the 17th April comes around the Government would have had ample opportunity to arrive at a decision?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We hope so, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 30 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

What is the policy with regards to students re-taking 'O' levels in Gibraltar?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Education

The present policy allows any student who wishes to repeat his GCE 'O' levels to do so as a private candidate only irrespective of whether he/she has left or is still a full time student in school. There are about 200 repeat subject entries each year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 30 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, is this a departure from the old policy? Is this a new policy to make children re-take their 'O' levels on a private basis?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

This is the same policy that has existed.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, with regard to fees for the re-taking of 'O' levels will the Minister say what is the policy at the moment as regards this?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Private candidates pay the fees, that is all there is to it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Was this the policy in the last few years, Mr Speaker, for children in Government schools re-taking their exams to pay for the fees?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does this have an educational or financial consideration?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Sir, this is the policy of the department. The Honourable Member might be saying whether these are subjects which the students want to take against the advice of the teachers themselves.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, my original question is does he ask people who are going to re-take 'O' levels to pay for educational reasons or because there would be too much money involved in the department paying the fees themselves?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

This is the policy of the Education Department for years.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I don't think he has understood the question. Is it financial or is it educational?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

It is educational.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So it is the policy of the Department, in fact, or of the schools concerned, not to encourage the re-taking of 'O' levels. Is that the position? Even those courses which are approved by the school, in other words, people who have failed and the teachers concerned think they should have a second crack of the whip, metaphorically speaking.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Sir, I would remind the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition that all previous Ministers have accepted this situation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But, Mr Speaker, could the Honourable Member not review this decision in view of the situation obtaining in the Comprehensive Schools at present where for instance some people are doing CSE's in some subjects and 'O' levels in others.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I will not review it since I do not think it is necessary to review it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 31 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

What is the current position concerning the state of disrepair of Nos 197/201 Main Street which necessitates scaffolding and the infringement of the Public Highway?

Answer

The Hon the Attorney-General

On 3 January, 1979, one of the owners was convicted and fined for failing to comply with an order under Section 39 of the Public Health Ordinance to repair or demolish the premises. The Government understands that he intends to demolish them and has advised him to take action under Section 338 of the Ordinance against the occupiers to facilitate this. If the matter is not pursued diligently, the Government will be obliged to take steps itself to seek demolition.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 31 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I think the Honourable the Attorney-General said that this was in respect of one of the buildings?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

One of the old buildings. I understand one of the trustees was taken to court.

HON G T RESTANO:

I take it it was one of the trustees on behalf of the whole estate.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

I am not in a position to answer that. I think he was prosecuted personally but as a trustee.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can Government give any indication as to what sort of time limit it is setting itself to move itself on this matter in view of the fact that this scaffolding has been there now for quite an inordinate period of time.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Sir, the primary consideration I think is public safety, it is recognised that convenience is also another consideration. The Government is keeping the matter under continuing surveillance as its actions have indicated, and it will take such further action as might be necessary to uphold the interests of public

safety, but subject to this the Government prefers to allow the private individuals concerned a reasonable opportunity to remedy the matter.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to say that since part of this building, 197/201 Main Street, has been in such a poor state or disrepair for two years now, would the Government consider looking into making necessary changes in the law to give it more powers in the future to enforce any dangerous buildings from being out of repairs or broken down.

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Sir, I think this is a matter which will have to be considered but I think it would be more appropriate to wait until this case has been decided one way or another before coming to any definite view on it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 32 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has Government been able to recruit a full-time dental surgeon?

Answer

The Hon the Attorney-General

The Government has not been able to recruit a full-time dental surgeon yet.

A Gibraltarian who qualified as a dental surgeon in December 1977 and who is bound by his Scholarship agreement to return to Gibraltar to work within two years of qualifying, has been asked to return to Gibraltar to take up his appointment. He has made a formal application to be released from his obligation and this is being considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 32 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, should the Gibraltarian refuse to come to Gibraltar, or should he be allowed not to come to Gibraltar, what steps would Government then be taking in order to ensure that a full-time dental surgeon is available in Gibraltar?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Sir, if that situation arises the Government will take action to provide accordingly. The surgeon who is at present working on a part-time basis has indicated that he is prepared to keep working on that basis until satisfactory arrangements have been made for his replacement.

HON G T RESTANO:

May I ask whether the Minister for Medical and Health Services is satisfied that we will not in the near future have a vacancy for a dental surgeon in Gibraltar lasting over a long period because he is unable to recruit a new surgeon?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am keeping a constant watch as to what the establishment is doing but when they tell me that they cannot do anything more than try to persuade the Gibraltarian to come, I will press relentlessly for an advert to be put in the necessary professional journal.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 33 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Are there any shortages at present for the nursing staff?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

Yes, Sir, twenty junior and eight staff nurses.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 33 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Does Government propose to advertise these posts to fill the vacancies?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

We are doing our utmost. Unfortunately, as I said in the House, I think it was on the last occasion, the number of people coming forward to fill the vacancies are not all that many and the ones that are coming are not of the quality that we would like. Nevertheless we are taking some.

HON G T RESTANO:

Do the applicants require to have any particular standard of education?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

A certain elementary standard is required.

HON G T RESTANO:

Can the Minister say what sort of standards are required. Is it a question of 'O' levels?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

They must be able at least to take an examination in simple English, mathematics and general knowledge. I think they just sit for an examination.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 34 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Does the Government not consider that the employment of a full-time paediatrician would be of significant advantage to the community as well as rationalising the function of the Health Centre?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

During his recent visit to Gibraltar Professor Stroud of King's College Paediatric Research Unit he expressed the view that the catchment area of children did not justify the appointment of a full-time Paediatrician and suggested that it would be wiser at this stage to engage visiting consultants four times a year and that, after a year's trial a further assessment should be made. This advice is acceptable to Government.

26.2.79

No. 35 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state when it is proposed to open the Childrens Ward at St. Bernard's Hospital?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

As the Hon Member already knows, from enquiries he had made through the Industrial Relations Officer as well as raising the matter at a recent staff side meeting with Management, the problem is one of filling vacancies. Despite all our efforts it has not been possible to attract the necessary applicants.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 35 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister think it is possible to re-deploy staff inside the Hospital to keep the Childrens Ward open?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I can only say, Sir, the staff that we have got at the Hospital at the moment because of sickness and the backlog of leave that they are taking, are working very, very hard. We are desperately in need of people coming forward and filling the vacancies that we have.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Honourable Member not consider that in view of such a desperate need it might be opportune to change the Government policy as regards the recruitment of part-time nurses?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Is the Honourable Member suggesting that we should have more part-time nurses?

HON J BOSSANO:

I am asking whether in fact if the situation is so desperate, it might not be opportune to review the Government policy not to recruit part-timers.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The difficulty with part-timers is that they have got the greatest incidence of absenteeism and it is very difficult to control them if they just don't come on the day they have got to come, but nevertheless I am

prepared to discuss this matter more in depth and to find out whether there are really all those part-timers who want to come in or that some of the full-timers should revert to part-timers. I will certainly look into the matter.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Children's Ward itself in a good condition or has there been any infiltration of water, for example, in the last few weeks?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

As far as I am concerned I knew there were some minor leaks recently, and of course, the contractor is still under obligation to put that right and he is putting that right.

HON G T RESTANO:

The contractor has been asked to put that right, is that correct?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In view of the answer that has been given to Question No. 33 and also to this one it seems that a serious situation does exist as regards recruitment in the hospital. Could I ask the Honourable Member for how long this situation has existed?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Basically it has arisen as a result of staff inspection. We were told that we were undermanned and that we needed 16 extra people. This situation has existed since around November.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member say, in view of the serious situation which necessitates the closing down of a ward or the non-opening of a ward, the Children's Ward, what special effort has been made to attract new staff?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The Matron wrote to the schools, the Youth Careers Officer, Mr Victory, was also contacted and advertisements were placed in the local press and also in the United Kingdom to attract the more senior ones of which we haven't got anybody to promote otherwise we find ourselves with our hands tied if there is someone who is going to be promoted within six months from Gibraltar and we cannot bring anybody from abroad.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, bearing in mind the relatively high unemployment figures that exist among juvenile females, would the Honourable Member not agree that he has in fact a good catchment area there and if this is not the case is it because of lack of educational qualifications?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

That, Sir, and the fact that they are so well paid now, or rather I am not going to say whether they are well paid or not but they are getting such high wages as shop assistants, that some of them prefer to earn a little less and do less work.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Finally, Mr Speaker, would the Honourable Member not agree that the health of the community should be one of the top priorities and would the Honourable Member not consider taking extraordinary steps to staff the hospital properly?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Short of direction of labour.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 36 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how often the E.N.T. specialist visits Gibraltar and how many patients are seen by him

- A) Under the Health Service
- B) As fee paying private patients?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

The number of patients seen by the E.N.T. Specialist under the Health Service on his last visit was 74. No Health Service patient referred to the visiting E.N.T. consultant is left unseen during the course of his periodic visits which are about four a year. Private patients are difficult to quantify as they are seen direct by the E.N.T. consultant and we keep no record, but on a rough guess their number is about half of those seen under the Health Service.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 36 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister consider that this volume of work would justify having an E.N.T. specialist in Gibraltar?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes. 74 is a good number of patients. You must remember that they have been already sifted by our E.N.T. facilities in Gibraltar and if the local E.N.T. man considers that this number of patients should be referred to someone else, I think it is good that he should come as he does periodically.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I think the Honourable Member has misunderstood my question. I am asking whether the volume of work would justify having a full-time E.N.T. Specialist.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, Sir, I have been very strongly advised by the man who came out recently on paediatrics that we must be very careful of recruiting consultants to Gibraltar who may not be fully involved. The end product would be that the consultant would leave Gibraltar within two years and then we would get a bad name and it would be very difficult to recruit any other consultant again. There is not enough work for a full-time E.N.T. Consultant.

