

GIBRALTAR

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MEETING OF
24TH JANUARY, 1989

NO. 1 TO NO. 43

NO. 1 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON LT COL E M BRITTO

24 1 89

Does Government intend to appoint a new Rent Assessor once the post becomes vacant on promotion of the present incumbent?

ANSWER

THE HON THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Yes, Sir.

What action will Government take to stop the deteriorating situation as regards the escalating use of fireworks during the Christmas and New Year festivities?

ANSWER

THE HON THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Commissioner of Police, Collector of Customs, the Chief Fire Officer, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and the Specialist in Community Medicine are considering the matter, with a view to making recommendations thereon to the Government.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO.2 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Is it envisaged that tighter controls will be introduced?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

I think we have to await the report from the persons who are considering the matter but I know they are considering the question of whether or not fireworks should be declared a prohibited import and whether or not to increase the penalties for the throwing of fireworks and generally under the Explosives Ordinance.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Is it also correct to say that some of the fireworks that were used in the festivities recently, were in fact illegal in Gibraltar? And if so could not the police have enforced the law on those persons using them, moreso since it is well known that such activities take place?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

Well on that question Mr Speaker, I am told that 120 bangers, 57 large rockets and 22 small rockets were detained by the authorities. The police prosecuted in one case and a conviction was recorded.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Will Government consider having a Public Display and thus prevent private displays?

HON ATTORNEY GENERAL:

I do not think that is a matter for me, Mr Speaker.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think that having a Public Display will necessarily prevent private displays, Mr Speaker.

Is Government now in a position to say whether the school hours will be changed for the start of the 1989/90 school year?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Mr Speaker, there have never been any Government plans to change the school hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 3 OF 1989

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, I am asking the question as a result of a study that the Gibraltar Teachers' Association undertook. Is the Minister saying that Government has not considered the representations that have been made by the GTA?

HON J L MOSS:

Mr Speaker, if the Honourable Member opposite will recollect the public statement that was put out by the GTA at the time, it said that they would contact me for further discussions and I am still awaiting them.

Will the Government consider amending the requirement to undergo one year's training in Gibraltar prior to the commencement of the course in respect of a teacher training award when the circumstances are such that it is in the Government's interest to do so?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Mr Speaker, if and when the circumstances are such that it is in the Government's interest to waive the diagnostic year in Gibraltar, it would be considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 4 OF 1989

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, I know a case where a young lady was undertaking a course in an area which would be beneficial to the Government and where the case would have led to the course being one-year as opposed to two-years. Would the Government not have considered that that would have been beneficial?

HON J L MOSS:

Mr Speaker, I do not like playing "Give us a clue", if the Hon Member opposite has a genuine case I am prepared to look at it, but if there has already been an answer, I suspect that this might have been in the young lady's interest but not necessarily in the Government's.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, what I am asking is, if a saving of a year's tuition fees, maintenance, etc, is not beneficial to Government? I have a copy of a letter from the Minister to the young lady saying that no he would not consider it at all.

MR SPEAKER:

We must not get involved in a particular circumstance or one particular case. I think the Hon Member has been given a general answer. Any further information should be the subject of another question or, perhaps, correspondence between the Minister and yourself. Next question.

Can Government confirm the number of trainees presently enrolled in the Government's Training Scheme with a breakdown of the numbers of each of the relevant courses?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr Speaker, following our commitment to ensure that all youngsters who left school last year would be engaged in either further education, employment or training, in the latter respect, the Government introduced a youth training scheme which commenced last September. The idea of this scheme is to prepare youngsters who lack qualifications or skills, for jobs which would be arising in the labour market. The main problem that these particular school leavers encounter when trying to find employment, is that normally they would be considered too young and, of course, inexperienced by employers and consequently, find difficulty in competing for jobs against older or more skilled unemployed persons. The employer, for his part, has to consider that an employee is an investment and invariably is more doubtful about how a school leaver would perform than he would be of a more mature person. Moreover, should an employer have a vacancy for which certain skills are required, employing a school leaver would mean spending time and money on training whilst at the same time also paying a wage to the youngster. This again, further deters the employer from moving in this direction. The Government gave careful consideration to all this and arrived at the conclusion that we should devise a scheme which should be beneficial to these school leavers and at the same time, beneficial to employers as well. The scheme therefore had to count on the co-operation of employers and also had to be attractive enough for them to participate in this. Ideally, it was thought there should be a situation where an incentive should be given to employers to take on school leavers under certain conditions which would make it worthwhile and attractive enough to ensure their participation. Likewise, in order to ensure and maintain the interest and participation of the school leaver, the training would have to be combined with a reasonable financial reward much higher than in any previous training scheme which ever existed in Gibraltar. So last September, Mr Speaker, after the introduction of the training levy, the Government launched our training scheme for school leavers who are now known under the scheme as Vocational Cadets and are receiving payment whilst under training. These cadets are offered to employers to be trained for specific vacancies subject to certain conditions being met. These conditions stipulate that an employer may only engage a cadet provided it is his intention to employ the trainee at the end of the agreed training period. The youngsters would be engaged initially on a trial basis for one month, or as otherwise agreed, at the end of which the employer would have to state whether the cadet is suitable for his needs. Should this be so, a commitment

must be given by the employer that full-time employment will be offered to the cadet at the end of the training period. The Government also introduced a pre-nursing course which is attended by a number of these Vocational Cadets. The progress of each trainee is constantly being monitored and any dissatisfaction, whether on the part of the youngster or the employer, is promptly dealt with. The monitoring also ensures that the trainee is not misused or not receiving proper training in which case the cadet would be withdrawn from that particular employer. The training instructors of the previous two Government training centres are now engaged in this monitoring role which ensures a better utilisation of these resources. It is their duty to report weekly on the progress of each trainee and to ensure their training is proper and worthwhile. They will also help and advise trainees and employers on matters of training in their respective fields. The reports on the monitored progress will assist the Gibraltar Training and Employment Board when a certificate of training is issued to every trainee at the end of the training period. The Government, Mr Speaker, is very encouraged by the results which have been obtained so far and by the response that we have had from employers to the Government's initiative. This can be seen from the figures the Hon Questioner has requested. One hundred youngsters have been recruited so far into the scheme. Of these, one has left Gibraltar and four others are already in full-time employment. The remaining 95 are all engaged in training on a wide variety of trades and specifications. This is broken down as follows:

BUTCHER	1	DENTAL NURSE	1
CAR RESPRAYER	1	ELECTRICIAN	4
CARPENTER	7	GLAZIER	1
CHAMBERMAID	1	HAIRDRESSER	7
CHART CORRECTOR	1	HALL PORTER	2
GENERAL CONST.	4	LABOURER	2
DELIVERY	1	MARINE ELECTRONICS	2
MASON	1	REFRIGERATION	1
MECHANIC	8	SALES ASSTS	10
OFFICE ASSTS	8	SECURITY ASSTS	1
PAINTERS	4	SIGN MAKER	1
PLUMBERS	7	TV TECHNICIAN	1
PRE-NURSING	13	WAITER/COOK	1
RECEPTIONIST	1	WAREHOUSE ASSTS	3

At present, Mr Speaker, we have more offers of training opportunities for youngsters than we have for school leavers and in this respect the Government is considering appraising the situation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 5 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Is the qualification of this certificate of training given at the end recognised as a qualification of any worth in the United Kingdom or the EEC generally?

