

GIBRALTAR

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Meeting of
13 March 1984
1 to 32

THE HON J E PILCHER

When was the Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited incorporated?

ANSWERTHE HON THE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

On the 27th February, 1984, Mr Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 1 OF 1984

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Financial and Development Secretary inform us if Appledore have been already appointed as Managers and if so on what terms and conditions?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As Appledore have already been appointed as Managers, Mr Speaker, as far as the remainder of the question is concerned I think I would require some notice of it.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Financial and Development Secretary make these available to us outside the House?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

In due course, yes, Mr Speaker.

HON J E PILCHER:

Could the Hon Member tell us whether Appledore are now on the payroll of Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited or whether they continue to be on the payroll of ODA?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

At this moment, Mr Speaker, the remuneration of Messrs Appledore is covered by the Consultancy Agreement they have with the Overseas Development Administration, that is, the remuneration of Appledore.

HON J E PILCHER:

How long will this continue?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I am afraid I cannot say precisely when, Mr Speaker, but I think the House will realise that the issue is one which will be determined by the release of the £28m ODA development funds and that will depend on the date at which there is either an agreement with the workforce or a sufficiently credible presence in the Dockyard to convince Her Majesty's Government that the Dockyard will be viable. Until that particular date I think we live with uncertainties.

HON J E PILCHER:

Is the Government happy with the authority they can exercise over Appledore with this state of affairs?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The Government passed legislation in the House during the previous House at which the question of relationship between the Government and Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited was extensively debated.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 2 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J BOSSANO

Can Government state why Regulations were made on 16th February exempting income arising from the £6m Hambros Bank Ltd Loan Agreement, from all taxes?

ANSWERTHE HON THE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, all payments of principal and interest on loans from financial institutions raised by the Government of Gibraltar are made without deduction of tax. During the negotiations in connection with the £6m loan facility recently, we received legal advice that Regulations were necessary for this purpose.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 2 OF 1984

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Hon Financial and Development Secretary say why it was necessary to pass Regulations on the 16th February under the Loans Empowering Ordinance when in fact a legal notice on the 2nd February exempted the payment of the interest from income tax under the Income Tax Ordinance?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The first Regulation, Mr Speaker, covered just income tax and the second covered all taxes which might be levied.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Government saying, Mr Speaker, that had these two legal notices not appeared the payment to Hambros Bank would have been in fact susceptible to income tax and other taxes?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As I said, Mr Speaker, we received advice during the course of negotiations that the laying of these Regulations was necessary in order to preserve strict adherence with the law. This was, of course, an interpretation by the lawyers both on the Government side and, indeed, on the side of Hambros.

HON J BOSSANO:

So the Government's view is, Mr Speaker, that in the absence of such Regulations the payment of interest and so forth in respect of such loans are indeed taxable?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Again, this is I think something of a hypothetical question, Mr Speaker, and as a lawyer yourself I think you would take the point that this would itself have to be tested by further legal advice.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Government intending to test it in respect of all the previous loans about which they have not passed Regulations beginning with the Barclays Bank loan of 1981?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I rather expected that question, Mr Speaker, and I think the answer to the Hon Leader of the Opposition is that I think we have better things to do.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member is telling the House that he has better things to do than to establish whether people who are required by law to pay tax are in fact paying that tax or not. Is he saying that in the case of the Hambros Bank loan the law had to be amended to exempt them from tax and in the case of all the previous loans there was no need to amend the law?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Mr Speaker, I am saying that we have, of course, borrowed previously and Regulations, to the best of my knowledge which of course is not extensive, have not been laid. I referred to the advice we received on this occasion and the substantive question is whether the loan to the Bank should be subject to tax. If they had been subject to tax then, clearly, we would not have been able to conclude negotiations for the loan facility as it was understood by both parties on the terms in which it was understood. The rates quoted by the bank were based on the assumption that the repayments of principal and interest would be free of tax and that is really the substance of it, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

No, Mr Speaker, the substance of the question, if the Hon Member will allow me, is for me to decide and the substance of the question is if the Government discovered that it had an obligation under the existing law of Gibraltar to exempt from tax interest payments that have not been paying tax, are they going to do something about the ones they have not exempted and if they are not why are they doing it on this occasion, that is the substance of the question?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Well, Mr Speaker, if the Hon Gentleman wants to ask that question and feels that it is of sufficient importance for us to receive advice of learned Counsel then he is perfectly free to put down such a question. He cannot expect me to give an answer off the cuff on a matter of such legal complexity here in this House.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I accept the ruling of the Chair on this matter but I assume that it is perfectly legitimate a supplementary, having asked the reason why on this occasion the Regulations were amended, to ask why on previous occasions they were not amended and therefore is it the case that the Hon Member does not know why it was not done before?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The short answer to that is, certainly, I do not know, Mr Speaker, why on previous occasions. I would assume that as the law is a dynamic institution rather than a static one, the law is built up as one goes along and we received advice on this occasion from very learned people, Mr Speaker, as to what we should do on this occasion which is what we have done.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, however dynamic the law may be the Government has been here since 1972 so would the Hon Member not agree that if it is a matter of Government interpretation and Government policy that interest payments are required to be eligible for tax deduction unless they are specifically exempted then, in fact, there has been a serious omission of complying with the law since 1981?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The requirement, Mr Speaker, was a requirement of the Bank that it should be free of income tax otherwise the amount to be paid would have been that much greater had it been subject to tax so at the end of the day the financial consequences would have been the same and that, as I say to the Hon Leader of the Opposition, that is the substance of the issue though it may not be the substance of his question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the Hon Member not agree with me, since he is the Head of that particular Department, that if in fact in the absence of any Regulations covering the previous loans since under the Income Tax Ordinance tax can be levied up to 6 years after it becomes due, that if the Commissioner of Income Tax in the light of the new legal opinion in this dynamic development of the law discovers that he should have levied tax, that he is required by law to do it in respect of the previous interest payments, would he not agree with me that that is in fact the case?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Mr Speaker, because I think that the answer to that question would really depend on the receipt of further legal advice which I am not, alas, qualified to give.

HON J BOSSANO:

Will the Hon Member in the light of the fact that I have brought this matter to his attention seek the necessary legal advice?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J BOSSANO

Can Government state what will be the estimated level of the Consolidated Fund and the estimated outstanding public debt at the end of this month?

ANSWERTHE HON THE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Mr Speaker, the estimated Consolidated Fund balance as at 31 March, 1984, will be about £7m. The public debt of Gibraltar as at that date will be about £26.4m.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 3 OF 1984

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Financial and Development Secretary consider that in the light of that level of reserves in the Consolidated Fund, the level of public debt that he has mentioned comes within the prudential level of public borrowing that previous Financial Secretaries have led this House to believe the Government should follow?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The debt charges, Mr Speaker, which are the important thing, I think, so far as prudential limits - the phrase the Hon Leader of the Opposition has used - debt charges represent about 8% of public expenditure, I am talking in terms of order of magnitude and I would not think that a situation which would give cause for alarm.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask, Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member will confirm that the first tranche of the Hambros Bank loan is included in the £26m?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I ask the Hon Member to confirm whether in fact the debt servicing costs is influenced by the nature of the agreement with Hambros Bank which defers the payment of the capital into the future?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The nature of the agreement with Hambros, Mr Speaker, is one which is normal for this type of commercial loan. I do not think that the method of debt repayment has been in any way influenced by this

particular loan. Obviously, the terms of this loan, interest, etc will vary from previous loans but we obviously got the most favourable terms which were available at the time.

HON J BOSSANO:

But when is, in fact, the first capital repayment due under the Hambros Bank loan, Mr Speaker, which the Hon Member has tabled?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

We have postponement of repayment of the first tranche, Mr Speaker, for 66 months, that is, $5\frac{1}{2}$ years.

HON J BOSSANO:

That is precisely what I asked the Hon Member, would he not agree with me that in fact if the loan agreement had followed the practice of the first loan agreement with Barclays Bank where there was immediate repayment of capital, the debt servicing costs would have in fact shown a much higher figure?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I apologise to the Hon Leader of the Opposition, I now understand his questions, well, naturally, I would agree with that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon Member not agree that this is the first time that a loan agreement has been made which defers repayment of capital for 66 months?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I think, from memory, the Hon Leader of the Opposition is right, Mr Speaker. On that, obviously, his memory is more extensive on such matters than my own.

HON J BOSSANO:

And that therefore on past practice, Mr Speaker, the debt servicing costs would be higher?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Well, debt servicing costs is itself something which one must discount over a period of years so I do not think I would agree necessarily with what the Hon Leader of the Opposition has said, I think I would like to consider that question, it is rather a subtle one.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON R MOR

Mr Speaker, since Government has been giving urgent consideration to the question of counting part-time service for the award of a pension since 20th December, 1978, will it now undertake to bring the necessary legislation to the next meeting of the House?