26.2.79

No. 37 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how long the Hospital has been without a dietician and when it is intended to fill the vacancy?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

The services of a dietician were available to the Department from April 1970 to September 1971. As the Hon Member already knows since he raised the matter at a recent staff side meeting with the Hospital management, the size of the Hospital does not justify the employment of a fully trained dietician.

It was however agreed that consideration be given to sending one of our cooks for a course on dietetics.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 37 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Honourable Member not agree that in view of the fact that there are different views as to the effectiveness of the work done by the dietician in terms of the improvement of patients in the period that there was one, would he not agree that it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the situation to ensure that we do not provide today a less effective service in this area than we were doing in the past.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

In the past, as I said was only one year and arising out of that particular experience, Sir, Gibraltarians are very difficult when you come to diet. The number of patients you get at the Hospital and the number of diets required can well be tackled by doctors and by having a cook sent on a course on dietetics. I can only assure you that we had plenty of problems when we had the dietician as in fact they found in Mount Alvernia where at the end of the day they had to give "callos" to the residents there because that is what they want.

26.2.79

No. 38 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

Has Government any plans to improve the unsatisfactory situation existing at St. Joseph's Hospital whereby there is little or no segregation of patients with different and varying degrees of mental illness?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

Yes, Sir. In anticipation of segregation being implemented some alterations are taking place in parts of the building, the rest depends on being able to recruit the necessary staff.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 38 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister outline the alterations that are made and will this result in alleviating the present situation quite considerably because it seems to me quite wrong that in the way modern science deals with mental illness, it seems to me quite wrong that there shouldn't be satisfactory arrangements for segregation.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

May I correct the Honourable Member on one point, this modern science business. We are going to go for segregation. Unfortunately modern science has got two views about the matter but I am not going to deal with that now. The acute patient will be on the top floor, the chronic patients will be on the bottom floor. Already a kitchen has been prepared at the top with the necessary partitions. The main problem is staff. We needed four people more, two are being sent there already, two staff nurses, and we hope that before the end of May two more will be sent.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Minister agree that the present answer serves to underline the apparently serious staff situation which exists in the Hospital?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

This is extension of services that we were not providing before. We decided about 6 or 8 months ago, when we came to the House, to extend the service by segregating patients which involves more staff.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In this connection, Mr Speaker, of the KGV Hospital, as in others, does the Minister consider the employment of the same staff as in England? I understand that auxiliary nurses are employed in the United Kingdom.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

We had the grade of Ward Orderly before. It certainly brings the standard down if you are not careful and you bring too many Ward Orderlies who don't go through any form of examination, but it has been brought to the staff side of the Management Committee where the Union and Management discuss matters and I believe this was raised about a couple of weeks ago, but I do not know whether any arrangements have been made to discuss the matter further between both sides or one side or the other has got to go back to decide whether we could engage Ward Orderlies. I certainly would not agree a blanket approval of Ward Orderlies but only a limited amount and this is being considered.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Without making a statement of policy on my behalf or on behalf of my colleagues, would the Honourable Member be aware of what the situation is in England and whether, in fact, auxiliary nurses are employed?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Oh, yes, that is why we raised it.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, with a full complement of nursing staff, what is the ratio between nurses and patients?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

It depends on the ward. There are certain wards which require more nurses than others. If the Honourable Member wishes I will try and get the information and pass it on to him.

HON G T RESTANO:

The Minister did say in June last year that the ratio was 2 to 1. Will there be an improvement on this when he has the additional staff?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, there will not be any improvement. If I did say 2 to 1 that was the correct figure as required. What we haven't got is staff to man the Children's Ward or the Geriatric Ward or to give more staff to KGV. We just do not have the bodies.

HON G T RESTANO:

My question was, in fact, when KGV has a full complement of staff what would the ratio then be?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

For segregation, exactly the figure I gave last year plus four more. All they need for segregation is four more bodies. I cannot remember from where you may be quoting but whatever figures I quoted plus four more which will cover the numbers required for segregation.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I can refresh the Minister's memory. He said that if you take the whole number of staff looking after KGV Hospital the ratio is about 2 to 1. If I remember correctly - I don't have the figures in front of me but perhaps the Minister could refresh my memory - I think quite a number of extra staff were presented either in a supplementary, I believe, for the KGV Hospital.

MR SPEAKER:

What is the information you require?

HON G T RESTANO:

This is what I am asking. I would ask him to confirm whether I am correct in saying that it was in the region of about 14 or 15 more.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I will not refresh the Honourable Member's mind. Following staff inspection there were 16 more bodies needed to cover both Hospitals. One was a Sister for maternity and four for the KGV.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 39 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Has Government any plans to modernise and enlarge the old-fashioned and inadequate Physiotherapy and Orthopaedic Departments Waiting Room which is clearly inadequate to meet the number of patients attending this clinic and who have to sit for long periods of time on the only four available and uncomfortable wooden benches?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Medical and Health Services

I am afraid space constraints make it impossible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 39 OF 1979

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Is it impossible then at least to alter the type of seating accommodation available so that the long wait is a little more comfortable. Could the Minister consider that further?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

There is little necessity to sit on those benches if people were to keep their appointments. They give block bookings and the people are there at 1.30, the clinic opens at 2.30 and some of them shouldn't be there until 3.30. To provide the comfort of those who enjoy waiting, and people do, I can assure you they do, we will provide cushions and also the painting of the Department which is down for next year.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Am I right in assuming that what the Minister is saying is that the accommodation is adequate but in fact it is the patients who are not sticking to their appointments through their own personal fault and not because there is little delay in being attended to when they arrive.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

They may well have to wait a quarter of an hour but no more than that.

MR SPEAKER:

Under the guise of improving the facilities in the Waiting Room, we are now discussing the attendance of people who have got appointments.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I want to get absolutely right is that it is not due to the smallness of the Waiting Room but in fact it is the fault of the patients and I just want to make sure that whether it is the fault of the patients or the fault of the Department and this is what I want to clarify so that there is no misunderstanding at all, Mr Speaker, in case I have to come back at another meeting to get further clarification.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The hard benches is the fault of the Department and cushions are going to be put there. I didn't mention the painting of the place because as you used the word "antiquated" I thought it would be a shame to paint an antique with a plastic coat of paint.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I don't see the word antiquated anywhere, Mr Speaker, I used the word "inadequate".

26.2.79

No. 40 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will Government state what progress has been made towards converting the old Labour Hostel at North Gorge into a Transit Centre for housing and what policy will be applied in allocating accommodation there?

Answer

The Hon Minister for Housing and Sport

The North Gorge Hostel is at present being converted into a Decanting Centre in connection with the current Modernisation Programme. It is expected that the Centre will be ready by about mid June this year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 40 OF 1979

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister add to what the policy is with regard to decanting which is part of the question.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, it will be used as a Decanting Centre, not as a Transit Centre. It will be used in connection entirely for the modernisation programme, that is, the decanting of tenants in pre-war housing that are up within the modernisation programme. We hope we will be able to assure people going there that they will be able to return to their modernised houses when completed.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I would just like clarification. What is the difference between a Transit Centre and a Decanting Centre?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The difference as I see it is that in a Transit Centre you can be there in transit, for a number of months or even years whereas in a Decanting Centre I hope we will be able to say to people that they will be there for eighteen months or one year depending on the time it will take to modernise their house.

HON G T RESTANO:

So in fact the distinction is not because of the tenant but because of Government's ability or inability to provide accommodation for those people in either the Transit or Decanting Centres. Is that correct?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Certainly the ability of Government to be able to provide a Decanting Centre.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Minister in a position to tell the House what reception this has had amongst applicants?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

We do not know, Mr Speaker, but I draw encouragement from the fact that people who had been told of this idea have accepted it quite well on the understanding that they will go there and be able to return to modernised dwellings.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 41 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Will Government state what policy is being followed in the decanting of tenants in the Town Range Housing Centre?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

Sir, with your leave, I propose to answer Questions No. 41 and 46 together.

All tenants of the Town Range Transit Centre who were accommodated there in 1965 have now been re-housed in accordance with the commitment given at the time.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 41 AND NO. 46 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Honcurable Member say what happens to the people who arrived after 1965?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, Sir, persons given accommodation at the Transit Centre after 1965 are invariably social cases that will have to wait their turn. When I said 1965 I referred to the people who came over from Spain over the frontier problem, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Honourable Member saying that nobody who arrived after 1965 has been re-housed?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not as far as I know, Mr Speaker, unless somebody has qualified on points or medically categorised.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What are the hopes for the people who are there since 1965, can the Minister give an idea at all? Can they be hopeful ever of getting proper accommodation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Under the Housing Scheme, of course, they stand as much chance as other applicants in the scheme. They would, of course, benefit inasmuch as they probably lack certain facilities that other Post-war houses enjoy but I cannot give them any categorical assurance that they stand any advantage or disadvantage over other applicants.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister prepared to give some special consideration to people who have been waiting for so long in circumstances which are very different to that of any other people in Gibraltar?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I do not know what the Honourable Member means by so long, Mr Speaker. As I say, invariably, most of the remaining tenants are cases of a social nature, people who have been dispossessed or have been evicted, sometimes by their own families. It would be unfair to give them advantage over other people who have been waiting much, much longer than they have.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Was not the purpose of clearing the Transit Centre to rebuild or to modernise?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