HON R MOR:

No, Mr Speaker the idea of giving a certificate at the end of the training period is to show employers that he has received a certain amount of training under the Government's Training Scheme. This is more than they had before.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, the actual training therefore simply involves, as I understand it, working with an employer and that work being monitored periodically by the instructors.

HON R MOR:

That is the position, Mr Speaker. The idea of the scheme...

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

There are no separate courses. A trainee does not spend part of his time working and then in the afternoons, for example, going to some training.....

MR SPEAKER:

With respect, what is your question.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

I would like to know the extent of tuition which a trainee receives when engaged under the Training Scheme, in this type of employment?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, this is not academic training, it is practical training and as I said at the very beginning, Mr Speaker, the idea is to train these youngsters for jobs in the labour market. Now what better way of training a person than by putting him into a job, which is already available, and receive his training there.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister not concerned that the so called qualification is not going to be recognised outside Gibraltar, for example, will a plumber receive a certificate of training and no other qualification which would be recognisable outside Gibraltar? Or nurses?

HON R MOR:

Well Mr Speaker, the pre-Nursing course is a different matter, these trainees will eventually go on to the Health Authority and will be trained further within the Nursing structure and receive their qualifications from them. The Training Scheme is geared to providing people with skills, as opposed to academic qualifications, Mr Speaker.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, 2 persons are being trained as Labourers, 2 trainee Labourers?

HON R MOR:

That is correct, Mr Speaker, 2 persons are currently being trained as Labourers.

HON K B ANTHONY:

And they will get a certificate that they are trained Labourers?

HON R MOR:

Yes Sir. They will get a certificate issued by the Board stating the training that they have undertaken during the year.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of Hon Members who were not present before and do not know what the Training Scheme substituted. The position was that before this Scheme came into operation there was a Construction Training Industry Centre which basically produced people that were subsequently employed by the Gibraltar Government as Boy Labourers. Now, Mr Speaker, during a period of twelve months they were introduced into four areas of the Construction Industry, painting, carpentry, plumbing and plastering but they were not trained to perform these four trades in that year. They were trained to do the level of labouring which is more skilled than somebody who has never worked or been in a similar situation. Part of the problem that we are experiencing in the Labour Department, and which I am sure the previous administration also experienced, is that when an employer asks for a Labourer he wants to know where has that Labourer worked before. If the applicants have come straight out of school then the answer is nowhere. A level of work experience, even at the level of Labourer, seems to be demanded in the Private Sector.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to know the cost of the Training Scheme up till now? Has the Hon Minister the details? I would also like to know how much the Government has recouped from the £2 levy? If the Minister does not have the information with him perhaps he could give it to me later.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, I do not have the details which the Hon Member has requested but as soon as I have them I will provide him the information requested.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Is there a binding obligation on the employer to retain the services of the trainee at the end of the period.

HON R MOR:

Yes Mr Speaker. That is precisely the idea. The trainee is taken on initially for a period of one month or as otherwise agreed. Then the employer has to give a commitment that at the end of the training period, the youngster will be given full-time employment.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Could the training period be 12 months?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, that is the maximum that we are prepared to allow.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, can the employer turn around at the end of the twelve months and say I do not want him or her now?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, the employer will be asked to give the commitment much earlier than the 12 months. Possibly after 1 month or whatever the trial period is.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

That is what I am asking, Mr Speaker? If, for example, the initial training is for 12 months, at what stage has the employer to give a commitment, make up his mind. After 1 month, 2 months, when?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, after 1 month or whatever has been agreed with the employer.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister not accept that a large percentage of the jobs that he has described are jobs that exist anyway in the Private Sector and that the persons concerned would have found normal employment even if the Training Scheme did not exist?

HON R MOR:

No Mr Speaker. The situation that we found in March when we came in was that there were 71 schoolleavers unemployed from previous years. So the whole idea of the scheme is to give the opportunity, which they have never had before, of going straight from school into employment.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker is the Hon Minister saying that this has created new jobs.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, the jobs these youngsters are now filling used to, in the main, be filled by foreign workers.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the Certificate of Training that is issued basically an attendance certificate that the trainee will obtain provided he does not do something silly, like shooting his employer, or is it something that is given on merit?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, the intention of the certificate is to show, the experience that the trainee has acquired during the time he has been under training.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, it is then just a recognition of the time spent under training and not of a standard. Can a trainee fail to get a certificate and who assesses the standard?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker there is no examination at the end of the trainee's training spell if that is what the Hon Member is referring to.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, a qualification means that you have achieved something.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, we are not talking about a qualification we are talking about a Certificate issued to a trainee whereby it states the experience that the said trainee has acquired.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, what procedure is the Government going to use to determine the length of period the employer has to.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. We are not going to get into that line of questioning of the nitty gritty of how the scheme works. Next question.

Has the Government increased all benefits payable under the Supplementary benefit scheme as from the 1st January and will they give details?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr Speaker, as I indicated in this House last November when referring to other benefits, in line with the increase in the cost of living, all means-tested benefits payable under the Supplementary Benefit Scheme have been increased by 5% as from the 1 January, 1989. The Government is prepared to provide the Hon Member with details outside the House.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 6 OF 1989

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon Minister for his offer to provide me with details. Could I ask one further question. Whether the 5% also includes those receiving the Elderly Persons Allowance.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, Elderly Persons allowances have not been increased.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, that means that they have remained as at 1988.

HON R MOR:

For the time being yes.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, what about the non-householder allowance, payable to a person living in a family where the breadwinner is not on Supplementary Benefits and which is therefore payable to a person aged below 65 years of age? I think that the non-householders allowance is not means tested. Would the Hon Minister confirm that?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, all I can say at the moment is that all means tested benefits have been increased and I will provide the Hon Member with an answer to his question outside the House.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, the point that I am making is that whilst I can understand that the Government may have certain problems with the Elderly Perons Allowance, which used to be linked to the non-householders rate and which is payable to a person living in a family with no income of his or her own and to that extent it is not means tested. But I would say that it does not have the same problems that the Elderly Persons Allowance may have and therefore if the Government has not considered increasing that, I would urge them to look into this allowance more carefully to see if in fact, they are able to increase it if they have not done so.

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, we will definately look into it now that the Hon Member has highlighted it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Now that Government considers that the question of liability for the payment of Spanish pensions has been resolved will Government state when they propose to make a start on reducing pensionable age?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr Speaker, the Government is committed to the restructuring of our social security system and the new concept of a social wage will be introduced. It is expected that work on this will start during the course of 1989.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 7 OF 1989

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, the work on the re-structuring of the Social Security system or the work on the lowering of the pensionable age?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, the concept of the introduction of the Social Wage.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, does that mean that Government has reached an agreement on the re-structuring of the Social Security system?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, both things will be happening at the same time.

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Which means, Mr Speaker, that it will be in a position to have an answer by the autumn or winter?

HON R MOR:

Hopefully, that will be so, Mr Speaker.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that the Social Wage will become payable only on the termination of the present fund, in 5 years time, at least that is the impression that people in the street have. Will the Social Wage, when it becomes payable, be payable as from the age of 60 or 65 years of age?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, it will be below 65 years of age. Time has nothing to do with the winding up of the fund in 5 year's time.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, has the Government targetted a date for its implementation?

HON R MOR:

Mr Speaker, work will start during 1989.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the Government still committed to its basic Manifesto pledge to give pensioners retiring at 60 a Social Wage during this term of office?