ANSWERTHE HON THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the conditions under which part-time service should become pensionable were put to the Staff Side there were a number of objections. These objections required study and some of the objections, Mr Speaker, confirmed the very complex question of part-time teachers. Sir, the revised conditions will now be put to the Staff Side and if agreement can be reached with the Staff Side then the necessary amending legislation will be prepared and brought to the House.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 4 OF 1984

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Member say when was the last meeting of the Staff Side?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Mr Speaker, I have no idea when the last meeting of the Staff Side was but I can give you the date on which the proposals to be put to the Staff Side were finally made, they have not yet been put to the Staff Side but that date, Mr Speaker, is the 14th December last year.

HON R MOR:

Can Government now commit themselves to bring this to the House as soon as possible?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Mr Speaker, we most certainly can and I do undertake that once an agreement has been reached with the Staff Side the legislation will be prepared and will be prepared quickly, I personally undertake that, Mr Speaker, and will be brought to this House but we must have an agreement.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm that work on the GASA swimming pool promised during the election campaign will commence in the 1984/85 financial year?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR SPORT AND POSTAL SERVICES

Mr Speaker, it is Government's intention that work on the GASA swimming pool project should continue during the 1984/85 financial year.

The project is to be phased over a period of time and as far as possible work is to be done by GASA members on a voluntary basis. The project includes a certain amount of reclamation from the sea and work on this has been in progress for some time on the basis of PWD providing and tipping the spoil and GASA members spreading and levelling the reclamation works.

Improvements to changing rooms and facilities at the old Tarik baths has also started on the basis of PWD providing the materials and the GASA membership carrying out the work themselves. The main item of expenditure is of course the structure of the swimming pool itself the cost of which would be in the region of £150,000 to £200,000.

Whether this work, which cannot be carried out by voluntary labour because of its complexity, is to be commenced in 1984/85 financial year will depend on the presentation of the annual estimates of expenditure, which are still being considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 5 OF 1984

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister do his utmost to fulfil this long pledge in his four year term of office?

HON G MASCARENHAS:

It is very difficult and as I have said already we are considering on the basis of this year's estimates how we can contribute to that. The only thing I can add to that is that on Tuesday last I met the GASA Committee and they have extended an invitation to me to visit their premises to have a look at the situation and I hope the Minister for Public Works will accompany me.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm whether it intends to make financial provision for improving the amenities for nursing staff at St Bernard's Hospital, which has been promised for a number of years, but which has still not materialised?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Mr Speaker, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the only further amenity requested by the nursing staff is the reprovisioning of male changing room facilities. This has been under consideration for some time and a number of alternative solutions have been suggested. The matter is currently under discussion by the senior management of the Medical Department and proposals will shortly be made to the staff in question.

Should the Hon Questioner have any other "amenities" in mind I shall be glad to look into them if she will provide me with the details.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 6 OF 1984

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, the amenities were in relation to the changing and washing facilities which are the normal part of the amenities of any workplace. Can the Minister say why this has taken such a long time to materialise when it was in 1981 that the Government informed the Staff Side that the current changing rooms were provisional and that they would be moved from their location into adequate changing rooms?

HON J B PEREZ:

The problem mainly has arisen through lack of space at St Bernard's Hospital but I want to add, Mr Speaker, that the proposal has in fact been put to the Procedure Committee which consists of the Director of Medical and Health Services, Administrator, Matron and Assistant Matrons, the Tutorial and senior staff representing all areas of the Hospital, for the lounge at the Hospital Quarters to be given to the senior female staff and the junior male staff to be moved to the area vacated by the former in the basement of the Quarters. This, at present, is under consideration and a report is awaited.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 7 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON R MOR

Can Government state whether they will be providing funds in the forthcoming Budget for the setting up of the College for Further Education?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Mr Speaker, negotiations for the setting up of the College of Further Education have not been finalised with the Ministry of Defence. Financial provision will therefore continue to be made for Government's share of the expenses of running the Gibraltar and Dockyard Technical College for the next financial year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 7 OF 1984

HON R MOR:

Is Government saying that they do not foresee that the College will be handed over during this year?

HON J B PEREZ:

Government is not saying that, Mr Speaker.

HON R MOR:

Could I ask the Government what it is saying then?

HON J B PEREZ:

The Government is saying that negotiations for the setting up of the College of Further Education has not been finalised with the Ministry of Defence. Financial provision will therefore continue to be made for Government's share of the expenses of running the Gibraltar and Dockyard Technical College for the next financial year.

MR SPEAKER:

But I think you are being asked now when does Government expect to finalise negotiations?

HON J B PEREZ:

What I am saying is that the negotiations have not finalised and therefore we are budgeting to continue the College as it is. If, in fact, negotiations are completed before then obviously we will have to come to the House for money.

HON R MOR:

Can Government foresee when they will complete the negotiations?

HON J B PEREZ:

I am not responsible for the negotiations but I am aware of what is going on. I think there is some time left yet for the matter to actually be finalised. We are talking about transfer of land and negotiations of prices, whether the Government ought to pay £X or £X + Y or shouldn't pay anything.

HON R MOR:

Doesn't the Hon Minister feel that he should apply pressure so that the negotiations are finalised?

HON J B PEREZ:

I am personally satisfied that the negotiations are being carried out as speedily as possible by the relevant authorities of the Government. I am not responsible for the negotiations but may I, however, point out that as far as I am concerned, in preparation for the College's new role we have already identified its Principal designate, the in-service training of the College's teaching staff is in progress, in fact, two senior lecturers attended courses at Coombe Lodge Staff Training Centre in November, 1983, and all lecturers will be undertaking a local course also organised by Coombe Lodge in early July. Senior staff from both Comprehensive Schools will be attending so as far as the Government is concerned we are trying to move.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, on the question of the land which the Hon Member has mentioned, is this in fact covered by the agreement that was made public recently by the Government where the price of any buildings transferred from MOD to the Gibraltar Government was based on a formula on continuing costs plus related to the age of the building?

HON J B PEREZ:

I am told that is the case, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, cannot the Government not confirm that this is a fairly straightforward formula since what we are talking about is how long the building has been there and if it is a continuing use I believe it was up to 60 years and after 60 years the transfer was free? I find it difficult to understand that there can be complication about the price if it is covered by that formula.

HON J B PEREZ:

The information that I have, Mr Speaker, is that there happens to be a dispute as to certain valuations of parts of the building.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON R MOR

Can Government state what specific service the College for Further Education is intended to provide within the education system?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH

An essential need is recognised by Government for a Further Education Institution capable of meeting the community's requirements for vocational training and re-training, particularly during a period likely to see the re-orientation of major sectors of the economy.

On transfer from the MOD, the Gibraltar and Dockyard Technical College will become the Gibraltar College of Further Education. It will be organised into three Departments as distinct from the single Technological Department at present. The latter will continue to concern itself with the full-time and part-time academic/theoretical training of apprentices and other students seeking vocational orientated qualifications.

It is intended to open a new Business/Commercial Studies Department catering for similar type of students seeking/requiring training in these areas. It has been noted that no facilities exist for these studies outside the Commercial Section of Westside School. It is envisaged that the new Department will cater for Business Education Council qualifications as well as the introduction of Managerial/Supervisory courses.

The third Department will provide General Studies support to courses in the other two Departments as well as taking over the Adult Education provision presently run from the Teachers' Centre.

The College of Further Education will therefore be providing vocationally orientated courses for students beyond compulsory school age, as distinct from the academic orientated courses offered by the two secondary schools. It will cater for employed young adults seeking training on a day-release basis, as well as offering full-time courses in specific vocational areas identified as community needs. All three Departments, but particularly through the Adult Education programme, will also offer an avenue for a continuing educational opportunity for members of the community wishing to partake of it.

The new College, together with the senior sections of both secondary schools, will endeavour to offer a wider, more rational and more realistic set of options to the individual student, particularly in the 15 and 19 age range.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 8 OF 1984

HON R MOR:

Can Government state whether they have the qualified staff to teach Business Studies and Commercial Studies?

HON J B PEREZ:

I am not quite sure that we have at present. I know there is a qualified teacher at Westside but she is a contract teacher but if there isn't, obviously, we will be having one out when the College starts off. In supplementaries to the previous question I did point out that certain lecturers had already been on courses and that in-service training is already in progress for teachers at both schools but, of course, the vacancies when available will be filled in by people with the necessary qualifications.

HON R MOR:

Can the Hon Minister say how many pupils can be accommodated?