It is quite correct. We hope and we have decanted, as I say, certainly the Transit Centre north of the TGWU, i.e. 39/41, Town Range. That is completely vacated and Government intend to be able to demolish or whatever in preparation for the next development programme but we have found, much to our dismay, that we will unfortunately have to continue with No. 15 Town Range as a Transit Centre because we have so many social cases.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I to take it, Mr Speaker, that the people who were in Transit Centres other than No. 15 have been accommodated on the basis that they qualified on points, not on the basis that they were here since before 1965.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is quite mistaken or I may have given the wrong impression. The tenants at 39/41 Town Range were people who were there since 1965. There has been so little movement within that particular Transit Centre. It is in No. 15 that we have a few remaining 1965'ers and the rest are basically social cases.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So then, Mr Speaker, I am right in saying, am I not, that these people were accommodated on the basis that they had in fact been waiting since 1965 irrespective of the pointage that they had and they were given houses, some of them, I imagine, in Varyl Begg, on the basis of that consideration and not on the basis of pointage. Is that a fact?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not entirely, Sir. There are people in the Centres who have qualified on points, who had applications even before 1965 but the majority of them have been decanted in accordance with the commitment of the Transit Centres.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I do not understand, Mr Speaker, and this is what I am trying to elucidate, what, in fact, is the commitment to the Transit Centres? On what basis were people in the Transit Centres in fact accommodated; some of them, as I say, in Varyl Begg?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, the people at the Transit Centre, if he is referring to the 1965 people, were brought out in accordance with the commitment of the decanting on the 5%. We have a 5% for Transit Centres. What did happen was that this Government did provide a re-appraisal of their points system within the Transit Centre.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And this consideration is not being applied in fact to all the Transit Centres but only to some?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Mr Speaker. We only had one Transit Centre. We can call them two because one is at 15 and one is at 39/41 Town Range. In fact, all the 1965'ers were brought into that and Hargraves, the old YMCA. They have all been treated exactly the same, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

It has come to my knowledge that some people have been stuck in the Transit Centres for a considerable time and apparently these considerations do not apply equally to them.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The people who have waited much longer than others in coming out of the Transit Centre were people who refused to pay the arrears of rent that they were owing, and until that was cleared, of course, they could not be offered alternative accommodation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is No. 15 Town Range being used as a Transit Centre to deal with the homeless and other social cases? Is that a policy of the Government?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, we will have to continue using No. 15 Town Range, as a Transit Centre particularly on social cases and dispossessed tenants.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And does that mean that it is not the Government's intention to develop in the immediate future No. 15 or is it Government's intention to put people into No. 15, shortly to move them on to other places?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I can give this House an assurance, Mr Speaker, that it will certainly not be within this Development Programme. The fact that we want to demolish No. 39 is, I understand, in preparation for the next Development Programme.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is there any accuracy in the fact that some tenants who have been in the Transit Centre for some time have taken allocation which was not previously allocated to them officially, in other words, tenants within that area next to their own allocation had left and that vacated tenancy had been appropriated by those who were there already giving them a far larger area.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, there have been cases of tenants in the Centres acquiring additional accommodation if and when there have been vacancies but this, of course, has been remedied and put right by the Housing Department when we have got to know.

HON G T RESTANO:

So all those tenants who have appropriated extra accommodation have been put back to their previous accommodation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No one is at liberty to absorb accommodation because he wants further expansion.

HON G T RESTANO:

But in fact this was done?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, no one has been able to retain what they took over without permission.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Honourable Minister know how many families there are in the Transit Centre? How many are left?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I am afraid I cannot answer that, not off-hand. But if the Honourable Member is interested I will be delighted to let him have the information later on.

HON J BOSSANO:

What happens when a family is dispossessed and put in the Transit Centre as far as their pointage is concerned?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The pointage continues, Mr Speaker, on his dispossession as dispossessed.

26.2.79

No. 42 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Is Government in a position now to state precisely according to what criteria the flats under construction at Rosia Dale are to be allocated?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

Government is considering offering Rosia Dale flats for sale to tenants able to give up vacant post-war accommodation which Government requires for decanting in relation to the Modernisation Programme.

The Government is also considering whether tenants in private accommodation who are able to return to Government adequate housing which Landlords agree to make available for Government tenants should also be eligible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 42 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, what about the tenants who are in houses that require modernisation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Mr Speaker, tenants of houses that require modernisation within this programme will have to be housed either in whatever vacant post-war flats there are within the various Estates, or the Filipino Decanting Centre.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister explain why the distinction?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I do not know if I understood the question rightly. If it is that the Honourable Mr Bossano was asking if somebody that is up for modernisation that wanted to buy one of the Rosia Dale flats and would eventually return to Government the modernised flat because we must not forget that when a person is decanted in connection with the Modernisation Programme he has two options, one is of remaining where he is or going back to his modernised flat. If, in the case of Rosia Dale, a person wants to buy then, of course, the Government would recoup the modernised flat and Government would certainly consider that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Somebody whose house was not available for decanting but was available for modernisation would also be able to give up that flat and buy a flat in Rosia Dale?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, one has to be careful because what we are trying to do is to be able to recoup more or less similar accommodation at Rosia Dale so we want to be careful in case somebody is going to hand back a room and a kitchen and expect to buy a four-room maisonette. If he is entitled, of course, then it would be advantageous.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

This is a complete departure, I think, by the Government from previous ways of allocating new houses in Gibraltar. Mr Speaker, on the question of giving up private accommodation, what does he mean by that, a freehold accommodation of which he is the owner or a flat which he rents and if so how is the Government going to control the re-occupation of those houses and also on the question of the sale, can the Minister state how these flats are going to be sold, what the prices are going to be? Has the Government now a definite plan of how they are going to proceed and, if so, could the Minister certainly say what he can today here but then make a statement of policy which we can discuss. This is a completely new approach, Mr Speaker, to the question of housing allocation.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I am delighted to see that for once we are not called antiquated in being able to bring up new vivid ideas. Mr Speaker, I did mention in reply to the general question that we would be considering private accommodation where Landlords would accept or agree to have Government tenants. In other words that we could make use of by putting Government tenants in. Mr Speaker, as to whether it is going to be freehold or not, I am afraid, we have not, quite honestly, discussed that particular issue. As regards price, Mr Speaker, what I can say is that it certainly will not be the same as the Home Ownership Scheme prices that we brought some time ago. They will be much more on the basis that they keep up....

MR SPEAKER:

Let us not have conjecture. Let us confine ourselves to giving factual information and not ideas.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

They are not just ideas, Mr Speaker, there has been consideration of this matter and I cannot give a specific price structure to the various compositions of Rosia Dale but it will be a different concept completely because we want the money, at least what they cost, to try and put that back into more housing. What I am trying to say is that it will certainly not be the same price structure as was thought before and I thought it would only be proper to give the Honourable Member that kind of information and to tell him that we wish to recoup the money for further expansion of housing.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister state when he will be in a position to give facts on the policy of the Government of which they do not seem to know anything about at this moment?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I think I can put the Honourable Member at ease. We have been working on this and we have had a considerable amount of work put into this.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could we know, Mr Speaker, I must insist on this, when will the Minister be in a position to give us the facts and figures?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I cannot tell the Honourable Member exactly. Soon, I think.

HON P J ISOLA:

Will the Minister, Mr Speaker, give an assurance to the House that it will, well before the project is completed so that there is no loss of revenue to the public, make public his proposals well before the houses have been delivered for allocation so that we do not have any delay and it gives time for public debate if necessary.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The answer to those three questions is, yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Honourable Member discarded all consideration of the pointage system in the allocation of these Houses, especially bearing in mind the fact that after the disastrous allocation of the Varyl Begg Estate there will be nothing on the cards, apparently, in the way of new accommodation for a considerable time to come.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I think the Honourable Member once again misses the point, certainly, on housing. The fact that we are able to recoup more houses for modernisation will eventually produce more houses for those people the Honourable Member refers to.

HON M XIBERRAS:

My question is, has he discarded completely all consideration of offering these houses to people on the basis of pointage if they can pay according to Government policy? In other words, it is a question of offering to those people who have a high pointage and the ability to pay for the flat.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, the case could well be that there are people who are on high pointage who are prepared to buy....

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether Government has discarded the possibility of allocating houses at Rosia Dale on the pointage system. It is as simple as that, yes or no?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not discarded in the sense that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is trying to lead up to, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I do not understand that reply and I seek clarification of the Minister. I am asking a simple question, has he discarded all consideration of offering these houses to people with a high pointage who have the ability to pay?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member bear in mind that the Government has a moral commitment to people with a high pointage and would he make the offer to these people first?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I will certainly bear that in mind, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member further, in order to avoid accusations of unfairness in offering these 34 houses for which, no doubt, there will be a great demand, will he take steps so that the public is aware that he is acting in a fair manner?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I always act in a fair manner, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The question is whether the Honourable Member will take steps to ensure that the public is satisfied that he is acting in a fair manner?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I hope the public are satisfied that I act in a fair manner, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Honourable Member, for instance, consulted the Housing Allocation Committee?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, according to Government stated policy, the allocation of new houses has been for the Housing Allocation Committee and we heard the Minister not very long ago making a statement saying that on the allocation of new houses he would consult the Housing Allocation Committee. Will he consult the Housing Allocation Committee in the allocation of these houses?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Once again, Mr Speaker, the Housing Allocation Committee is consulted upon the houses that Government make available or allocated. This is the sale of houses and not the allocation of houses, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Minister has said that he has not discarded all consideration of pointage in the offer of these houses how can he possibly get away from consulting the Housing Allocation Committee?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a simple question. If by any chance houses are allocated from the Rosia Dale complex will the Minister give an assurance that the Housing Allocation Committee will be consulted on these allocations. That is all you are being asked.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

If they are to be allocated under the pointage system then definitely yes, Sir. If they are up for sale then no, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In order to ensure fairness in connection with the offer of these houses can the Minister commit himself to notifying the Housing Allocation Committee about who is to be offered the houses in advance without consulting them?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

If the houses are for sale, no, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I meant, Mr Speaker, in all cases.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Then, I am afraid, if the houses are for sale, no, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Minister not aware that he might be open to allegations of favouring one at the expense of another in the distribution of 37 flats only?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I think I am open to allegations whether the Housing Allocation Committee allocate or anybody else does, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 43 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state whether there have been any cases of transfer of accommodation within Varyl Begg Estate, bearing in mind Government statements that no transfers within the Estate would be allowed?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