HON R MOR:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

Will Government confirm that old age pensioners no longer have to contribute to the Group Practice Medical Scheme and why has no statement been issued to that effect?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND SPORT

Mr Speaker, the Opposition is aware that the Social Insurance (Contribution) Regulations was amended in November 1988 to allow for contribution credits to be granted to certain classes of unemployed persons over 60 years of age. These credits effectively cover their insurability under the GPMS Ordinance. The Government issued a legal notice on 22 December 1988 amending the Regulations concerning contributions to the Health Service. Under the new arrangements which were effective from 2 January 1989, unemployed persons (including unemployed pensioners) have their contributions paid from the Social Assistance Fund and are, therefore, not required to make payments themselves. It is the Government's policy to improve services for the elderly and the needy. This step has been taken to achieve an improvement and we do not consider it appropriate to seek unnecessary publicity as we implement elements of our election manifesto.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 8 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister appreciate that the average person does not read the Gazette, therefore did not see that Legal Notice and are not aware of the fact.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, persons have to go to the Health Centre to register and they are informed then. Mr Speaker there are 56,000 files at the Health Centre Records and it would be pandemonium if every person were to go there at the same time. It is therefore much better to deal with them when they come to register.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, I hope the Hon Minister has no objection if we in the Opposition inform persons who ask us what the position is?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, we welcome their help. At long last we have the Opposition helping us!

HON DR R G VALARINO:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Minister confirm that as stated in the Gazette of the 22 December, 1988, contributions to the GPMS have gone up £2 whereas contributions to the Social Insurance have gone down £1. Thereby making it a £1 raise in total?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

That is correct, Mr Speaker.

Have the BMA now replied to "the specific post of a physician with interest in geriatric medicine" and what were their comments?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND SPORT

Mr Speaker, no reply has been received from the BMA. The Government wrote to the BMA on the 23 September, and is naturally disappointed that a reply has not yet been received in view of the initiatives we already have taken in many areas within the Health Services. In a matter such as this we want to consider what advice the BMA has to offer, and we have also pressed them for a reply.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 9 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Is the Government still committed to the principle of having a Geriatrician at the Hospital?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, before proceeding we are awaiting the BMA's views.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Will the Government press the BMA for a reply? The BMA are very hasty in sending letters when it concerns them and perhaps they could be jogged now that it concerns Government.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

We are pressing them for a reply, Mr Speaker.

Are any Gibraltar Health Authority doctors working at the new clinic at the Watergardens?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH SERVICES AND SPORT

To the best of my knowledge none of the Health Authority's Consultants are working privately from the new clinic.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 10 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, will the Government accept that to the best of my knowledge some are working and will they monitor the situation very carefully.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

We will, Mr Speaker, and if the Hon Member has any evidence we will investigate it.

NO. 11 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON M K FEATHERSTONE

24 1 89

Has Government now had the black dust emanating from GSL analysed and with what result?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND SPORT

Mr Speaker, as I informed the House in November last year, the black dust in question was submitted for analysis in UK but no results have yet been received from the UK Laboratory. Since, as explained in answer to my question No.95 of 1988, a total of eighty samples in eight batches of ten were agreed to be sent for analysis over a period of twelve months, a request for information on the results of the first batch submitted has been sent with our second batch and a reply is eagerly awaited.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 11 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker will the Government press for a reply.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, with a second batch of samples we have asked for an urgent reply to our first batch.

NO. 12 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON LT COL E M BRITTO

24 1 89

Will the Minister for Sport say whether attendance at meetings of the Sports Advisory Body is restricted to its members?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND SPORT

Answered together with Question No.13 of 1989.

Will the Minister for Sport say which were the Sports Associations that she consulted before deciding on the membership of the Sports Advisory Body?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND SPORT

Mr Speaker, attendance at meetings of the Sports Advisory Body will normally be restricted to its members. However, if any Sporting Organisation in Gibraltar wishes to make verbal representations, on any specific matter concerning their sport, a representative of that organisation will be invited to attend. As I have previously said in answer to Question No.94 of 1988, the decision on the setting up of the Sports Advisory Body and its composition was taken by Government after having sought the advice not only of Sports Associations but also of individuals involved in the sporting scene as well as officials of Government's Sports Department. Subsequently Sports Associations were consulted by me in order to seek their views as regards the individuals Government had earmarked to be members of the Body and naturally these Associations are the ones which involve seven of the members appointed.

Gibraltar Football Association
 Gibraltar Hockey Association
 Gibraltar Volleyball Association
 Gibraltar Amateur Athletic Association
 Gibraltar Amateur Basketball Association
 Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association
 Gibraltar Squash Rackets Club

However, I wish to reiterate what I told the Hon Member in the November meeting of the House of Assembly that even though seven members of the Body happen to be members of Sports Associations, their appointments are personal ones and they have so been informed. They have been appointed to advise Government on Sports matters generally and not as representatives of the Sports Associations of which they are members. I wish to stress that Government feels this Body is the way forward to try and improve Sport generally in Gibraltar and with the co-operation of everyone concerned we hope to be able to redress the years of neglect the sporting scene has suffered in Gibraltar.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 12 AND 13 OF 1989

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, has the Minister advised Sporting Associations of the facility for making representations personally?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, once we agree on a date for a meeting and the meeting is held we shall issue a letter to all Sporting Associations informing them of this.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister saying that the Sports Advisory Body has not yet met?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

The Sports Body has not yet met Mr Speaker, because certain individuals and Sporting Associations had not yet replied.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, when the Honourable Minister says that individuals have not replied is she referring to persons appointed to the Board?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

That is correct, Mr Speaker.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister then saying that those persons have been appointed without them first having indicated that they were prepared to accept?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

No Mr Speaker. It took a bit longer because some individuals were away from Gibraltar. The Sports Advisory body has already been constituted and we will be holding a meeting very shortly.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, I am not clear from the Minister's answer if only the seven Associations mentioned and who have representatives in the Body were contacted directly.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

No Mr Speaker, I went even further than that. I said that not only had I contacted the Association but had also consulted certain individuals within the Sporting Scene. I also consulted Government Officials.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, I am asking which Sporting Associations were consulted prior to the decision being made?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I gave a list of the Sporting Associations I had consulted. It is up to the Government consult those Associations it feels are appropriate.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the answer is clear. The Minister has said that she consulted certain Sporting Associations which she has named and subsequent to that she has also approached individuals to become members of the Advisory Board.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, with respect that is contradictory to the previous answer. I asked "whether these were the only Associations" and I was told "no". I now ask which were the others and I am told that it is only these seven. So which is it only the seven or were there more than these seven?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker I said that apart from the Associations that I had consulted, I had also consulted individuals in the sporting scene and also Government officials.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, the answer then is that only these seven Associations were consulted? As Associations?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes, Mr Speaker. But apart from these Associations, individuals and Government officials were also consulted and I am satisfied with the advice that I have received and as Minister for Sport I stand by the decision that I have taken.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, obviously the Minister is satisfied. I accept that she has consulted certain individuals but she consulted seven Associations who agreed with the seven nominees that she intended to appoint.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. The Minister has most certainly not said that. What the Minister has said, as we have all heard, is very specific. She has said "I have consulted seven Associations, I have consulted individuals belonging to other Associations and I have consulted Government officials and I have appointed these gentlemen to the Advisory Body. Next question.