HON J B PEREZ:

I cannot say that at this stage, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would this involve a substantial increase in the establishment? The Hon Member will recall that in the estimates for 1983/84, in last year's budget, there was an increase in lecturers from eighteen to nineteen and it is shown in the estimates as College of Further Education as if it had been Government's intention last budget to start the process of which he is talking. Does it mean that the teaching staff that Government envisage is required is already there or will it mean a substantial increase?

HON J B PEREZ:

There should be an increase of staff at present there because we are of course dividing into three departments and more staff will be required.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 9 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J C PEREZ

Mr Speaker, can Government state whether the cost of the new equipment for IDD has now been passed to the Telephone Service Fund?

ANSWERTHE HON THE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

Yes, Mr Speaker. The first charge on the Fund is being made in 1983/84. The IDD Capital Expenditure will be amortised over 15 years and will be charged to the Fund as each bill matures; each repayment will be individually amortised over the remainder of the 15 year period.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 9 OF 1984

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm that the repayment costs will not require any further increases in tariffs?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As far as increases in tariffs are concerned, Mr Speaker, the Government takes into consideration a variety of things in which the capital charges are clearly one factor but only one. I can give no assurance about tariff increases to the Hon Member.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member state how it is intended that the cost will be spread out? The Hon Member has said that it is intended to be spread out over 15 years, is this equally in the remaining part of the money that needs to be transferred from the Development Fund to the Telephone Service Fund?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I am not quite sure that I understand the latter part of the Hon Member's question, Mr Speaker, but in my earlier answer I said that the expenditure will be amortised over 15 years and the 15 years is chosen because that is the estimated life of the plant so, in fact, in normal commercial terms one has chosen a 15 year depreciation period because one thinks that is the period for which the plant is likely to have a viable life. After that, new technology or some other events might cause a need for replacement or of course there might be a need for replacement earlier than then.

MR SPEAKER:

I think what you are being asked is when is the first charge being made on the Fund and is it being spread evenly after the 15 years?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The first charge is in 1983/84, Mr Speaker, and thereafter as far as the Telephone Fund is concerned, over 15 years.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, can the Hon Member inform the House how much of the money has already been transferred and how much of it is left to be transferred?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

The total capital expenditure amounted to just over £1m and the total amount is being transferred to the Fund.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J C PEREZ

Mr Speaker, what is Government's policy with regard to disconnecting telephone subscribers who are in arrears?

ANSWERTHE HON THE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY

The general rule, Mr Speaker, has been that telephone service should be withdrawn when subscribers are in arrears for two quarters.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 10 OF 1984

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, if a subscriber in one quarter is in arrears of a substantial amount of money does Government not consider taking action against the subscriber?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I have stated the general rule, Mr Speaker, obviously the general rule is not implemented without referring to the circumstances of each individual case or each individual difficulty.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member state whether there is a different policy as to whether the costs have to do with operator assisted trunk calls rather than with the normal costs?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, not that I am aware of, Mr Speaker, I do not think that is considered itself as an issue but we are talking about disconnections.

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Hon Member aware that there is an instance of a subscriber who owed the Government £3,421 out of which £3,300 were operator assisted trunk calls and that that individual has left Gibraltar and that that bill has not been paid?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Mr Speaker, what I can say is that the Government is seriously concerned about the extent of arrears for municipal services and is studying the situation closely to see what additional measures may be necessary to reduce the arrears.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member confirm that the £3,300 of operator assisted trunk calls are paid by the Gibraltar Government to outside services and that that money needs to be passed now to the rest of the subscribers, that cost needs to be spread out now to the rest of the subscribers?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Mr Speaker, I have said that I cannot confirm that because I am not aware of the particular instance which the Hon Member has mentioned but of course if he wishes to enlighten me about it.....

MR SPEAKER:

I think the question you are being asked is, is it the general policy for the Gibraltar Government to become responsible for that part of the charge which is payable to the other country when these monies are not paid?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON M A FEETHAM

Mr Speaker, has the Ministers' Committee set up to solve the unemployment problems, which the Chief Minister said during the election campaign had been considering radical ideas before the elections, now completed its work?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Sir, as stated by the Chief Minister in his address at the Opening of the House on 22 February, 1984, one of the first tasks to which Ministers addressed themselves after the election was to consider the report of the sub-committee of Council of Ministers which had been appointed to review employment policy.

The report contained proposals on employment and retirement policies, amongst which were:

- a. That steps be taken to retire Government employees who are over the retirement age in order to make way for school-leavers and others without jobs. Exceptions would be made to safeguard the interests of those who would suffer hardship.
- b. That Government employees who are conditioned to voluntary retirement before the age of 60 should be encouraged to do so.
- c. That in order to discourage persons over the age of 65 from staying in employment or seeking re-employment, consideration be given to move towards the payment of a Retirement Pension rather than an Old Age Pension as at present.
- d. That control should be exercised over part-time employment, so that persons who hold a full-time job and are also working part-time should be required to relinquish their part-time employment unless they are expressly authorised.
- e. That recruitment policy be directed at ensuring that breadwinners out of work are given priority of employment over other applicants.
- f. That a sub-committee under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Public Works should consider the extent to which posts which are conditioned to long working hours can be split up and what additional posts can be created in preference to high overtime working.

All these proposals have been approved in principle by the Government and the cooperation of the Unions will be sought for the implementation. The measures will be introduced as the unemployment situation demands and this depends to a large extent on progress on the commercialisation of the Dockyard.

In addition to the above a Committee under my Chairmanship is at present considering ways of dealing with the problem of youth unemployment. This will subsequently be the subject of consultation with the Unions and private employers and it is hoped that proposals will be finalised within the next two months. I have already arranged to meet all the unemployed youngsters at the Construction Industry Training Centre on Thursday 22 March to discuss this problem.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 11 OF 1984

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, the purpose of asking this question is to ascertain from Government what in real terms are they proposing to do about creating jobs for the unemployed.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, if I have not said that in my answer I do not know what I have said.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Can the Hon Member opposite say whether in his answer he has in fact stipulated any area where he is going to create new jobs in the economy?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, the only areas that I could possibly mention I have actually indicated where we could open up new areas of employment are in relation to youth unemployment. In respect of the others the measures are all there in respect of other people. What I am trying to do with my Youth Employment Committee is to try and make Gibraltar as self-sufficient as possible and in this way encourage the youngsters to look at other areas of jobs which they are not prepared to do in the past. In this respect, yes, it is a question of creating jobs for youngsters who have never wanted these kind of jobs before.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister explain how he proposes to do this within his general manpower planning policy, please?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

As the Hon Leader of the Opposition well knows, as Chairman of the Manpower Planning Committee between us and other members of the Board we exercise a very tight control in the Manpower Planning Committee and obviously the control of manpower and the training of young people to take up jobs because of the tightening of control that we have, go hand in hand.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Does not the Minister agree that to pursue this policy without the safeguard in the longer term by creating a manpower planning policy which meets the criteria that we require growth in the economy that in fact he is working towards a lowering of the standard of living of the Gibraltarian workers in particular?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, I do not think I have to answer that question.

THE HON R MOR

Will Government state what is the current level of supplementary benefits in Gibraltar and in the United Kingdom?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr Speaker, the main basic rates of Supplementary Benefits in Gibraltar are:-

A married couple	=	£39.50 per week
Single person living on his own	=	£22.40 per week
Single person living with others	=	£11.30 or £16.20 per week
Allowances for dependant children	=	£6.60, £7.90 or £9.70 per child according to age plus £5 for first child
Long term rate (after receiving benefits for 2 years)	=	£1.70 extra per person

The corresponding rates in the UK are:-

A married couple	=	£43.50 per week
Single person living on his own	=	£26.80 per week
Single person living with others	=	£21.45 per week
Allowances for dependant children	=	£9.15, £13.70, £16.50 or £21.45 per child according to age
Long term rate (after receiving benefits for 1 year)	=	An approximate 25% increase on the above figures

The foregoing are only the main basic rates. In addition there are a number of other allowances (particularly in the United Kingdom) which are too numerous to detail in this answer but which I will be pleased to make available to the Hon Member on request.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 12 OF 1984

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, since it is Government policy to maintain parity with the UK for employed persons, can he confirm it is equally their policy to increase Supplementary Benefits to the same level as in the United Kingdom?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

No, Government's policy towards parity is in regard to wages and conditions and not to Supplementary Benefits.

HON R MOR:

Can Government confirm that the number of unemployed persons who have exhausted their Unemployment Benefit and are now on Supplementary Benefits has increased?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

13.3.84

NO. 13 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON R MOR

Has Government now considered waiving social insurance contributions for unemployed persons over 60 years of age?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Sir, the Government is currently considering proposals for extending social insurance credits for unemployed persons over 60 and these considerations are near to completion. I expect to be in a position to make a statement on the matter at the next meeting of the House.