One family at Varyl Begg (Ground floor) had to be moved as a matter of urgency into temporary dwellings as their flat suffered severe flooding.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 43 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, there have been no more?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Not for transfer, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, have any representations been made to Government by tenants of Varyl Begg Estate wanting a transfer on the same grounds that he has mentioned, namely, flooding?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Why, Mr Speaker, has in this particular case leave been granted or a transfer been allowed whereas in other cases it has not been allowed?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

In this particular case, Mr Speaker, it was 1.20 in the morning when the ground floor was flooded and there were three feet of water in this particular flat. The husband had apparently taken an overdose not being able to face the traumatic experience and there was a child with severe fever. At that time in the morning I thought it only human that I should offer them another leaking house at Varyl Begg because I did think that this particular case, because of the circumstances warranted particular attention and it was done, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am grateful to the Minister for making public this information because he had told me, I should explain, in a meeting earlier. Would he not agree that in the case under reference, the case of the Baglietto family which I explained to him, in fact, flooding took place through exactly the same reasons and does he advise Mr Baglietto to take an overdose of pills before he can get a transfer?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

This is the trouble with the Leader of the Opposition, when one tries to explain one's action on humanitarian grounds then, of course, one can be caught in his cobweb but it is not the same, Mr Speaker, in this particular case there were three feet of water. In fact, I did explain to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that by sheer coincidence on that particular night two main pipes, one of brackish water and one of fresh water, burst simultaneously and the flooding was quite severe. In the case of the Baglietto family, I sympathise with the particular case but it was not quite as severe as this particular one where I had to formulate a judgement there and then at twenty past one in the morning.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it not a fact that in the case of the Baglietto family flooding was severe enough for the Public Health Department to condemn one of the rooms. Would he not consider that to be severe enough?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is again slightly exaggerating. There was no such thing as condemning one of the rooms and I explained this to him at the meeting we held a few days' ago. There was no condemning.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, what we are going into I hope is the applicability or application of the Government ruling of no transfers within Varyl Begg and to the extent that there has been an exception one wants to know on what grounds the exception has been made and whether these grounds exist in other cases. This is the purpose of my question. Could I ask the Honourable Member to say whether, in fact, in this particular case he has mentioned the arrangements are of a permanent nature?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, on a temporary basis. Once some repair work has been carried out the family will have to go back to the original dwelling.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it not a fact that this particular flat was vacated by its previous tenants for the same reason and that tenant was transferred to another tenancy?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I cannot say if that is so. I will be very honest in saying it would not surprise me that all ground floor flats are probably the same at Varyl Begg.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would not the Honourable Member think that if he has already had one tenant moving out because of the flooding that the flat is subjected to, then the only thing he can achieve by moving the existing tenant back unless the defects are remedied is another twelve o'clock call and another bottle of pills.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, it has been found that these ground floor floodings are invariably caused due to the pipe carrying the main water supplies up the duct. Apparently the construction there is that there is a well or a duct at the bottom of this, which has no outlet, no weeping hole, and when it fills up apparently it seeps in. It seems that Public Works have been working on this and they are now producing weeping holes which will do away with the flooding.

HON M XIBERRAS:

On the question of Government's policy of not allowing transfers at all, I am referring to cases similar to the one I have mentioned of the Baglietto family, has the Government in fact withdrawn the offer made to me acting on their behalf, of an offer in certain houses when these become available on a temporary basis.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

There was no question of smaller flats, Mr Speaker, it was on a temporary basis and as I said to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in various meetings we have held on the subject, we were only waiting for information from London as to what was to be done in compliance with the Andrews, Kent and Stone Report and then one would know exactly what was left that one could use on a temporary basis to try and remedy the suffering of these poor people.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it then, Mr Speaker, that the Minister stands by this particular commitment of offering to the people within Varyl Begg these flats when they become available.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, it is Government's intention all the way through.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Minister inform these people, I think it was about fourteen cases of requested transfers within the Estate, will he make it available to those people who are affected, in writing?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, as far as I know my information is that there are three people who want to move not fourteen.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 44 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government explain what part the Housing Allocation Committee has played in the latest allocation of Varyl Begg Estate flats?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

The Housing Allocation Committee have allocated all the flats which became available to Varyl Begg with the exception of the balance due to the approved percentages.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 44 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, how many flats were allocated by the Housing Allocation Committee out of how many?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The total, with the exception of 15% on the medical category; 5% on the Transit Centres; 8% on Quarters and in the case of tied houses, one to the Waterworks and two to Prison Warders. All the others were done by the Housing Allocation Committee.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I want to know is how many were allocated and how many were allocated by the Housing Allocation Committee.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I have not worked it out but knowing that the Member is a very good mathematician he might care to do so. Out of 140 flats, Sir, 15% went to the medical category, 5% to the Transit Centres, 8% on the Quarters agreement, one house was a tied quarter, i.e. related to the Waterworks and two for Prison Warders, so roughly about 40%.

26.2.79

No. 45 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state when it believes it will be in a position to honour the commitment to one Mr R Rutherford, a resident of Varyl Begg Estate, to a transfer of accommodation within the Estate?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

Government is unable to commit itself to a definite date for making a further offer to this gentleman within the Estate.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 45 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it that the Minister does not deny that a firm commitment was made to Mr Rutherford for a transfer of accommodation in view of the pretty bad conditions under which he is living in the Estate?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, it is so and in fact Mr Rutherford was offered a flat in Varyl Begg Estate but he refused it because it was on a ground floor.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Minister not agree that in view of the fact that at least one other person who was given accommodation at the time he and Mr Rutherford made representations within the Estate, in view that this gentleman was accommodated, that an offer to Mr Rutherford is long overdue and would the Honourable Member not agree that this should be made within the current allocation?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

The other family composition that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition refers to and Mr Rutherford were offered accommodation exactly the same day. The fact is that one family accepted the alternative accommodation and Mr Rutherford failed to accept it, but it does mean to say that Mr Rutherford is entitled to anything else because he has waited longer, they were both offered accommodation two years' ago.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it not a fact, Mr Speaker, that Mr X got a higher flat and that therefore the offer that was refused by Mr Rutherford was not one similar to Mr X but he has been offered a ground floor flat.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Rutherford required a 3RKB flat which is on the ground floor and Mr X required a 4RKB flat which is on the fourth floor.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member, bearing in mind the commitment that he has to Mr Rutherford, would he make sure that an offer is made to him as soon as a flat becomes available?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I can say that I will offer Mr Rutherford and the other Mrs Baglietto and the other people that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has mentioned earlier on, as soon as I know exactly what is going to happen with the Varyl Begg tragedy and then we will try and do justice and fairness to each and every suffering tenant.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would he not agree that since the Government has given a commitment which the Minister has admitted to, that Mr Rutherford has a prior claim, in fact?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

No, Mr Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition must realise is that although I am Minister for Housing there is a Government of Gibraltar where we share and join in collective responsibility. The fact that I committed myself as a Minister to rehouse Mr Rutherford, which I did, and he rejected, then Government comes along with a policy particularly on the last phase of Varyl Begg that we cannot move anybody in Varyl Begg because of the very many problems there.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, might I just add for the record and ask this question for confirmation, did not the Chief Minister in fact also come into this and did he not say that Mr Rutherford should be housed. It was not just a question of the Minister for Housing. I am thinking in fact of what commitments Ministers can give and how we can go by commitments that are given and then they are put off.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is very right, not only did I commit myself to Mr Rutherford and Mr C but so did the Honourable and Learned the Chief Minister, and as I said we honoured that commitment, but there were two people then who wanted re-housing, one was Mr Rutherford and the other one was this Mr C and we did house Mr C and we offered Mr Rutherford accommodation

which he rejected. Subsequently, of course, then the Government policy was that we should not move anybody into the final phase. What happened, as you know, Sir, is that we had a two and a half year delay in the allocation of Phase VI and that made Government alter their policy slightly.

26.2.79

No. 46 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how the selection of families for re-housing from the Town Range Transit Centre has been carried out?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

(Answered together with Question No. 41/79).

26.2.79

No. 47 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state on what basis the latest allocation of flats at Varyl Begg Estate has been conducted?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

After honouring the approved percentages the remaining vacant flats at Varyl Begg Estate have been allocated by the Housing Allocation Committee on pointage value as at 30 September 1976.

26.2.79

No. 48 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

In view of the public disquiet with the known facts of the latest allocation of Varyl Begg flats, will Government publish the list of successful applicants now?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

Government is not aware of any "disquiet" over the latest allocation at Varyl Begg. It is hoped to be able to publish the list of successful applicants as soon as possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 48 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that the Minister has promised the publication of the list a very long time ago of the Glacis Estate and he has still not honoured this commitment, would the Honourable Member care to give them a time by when the list at present being asked might be published?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I cannot give a time and I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will accept that my department is quite overworked and it would be improper to divorce them from the day-to-day running just to draw up the list. As soon as possible we certainly will, Mr Speaker. The list is drawn up since 1976 on the question of allocation, Mr Speaker, but as one goes down the list, one does not know exactly if there is going to be movement, particularly for instance, in Glacis. We had the Penney House situation where people went there and came out. It is not as easy as it appears at first sight. Even today, one could say that one would not have a total allocation of Phase VI of Varyl Begg completed.

26.2.79

No. 49 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Does Government not agree that in the light of the lack of sufficient car parks in Gibraltar, speedboats should not be allowed to be parked in them during the winter months and will Government take the necessary measures to stop this practice?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Housing and Sport

Under paragraph 13(1) of the Traffic Parking and Waiting Order Cap 154 it is an offence to park a vehicle other than a motor vehicle in any car park which has been scheduled.