Will Government state what is the intended use of the dump being created at the southern end of Eastern Beach, bearing in mind that whenever there is an Easterly storm, tipped debris and rubbish is swept away, ending up on Eastern Beach and Catalan Bay Beach?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, rubbish is not being dumped at the area adjacent to the southern end of Eastern Beach. As the Honourable Member was told in a letter to him last year, that area is being used to tip debris from Construction Sites. This will eventually result in a substantial amount of land being reclaimed from the area. Government is trying to enclose this reclamation before the beginning of the summer season.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 14 OF 1989

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, I do not think my question has been answered. I asked for the intended use?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I do not think that the Hon Member understands. I gave him in a letter last year, all the details. I told him it was being used to tip debris from construction sites and that once the land had been reclaimed, Government would then decide to use.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. So it is open ended as regards its use?

HON J C PEREZ:

Yes Mr Speaker.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker I have recently visited the site and I can assure Honourable Ministers that there is more than just builders debris being dumped there.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, what the Honourable Member may have seen, is that when the skip arrives, there is a man on site, separating

the load. The builders debris is separated from wood etc. The wood etc is removed from the site and taken to the destructor for disposing off.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, it is obvious to me that if that land is to be reclaimed efficiently there must be some form of break-water to stop the debris being swept away whenever there is a storm.

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker. It was not the Government's intention to reclaim that land but since we needed an area to tip builders debris we thought that we might as well use that debris to try and reclaim the area. There has been more area reclaimed than what has been swept away. So there is still progress. The Public Works Department is looking for ways of enclosing the reclamation so that it stops affecting the beaches in the summer and secondly helping the reclamation by disallowing the heavy seas from entering into the reclamation. The breakwater concept would be used if the Government had definite plans for that area.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, could not the debris be tipped in the Government's reclamation area in the harbour?

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker, as I explained to the Hon Member in my letter, the developers of the reclamation on the western side have asked me not to tip that type of debris in that area because that would disallow the housing project to commence as scheduled. This type of debris seems to affect whether you can start building on it immediately or not. The type of debris being tipped at Eastern Beach needs a settlement period and could not be mixed.

HON K B ANTHONY:

One final question, Mr Speaker, on this topic. Will the debris, etc which has been washed up at Catalan Bay be cleared before the Bathing Season?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I am not sure to what debris the Hon Member is referring?

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, I have seen debris etc at Catalan Bay and I am sure the Hon Member is aware.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, what type of debris? Sand? Stones?

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to get into this type of argument.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, has the Government stopped putting hexagonal concrete blocks in that area to stop erosion?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, one of the reasons why we are continuing with the tipping of construction rubble in that area is because we were advised by the Public Works Department that the road leading to Catalan Bay would need substantial repairs if it was not reinforced through a reclamation programme. So instead of having that debris being pushed into one particular area we are pushing it towards Catalan Bay in order to protect the road. This makes the area more susceptible to erosion than if we had proceeded outwards only. It is certainly something that we are trying to solve through this method, if we fail to do so, we will have to have the boulders, which the Hon Member referred to, being placed in the area to protect the wall and the road.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, has the Minister received any representations from the Catalan Bay Village Council on the matter?

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker.

HON A J CANEPA:

Not even verbal representation.

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, I understand that the Chairman of the Village Council has pointed out the danger. I am not sure who to. Perhaps the Hon Minister could ascertain if it has been to some of his Department's officials.

HON J C PEREZ:

I certainly will, Mr Speaker.

In view of the recent purchase of a barge for the disposal of rubbish at sea, at a cost of £180,000, will Government confirm that sea dumping is part of the long term rubbish disposal plans of the Government?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member well knows that sea dumping is not part of the long term rubbish disposal plans of the Government. As I have explained on innumerable occasions, when we came into office on 24 March we found that the previous administration was disposing of rubbish via the chute at Europa Point every time the Incinerator broke down. The Government first faced this problem during the summer season and made alternative arrangements to dispose of refuse at sea because this method was found not to pollute our beaches. This was found to be the case and it was only at the end of the summer season, when the chute was used once again, that items of refuse began to appear on our beaches. The barge which has been acquired is not exclusively for the disposal of refuse. However a particular type of barge to facilitate the operation has been acquired because it was envisaged that the Public Works Department would have to dispose of refuse at sea whilst the major refurbishment of the incinerator takes place. This is due to commence shortly. The barge is of a type which will enable this to be done in accordance with the International Regulations for the Disposal of Refuse at sea.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 15 OF 1989

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon Minister. Has the organisation Greenpeace been contacted to see if they agree to this type of disposal at sea?

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Would it not be a good idea, Mr Speaker?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, when Greenpeace were in Gibraltar the Government explained its position and that organisation certainly understood the Government's difficult position, when it came into office, and were informed of the efforts the Government was making and they even invited the Chief Minister and myself to lunch on board their ship.

THE HON K B ANTHONY

Will Government state whether or not it will now consider entering into arrangements with the Mancomunidad, over the disposal of Gibraltar waste to Spanish rubbish land-fills?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The position as regards using the Los Barrios tip is as stated in my reply, at the November meeting of the House, in answer to a question on this subject.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 16 OF 1989

HON K B ANTHONY:

I thank the Hon Minister, Mr Speaker, but in view of the healthier relationship with the Mancomunidad and the setting up of a joint venture company, would it not be a possibility to consider setting up a joint venture company with a Spanish company for the disposal of rubbish?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, regardless of the position of the relationship between the Gibraltar Government and the Mancomunidad and the Mayor of La Linea, the position on the tipping of rubbish in Los Barrios has not changed from what it was in November.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Minister telling this House that he is completely satisfied that all our rubbish problems will be solved in the foreseeable future without the use of this land tip?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I am not telling the Hon Member that. I am telling him what the position was last November and the Chief Minister also explained it. I said "that the possibility of using the Los Barrios Tip has been discarded for various reasons as set out in my Press Release from the Hon Member opposite". The Chief Minister said "It required a request, as a personal favour, to be allowed to use the tip and in the discussions I have had with people in the Foreign Office, who have been in touch with the Authorities on the other side, and it would require a political agreement". The Chief Minister further stated "that the policy of the Government, as I will explain in answer to other questions on cooperation with our neighbours, is that we are not prepared to enter into deliberations where there are strings attached". That remains the position of the Government as far as the dumping of refuse is concerned.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister obviously does not understand my question. I did not suggest that it should be dumped in Spain as a personal favour, I am suggesting the setting up of a joint venture company.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member wants to get into the business, I am quite prepared to look at any proposals he might have in the matter. What I am saying, Mr Speaker, is that the Government has looked into the matter and as far as we are concerned the situation has not changed from what it was in November. If the Hon Member, however, feels that he should make proposals, I shall consider them favourably.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon Minister but I am not looking for business in this House.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, does not the Government feel that in return for its proposed initiative on the factory that it could have sought from the pertinent authorities in Spain some reciprocal treatment to the refuse problem? Would that not have been sensible?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I believe that is the subject of a motion the Hon Member has given notice of.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes but it is an acceptable question and the answer may be yes or no.