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

Sir, is it Government's intention to re-accommodate North Gorge tenants within the next financial year?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

No, Sir. These tenants will only qualify for re-accommodation in accordance with the pointage value awarded to their respective applications.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 14 OF 1984

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Sir, can the Minister then confirm that North Gorge is intended as temporary accommodation?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

North Gorge was intended as temporary accommodation and it has lasted a long time, like Glacis.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Has the Government got a policy on how long tenants can stay in temporary accommodation?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

No, Sir.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, in the absence of a policy, doesn't that mean that a tenant can stay in temporary accommodation for a lifetime, doesn't the Minister think that there should be a maximum period?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The whole question of accommodation whether temporary or otherwise for new accommodation is based on points so it is not a question of being there a lifetime, some of them could be there a lifetime but it does not necessarily follow. There is a pointage system which gives points for time, too, so the longer you are there the more likely you are to get a new house somewhere.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, do or do not temporary buildings have a lifespan and if so when will the lifespan of the North Gorge buildings end.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The building in question, Mr Speaker, was in fact made available for social cases and not for the people on the general housing waiting list.

MR SPEAKER:

You have been asked what is the lifespan of North Gorge?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I have no idea, Sir.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Can the Minister find out and let me know?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Certainly, Mr Speaker.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, since the Government has no intention to re-accommodate tenants of North Gorge during the next financial year, will the Government commit itself to undertake certain repairs to alleviate the living conditions of people at North Gorge including, perhaps, an extension to the communal washing facilities at present existing?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the Government is willing to effect any repairs that are necessary to put North Gorge into a reasonable condition but I would mention with regard to some of the washing facilities, certain equipment that was there has apparently been taken away by persons whom we do not know who they are but we have certain suspicions it is the tenants themselves.

HON J C PEREZ:

Will the Hon Member undertake to look at the points raised by the tenants through us and if I write to the Hon Member would he consider the points raised by the tenants?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I will not only undertake to do so, we are already in the process of doing it.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, can the Government then confirm that there is no difference in fact in being accommodated in temporary or permanent quarters as regards the allocation of buildings?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There is no difference.

HON J E PILCHER:

And there is no pointage allotted to people who are put in temporary quarters?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There is no difference, Mr Speaker.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister or his Department then make the people living in North Gorge aware that temporary and otherwise is no different since they are under the impression that temporary means temporary?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

I have not introduced the word temporary into this debate. The people at North Gorge are there for social reasons and that is the only reason they are there. They were not allocated that particular unit or flat at North Gorge because they were in the general housing waiting list. They were allocated that particular flat because they had social problems at their particular homes.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member not agree that the conditions in which those people are living indicate that they are already a social case by the way in which they are living at North Gorge?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, they were probably homeless before.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

13.3.84

NO. 15 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

By how much does Government plan to reduce the housing waiting list in each of the next four years?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Sir, it is not possible to quantify the reduction in the housing waiting list in the manner requested by the Hon Member. Thirty new flats at Rosia Dale will be completed in July and twenty-two modernised flats, comprising Phase 2 of Road to the Lines, will become available in 1985. The modernisation of Tank Ramp, Phase 2, will provide an additional fourteen units. The release of the voids at Bayside Comprehensive School should provide a further fourteen units.

Further incentives for home ownership in the private sector are to be introduced by the Government in connection with this year's Budget. It should be noted that the private sector is already in the process of implementing some schemes, notably at the Calpe Hostel Site. Upon fruition, this should reduce the waiting list by at least forty applicants.

Consideration is also currently being given to the provision by the Government of a site for private sector development under conditions that would ensure an impact on the housing waiting list.

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm that people living in condemned dwellings are classified as homeless?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

No, Sir. No-one is classified as homeless unless they are actually out in the street. If, however, they happen to be applicants for re-accommodation, their application is automatically reassessed in accordance with the provisions contained in the Housing Allocation Scheme regarding homelessness. They are awarded additional points depending on family composition and requirement.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 16 OF 1984

HON J L BALDACHINO:

In other words, Mr Speaker, can the Minister then confirm that they do not have priority over other people in the normal housing scheme?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

They are given points for the type of house that they are living in.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Doesn't the Government consider that people living in condemned houses are worse off than others who are living in normal houses that are alright?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That is precisely why they get more points.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, are they then offered first choice when a new building or a modernisation project is ready?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, they are only given consideration if they have more points than anybody else.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, isn't the Government concerned that there are people living in these conditions and at least they should have had their problem solved by being provided with adequate houses?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The Government is always concerned that people are suffering either because they are homeless, because they are social cases or because they are living in dwellings which are not up to standard. I think one well knows that housing is one of the biggest problems that Gibraltar has. What the Allocation Committee and the Advisory Committee does is to try to be as fair as possible because as we all know no system is perfect and people get up to all kinds of tricks to become social cases so that they are given a house. They pretend they have quarrelled with their in-laws, etc, etc. The answer is that we are concerned and we are trying to do our best as fairly as possible.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, my question is on condemned dwellings. I am sure that when a dwelling is classified as condemned this has been done by the Health Department, which is a Department of the Government.

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That is so. It could be so easy to get yourself into a condemned dwelling so that you could then be reallocated a new house.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, how can it be so easy to get into a condemned dwelling when they are all full up and, anyway, the one that allocates people in condemned dwellings is the Minister?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Mr Speaker, they do squat in condemned dwellings, that is part of our problem.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, I am not talking about the people who squat, I am talking about people who are living in condemned dwellings. Doesn't the Minister think that those people who are living in a condemned dwelling which has been allocated by the Government are worse off than other people who live in other dwellings?

MR SPEAKER:

I think the answer to that one has been that they do and that is why they are awarded extra pointage, is that correct?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

That is right.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Minister or the Government whether in fact once a dwelling is declared unfit for human habitation by the Public Health authorities, the landlord of the dwelling is in fact contravening the requirements of the Public Health Ordinance?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

And what happens, Mr Speaker, when the landlord happens to be the Government?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The Landlord and Tenant Ordinance does not affect the Government.

HON J BOSSANO:

I am talking about the Public Health Ordinance, Mr Speaker. Is the Public Health authority required by the Ordinance to take action against the landlord, a private landlord, that rents unfit accommodation to tenants and what happens when the landlord happens to be the Government?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

The Public Health Ordinance does not affect the Government either.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does the Minister not think that the credibility of the Government in requiring private landlords to comply with the law would be enhanced if they set an example by acting consonant with their own legislation?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We are doing that, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

So then can the Hon Member answer the question that I asked? Notwithstanding the fact that it does not apply, what happens?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

We have a case, for example, Jumper's Buildings, which has been declared a condemned building. We are making every effort for safety reasons in re-accommodating the people at Jumper's Buildings but the problem is because they know that we want to move them out because of the risk to life, instead of trying to get out as quickly as possible they become choosy and they try and blackmail the Government into getting other accommodation which they are not entitled to.

HON J BOSSANO:

But apart from the specific problems, the policy then is in fact more than just simply giving more points as the Hon Member has been saying because he is now saying that as landlords where they have tenants living in condemned dwellings they do re-accommodate them, not just give them points?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

There are various ways of condemning. The most obvious serious one is danger to life. When there is danger to life like in Jumper's Buildings that has priority over other types as happened with Penney House. Penney House was a good example where we decanted the whole building.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 17 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

Sir, is Government satisfied with the safety of North Gorge buildings?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Yes, Sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 17 OF 1984

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Sir, if that is so, who or what Department certified that the building could take the new imposed load when it changed from being a hostel to become a normal dwelling?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the information I have is that it is accepted that the North Gorge buildings are of a temporary nature but their condition regarding safety is considered as acceptable. My Department complied with Fire Brigade requirements on fire precautions and new landings, stairs and fire resistant doors were constructed. It is confirmed that the Chief Environmental Health Officer has not condemned these buildings and my Department informs me there are no outstanding structural defects.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Sir, when I talk about imposed load, the imposed load on a building is that when a building is constructed you look at what it is going to be used for, is going to be installed, how many people are living there and so on. As I understand it, North Gorge was a hostel and therefore when they looked at the imposed load it was looked at from the point of view of its use as a hostel. When it changed to a normal dwelling and when people start putting in their furniture, their beds and more people, that is what I am talking about, that is the imposed load I am talking about. In other words, will the structure of the building take the new load that has been imposed on it?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I accept that but, as I have said, my structural engineers inform me that there are no structural defects. I would presume, therefore, that it can take the extra load of these gentlemen moving in grand pianos or what have you.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, I think the Hon Minister does not understand my question.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, I have understood it quite clearly. You are stating that the building was built as a temporary hostel and as a hostel perhaps it was given a floor loading of xlbs per square inch. Now, because the people are moving in with extra furniture, refrigerators, etc, the loading is X + Ylbs per square inch. But my structural engineers inform me that the structure is sound enough to take the X + Y plus possibly a Z. If, however, people were to move in something of extreme weight, for example, if you had somebody who moved in 500 tons of lead, then perhaps the building might collapse but under normal circumstances they inform me it is structurally sound.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Can the Hon Minister confirm that the removal of boulders by explosives at Glen Rocky Distiller which was supposed to take place on the 2nd March was cancelled due to fear that the structure of the building would not take the vibrations of the explosion?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I am not aware of that fact, Sir.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