If a speedboat is on a trailer and this is parked in a scheduled car park then an offence is committed.

If a speedboat were simply left on a road or a scheduled car park (but not on a trailer) then there would be an offence of obstruction committed.

The necessary measures to stop this practice are being taken by the police.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 49 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, if I can pinpoint one particular example, a speedboat on a trailer, may I add, being parked in the car park opposite Ocean Heights for five months. Can I ask why it is that the police have taken no action to have this vehicle removed during all that time?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member that three weeks' ago, before the question was put, the owner of the speedboat and trailer was reported for the offence.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Minister aware that this morning the speedboat was no longer where it had been for the last five months?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, Mr Speaker, the continuation of the offence is another matter altogether.

HON G T RESTANO:

Was the Minister aware that the speedboat had been taken away either this morning or over the weekend?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I know the owner was reported by summons about two or three weeks' ago.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the Minister aware then that the speedboat had been taken away this morning or over the weekend but in fact has been placed in another parking space further down the road?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

It is not for me to go round chasing speedboats parked on the road, Mr Speaker. I am sure the police will take the matter up once they spot it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it that the police acted on their own initiative and the Minister had nothing to do with it?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I can vouch for the police on that fully, Mr Speaker. In fact, when the question came along the Commissioner informed me that this had already been dealt with.

26.2.79

No. 50 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government make a statement on the general conditions at the Prison?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

There has been a considerable improvement in the conditions at the prison since the inquiry in early 1978. Prisoners are being provided with work on a regular basis, both within and outside the prison. In addition, use is being made of the gymnasium facilities at the Boys' Comprehensive School.

Meals are being supplied by St. Bernard's Hospital and there is every indication that the quality, quantity and variety are considered by the Prisoners to be adequate and appetising.

We are trying to provide a staff nurse, who will form part of the prison staff, and who will be responsible for the day-to-day treatment of sick prisoners, under the direction of the doctor charged with looking after the health of prisoners. Dental treatment, including fillings, now form part of the medical care.

Work has already started on a general programme for improving the physical conditions. The main priority is the construction of a new ablution block, and the existing ablution buildings will be converted into additional accommodation for trust prisoners, stores, etc. Cells have been rehabilitated and will be equipped with improved lighting facilities. Automatic laundering facilities are now available and will be further extended in the very near future.

Security measures have been improved by the construction of a "sentry" post to supervise the area which is overlooked by the Tower of Homage, and anti-climbing devices have been installed at strategic points. Telephone communications within the prison have been improved. An alarm system will soon be in operation and floodlights, which have already been purchased, will soon be installed to light up the perimeter walls and their approaches. Provision is being made in the 1979/80 estimates for radio equipment for officers supervising groups of prisoners working outside the prison and on escort duties.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 50 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, what new work has been provided for the prisoners?

HON A J CANEPA:

They have been working in the cemetery, they have been working at St. Michael's Cave, they have also been working in the general upkeep within the prison, painting prison walls, etc, and some months ago they were also working at Camp Bay breaking up stones which were required actually for some of the work that was going to be undertaken at the prison.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is there some work still required to be done there on the recreational area at the prison?

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not know what the Honourable Member is referring to.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am referring to the place where the table-tennis table used to be.

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not think there is any work required to be done there. It was done a long time ago.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could the Honourable Member offer a comment on the question of release on parole?

HON A J CANEPA:

I must make one thing clear, that parole is not my responsibility as Minister, it comes under the Governor. I can try to help the Honourable Member if he wishes to be specific about it but I do not know what is the kind of general comment that he would want from me seeing that it is not my responsibility.

HON M XIBERRAS:

As the Honourable Minister is responsible for the prison could he give an indication as to how many people are being released on parole and how many are not?

HON A J CANEPA:

I could not say off-hand, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The number of people out now on parole, in tens or fives?

HON A J CANEPA:

I would say at the moment, since the new regulations on parole were introduced, I would imagine that the number of people that have been released on parole must be close to double figures, eight or ten I would imagine.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has anything which was recommended by the Committee that looked into conditions at the prison following the riots, etc, have any of the recommendations not been met up to now?

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not think that we have left anything out. Everything that was recommended by the Inquiry has been done or is in the process currently of being put into effect.

26.2.79

No. 51 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Does Government not consider in view of the consumption pattern of senior citizens living on their own, that the application of the normal primary rate of electricity should not apply to them?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

No, Sir, but in respect of those on Supplementary Benefit increases in electricity charges are taken into account when the rates of benefit are reviewed.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 51 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

I take it then, Mr Speaker, that the Government does not intend to review the rate itself?

HON A J CANEPA:

Not as a matter of general application to senior citizens. This would never be contemplated because senior citizens come under all sorts of varieties and some of them may be very wealthy and are well able to afford to pay not just the primary rate but even beyond that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I re-phrase the question then and ask in respect of senior citizens who are not well off, is the Government prepared to help them in the consumption of electricity, either in this way or in a similar way?

HON A J CANEPA:

Sir, in a similar way, yes. We are doing already this. For instance, on the last two occasions when electricity has been increased the primary rate has been increased less so than the secondary rate. Last year the average increase in electricity charges was 40% but the primary rate was only increased by 20%. As I say, for people who qualify for Supplementary Benefits we take cognisance of these increases and we try to help them to meet the increases, but to tamper with the primary rate I think would be dangerous. The House must bear in mind that the primary rate does reflect, to a reasonable extent, the provision of the service itself. In other words, the person consuming electricity has to pay for the service, the fact that when he turns on a switch the light goes on, that has to be paid for, there is that element of fixed charge which you cannot get away from. So rather than tamper with that we can have all sorts of consequences, I think what we have got to do is

identify; as I think we do, who are the people in need and take steps to help them and this is being done.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In a general way, Mr Speaker, I do not disagree with the Minister. Will he not agree that the Government's way of taxing this does not distinguish between older people and less old, in other words, that he is helping all those who are in need but in the case of older people, as my contention is, they are particularly in need of electricity as warmth for the home and so forth and would the Minister not further consider subdividing those people who are old and also on Supplementary Benefits?

HON A J CANEPA:

In that case, yes, we certainly are prepared to help them and as I say we are doing that already but where we are constantly in this House coming up against an obstacle in the way that we tend to view things perhaps on both sides of the House is in this over-current use of the term "senior citizen" or "pensioner" for instance. What is a pensioner and what is a senior citizen? It does not help at all when we get questions from Honourable Members opposite who do not draw some distinction as to what it is that they are getting at.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member take note of this, that what Honourable Members on this side of the House are getting at is some sort of consideration for the person who is old and also not necessarily destitute or in great need but in a position not to enjoy the standard of living that he enjoyed before.

HON A J CANEPA:

I think I can just wind it up by saying that we take note of that. As I say it is uppermost in our mind and when something has to be done about electricity the need not to increase the primary rate too much to maintain it as constant as possible is borne in mind for them.

26.2.79

No. 52 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government give an approximate figure of the number of persons, male and female, over pensionable age, in terms of social insurance legislation, who are not entitled now to receive pensions under such legislation?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

There are, at present, 948 persons over age 65 receiving Elderly Persons Pension, 232 over pensionable age receiving Supplementary Benefits and 79 also over pensionable age receiving transitional Retirement Pension, totalling 1,259 altogether. None of these would be receiving these non-contributory benefits if they were entitled to Old Age Pension under the Social Insurance Ordinance.

Let me add, however, that there is another group of persons over pensionable age - i.e. women aged between 60 and 65 - who may number anything up to 700, who are not yet entitled to contributory Old Age Pension and who are not yet receiving the Elderly Persons Pension since it is not payable until age 65.

26.2.79

No. 53 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state how many self-employed persons were admitted in 1975 into the Social Insurance Scheme on payment of a lump sum contribution and how many of these are now in receipt of their pensions?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

In 1975, 278 self-employed persons opted to pay arrears of contributions - 96 of them in one single payment and 182 by instalments.

Now, 4 years later, 35 of the 96 who paid in one sum, and 26 of the 182 who paid by instalments, are receiving Old Age Pension; in other words, 61 out of 278.

26.2.79

No. 54 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state how many persons were prevented in taking advantage of Government's offer of becoming entitled to Social Insurance Pensions on payment of a lump sum by virtue of their being over pensionable age at the time?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

I find it very difficult to reply to this over simplified question, for several reasons.

Firstly the question, as put, implies that a general "offer" was made, which some people were prevented from taking advantage of, because of their age. What in fact happened was that on 6 January 1975 employed and self-employed persons, without exception, were made compulsorily insurable, and those who were not insured already were given the option to pay contributions in arrears in respect of such periods, since October 1955, during which they had not paid contributions because they were not compulsorily insurable. Since contributions under the Social Insurance Ordinance are only payable by persons under pensionable age, the option was not open to those who had reached pensionable age on 6 January 1975. For those who were brought in compulsorily, and especially for those other than the very young, it would have been inequitable to require them to start paying contributions which, eventually, would give them entitlement to reduced benefit or none at all. Hence the decision to give them the option of paying past notional contributions.

The second point that I would like to make it that it is not strictly correct to say that anyone became entitled to pension on payment of a lump sum. That is evident from the figures given in answer to the previous question. Those who opted to pay the arrears could do so either in a single payment or by annual instalments, provided that, in the latter case, the arrears were paid up within 5 years or before reaching pensionable age, whichever was the earlier. Those very near pensionable age who took up the option therefore had little alternative but to pay the arrears in a single payment, but they still had to wait for their 65th birthday before becoming entitled to the pension. Whether they had to wait a day or a year, they still ran the risk of losing all or some of the benefits to be derived from their contributions if they died before becoming entitled to the pension.

A third point is that the sum payable by way of arrears varied from person to person - the maximum being about £250 for a person who had not contributed at all in the past. I mention this because reference to a "lump sum" in the question could convey the impression that there was a magical, arbitrary figure involved.