HON J C PEREZ:

Well, Mr Speaker, the Hon Member will get an answer when he moves his motion.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, if that is the type of openness one is supposed to have at question

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I am certainly not going to give the Hon Member ammunition to use against the Government when he moves his motion.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, it is not ammunition, it is information for the people of Gibraltar to know. Does the Government still think that Gibraltar would be vulnerable by entering into an agreement with the Mancomunidad to dump rubbish in Spain? Would we be exposed, Mr Speaker?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, it is not a question of being exposed or being vulnerable. The position as explained to the Hon Member opposite in November, is that the Government of Gibraltar is not prepared to enter into any political, Government to Mancomunidad, arrangements for the disposal of refuse, which formed part of the discussions taking place under the previous administration as part of the Brussels process, which this Government disassociated Gibraltar from. However as a commercial venture any private enterprise is free to come to the Government with proposals to dispose of refuse and what they do with refuse after we get rid of it, whether they tip it in Los Barrios or they tip it in La Coruna, is totally irrelevant to us. The position of the Government as already shown from the day it took office is its desire to encourage mutually beneficial cooperation, the concept will be explained once again to the Hon Member when the motion comes, but on the question of refuse, the position is that there will not be any political deals because they are not acceptable to this Government.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, two matters. First of all, will you please confirm, for the benefit of the Hon the Minister for Government Services, that over the years there have been many occasions in this House when after a Member of the Opposition has given notice of a motion, a number of questions have been tabled beforehand by Members of the Opposition with the specific intention of obtaining information to be used later on in the course of the debate.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, the Rules are quite clear on this. Most certainly the Opposition are entitled to ask questions which will enhance their position vis-a-vis the future motion provided it does not anticipate any matters which are going to be conducted. On the other hand it is for the Government to decide whether they wish to answer the question or not. And neither the Opposition or the Chairman can force the Government to answer questions and the attitude they take, of course, is their decision and they take the consequences. That is the position.

HON J C PEREZ:

Fine, Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member cares to look through Hansard there were many instances where the Government refused to answer questions.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, there were also many instances where the Government, of which I have been a member of, answered a number of specific questions. I can remember, notably, in the days when my colleague Mr Featherstone, was Minister for Medical Services, when a whole series of questions by Mr Gerald Restano, as an introduction to a motion, and the questions were all answered because they were seeking information and the Government had the information available and felt that it should give it. Mr Speaker, I now have a supplementary for the Hon the Chief Minister. Whilst understanding his attitude towards the Mancomunidad, would he consider making a direct approach to the authorities at Los Barrios, to the Mayor of Los Barrios, with a view to entering into arrangements with them to use the Los Barrios Refuse Tip?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, it is clear to me and to the Government from what we have been able to glean from the situation that there are people on the other side who feel that, and I think it has been reflected in public statements, if Gibraltar was given an opportunity to use the Los Barrios Tip it would be a concession to Gibraltar on which something will be asked in return and we think there is no mileage in pursuing that road.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, will the Chief Minister accept that my concern is that a problem that exists and which the Government has so far been unable to solve is solved and also accept that there is a need for Gibraltar to solve on a short-term to long-term basis, for the future, this problem of the disposal of refuse? That it is not easy for the Government to fund the cost of another incinerator and that therefore when an incinerator breaks down, whilst maintenance is undertaken, we have a problem and that there is a genuine desire on the part of many people in Gibraltar that that problem is resolved. What we are offering are alternatives as to how it can be done.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I am aware that we have to solve this and indeed many, many others, and we do not think that the solution to the problem lies in approaching the Mancomunidad or the Los Barrios Tip, as a Government, and ask for facilities to be provided to the Government of Gibraltar. However, as I have already said, if a private company came to the Government and offered a service of removing the refuse from Gibraltar, what they then do with the refuse, once they have removed it, is something that the

Government is not concerned with. So we are not saying to people 'you cannot take the refuse to the tip at Los Barrios'. What we are saying is that in our political judgement it is not in the best interest of Gibraltar to pursue the line that was being pursued previously, of holding political discussions, where as part of an overall exchange of concessions, we are offered as a concession the Los Barrios Refuse Tip and we have to offer them what they put in the "shopping list". That is the background and this has been discussed in the past. The Hon Member must know it because he was in office when this was discussed. We are not prepared to continue along that road and although we have a problem we also have a responsibility, as a Government, to resolve that problem in the exercise of our judgement as to what we think is best for Gibraltar. That is what we are doing, looking at the situation whereby we can dispose of the refuse by using a barge at a distance from Gibraltar, as answered in Question No. 15 of 1989. We are also looking into other ways of disposing of the rubbish when the incinerator is undergoing maintenance, as my colleague has said, and he is considering various proposals which a number of different parties have submitted. Once a decision, on a permanent solution, is reached we will make an announcement.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, I think there is a misconception in certain quarters, and these I have heard voiced over GBC Radio. Will the Hon Minister for Government Services confirm that since the arrangement that we are discussing would be for limited periods only, in other words, during those times when it breaks down or is undergoing annual maintenance repairs, there is no question of any rundown in the workforce? That people will not lose their jobs, those involved in the disposal of rubbish? Will the Minister confirm that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member opposite prefaced his previous question by saying "That it was clear that Gibraltar could not buy a new Incinerator, that we had to find a permanent solution to the problem and that we should be looking at the Tip at Los Barrios as one positive way of solving the problem permanently, given that we cannot afford an Incinerator". Obviously if we cannot afford an Incinerator it follows axiomatically that we cannot afford to keep the twelve persons working on a non-existent Incinerator

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Chief Minister will give way. We cannot afford a second Incinerator, an additional one, so that we have two and when one breaks down we have another that can be used. That was the thrust of my previous question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, Mr Speaker, I think the record will show that the word "second" did not appear and I can tell the Hon Member that certainly his colleague, Mr Anthony, has said in an interview that we could not afford the first Incinerator never mind the second one.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Government cannot afford to set up a new Incinerator at a cost of £5m, £6m or £7m to replace the present one. One accepts that. It is essential to make the point that we are not talking of the labour force being run down as is the impression that is given by Members opposite or their supporters.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member is asking me a question of information, then he is asking me to say that the impression that people have of what he has said is incorrect. I cannot answer, as a Government, the impression that people may have of what he has said. All I can say is that what he has just said now would tend to support that impression. Because if he is saying that it could well be that the Government cannot afford even one Incinerator, which he has just finished saying, it follows logically that it cannot afford to keep people employed on a non-existent Incinerator. Now we are looking at the possibility of replacing the existing Incinerator, at the end of its useful life, with other facilities which will continue to be in Gibraltar. We are not yet in a position to announce whether that is going to happen or not, because the decision has not yet been taken. We have a number of proposals from private companies for a number of different methods of disposal and we are looking at all of them.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Are the streets now being flushed regularly?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, most streets are flushed regularly as programmed especially during the dry season. However, there are many areas where flushing cannot be done very frequently because of the number of parked vehicles and other obstructions. These areas are included in a separate cleaning programme. Occasional general clean-ups, including flushing is carried out when these areas are cleared, with the co-operation of motorists, the Police and the general public, of parked cars etc.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 17 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Is the Hon Member aware, Mr Speaker, that last December was the driest for 140 years? And this could be called part of the dry season and Main street was not flushed once during this period.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware that we had downpours in January?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Member not agree that the streets of Gibraltar are now dirtier than they have ever been.

HON J C PEREZ:

No, Mr Speaker. The level of cleanliness in Gibraltar has improved dramatically since the 24th March. That does not mean that the Government is satisfied with the level of cleanliness as it is at the moment but it is certainly much better than what it was. Other steps will be taken during the year to further improve the cleanliness of the whole of the city.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, if the Government think that the streets are cleaner now, they are running under a misconception.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Will Government circulate to the Opposition, the Report on the future electrical demands for Gibraltar for the remainder of this century, that was commissioned by the previous Administration?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, as I promised during the Budget Session, a copy will be made available to the Opposition on a confidential basis. This has not been done before because there were insufficient copies available. Extra copies of the Report have recently been received.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Why are so many street lights not working and for such a long time?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, some delays are being experienced in the replacement of defective bulbs etc in areas where there is a need to stop the flow of traffic or remove parked vehicles to allow the work to proceed. The Electricity Department has to coordinate the works with the Police and take their turn within the priorities set out by the Traffic Section.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION 19 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware that in Landport Tunnel, which is not liable to any traffic considerations, one of the fluorescent lights, which are easily replaceable, has been out of action for at least 4 months?