There were notices put, I do not know if it was by the Housing Department or not, saying that there was going to be an explosion at Glen Rocky and that the people should not be afraid if they heard the noise.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I understand that there were such notices placed but that the actual explosions were cancelled, I am not sure of the reasons why they were cancelled.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Somebody informed the tenants of North Gorge on the day that the explosion was to take place that it had been cancelled because they thought that the building would not take the vibrations of the explosion.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Information has just come to me that the reason why it was not done was that the person who was the expert in doing the explosive work had gone to England and that it was afterwards decided to do the breaking of the rocks by hand.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, since the Hon Member in the previous question said that he was looking at North Gorge in relation to repairs, etc, will the Hon Member not look into the broken fence at the edge of the precipice to the North Gorge Distiller which is broken and is a safety hazard to children there and will the Hon Member not look into a fire door which is broken and has been broken for a long time?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, I am quite happy to look at the fence and also at the fire door. I would mention that these doors do not normally break by themselves, it is hoped that the tenants once these repairs are effected will look after the property with a reasonable amount of care.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, but if the proper glass had been placed on the door which is a fire protective glass, it could not have been broken by the tenants.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Mr Speaker, seeing that North Gorge is a temporary building, does Government carry out periodical checks on the structure of the building?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

A check was carried out before the building was actually allocated as temporary accommodation. I do not know if any checks have been carried out since then but if the Hon Member wishes me to make a specific check I shall be happy to see that it is done.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

I would like the Minister to carry out that check.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, I am slightly confused. The Hon Minister for Housing said that the tenants are not temporary, they are allocated on a permanent basis whereas the Minister for Public Works says that the building is temporary. Could the Government enlighten me on who is right?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

By a temporary building one means a building which theoretically will have a limited life whereas a permanent building has a life of anything over 50 to 100 years. I think mention has already been made of certain temporary buildings that were put up at the Glacis site. I remember they were going to be for some 5 to 10 years and I believe they lasted some 20 years. The normal conditions of a temporary

building is that you should be able to get at least 10 years use out of it. I think the same thing appertains in the MOD where on the Cormorant site there is quite a lot of temporary buildings but they have been there for a very long time.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Did the Minister say that temporary buildings normally have 10 years life?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, I said that it is hoped that they should last for 5 to 10 years but if they are kept in reasonably good condition and maintained properly then one can get, as happened at Glacis site, up to 20 years out of them.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

13.3.84

NO. 18 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

Sir, is it normal procedure for Government tenants to sign contracts without seeing the allocated dwellings?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

No, Sir. Prospective tenants are always taken round by an officer from the Housing Department and given an opportunity to view the accommodation offered before they actually accept and sign for it, unless they specifically state they wish to accept without viewing beforehand.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 18 OF 1984

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Sir, am I to understand then that when a dwelling is allocated to one of the tenants he is told that he can actually go and see where it has been allocated?

HON MAJOR F J DELLIPIANI:

Yes, Sir.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

All I have to say to the Hon Minister is thank you very much.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J E PILCHER

What is the forecast percentage increase in tourist arrivals for the financial year 1984/85 over the years 1983/84?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM

Mr Speaker, it is difficult to forecast percentage increases in tourist arrivals for 1984 compared to 1983. However, the indications are that the late booking trend from the UK persists but an increased all inclusive charter programme will boost hotel traffic especially in Summer 1984.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 19 OF 1984

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister not aware that according to his own statistics the tourist arrivals for 1983 are an all-time low and in fact a decrease of 34% over the figures when they came into Government in 1980, the previous House of Assembly?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I do not think that is relevant to the question I have been asked, Mr Speaker.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, I am only trying to establish, given the same figures, that a 51% increase in tourism is needed to bring the level up to 1980 and if it didn't have any beneficial effect on the economy in 1980 I do not see how it is going to have a beneficial effect on the economy now when the Government is saying that tourism is going to be the pillar of the economy.

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, I can argue that but I do not think it is pertinent to the question. The question is: "What is the forecast percentage increase for the financial year 1984/85 over the years 1983/84?" I just cannot possibly forecast that with accuracy. All I can say, in essence, is that there appears to be a much higher indication of tourist arrivals, all-inclusive tour arrivals, that is, people staying in hotels for this summer than certainly was in 1983 which was a bad year.

HON J E PILCHER:

Doesn't the Minister agree that the Government should have a target to which it is working?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Mr Speaker, you cannot have a target. Tourism is business, as long as we do not lose money, we obviously would like to have all the hotels full.

HON J E PILCHER:

Is that your target?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Of course it is, Mr Speaker, that is my aim. I know it may be a pious hope but I wish I could have all the hotels full.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, could the Government say what happened in 1975 when we had such a high figure of tourists?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, in 1975 it was the question of the financial restrictions out of the sterling area and we benefitted very highly from that and 1979 was a boom year for Gibraltar in similar circumstances.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

Mr Speaker, is it Government's intention to release the Inner Keep at Moorish Castle to the Museum Committee?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM

Mr Speaker, in his Annual Report, the Chairman of the Museum Committee, says that in order to progress on the project to open up the Northern Defences to visitors "it is essential that the Inner Keep, a magnificently preserved monument of 14th century Moorish architecture, containing the British Army 18th century Military Prison, should be released to the Museum Committee for its restoration. At present, it is part of the prison, and scarcely used, just for a solitary confinement cell and a carpentry workshop". He suggests that these could be resited by building a small extension on the south side of the Prison.

The Museum Committee's Report was issued last month and the recommendation in respect of the Inner Keep will be considered in detail against the background of the Government's declared policy of improving tourist amenities and attractions in Gibraltar.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 20 OF 1984

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, in view that the Prison Superintendent is being allocated quarters outside the Prison, can the Minister look into the possibility of moving whatever there is inside the Inner Keep to this area?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

Yes, I suppose everything will have to be looked at. I do not really know the connection between the ex-Superintendent's quarters within the confinements of the Prison and the Inner Keep but I accept total ignorance on what one could do by using that office or whatever. It is certainly in the whole context of what one would like to see at Moorish Castle of hopefully re-siting the Prison some day.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister then confirm that he will look into this possibility?

HON H J ZAMMITT:

I will certainly look into it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 21 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON M A FEETHAM

Mr Speaker, when was the contract for the development and rehabilitation of Tank Ramp Phase II awarded?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Sir, the contract for the development and rehabilitation of Tank Ramp Phase II was awarded on the 30th January, 1984, and contract work commenced on site on the 1st March, 1984.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 21 OF 1984

HON M A FEETHAM:

Could the Minister state when the tenders were actually invited?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think the tenders were put out some time late in August.

HON M A FEETHAM:

In view of the deflated state of the construction industry, could the Minister state why it has taken so long to have the actual contract awarded?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The tenders came in in their due time but it is a condition that a tender cannot be awarded until there is the money to cover the actual cost of the tender. Because we had not finalised the tranche of borrowing that we have recently finalised with Hambros Bank we had to hold the actual awarding of the tender until such borrowing had been completed.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister give assurances that apart from the statement which he has just made that in fact these things will be speeded up in the future because I am not entirely satisfied with the answer.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The Government is fully appreciative of the dearth of work in the construction industry but as I have said it is an essential that we do have the full amount of money before we award a tender and if we do not have the money then of course the tender cannot be awarded. Where the money is available there is normally no delay in the awarding of tenders.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J C PEREZ

Can Government state when the MOT vehicle testing station at Eastern Beach was completed?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Sir, the MOT Vehicle Testing Centre at Eastern Beach Road was completed on the 15th September, 1983.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 22 OF 1984

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member state whether the staffing requirements have now been agreed to and when will the MOT station be operating?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The delay in getting the staffing was a certain amount of considerably difficult negotiations with the relevant union but I understand this has now been finalised. The Government will shortly be advertising for the extra posts that are needed to cover this and it is hoped that the Vehicle Testing Centre will come into operation at the beginning of April.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, when was it envisaged that the Vehicle Testing Centre would be completed and when was Government expecting it to be operational?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Government had hoped that the testing centre would be operational at the beginning of this year but unfortunately, as I say, there were rather difficult negotiations with the relevant union and this has created a certain measure of delay. However, as I said, the situation now seems to be clarified and we are expediting the actual opening as rapidly as possible.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, if it was intended to be operational at the beginning of 1984 why is it that the Government bought the equipment in 1981 with a warranty of only one year and is that warranty applicable as from the beginning of 1984 or has that expired already?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question but I would understand that the warranty should normally start from the beginning of use of the equipment.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member confirm whether it is Government's intention to bring out an expert from the company which supplied the equipment to see whether the warranty can be valid as from the date of use?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I would not say we have to bring out an expert but we can communicate with the company, of course.