Having said all this, I turn to the question as to how many persons there were to whom the option did not apply because they were already over pensionable age. There were a few known to be still in employment but over pensionable age on the effective date, and who made personal representations and enquiries at the time, but there must be many others who, whether in retirement or self-employed, accepted the fact that the option was not open to them and who did not campaign for it to be made so. This is such an unknown quantity that I would not even care to hazard a guess which could be very far from the true figure. The reply to question No. 52/79 gives an indication of the absolute maximum number of persons who could have been involved in the terms of the Hon Member's question.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 54 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It does not tell me the number or whether the Minister has made an effort to obtain that number. Would the Minister say that this would have been at the time a fair consideration to take into account, the classification of different categories of people and the reason for their exclusion from the scheme and on that basis would the Minister not be prepared to have a guesstimate of it on the basis that it would be treated as a guesstimate. After all, he has certain parameters already, or we have certain parameters already on the basis in answer to No. 52.

HON A J CANEPA:

In Question No. 52 I have been able to give definite details and quite specific information about the number of people over 65, on Elderly Persons Pension, about the number of people over pensionable age receiving Supplementary Benefits and about the number of people getting the transitional Retirement Pensions, the latter being very old people who were already too old to benefit back in 1959 fully from the introduction of the Social Insurance Scheme and those, we can quite accurately say, total 1,259. I have then left open the other group that we have identified who are women aged between 60 and 65 and I have said that they can number up to 700. That we know roughly from the census, that there are about 700 women within that age group but these are women who have not yet qualified perhaps on their husbands' contributions for Old Age Pension but who might do so. They may not have qualified yet because the difference in age between them and the husband is not very much and therefore until their husbands reach the age of 65 they will not qualify on their husbands' contributions for Old Age Pension and then there are, as I say, some who may not qualify at all under this heading but who will get EPP when they reach the age of 65. You can assume, therefore, that the total figure is the absolute maximum of those who could, in the terms of the Honourable Member's question, answer the request which he is making. The absolute maximum is anything up to 2,000.

26.2.79

No. 55 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Has Government received a report from Miss Pamela Thayer following her latest visit to Gibraltar towards the end of last year?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

No, Sir.

Miss Pamela Thayer, Principal Social Work Service Officer of the Department of Health and Social Security, came to Gibraltar in October/November 1978 to review progress made as a result of her recommendations following her previous visit as Child Care Adviser in 1970.

On her return to Britain she wrote to the Department of Labour and Social Security in November and again in January requesting information and figures of several kinds for inclusion in her report. This was not readily available, but has been sent to her as it came to hand; the last item having been sent only last week.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 55 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Government make available to Honourable Members on this side of the House a copy of the Report when it does arrive?

HON A J CANEPA:

We shall consider that, Mr Speaker, when we get the Report. At the moment I can tell the Honourable Member that Miss Thayer came here under technical co-operation arrangements and therefore her Report will be submitted through the Ministry of Overseas Development. Eventually it will come to us and when we look at the Report the Government will consider whether it should make it available to Honourable Members opposite and I will, of course, keep in mind the fact that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, as my predecessor, was involved in the previous Report and that he therefore has a special interest in the matter.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Minister further bear in mind Mr Speaker, that it would not be unprecedented to make reports of this type available to Honourable Members of the Opposition. Could I ask the Minister though, in advance, whether Miss Thayer's terms of reference were confined to Child Care or whether it was in fact the Family Care Unit as a whole that she was looking at.

HON A J CANEPA:

No, in fact not the Child Care and Family Care Unit as a whole but other aspects of social problems in Gibraltar, perhaps even including the aged. I hope to see a fairly wide Report from her and I will keep in mind the considerations which the Honourable Member has mentioned in respect of the circulation of the Report.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state whether the number of Gibraltar Government employed persons increased since March last year, and if so, by how much and will Government give recent employment figures for the public and private sectors and separately for the Ministry of Defence and Department of the Environment?

AnswerThe Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

The figures available refer to the April 1978 Employment Survey Report and this showed that there were 3320 persons employed by the Gibraltar Government at the time. The October 1978 Employment Survey has not yet been tabulated but a quick count has produced an estimate of 3440 persons employed by Government last October, an increase of about 120. These figures include part-timers, and those employed temporarily.

The latest available figures with regard to employment in the public and private sectors are those published in the April 1978 Employment Survey Report and are as follows:

Public Sector	7149 (of which MOD 2882, DOE 837)
Private Sector	4196

From the information being processed at the moment in connection with the October 1978 Employment Survey the following estimates can also be provided:

Public Sector	7230 (of which MOD 2850, DOE 840)
---------------	-----------------------------------

The October 1978 estimates for the private sector cannot yet be provided because of late response by some firms.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 56 OF 1979

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, against the background of what the Financial and Development Secretary and other Members of the Government have said from time to time, would the Minister agree that the increase, as the figures show, has been in Government employment?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, as far as the Public Sector is concerned the MOD and the DOE appear from one Employment Survey to another to have been pretty well constant and it is the Gibraltar Government which has increased by about 100 roughly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Honourable Member know whether this increase has been in industrials or in non-industrials?

HON A J CANEPA:

They are small groups here and there but I would not care to hazard a guess whether they have been industrials or non-industrials. Generally spread out, for instance, a number of school teachers had to be employed and this would have been reflected from one Employment Survey to another because of the problems at the time when the Christian Brothers left and more school places had to be provided in Government schools. Within the Prison service there has been an increase that one can think of. Secretariat, perhaps, but it is very difficult to say with more exactitude than that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in view of the Budget Session next month, would the Honourable Member note that I will be interested in these figures against the background of debate in Budget time in the last two years.

HON A J CANEPA:

I am very much interested myself, Mr Speaker. I am not able to answer because I have not seen the Employment Survey Report myself so I do not have the details and I certainly would not want to come here in April without the last Employment Survey Report.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I comment briefly on the MOD. I gather that there is a reduction of some 32, whereas DOE has remained practically steady. Does this show a trend for MOD and DOE respectively over a longer period of April to October?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, I do not think so, we also monitor this in the Manpower Planning Committee and I do not think that a decrease of 30 or so in the MOD should be seen as a trend at all.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That information is certainly welcome, Mr Speaker. As regards the Private Sector, could the Minister, without giving figures for October 1978, say what generally the trend has been, has it kept pace with the trend of recruitment in the Government?

HON A J CANEPA:

I could not say, Mr Speaker. There have been some redundancies in the Private Sector, well known redundancies in the Port and a fairly large firm which specialises mainly in drink and tobacco may have cut, I have mentioned that in the House before. I could not say, it is very difficult, Mr Speaker, really the October 1978 figures

and more, so the April 1979 figures for the Private Sector are going to be very, very interesting because they are going to be connected with wage increases etc, but it is very difficult to hazard a guess without having the actual statistics.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Finally, Mr Speaker, could I ask about the Manpower Planning Committee, whether they feel that these figures reflect the actual need of Gibraltar or whether they would like to see an increase in one direction or another?

HON A J CANEPA:

Where we definitely want to see an increase is in the building industry because that is a very good barometer of economic activity in Gibraltar. It is very difficult to say.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Doesn't the Manpower Planning Committee have estimates of how much labour would be required, say, over a period of 3/6 months?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Minister say whether in fact these figures, generally speaking, meet the target for the desirable figures.

HON A J CANEPA:

It is difficult to say, Mr Speaker. These figures are out of date. Here we are dealing with figures which are at the very least now going on to about nine months' out of date and in the Manpower Planning Committee at least in so far as the alien labour force is concerned, our figures are much more up to date because the Department of Labour and Social Security provides the number of work permits in issue at the end of the month prior to the meeting of the Manpower Planning Committee, so it is very difficult to reconcile two sets of figures.

HON G T RESTANO:

The Minister has said that it is difficult to guess the figures for the Private Sector because firms are not directly responsible but does not the Department of Labour and Social Security in any way have a list of employees?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, in the Employment Survey who are not just dealing with aliens, you are not just dealing with those who require a work permit, you are dealing with EEC nationals as well and locals and those are not on the books of the Department of Labour and Social Security in that sense, they do not come under the Control of Employment Ordinance.

HON G T RESTANO:

Doesn't the Minister have an idea, as far as the areas are concerned whether the employment figures come down or whether they remain static or whether they have increased in the Private Sector?

HON A J CANEPA:

I think they are on the up and the indications in the Manpower Planning Committee is that there is more of a demand for labour, particularly in the building industry, creeping up every quarter.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Government aware that an increase in Gibraltar Government employees of some 120 between April and October must represent an additional expenditure of public funds of about £400,000 a year and that a decrease in the MOD and DOE of about 70, not 30, must represent a drop in HMG expenditure in Gibraltar of about £200,000 a year. Are the Government not concerned? In the total given by the Minister there is a drop of MOD of 30 and a drop in DOE of 47.

HON A J CANEPA:

837 as against 840.

26.2.79

No. 57 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Will Government state the unemployment figures for the months of October, November, December and January giving the breakdown by sex and nationality?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

The end of the month figures for 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.

2. Once again, these figures include the hard core of Gibraltarians, about 40, who for different reasons are extremely difficult to place in employment.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 57 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I notice that the proportion of juvenile females over these four months has as a whole increased in relation to the previous four months. We had earlier this morning the question of difficulty in recruiting staff at the hospital, so can the Minister say why it is that these female juveniles are ineligible to fill the vacancies in the hospital?

HON A J CANEPA:

I thought the answer was made clear this morning, that there are certain basic qualifications required: they are required to sit an exam which reflects basic requirements and if they are not met then the material just isn't there. The Honourable Member should note, of course, that I have given the figures from October to January, the previous four months would not reflect the extent of school leavers, and that is why, probably, though not being bad results, they are not very high, these are a little bit higher than prior to October because of school leavers registering at the end of the school holidays.