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker, I am afraid that I do not walk past that way and am therefore not aware of it. However, if the Hon Member gives me details I will see why that has been so. I am aware, for example, that we had one at City Mill Lane, which is pedestrianised, out of order for a long time and this was as a result of a major fault in the area, which has subsequently been repaired. Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member has other details he could perhaps let me have them or he should contact the Department directly.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Minister also aware that 20% of the lanterns in Main Street, three of them within a hundred yards of this House, are inoperative?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I do not think that is quite true because I do pass through Main Street, I certainly do not have time to count them, but I will contact the Department and have them check the lanterns.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Department could consider changing defective lamps during dark hours instead of by day when the traffic flow is minimised?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, sometimes this is done but obviously it is more expensive.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, could the men be given time off in lieu?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Member honestly think that this will be acceptable to the men?

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Will Government state when the planned move of the Main Post Office will take place?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, the Government has not yet taken a decision to move the Main Post Office from its present location.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 20 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, does the Government not agree that such a move would be a disaster?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, if that is the view of the Hon Member we shall take it into account when we take a final decision.

HON G MASCARENHAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Government consider leaving at least a couple of counters at the present site, if they do move it?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, all aspects are under consideration. Obviously having a Post Office in the centre of town, in view of the high number of tourists who use it is being weighed up. When we take a final decision we will come to this House and they will have their say if they disagree with the move.

HON A J CANEPA:

You will come to the House or will we hear about it through the media?

HON J C PEREZ:

Whatever comes first, Mr Speaker, we are an open Government we have to announce our decision and then take them.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Will Government state whether or not they intend to go ahead with the ban on private motor vehicles using the Upper Rock (with the exception of taxis or tour operators) from Mondays to Fridays, as reported in the local Press on Friday 9th December 1988?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, as I informed the Hon Member recently in reply to a letter I received from him, this is a matter which is presently under consideration. No final decision has as yet been taken.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION 21 OF 1989

HON K B ANTHONY:

Has the Hon Minister considered that decongesting the Upper Rock will only bring greater congestion in the City Area?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, that is an argument which the Hon Member used in his letter and I did tell him that all the points would be taken on board, in considering the matter.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the Government in this case prepared to give an undertaking that they will not take a decision, which will ban or restrict movement of Gibraltarians in the Upper Rock, unless there is first a public debate in this House? I think this is a matter of principle, of sentiment to Gibraltarians.

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker, the Government is not prepared to give that commitment.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, in view of the fact that the reasons for this is to prevent congestion in the Upper Rock, has the Hon Minister considered putting our famous Traffic Wardens there to clamp cars or have them towed-away?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, the contract that the Commissioner of Police has with the Gibraltar Security Services Limited is something for which I am not answerable in this House. It would

be a matter for the Commissioner to look into, if he thinks it would solve the problem. My understanding is that that would not solve the problem.

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, they have considered it then, apparently.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, I said that my understanding of the matter is that that would not solve the problem. I think that it is a matter for the police to decide.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Minister, when considering the matter take into account that there are Gibraltarian families living in the Upper Rock and that it is necessary for their relatives and friends to visit them. No system of permits will really meet the situation

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, all this is being taken into account. What I can say is that if we did take a decision to do so, those local cars wanting to go to the Upper Rock will have very little problem in acquiring a special permit to do so.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Mr Speaker, does the Government wish to return to the bad old days of the MOD, when Gibraltarians were prohibited from visiting the Upper Rock?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, that is not the situation that the Government has under consideration at the moment.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister consider that in a situation of a family living in the Upper Rock wishing to have a party for the relatives and friends, that these persons wishing to go to the Upper Rock would have to approach some authority, the Police, or Gibraltar Security Services Limited do obtain a permit for an Ad-Hoc visit? Is that satisfactory?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, that is the same as anybody having a party in Main Street or Irish Town nowadays.

MR SPEAKER:

Order, order. Perhaps the Opposition might wish to ask a question as to whether, when this matter is being considered, the interests of people living in the Upper Rock will be taken into account? I do not think we should go into the specifics of how they will be allowed. Next question.

Can Government state how much revenue has been raised through car clamping and towing away during this same period, and how do these figures of cars clamped or towed away compare with previous equivalent period of time, when this responsibility lay with the Gibraltar Police Force?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, the Government does not receive any revenue for clamping and towing away since the Gibraltar Security Services Limited undertook this service. During the equivalent period when this responsibility was undertaken by the Police a total of £2,270 was raised.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 22 OF 1989

HON K B ANTHONY:

Mr Speaker, Government may not be receiving money now but it is a joint venture company therefore presumably Government will be receiving revenue.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, Government will be receiving money from all its interests in all its companies, if they show a profit at the end of a particular year, yes.

HON K B ANTHONY:

In April, presumably, the end of the Financial Year, Mr Speaker?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, it will be at the end of each Company's Financial Year.

What further changes does Government intend to make in the prices of tickets and values of prizes of the Gibraltar Government Lottery?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Speaker, the Government does not intend to make any further changes to the Gibraltar Government Lottery.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION 23 OF 1989

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, does this mean that the Government is satisfied with the results obtained so far, in the first three weeks of 1989, in the Lottery?

HON J C PEREZ:

Yes Mr Speaker, the Government is satisfied with the results so far.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, can the Minister disclose what proportion of unsold tickets have been returned?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member had given me notice I would have brought him the figures but since he has not I do not have them with me. What I can say, Mr Speaker, from memory that the level of tickets being returned to the Government is not far more than the level of tickets in any January previously.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Minister is correct, and I appreciate that he has not been given notice, it is contrary to the information that I have and which is that a larger proportion of tickets is being returned and maybe he would like to confirm that the conditions of the return of tickets has now been changed. Prior to the end of the year, only a percentage of tickets were allowed to be returned, whereas now all unsold tickets can be returned.

HON J C PEREZ:

Yes, Mr Speaker, now all unsold tickets may be returned but I disagree with the Hon Member that an excessive amount of unsold tickets is being returned. Mr Speaker, it is

not unnatural that in January and February the sale of lottery tickets falls. The new price and prizes structure has not had an unfavourable impact on the sale of tickets. At least that is my information although I do not have the exact details with me. I will however make them available to the Hon Member if he so wishes.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm that the conditions of the return of unsold tickets were changed as a result of representations by the Lottery Agents?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, a meeting was held with all the Agents and they all eventually agreed to the new structure and to the new system in force today. This was done by agreement with all the Lottery Agents.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, I notice that the Minister used the word eventually, will the Minister confirm that the Lottery Committee initially advised against the changes and that the Lottery Agents were also against the change.