HON J C PEREZ:

Is it the intention of the Hon Member to communicate with the company to see whether the warranty is to be extended?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

If such has not been done I will see that it is done.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J C PEREZ

Can Government state whether the recent street cleaning campaign is covered by the funds provided for in the estimates of expenditure presented to the House at the last Budget?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Yes; Sir, the recent street cleaning campaign is covered by the funds provided in the 1983/84 estimates.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 23 OF 1984

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member confirm that it is covered under Head 60, sub-head 38 which is Cleaning of Highway where £267,000 was allocated?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

If the Hon Member is quoting correctly from the estimates, yes, Sir.

HON J C PEREZ:

Will the Hon Member state what are the duties that are not being done by the employees doing this street cleaning campaign whilst they are on these duties?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

They are mainly not cleaning the beaches, Sir, which is not normally done during the winter period.

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Hon Member considering whether to employ people on a permanent basis for the street cleaning campaign to be a permanent feature rather than a temporary one?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

That is something we shall have to look at when preparing the estimates, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 24 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J C PEREZ

What is the policy of the Government in respect of the safety of public parks, playgrounds and their amenities?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS

Sir, it is the policy of the Government to maintain the highest possible standard of safety at the public parks and playgrounds.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 24 OF 1984

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Hon Member expand on what this effectively means? Is there an annual check, a monthly check, a weekly check or how is that undertaken?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Normally a check is made by somebody on a six monthly basis but where the playground actually has a park keeper he is informed that if he should see anything untoward in any of the equipment he must inform the department immediately and some measure is taken to remedy what is wrong.

HON J C PEREZ:

Was this not the case recently in the Glacis park where a guard on the slide was broken which caused a five year old girl to lose half of her finger?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I would rather not comment on that at this moment, Sir, because Government has received a claim from a legal entity with regard to this and I think anything I might say might be classified as sub judice.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON M A FEETHAM

Mr Speaker, will Government state whether it has considered the report entitled "Gibraltar, the Way Forward" drawn up by the Economist Intelligence Unit commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce and make a statement on the matter?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Sir, the Government has taken note of the Economist Intelligence Unit report's findings and is considering taking action on its more specific recommendations. The report does not reveal any new, major proposals nor solutions. I would say, however, that I welcomed its positive views on the commercialisation of the Dockyard and its helpful emphasis on Her Majesty's Government's responsibility in assisting the Gibraltar economy.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 25 OF 1984

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister state specifically which part of the report is considered favourable and which part of the report is not considered favourable?

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not think it is a question of considering some part favourable and some other part unfavourable. I could make a fairly detailed statement on my own views about the report but with regard to the specific recommendations, if I mention one perhaps you might get an idea of the nature of the recommendations that I am referring to. For instance, there is in the report a recommendation regarding the lowering of the ceiling of expenditure for qualification for a development aid licence, this is the kind of specific recommendation that I think the Government can be more sympathetic towards but other arguments advanced in the report about the nature and the role of the private sector and the burden that should devolve upon the Government in this connection I would reserve my views unless I am pressed by the Hon Member to answer.

MR SPEAKER:

Perhaps the Hon Member would like to ask the Minister whether Government intends to make a statement on the report.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Apparently he is not prepared to make a statement. Would the Minister not agree that in essence the report says nothing new to anybody in Gibraltar?

HON A J CANEPA:

I agree.

MR SPEAKER:

That is a matter of opinion.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister agree as well that in fact the report which is a collection of views primarily from the Chamber of Commerce and people in that sector of the community is, in fact, a reflection of Government's past and present policies?

HON A J CANEPA:

No, Mr Speaker, and I will say that first of all because as I indicated earlier on, one of the main shortcomings or disappointments of the report is that it fails to say what the private sector should do to help itself. For instance, what should be its pricing policies? What should be its pattern of trade? It says nothing about the licensing of trade. It says nothing about training in and by the private sector. The onus has been placed entirely on the Government and I cannot accept that. Also the report ignores the underlying element which I think is crucial in an analysis of our economic situation and that is the fact that since, and largely because of the closure of the frontier, Gibraltar's social and infrastructural needs multiplied to such an extent that this resulted in the near total allocation by the Government of capital resources into housing, into education, electricity and water and very little, therefore, could go into developing tourism or any private sector orientated activity. I do not think the report really has analysed fully what the reasons for our present problems are other than the obvious one of the partial opening of the frontier and the closure of the Dockyard but it does not make a proper historical analysis of what in fact has happened in Gibraltar from 1969 to the end of 1982.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Whilst agreeing to a great extent with the reply of the Minister in clarification of my question, can it also be said that a response from the private sector to the difficulties which it has faced is impossible in the light of the closure of the Dockyard and in the light of the policies of the British Government towards Gibraltar?

MR SPEAKER:

I will allow a short reply to that but we must not debate the report under the guise of a question.

HON A J CANEPA:

It is extremely difficult, I think, to get the right sort of response, yes.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON M A FEETHAM

Does the Minister for Economic Development consider that Her Majesty's Government has now fulfilled the pledge to provide Gibraltar with a viable economic alternative to the Naval Base?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Sir, I assume that the Hon Member is referring to the Naval Dockyard and not the Naval Base. Firstly I should say that in the 1981 Defence White Paper Her Majesty's Government did not unfortunately pledge to provide a viable economic alternative to the Naval Dockyard; the reference was to alternative ways of supporting the economy. Notwithstanding this, I would reaffirm that the Government is satisfied that a reasonable package has been obtained to help offset the effects of dockyard closure, particularly given the assurances on future assistance.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 26 OF 1984

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister not agree that as far as his Government is concerned what in fact they have obtained as a viable economic alternative to the Dockyard has not been an alternative amongst others but the only alternative since something is better than nothing?

HON A J CANEPA:

In the event the study that the consultancies, the sum total of all the consultative reports and the very deep and profound analysis that the Government made of the situation during 1983 led to our arriving at the view that commercialisation of the Dockyard was the only way forward in respect of putting the assets and the facilities at Her Majesty's Dockyard to some reasonable use that could make a significant contribution to our economy.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Does the Minister not agree that there is a fundamental difference in principle in having to accept something that is better than nothing when someone else is ultimately responsible for it and that of having to accept it anyway and making oneself responsible for it?

HON A J CANEPA:

Yes, but there is an aspect that the Hon Member is conveniently forgetting and that is the assurances given by Her Majesty's Government about future assistance in the context of any problems which the economy might face in the future and in particular as a result of commercialisation of the Dockyard. I think Her Majesty's Government because of the statement made by the Minister at the time and because of their underlying obligations under the Constitution, cannot shirk off responsibility for future economic difficulties by the people of Gibraltar.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister not agree that in fact Government obtained the package deal within the framework of what the British Government intended Gibraltar to have?

HON A J CANEPA:

That is not for me to say, Mr Speaker.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The people have said that..

HON M A FEETHAM:

Did Government at any stage propose their own alternative to the Dockyard closure from a Gibraltarian point of view?

HON A J CANEPA:

Our own alternative, Mr Speaker, was to keep the Dockyard open. That was the policy of the Government until it became abundantly clear that the British Government was not prepared to keep it open and that the only alternative to commercialisation was grant-in-aid and that we were not prepared to countenance.

HON M A FEETHAM:

The Minister has not answered my question. Did the Government at any stage propose in the light of the difficulties they were having in their negotiations, their own alternative to the Dockyard closure from a Gibraltarian point of view?

HON A J CANEPA:

The alternative was that, Mr Speaker, it had the support of the then Opposition party, it had the support of the Trade Union Movement that the Dockyard should be kept open and that it should undertake much more commercial work than has been the case in the past and the answer to that was nothing doing.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister then clarify why Government took the unprecedented step in their dealings with the British Government of having accepted responsibility for the economic viability of the package deal Government negotiated as a substitute for the Dockyard?

HON A J CANEPA:

We have not accepted responsibility for the economic viability of that package.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Can the Minister clarify how he has not accepted responsibility?