The underlying reasons; I could arrange with my Honourable Friend the Minister for Education to make available the Youth Employment Service Report for 1978 to the Honourable Member. I think he would find all the underlying reasons and the suggestions made by the Principal Youth and Careers Officer which entail a change of attitude by the young girls involved and the proposals which he makes for meeting this unemployment problem. I think we could get a copy for the Honourable Member.

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I am very grateful for that and I would be delighted to have a look at the report.

Another point which I should like to know is: aliens unemployed. In these four months the figure for aliens unemployed was 96; in the previous four months it was in fact 56. Does the Minister have an idea why there has been this quite extraordinary increase of unemployed aliens over these four months?

HON A J CANEPA:

I would not like to say that there has been an increase, Mr Speaker, I would like to see the figures for the previous four months. The number of unemployed aliens from October to January averages 22 or 23 males and 7 or 8 females, so the average is only 32 or 33 aliens unemployed.

HON G T RESTANO:

In the answer to Question 222 of 1978 the figures for four months were 25 against 10 taking this particular list which has been circulated today, 20 against 8, 26 against 18, 25 against 20, as far as males are concerned; as far as females are concerned 3 against 1, 8 against 1, 8 against 1, 8 against 0. So there has been quite a considerable increase.

HON A J CANEPA:

I would not be able, off-hand, to account for it, Mr Speaker.

HON G T RESTANO:

Could I ask the Minister to look into it and let me know at some future date?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, I will do that.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Are we quite sure that the figures are not cumulative. It may so happen that the first 25 may still be out of employment at the end of that period. It is not that people have gone and others have....

HON A J CANEPA:

There is a constant turnover. Some of those, for instance, who were unemployed at the end of November may have been employed at the end of October, but not necessarily so.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

What I am trying to establish is how many of those finally left Gibraltar because they could not find employment?

HON A J CANEPA:

I would not know, that would be a matter for Immigration. I will say this; they would exhaust their Unemployment Benefits after thirteen weeks during which it is only fair they be helped in every way to find employment and should be allowed to remain in Gibraltar. What happens after those thirteen weeks is a matter for Immigration. When they have exhausted Unemployment Benefit and their prospects of finding employment are no good, then, they should no longer remain in Gibraltar.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

In fact, to find out the real unemployment rate of aliens, it is necessary to find out how many have left Gibraltar because they could not find employment. This obviously cannot be shown in this return that you have given us.

HON A J CANEPA:

No, we cannot show that in this return, nor can we say that the 25 Unemployed in October were or were not there in November unless we actually go through them one by one, because they may have been at varying degrees in the period that they are allowed to receive Unemployment Benefit.

HON G T RESTANO:

Are the unemployable mainly adults and is there any trend as to their unemployability?

HON A J CANEPA:

These are mainly adults who suffer from mental illness, alcoholism, etc. They are very difficult to employ, sometimes, they are placed in employment and they do not remain there for more than a few months or weeks.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Manpower Planning Committee considered from a positive point of view the employment of Gibraltarian and British juveniles both male and female? I note that the Honourable Member has in fact recourse to the Youth Employment Officer's report but has the Manpower Planning Committee considered this?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, Sir. As far as male juveniles are concerned there is no problem at all. As far as females are concerned

the Manpower Planning Committee is very conscious of the fact that there is some problem of unemployment and the awareness of this problem reflects itself in the attitude to the various quarters and in particular the retail and distributive trade. Because it is aware of the fact that this is a traditional area which these young females are seeking to find employment in, the Manpower Planning Committee is somewhat stringent in its recommendations about this area of employment. It is not a sole area and this is made clear by the report of the Youth Employment Survey but what there is required really is a change of attitude. There are vacancies elsewhere, apprenticeships, for instance. It is a case of young girls making up their minds that they should take them up.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has not the Manpower Planning Committee made specific recommendations about this problem?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, not beyond the extent to which I have mentioned.

26.2.79

No. 53 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon Major R J Peliza

Does Government have any plans to make general repairs at the Casemates Hostel?

Answer

The Hon the Minister for Labour and Social Security

Yes, Sir.

Government has plans to carry out considerable improvements and repairs to Casemates Hostel. The estimated cost of £250,000 is to be met from ODM funds made available in the current Development Programme.

Tenders for the work were invited in December 1978 and closed at the end of January 1979, so that the works are expected to commence in the near future.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 58 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Would the purpose of the hostel remain as it is at the moment, will it be used for the same purpose as it is being used today?

HON A J CANEPA:

Primarily, yes, but on a different basis. The numbers accommodated there will be lower by about a hundred than what they have been heretofore. We are sacrificing about 100 beds, or so, in order to provide better amenities, in particular cooking facilities within each dormitory and not in a communal kitchen. It will meet mainly the requirements which have been met traditionally for the last decade or so.

HON G T RESTANO:

Seeing that such a large amount is going to be spent on the repairs of this hostel, Mr Speaker, doesn't the Government think that the hostel being situated in such a prime area of Gibraltar that it might be better used for other purposes and.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, we are not going into the policy of the use of property in Gibraltar, generally.

HON G T RESTANO:

No, Mr Speaker, not generally, but the Minister has said it is a quarter of a million pounds.....

MR SPEAKER:

Well, then the original question should have been:
"Does not Government feel that due to the prime site of this particular hostel, it should be removed somewhere else and the site used for some other purpose?"

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, we did not know what the cost was going to be until we have heard it now.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, as a matter of fact they ought to have known, because I was reading the Hansard of last year and the information is in a speech I made then.

MR SPEAKER:

What the Honourable Member is saying is that he did not know what the cost of the works would be.

HON A J CANEPA:

Oh, yes, but I am saying that the information has been given in the House before, and I gave this at Budget time last year.

MR SPEAKER:

I see, but, anyway, a quick answer to that one might satisfy the circumstances,

HON A J CANEPA:

The answer is to be found in the City Plan. I think the long term development plans for the Casemates area are spelt out there.

26.2.79

No. 59 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the number of posts advertised by GBC in recent months, are there proposals afoot for extending the activities and programme hours of GBC Television?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

There are no plans at present to extend the programme hours of GBC. Some of the posts recently advertised are the direct result of the implementation of the recommendations of the GBC staff inspection report; others are in respect of vacancies which existed before the staff inspection and which the Corporation had been unable to fill on account of the unattractiveness of the remuneration offered.

Although the staff inspection did not envisage the extension of programme hours, the reorganisation of the station will make it possible for the Corporation to extend their news and current affairs service and field production work within the existing programme hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 59 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Can we look forward, Mr Speaker, to a rather more polished programme on GBC/TV on current affairs than we have today? Are we going to be promised at least that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I called it expansion of their news and current affairs service and field production work, whether that is polished or not I do not know but that is the personnel which we have been able to cater for.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Would that include, Mr Speaker, the broadcasting of the meetings at the House of Assembly?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, that was specifically mentioned, would be considered once the whole of the new station was operational from Mercury House and the staff were able to devote themselves to this. That presents no practical problem as far as broadcasting is concerned.

26.2.79

No. 60 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon P J Isola

In view of the increased use of GBC Television for advertising purposes, can Government give guide-lines to the corporation as to the need to ensure the limited GBC Broadcasting time is not unduly shortened by lengthy dull and monotonous advertising and can Government state what percentage of total revenue of GBC is represented by advertising revenue?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

Programme broadcasting time is not shortened in favour of advertising. In accordance with the policy laid down by the Board of GBC the time allowed for advertising is limited to ten minutes in the hour throughout the whole of the broadcasting time. However, as there is normally no advertising during the children's programme during the early evening, the unused advertising time allocated to this period is allowed to be carried forward to the late evening programmes sometimes resulting in the ten minute limit being exceeded in any one hour though not overall. This, however, is more the exception than the rule and except at peak periods, e.g. before Christmas, considerably less than ten minutes in the hour is taken up by advertising.

It is estimated that the revenue to be derived from advertising during the financial year ending 31 March, 1979, will be in the region of 20%/25% of total revenue for the year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 60 OF 1979

HON P J ISOLA:

Sir, I thank the Chief Minister for that information. Could I ask whether the idea, presumably, in giving directions that advertising should not exceed ten minutes in any one hour is out of consideration for the televiewer and not necessarily for any other reason and will the Chief Minister ask the Corporation that that limit should be observed whether advertising time is taken up in children's programmes or not? Will he not agree that it is unfair to land the televiewer who watches television after nine o'clock, for example, with increased advertising some of which is very, very repetitive indeed.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

This is one of the aspects which I think will improve with the new set-up. There is a section which will devote itself to the presentation of advertising material and so on. In so far as the ten minutes per hour is concerned, what I did say is that not necessarily is the time that is not used during the children's hour always passed to the late evening.

Some of it is sometimes passed, I think it is a matter of balance and I am told it all depends how keen one is to see the next programme as to how much patience one has to put up with this or other commercial which I am not prepared to specify from this side of the House.

HON P J ISOLA:

Perhaps the Government can suggest to the Corporation that in the case of certain advertising - for example, there is a particular one in which he is very glad that she does not smoke a particular brand - cannot Government ask the Corporation to consider that if somebody wants that sort of advertising to be repeated endlessly for months and months they should pay a premium for the privilege.

HON CHIEF MINISTER :

I shall certainly convey that to the Corporation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Can I ask the Honourable and Learned Chief Minister where he gets his information from?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not normally disclose my sources of information but this, of course, comes from GBC.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can I ask the Chief Minister whether he approaches GBC formally as he would Civil Servants, for instance, for the preparation of an answer or whether he has meetings to discuss these matters?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In the general trend of things if it is a matter of statistics and so on, the staff in the Secretariat which has now been strengthened to deal with these matters, obtains the information from the Corporation. If I find that it is rather a delicate area in which I am not clear with the information produced by the staff, then I call upon the Chairman of the GBC to explain matters to me. I rarely do this because I think that the more independent they are the better for everybody.