HON J C PEREZ:

No Mr Speaker, the Lottery Committee recommended that the changes should be introduced in stages but were not against the Government's decision of introducing the changes in one go. The Agents had reservations. I met all the Agents and after the meeting it was agreed that it was in their best interest, in the Government's best interest, in the Sub-Agents and in the best interests of everybody who participates in the Lottery to take the steps now.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, is this still the opinion of the Minister, now or was this the opinion after the meeting with the Agents.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, it is not a question of opinion, I am telling him the sequence of events that led to the changes in the Lottery. Mr Speaker as a result of my meeting with the Agents some benefit has been derived by the Sub-Agents, because the Government pressed that the Agents should be more amenable in relaxing the amount of money that they allowed to the Sub-Agents in return for the commitment on the return of Lottery tickets. As well as the collection of the prized tickets on the same day. Other things were also worked out and they also agreed that it was in the

best interest of all persons concerned that the price and prize structures should be changed.

HON LT COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, one final point. Will the Minister accept that the points I have been making are a genuine reflection of opinions and feedbacks that I have had from the buyers of lottery tickets as well as from some sellers. Is he aware that there is a general feeling that the price is high and that a number of people have had to cut down on their "fijos". Whilst people could win £20,000 for £2.50 they can now win £25,000 for £2.50 and there is therefore a tendency to buy half a ticket instead of a full ticket?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, that is the Hon Member's opinion but it is not reflected in the figures. There are a certain amount of people that have released what is termed as "fijos". But there are also more people buying full tickets. It is certainly better for the Agents to sell a full ticket than to have to keep a tenth of a ticket for one person and another tenth for another buyer with all the complications that brings. However, that was not the intention of the change of price structure. We felt that the price and prize structures needed to reflect today's economic circumstances and a lot of persons were complaining that £20,000 was no longer a realistic prize.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Minister confirm whether in the last few draws the Government has won most of the first prizes?

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, there was a particular draw where the Government won 9/10th of a ticket.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Minister not agree that was probably an elequent example of someone having retained a 1/10th share and returned 9/10ths. And that for the good image of the Gibraltar Government Lottery, and it has always had a very good image, that that is undesirable. That we do not wish to see the Government winning the first prize too often?

MR SPEAKER:

That is a matter of luck.

HON J C PEREZ:

Mr Speaker, it is desirable that all tickets should be sold and someone win the first prize but it is not unheard of for the Government to win a first prize. Mr Speaker even when the lottery was prized at £20,000 the Government on more than one occasion during any particular year has won the first prize. The fact that 9/10ths of a ticket was returned only signifies that one particular person held 1/10th of a ticket. That does not mean that that particular person always bought previously 2/10ths of a ticket. The situation cannot be looked at depending on the reactions of individuals, it must be looked at as a whole. Then a proper assessment can be made. The Hon Member will be given all the pertinent figures.

THE HON P C MONTEGRIFFO

Can Government confirm that it is now in a position to proceed with the introduction of a full regulatory system for the provision of financial services from Gibraltar?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

No Sir. We would only be able to proceed with the introduction of a full regulatory system when legislation is enacted.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 24 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker in answer to a similar question in November, the Government replied that it would hope to be in a position to enact this legislation in late January or early February. Does the Minister not consider that this is now vitally urgent and that any further delay is seriously jeopardising Gibraltar's reputation and intergrity as a Financial Centre?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I have already stated in November, 1988 that we expected it to be in place by January or February. We are now in January, and February is still to come and by that time we hope to be in a position to publish the Bill.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

We can therefore look forward to a February meeting with the Bill before the House containing the Government's proposals? Can I have that undertaking?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I cannot give such an undertaking. We are working towards that programme.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, can I also have an indication from the Minister of whether in putting together the system, is it envisaged to increase the manpower and resources available for supervision, so that more effective supervision can be undertaken in the future.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I cannot give him that undertaking. These are things that are being looked at by Government and a decision will be taken in due course. It depends on what supervisory role the Government intends to play.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, as far as I am aware there has not been a great deal of consultation with the industry. Is there going to be full consultation with all interested parties in the Financial Services Industry before a Bill is brought to this House?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, we are working towards a Bill being ready in February, it is premature to say that we will be able to publish by then.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Minister not consider, because we are all pulling in the same direction, that a further delay in getting this legislation in place is really jeopardising our position?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, there is no delay on the part of the Government, because the political will does not exist. The position is that as soon as we came into Government we looked at the situation as it existed, we looked at the amendment to the Companies Ordinance introduced as a matter of urgency in November 1987 by the previous Government, and which by April 1988 had still not been implemented, and we have given instructions that with the resources that are available to us, and with the views that have been put to us by people who are operating in the Financial Services Sector in Gibraltar, we should provide something which avoids some of the criticism that have been made about the Financial Services Act in UK. It should however be of a sufficiently high standard to ensure that we are able to introduce a licensing system which will reassure those who want to do business from Gibraltar that we are well equipped to keep out the undesirables, to the extent that it is possible to keep them out. Which is never 100%. Therefore there is nothing that we can say or do, at this stage, that will accelerate the process. The process is going as fast as we can make it go. It is as simple as that.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I take note of what the Chief Minister has said. But surely it is a question that you cannot get more out of the same resources, if those same resources are still doing the job they were previously doing. Unless

in the Government's view there was inefficiency before in the way that these resources were being used.....

MR SPEAKER:

Order. We are talking at cross purposes. The resources that the Chief Minister has referred to are not the resources to implement the existing system. The resources referred to are to prepare the new legislation.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

I accept that absolutely, Sir. The question I wish to ask is, does the Government not consider that because of the vital importance of this issue, that urgent resources, expert urgent resources should be put in, either to cope with the work of these people, who are presently doing it, to make sure that that is not delayed or to make sure that the legislation and all the necessary Regulations are completed? We have had Law Draftsmen brought in for certain specific matters. Are additional resources not required to put this together?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, Mr Speaker, the previous question which I have just answered, was about bringing in expert resources to police the situation after the new law was brought in. That is the question he asked and that is the question that I have answered. If he is now asking "Do we consider that by bringing in somebody from outside we are going to have the law drafted before February, which is 3 weeks away, then the answer is no.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, fair enough, the only thing is that I am acting on the Minister's indication that by February there will be something and I am keen to ensure that there will not simply be a paper which will not be enacted until six months time.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member has been told now, and in November, that the timetable was that the Draft Legislation would be ready, the first Draft, would be ready by February this year. He has now been told by my colleague that the target that we announced in November has not changed. We are still working to the same target, at the same speed, there has been no slippage and we are not behind time. Spending money in bringing lawyers from outside is not going to make us get there any faster, it is just going to get us there more expensively and we are not prepared to do it.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON P C MONTEGRIFFO

Can Government confirm when the Gibraltar Economic Development Council is to be established and will the Government undertake to keep the public fully informed on the deliberations and proposals made?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, it is Government's intention to proceed with the setting up of the Economic Development Council as soon as the necessary machinery to service it has been set up.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 25 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is there an indication when that machinery will be set up?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, the answer is that this will have to wait its turn in the order of priorities which the Government has drawn up.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, the Council was going to be one of the fundamental forums for establishing the Government's economic policy and we are going to be halfway through the Government's term of office with the Council not having met once. Is that desirable bearing in mind the importance the Government gave to the setting up of this Council?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, as the Hon Member is aware it is not the intention of the Economic Council to formulate economic policy. The Government has its own economic policies and this was clearly stated in our manifesto. The Economic Council is there to play a role of monitoring or it will be there in due course, as soon as we are able to establish it.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, as far as the second part of my question is concerned bearing in mind the advisory nature of the body and the fact that it will not take concrete decisions, will the Government keep the public informed? Will it be an open type of forum where various different groups of people will be allowed to participate and where the community, as a whole, will be involved in their deliberations?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I think that the Hon Member has got the wrong end of the stick. The Economic Council will be there to monitor Government's economic policies and anything that is brought up by its representatives. It does not mean that everything discussed in the Council is going to be the subject of public debate. The people have elected the Government of Gibraltar on the economic policies it put forward in its manifesto and the Council will be there, as a forum, where the Government's economic policies will be monitored.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the Council then going to be a form of watchdog over the Government's policies? Is that what the Hon Minister is saying?