HON A J CANEPA:

Because if there had not been a promise of future economic assistance on the part of the British Government we would not have accepted the package.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Is the Minister still of the view that the alternative to the Dockyard, the new Gibraltar Shiprepair company, is not viable?

HON A J CANEPA:

He is not going to draw me out of that one, Mr Speaker. I knew that it would come sooner or later in a supplementary. If Mr Gerald Restano was there we would probably be getting chapter and verse.

MR SPEAKER:

Well, you cannot blame him for trying.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Can the Minister say whether there will be any economic activity in respect of Queensway and Rosia this coming financial year 1984/85?

MR SPEAKER:

No, it does not arise from this question.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, economic activity is a very loose word, if the Ministry of Defence starts reprovisioning some of the facilities there then I suppose indirectly that is of economic benefit but if what he means is will there be any developers starting work there the answer is no.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister explain what safeguard conditions or reservations did Government take into account in accepting responsibility for the success or otherwise of the package deal of the impact on the economy in relation to the present negotiations taking place within the EEC affecting Gibraltar's future economic independence?

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, that does not arise from the question, it is a separate question altogether and for the first time from the Government benches I must say I require separate notice.

MR SPEAKER:

If it does not arise you must not answer it, that is the answer.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, does the Government not consider that when it is negotiating with the British Government on something of such fundamental importance that as the elected Members of Gibraltar they have to consider the immediate short-term and long-term impact of any such package deal and my question is within that context.

MR SPEAKER:

With respect to the Questioner, we are just asking questions and supplementaries on the original question which is whether Government accepted that they had been given a viable alternative.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Mr Canepa tell me when he discovered that the pledge was not for a viable alternative?

HON A J CANEPA:

We have always known, Mr Speaker, I think perhaps I might quote what the Defence White Paper actually says.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, I am quite aware of what the Defence White Paper says.

HON A J CANEPA:

But perhaps not everybody is. "Consideration will be given to alternative ways of fulfilling the Government's obligation to support the economy of Gibraltar if it is decided that the Dockyard work there cannot be kept up indefinitely. This consideration will be undertaken in closest consultation with the Gibraltar Government". That was the Defence White Paper of June 1981.

HON J E PILCHER:

Can the Minister then say why in 1982, in a presentation at the Construction Training Centre, he said that we had to hold the United Kingdom to its pledge to produce a viable alternative?

HON A J CANEPA:

Of course, and we still do and we think that the assurances which are contained in Mr Ian Stewart's statement underline that. When I came back from London in the debate here in the House I said that in my view that was the most important part of the Minister's

statement and that was the most important statement that had been made by the British Government with regard to its responsibilities for the economy of Gibraltar since the famous support and sustain policy was first promulgated by George Thomson in 1968.

MR SPEAKER:

I think we are talking at cross purposes. I think what the Minister has said is that the United Kingdom Government has never promised a viable alternative, the Gibraltar Government has always sought a viable one. I am just stating, by way of explanation, what has been said in the House.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister, in fact, confirm that in November, 1982, speaking to the people who had just finished their training at the Construction Industry Training Centre he said, quoting from memory: "The British Government is committed to providing a viable alternative and we must hold them to that pledge", did he use those words?

HON A J CANEPA:

I forget the exact words that I used, we can check on that, but certainly I remember the background distinctly in which I made that. The background was that we were not getting any assistance from ODA, ODA had not yet come forward with a new development programme, we were being told that the change in the economic circumstances of Gibraltar that were going to be brought about was an exciting challenge and I had my doubts about that. Between that date, November, 1982, and July, 1983, we got £13m of ODA assistance, we got the transfer of major sites and we got the assurances for future economic assistance together with an improved naval programme for the Dockyard which together make the package tolerable.

MR SPEAKER:

I think we are not going to discuss that any further. Next question.

NO. 27 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J BOSSANO

Can Government state whether the contribution to be made by the Inland Revenue in lieu of rates for Crown Properties will be greater in 1984/85 than it has been in 1983/84?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Yes, Sir. The contribution by Her Majesty's Treasury in lieu of rates for Crown Properties occupied by the MOD in Gibraltar will be greater in 1984/85 than for 1983/84.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 27 OF 1984

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister state what will be the percentage increase in that contribution?

HON A J CANEPA:

About 7% more, Mr Speaker.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister state whether in fact the percentage contribution by the Inland Revenue will be in line with the percentage increase in yield from rates collected from the public sector tenants and from private sector tenants?

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not know about that, Mr Speaker, because I am aware of the fact that a general revaluation of properties is due, in fact, it was deferred last year and the Government will now have to consider whether it should be implemented or whether it should be deferred again and I have an indication, if it was not deferred, what the increase revenue from the private sector, in particular from business, would be because, as I say, the revaluation is now overdue by a year and it will have been six years since the last revaluation and therefore the impact on revenue would be very considerable during 1984/85 and much in excess, certainly, of the 7% which, after all, all that it does is to compare a normal year with another normal year 1983/84.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept that point, Mr Speaker, in respect of the private sector. Can the Minister say whether the increase will be in line with the rates assessment on the properties of the Gibraltar Government itself which, presumably, will not be subject to such a revaluation?

HON A J CANEPA:

I have to check on that. If the Hon Member wishes I can do so and perhaps give him the answer later on in the course of the meeting.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon Member agree with me that it would be a reasonable criteria to apply that the public sector, whether it is in respect of the Ministry of Defence or in respect of the Gibraltar Government, should have the same sort of rates reviews?

HON A J CANEPA:

At first hand I would say yes, but I am very much a layman in these matters.

HON J BOSSANO:

Could I just ask one final question, Mr Speaker? Has, in fact, the amount been affected by the decision of the British Government now, recently announced in the Commons, to transfer to the Gibraltar Government both the area occupied by the Naval Dockyard and the area of the North Mole?

HON A J CANEPA:

I am pretty certain that it has not in respect of the latter, Mr Speaker, because if that were to be the case then in the draft estimates of the Port Department there would not be any provision for payment of rent which there is at the moment. I am aware that there has been a Treasury Minute on the transfer of the North Mole laid in Parliament and I was asking about this particular aspect as recently as last Friday morning but I do not think it has come through yet and therefore at the time when the estimates of revenue are being drawn up I do not think that that will be reflected. Whether anything were to happen between now and the middle of next month which might alter the situation is another matter.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

"HON A J CANEPA:

Sir, I undertook yesterday, arising from supplementaries to Question No. 27 to try to obtain some further information for the Hon Leader of the Opposition. His question then was whether the increase in the rates payable by the MOD as between 1983/84 and 1984/85, whether the increase was in line with the increase of Government properties and the answer is, indeed, yes. The increase in contribution is, in fact, due to the increase in the rents of Government residential accommodation which have been equally applied to Ministry of Defence domestic premises. The percentage increase is therefore the same in respect of the domestic civilian list but it reduces to 7% as a result of the non domestic element which has not been reassessed pending a general revaluation as I explained yesterday".

THE HON M A FEETHAM

Mr Speaker, can Government confirm that the area of the slipway and Gun Wharf will not be handed over by MOD on a permanent basis but will be leased to the Government of Gibraltar?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE

Sir, I can confirm that the area of Slipway and Gun Wharf will not be transferred to the Gibraltar Government on a permanent basis. The area will instead be leased to Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited at a peppercorn rent.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 28 OF 1984

HON M A FEETHAM:

Will the Minister say why the Government has accepted this state of affairs?

HON A J CANEPA:

The reason, Sir, is the Ministry of Defence wish to be assured of the continued availability of adequate repair facilities for its small craft and that is why the lease will contain a proviso allowing the Ministry of Defence, if necessary, to resume repairing its small craft using the facilities in this area and I should perhaps mention that the lease involved is one for a period of twenty years.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, could it not be taken as well that the MOD are showing very little faith in the Shirepair company?

HON A J CANEPA:

Well, they are waiting twenty years to find out.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Could the Minister give details of the lease?

HON A J CANEPA:

I do not think it arises from the question, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

You do mention the lease in the answer, you have said it is going to be for a term of twenty years, whether you wish to disclose any further information is up to you.

HON A J CANEPA:

That is the only information that I have.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the fact that the lease is for twenty years does not mean that the Ministry of Defence cannot decide prior to the termination of the lease to terminate it and take over repairs themselves if they are not satisfied with the way the Shiprepair company is performing, is that not the case? It is not a question that they are waiting twenty years to find out, in fact, there is a safeguard in the lease which enables them to step in at any time, is that not the case?