HON M XIBERRAS:

That is in fact, Mr Speaker, the point of the question. Could I ask the Chief Minister whether in answering this question, for instance, on matters of policy on advertising he is, in fact, making his own the views expressed by GBC or if he is simply conveying information to the House?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am making no judgement. I am conveying the answers to the House as requested. I shall perhaps have something to say during the consideration of the Estimates having regard to certain expenditure about certain aspects of it which I understand is already being looked into and we shall have no hesitation in informing GBC of our views and they themselves I know are concerned about the expenditure but there has been no indepth discussion, certainly not since the review of the Staff Inspection Report, about any of these matters though they well know that we are very concerned about it and they are also concerned about the considerable expenditure incurred in television.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Could I ask the Chief Minister whether he agreed with the present policy of GBC on broadcasting.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, I cannot allow that question. We are talking about the time dedicated to advertising.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, Mr Speaker, and that involves a policy.

MR SPEAKER:

Not in my judgement.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can the Chief Minister say whether he agrees with the practice which he has outlined?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have not considered it. I have just passed on the reply given to me particularly because in the near future we will consider the whole question of advertising and the whole question of revenue producing sources of GBC, it did not seem to me the most appropriate time to consider what has been going on for the last few years. I should have mentioned earlier that as from September the Managing Agents have disappeared from the scene and GBC itself is carrying out its own functions and the functions of the Managing Agents and are re-hatching their own policy, generally, and it is only fair to give them a little time for them to produce their ideas on the matter when we discuss the question of next year's Estimates.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I just wanted to underline the fact that no member of the Government is actually responsible, as I understand it, for the ins and outs of GBC when it comes to such things as staff reports on salaries and so forth, it struck me that there was a discrepancy between the way the Chief Minister was couching his reply to this question and the way that he answered questions on other matters such as staff inspection where monies are voted by the House and not given by the Government to GBC.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 61 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state how the decision was taken to allow Gibraltarian Representatives to attend a meeting of the Strasbourg Working Parties held in Madrid, given the continuance of the Spanish blockade against Gibraltar, and who took the decision?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

Gibraltar Officials attended the first meeting of the Working Parties in London in July 1978. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office invited His Excellency the Governor once again to send officials from Gibraltar to the second meeting held in Madrid in December last.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 61 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Chief Minister say once the invitation was received to send officials to Madrid, whether, anybody in Gibraltar thought that given the continuance of the Spanish blockade, the officials should not go to Madrid?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

A meeting of the elected members representing both sides of the House, except Mr Bossano, was held on 2 May to consider the procedure and tactical arrangements for meetings of the Working Parties. At that meeting the elected Members considered the possibility that at some stage it might be suggested that a meeting of the Working Parties should be held in Madrid. The elected Members decided that they would not object to a meeting of the Working Parties being held in Madrid. The Honourable Member was not present at this meeting nor at any other meeting of elected Members when matters relating to the talks have been discussed because he had opposed the motion by Mr P J Isola on 14 April 1978 which expressed confidence in the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, and supported the continuation of the talks whilst bearing in mind the previous motions that sovereignty should not be discussed or negotiated.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Chief Minister not think that notwithstanding the fact that he does not wish to invite the Honourable Questioner to any of these meetings because of the views he held, there is no reason why the existence of the meetings should be kept a secret from the people of Gibraltar?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The meeting was not secret at all. The only point is, when the elected Members need to discuss matters of general interest, they do not issue communiques.

HON J BOSSANO:

But does the Chief Minister not think that in view of the fact that Members of the House have expressed in other contexts the view that meetings held in Spain should not be attended by Members of the House or their representatives in other capacities, that it is logical to expect a decision of this importance to have been made public at the time it was made public to see what public reaction there might be to it?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

At that time it was 2 May and the question of the Working Parties had been suggested on 15 March when we met in Paris. It was only then that the idea of Working Parties was being considered and it was generally felt at that meeting which was held for that purpose, after the motion of the Honourable Mr Peter Isola, which the Honourable Questioner voted against, what the procedure would be on Working Parties. It was just an ordinary meeting of elected Members and there was no secret at all about it. Surely, the Honourable Questioner has got many people in the Secretariat who know when the elected Members meet or do not meet and we do not issue communiques when matters of this nature, which are purely formal, is discussed between them, no more than I issue a communique if I have the pleasure of seeing the Honourable Questioner in my office.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Honourable and Learned the Chief Minister think that there is any reason to review the decision to allow Gibraltarian representatives to attend Working Parties if they are even held again in Spain, given the continuance of the Spanish blockade?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think so. I think what is required to be considered is the question of Working Parties, generally, having regard to the results so far. Certainly at the next round there would be great objection if it was not in London and the whole purpose of the idea was to alternate officials and not Members of the Government in the two areas in which the two Governments worked, so that the next one, if there is to be one, it certainly ought to be held in London and nowhere else.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 62 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon J Bossano

Can Government state why the right-hand pedestrian gate at the La Linea frontier is kept closed on the Gibraltar side?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

This gate has never been open at any time as the Spanish immigration post, at which travellers to and from Spain would have to stop for normal documentation checks, is on the left-hand side.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 62 OF 1979

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Chief Minister state, notwithstanding that as it has never been opened in the past, why it is not open now given that the Gibraltar gates at the frontier are kept open when it is quite obvious that it is impossible to get through because the others on the other side are closed?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The right-hand pedestrian gate, I remember very well, was constructed as well as the left-hand pedestrian gate, with the possibility of introducing a two-way flow of pedestrians between Gibraltar and Spain. However, difficulties were raised at the time by the Spanish Government and the arrangements were never put into effect. Such arrangements would have necessitated the construction of a corresponding Spanish control post on the east side of the roadway so that people would not have to cross to check on the other side. It was never done, and I do not speak here on behalf of anybody but my own understanding of the position is, that what the Gibraltar Government is doing with regard to the gates is to leave the matter in status quo ante, and what it was at the time when the gates were closed. Those that were opened continue to be opened and those that were closed remain closed.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would not the Chief Minister agree, that in view of the fact that those that were open on the Spanish side have now been closed, there might be some justification for us opening the ones we used to have closed?

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 63 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Is the Chief Minister now in a position to make a statement with some degree of decisiveness in respect of control over expatriation of bank profits and insurance premia?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

Mr Speaker, as I replied when the matter was last raised in the House, I shall make a statement of the Government's proposals in that regard when the Government is ready.

May I remind the Member that in the course of my reply I was at pains to correct any misunderstanding there may have been of an earlier statement of mine on this subject. I said and I will now repeat that while bank profits are not necessarily excluded - the Government has more in mind, and I should have made this clear, some requirement for local banks and any other authorised deposit-taking institutions to retain in Gibraltar a reasonable proportion of the funds deposited with them. I would like to add that we shall see later on in these proceedings that in fact this is already having results in an indirect way.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 63 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Mr Speaker, I take it that the Chief Minister is referring to the Bill which is before this House which refers to the banking side of the operation. May I ask him what ideas he has on the insurance side of the operation?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am prepared to make a statement when I am ready. We have obtained, as a result of the original statement, willingness on the part, not only of the bank but of the insurance companies to invest money in Gibraltar as part of their contribution to being here and if the trend continues there may be no need to take any measures. It was a warning and an idea but I think the warning has well been taken.

HON G T RESTANO:

I am not quite clear in my own mind, Mr Speaker, are we going to get a statement from the Chief Minister?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Not today. All I say is I will make a statement when I have to make a statement.

MR SPEAKER:

The Chief Minister did say that he is not in a position to make a statement now, but he will make one when he considers the time is right.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I understood that the Chief Minister would be in a position to disclose at least part of his ideas when the banking legislation was taken at a later stage.

MR SPEAKER:

No, as regards to what he said in that so far as it applies to bank profits, the Bill which is being presented at this particular sitting of the House, shows that matters are progressing in the right direction in so far as banks are concerned. I think that is what he said.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Chief Minister be in a position to specify what, in fact, the position is at the moment?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think we may be able to discuss that when we deal with the Bill.

HON G T RESTANO:

That is why I said that the Bill deals with the banking side of this question but not the insurance side. I would like to know what are the thoughts behind or the Chief Minister may have as far as the insurance side is concerned, the banking side is quite clear.

MR SPEAKER:

The Chief Minister has already replied that as far as the insurance is concerned, he is not prepared to make a statement and that will have to wait for the time when he is in a position to make a general statement.

HON G T RESTANO:

We have been waiting, Mr Speaker, for two years.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Surely you can wait for another year and it will not do you any harm.

HON G T RESTANO:

Is the reply then that the Chief Minister is not prepared to give any indication of when is he going to give fruit to this idea that he had two years' ago?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not ready.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

26.2.79

No. 64 of 1979

ORAL

The Hon G T Restano

Has the tender for the conversion of Mercury House for GBC been awarded yet?

Answer

The Hon the Chief Minister

No Sir. The closing date for tenders for the conversion work was the 15 January 1979. Provided the House finishes its business in time the Tender Board will be meeting to consider the tenders on the 1 March 1979.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 64 OF 1979

HON G T RESTANO:

Can I take it then, Mr Speaker, that the tenders were in fact submitted by the tenderers by 15 January?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

They were, and if the next question is going to be why haven't they been considered earlier I will give the answer without asking for it.

The tenders were referred to the Director of Public Works for his recommendation on 17 January. The delay has been due to the fact that the lowest tender received is considerably higher than the amount estimated for the work and this has necessitated closer examination of the tenders submitted than would normally have been the case. If the Tender Board made an award completion of the works will take just over a year and GBC would take about three months to move in from the moment the premises were made available to them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So that means that we will not have broadcasting of the House until after the elections.