HON A J CANEPA:

Presumably that is the case but I am not involved in the negotiations myself and I have not been at any stage, I do not know enough about it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 29 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J E PILCHER

Can the Chief Minister explain how the future pay levels in the Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited will be linked with the success of the commercial yard?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Sir, I presume the Hon Member is referring to my statement of the 1st December, 1983, where I made the point that future pay levels in the Dockyard will depend on the efforts of all concerned with the operation. It is not for me, however, to say how pay will be determined. That is a matter for negotiation between the company and its employees.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 29 OF 1984

HON J E PILCHER:

I think the Minister has referred to another question. I think in statements before and in fact it is different from now, the Chief Minister is referring to, obviously, levels of productivity. Is he referring to levels of productivity?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I said that the statement which is the one that I have been able to find which no doubt the Hon Member is referring, was the statement made on the 1st December. First of all I said that parity was applying to all other sectors of the MOD and then I went on to say: "Insofar as Dockyard employees are concerned, the question of parity will depend on the efforts which all concerned are prepared to make in order to ensure the success of the commercial yard. Parity will apply" - obviously they were talking about wages - "parity will apply on 3rd January, 1985, the pay that workers in the commercial yard will get thereafter will depend on their efforts and the efforts of all concerned in making a commercial Dockyard a success". It does not go any further than that.

HON J E PILCHER:

Yes, Mr Speaker, but since the Chief Minister has said this what does he understand by that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

What I understand by what I said? Well, that the level of pay at the beginning of 1985 would be similar to whatever level of pay was parity and thereafter it would depend on the success of the Dockyard and the way in which the whole thing develops.

HON J E PILCHER:

But how?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not prepared to say. I am not an economist and I have not made any assessments as to progress from day to day. All I can say is, I think, which is a generally recognised basis is that it will very much depend on the success and the efforts that everybody puts into it and I did not specifically say the workers, I said everybody concerned.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, taking into account that the analysis and projections of Appledore have themselves said there will be a loss in the first three years, does that not mean that there won't be a pay rise for the first three years irrespective of who sets the pay and the pay limits, whether it is done by the Gibraltar Government or Appledore?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I do not agree with that. I am quite prepared to talk about this to the extent I know and I do not say that I claim to know a lot about it, but the question of making part of the support money account for setting off the losses that may be suffered in the first two years normally must be taken into account in the whole context of how the thing is progressing. I think that it could well be a loss and if the productivity is high, this is my own view, I am not expressing anybody's view, if the productivity is good and the loss is there nevertheless that will be reflected in the pay of the people concerned.

HON J E PILCHER:

So what in fact the Chief Minister is saying is that there will be, if there is no productivity because there will be a loss for the first three years, there won't be a rise for the first three years?

MR SPEAKER:

I think, in fairness, all these questions and answers are completely and utterly hypothetical because it has been said by the Chief Minister that it is not his concern that it is the concern of the Shiprepair company and the employees.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think I would like to explain that I said the opposite of what the Hon Member understood.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon and Learned Chief Minister think that it would be unfair if the effort is made by the workforce and that the Shiprepair company through other factors is unsuccessful, that the workforce involved which is making a great effort

should be paid less than the rest of Gibraltar and can the Hon and Learned Chief Minister explain how it is possible that this will be an incentive for the people involved to carry on putting on that effort?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am not prepared to answer that further hypothetical question. I see the point in the question and I see that irrespective of other factors, I think it is fair to say that the performance of workers at the beginning must be taken into account in their earnings as it would after the losses are covered by the package.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, doesn't the Hon and Learned Chief Minister think that even if it is a hypothetical situation that these need to be looked at before going into something which could arise in the future to the detriment of the whole project?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think that anything more can be looked at theoretically in the future that has been done already by all parties concerned and it is only in the performance and in the implementation of it that time will show whether the thing is the right thing or not. That is as far as I will go.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 30 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J E PILCHER

Can the Chief Minister explain what he means by the statement made on the 1st December, 1983, that parity would apply on 1st January, 1985, for employees of the Gibraltar Shiprepair Company?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

I think I have answered that virtually in my supplementaries to the other.

The managers of the yard have repeatedly made the point that; initially, average hourly pay would be equal to the parity level prevailing in the Dockyard on closure. That is my understand of the position.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 30 OF 1984

HON J E PILCHER:

How can the Chief Minister reconcile this with the fact that Appledore's rates of pay are set by themselves to form the basis of the 1983 report? Could Appledore in 1983 predict what the basic wage will be in 1985?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I understand, and I stand to be corrected, that the offer that they would make would be that the wages of the staff of the shiprepair yard will be the wages that are being earned by other sectors in the Ministry of Defence employment as wages and then after that the result would depend on productivity.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, the rates have already been published, in fact, some people have already got their rates of pay in offers made by Appledore and in fact Appledore told the unions in the union meeting that the pay would be the same on average with a difference of a few percentage points. Does not the Chief Minister agree with me that nowadays a few percentage points is the difference between the pay of one year and the next?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

This is a matter for the management of the company and I do not know whether by the measure in which they decide the wages there may be variations but I would certainly be very surprised if the offer to start, in fact, I can easily say that I understand that some grades have been offered starting wages higher than the ones being paid at present.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon and Learned Chief Minister not agree with me that if he has made the statement that he has made on so many occasions since December, 1983, and during an election campaign, in fact, there is a responsibility to ensure that the company does not make him out to be a liar by failing to fulfil what he has said was going to take place, does he not agree with me?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think the word liar is rather strong. You mean make a mis-statement of fact, I would accept that but not liar. Yes, of course, the answer to that one is yes and I would be very surprised and in fact I had no evidence of that, if that evidence was brought to my attention I will see that my words are honoured.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 31 OF 1984

ORAL

THE HON J BOSSANO

Will Government state whether they have been consulted on the possibility of the Gibraltar guardship being removed from Gibraltar and placed on 96 hours standby?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

No, Sir. As the House knows questions of security and defence are the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and His Excellency the Governor. It is therefore not customary to have consultations about them.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 31 OF 1984

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Chief Minister not agree that in the context of both its economic and its effect on morale it is something that he might wish to initiate consultation on if in fact the consultation is not initiated by the other side?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I entirely agree and it has happened, but I do not call it consultation, I call it complaint.

HON J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister has, I take it from his answer, therefore, made the relevant authorities aware that he is concerned that something like this should be done without his having an opportunity of expressing the important implications for Gibraltar?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not going to have the Hon Leader of the Opposition tell me what I have said. What I have said I have said but incidentally the facts in the question are not exact - I do not want to get involved in that - and less bad than they look.

HON J BOSSANO:

Would the Hon and Learned Member agree, Mr Speaker, that it would be unnecessary for me to tell him what he had said if he told me what he had said?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, but I will have the pleasure of not telling you.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON J E PILCHER

Can Government state why the visit to London of the Deputy Governor between the 5th and 7th February, in his capacity as Chairman of GATAB, to attend a meeting on civil aviation matters, was not previously cleared with the Board?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, GATAB advises the Governor in the discharge of his responsibilities for civil aviation matters. The Deputy Governor's visit to London, as such, did not require previous clearance with the Board. The talks he attended were of a preliminary nature and the question of asking the Board to advise the Governor did not arise at that stage and has not arisen since.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 32 OF 1984

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, I take what the Chief Minister has said but if the Deputy Governor went in his capacity as Chairman of the Board and taking into account that he did not seek the advice of the Board first, should he not have reported to the Board after his visit to the United Kingdom?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The purpose of describing the Deputy Governor in the press release as the Chairman of the Gibraltar Air Transport Advisory Board was to show why he, who is also the Governor's senior official adviser on foreign affairs, rather than any other official should attend the meeting and I will concede myself though I was not responsible for this but I accept responsibility to the extent that it was a press release, that with hindsight and in order to have avoided the confusion which appears to have arisen it would have been better not to describe him in that way.

HON J E PILCHER:

Is the Hon and Learned Chief Minister then saying that the Deputy Governor did not go in his capacity as Chairman of GATAB?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, it is very difficult to say. Of course he could not divest himself of that responsibility but I have also said that describing him in his capacity as Chairman of the Gibraltar Air Transport Advisory Board was to show why he rather than anybody else went and, of course, the fact that he is the Chairman of GATAB was an element in it and I would have thought that if it was necessary the report would have been made. I know actually what happened and I can tell the Hon Member that really nothing worth reporting back came out of it.

HON J E PILCHER:

Can the Chief Minister then say why this, which is something that is not worth reporting, was not taken to GATAB and everybody reassured?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not responsible for what other people do. I have answered the question to the best of my ability. This is what the then Deputy Governor did and that is it.

HON J E PILCHER:

Just on a point of clarification. The Chief Minister is then saying that GATAB will not be called for information as regards the Deputy Governor's visit?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am not saying that. It is for the Governor to decide when he needs to seek the advice of the Board in order to discharge their responsibilities. All I can say now is that in my estimation there has been really nothing to report back on.