HON M A FEETHAM:

No, Mr Speaker, let me inform the Hon Member, who is being a bit of a cynic, that until such time as the Council is set up we are having regular meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and the Trade Unions where the policies that we intend to introduce are explained. Up to now, as the Hon Member is aware, we have been receiving support from both these organisations to the Government's proposals.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, bearing in mind that matters such as the City Plan are made public and the general thrust of Gibraltar's development is also made public, does the Government not consider it desirable that there should be some form of public participation within the Council so that regular reports are given to the public and also a chance for the public to air their views or proposals, subject of course to confidentiality.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, the answer to that is no.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, that is part of the open Government that was promised?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, it is not part of the open Government. It is part of the difficulty we have in explaining things to the Member opposite who clearly does not have a clue of what he is talking about half the time. The Economic Council that the Government included in its manifesto when it fought the Election, which the Hon Member does not believe in anyway, I do not see why he is so enthusiastic to see it happening when he was against it, because he did not vote for us

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I have never said that I am against it.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, how does the Hon Chief Minister know?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Point taken, Mr Speaker, we don't know. The Council, Mr Speaker, is a sounding board for the policies of the Government. That sounding board today is working on an ad hoc basis in anticipation of more formal machinery being introduced. However, it would be pointless to do the exercise of introducing the machinery if we are unable to provide the people who would be sitting in that Council with the necessary support that the Council would require to do its work. That necessary support is dependent on the degree which we can produce better detailed information than what is available to the Government at the moment and which is the same information, basically, that was available to the previous Government before the 25th March. The Government has to go through an exercise of updating and investing in computerisation on a big scale, which the Opposition will see reflected in this year's Budget, in order to be able to collect data sufficiently quickly to be processed and it is the infrastructural support for economic planning that is missing still and will take more time than we thought it would take because the state of the system is worse than what we thought it was when we were outside Government. At the time we were looking at the situation from the Opposition side of the House, Mr Speaker, Hon Members will recall that when I spoke during last year's Budget, I said that many times, when I was in Opposition I felt that the AACR administration was unwilling to give me information that I was seeking and it is quite obvious to me now that the previous administration was unable to give me the information that I was seeking. Part of the problem is that we have manual collection and manual compilation of information which is very time consuming and quite often by the time you get this answer to the question that you are asking the information is no longer of any use because of the time taken in producing it. Those are the difficulties. Now, given the many other areas that we have to cover, like the Training and Employment Board which we are committed to implementing and which we are still not in a position to start, the situation is that we want to go ahead with the Economic Council, we are committed to it and we want to do it as quickly as we can. Once we are ready we will announce it.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I am always glad when I receive an attack of this nature from the Chief Minister, when he highlights my inability to understand and which probably means that I am hitting the right mark and he has to resort to that. Mr Speaker, if the

Council is a sounding board why then are the Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce privileged parties to expressing a view? Is the public not the best sounding board? Have the public no right to be told this is the general direction in which we are going? Why not invite discussion on the development of sites, seek the views of the public on the development, for example, of Jumper's Building, are the people of Gibraltar not entitled to that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, Mr Speaker, I am afraid the Hon Member, again, shows he does not have a clue about how society functions.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Your society.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, Mr Speaker, how society has always functioned. XXX XXX left primary school, which is not so long ago. There are representative bodies which the Government of Gibraltar since time immemorial has consulted on issues. When the AACR was in power, they did not have an opinion poll or a referendum, they used to call in the "affected parties" and if Government felt that there were matters of interest to employers and employees, then the people who are consulted, logically, were the representatives of employers and employees. Now in a situation where the Chamber of Commerce is a very high proportion of the business community and the coverage of the Trade Union Movement is a very high proportion of the workforce we therefore have a great ability to consult and seek the views of those affected by the decision making than would be normal in any of the western democracy. Mr Speaker, the Hon Member's concept of some Roman forum, with people voting by a show of hands in the middle of the Piazza on Government policy can only be designed to make sure that we spend the whole of the four years doing as little as they did in the last sixteen and we certainly do not intend to go down that road.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, is the fact that the original question has been answered by the Hon the Minister for Trade and Industry mean that he is going to chair the Council? Or is it intended that the Chief Minister, who is his overall responsibility for the management of the economy, will chair the Council?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I will be chairing the Economic Council.

THE HON LT-COL E M BRITTO

Will the Minister for Housing state the projected starting dates of construction of the Westside One and Westside Two projects?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, responsibility for the approval of Developments and Construction lies with my Department and I shall therefore reply to the Question and indeed the next one.

The projected starting dates are as follows:-

<u>WESTSIDE 1</u>	<u>COMMENCEMENT</u>	<u>COMPLETION</u>
Phase 1	April 1989	September 1990
Phase 2	January 1990	July 1991
Phase 3	January 1991	July 1992

<u>WESTSIDE II</u>	<u>COMMENCEMENT</u>	<u>COMPLETION</u>
Phase 1	July 1989	December 1990
Phase 2	July 1990	December 1991
Phase 3	July 1991	December 1992
Phase 4	July 1992	December 1993

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 26 OF 1989

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, may I crave your indulgence for two seconds to look at the dates?

MR SPEAKER:

There is approximately eighteen months between the start and finish of each Phase.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, what strikes me is the six months difference in Phase 2 between completion and starting of the various phases. Will the Minister explain that?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, these projected dates for completion and commencement have been provided to us by the developers. They are responsible for the development.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON LT-COL E M BRITTO

Will the Minister for Housing say what is expected to be the price relationship between similar units in the Westside I and Westside II Housing projects?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, there is very little difference in price relation involved between the Westside I and Westside II Developments.

The type of construction and level of finishes are the same.

The Westside II Development works out at a slightly cheaper rate per square metre.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 27 OF 1989

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, is that as far as the Minister is prepared to go "slightly cheaper rate"?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, we could be talking about £2 per square metre cheaper.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, considering that a proportion of the Government's low cost housing is intended to be in that area, does the term 'low cost housing' still come into play?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, quite frankly, I don't know what this question has to do with the original question. The two schemes have a different unit mix and are aimed at slightly different markets.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, let me re-phrase the question. Is it still intended to provide low cost housing in Westside II?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, that question has already been answered in a previous meeting by my Hon colleague and the answer is yes.

MR SPEAKER:

What you are being told is that the difference in price between Westside I and Westside II does not take it out of the low cost housing bracket. Next question.

THE HON P C MONTEGRIFFO

Can Government give a breakdown of all joint venture companies in which Government has acquired an interest during the period 25th March, 1988, up to 31st December, 1988, giving details of each of the respective shareholdings and directorships?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, the number of joint venture companies where Government has an interest are as stated in the answers given in November, 1988.

There have been no other joint ventures during the period in question.

The directorships and shareholdings of companies, is information which the public has access to and the rules governing this are referred to in Section 17 of the Standing Orders of the House.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 28 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr. Speaker, the public may technically have access to it if they bother to go and search....

MR SPEAKER:

No, with respect, Standing Orders does say that the Government is not here to answer questions on information which is easily accessible to the public and if you wish to obtain details then all you have to do is go to the Register of Companies to get your information.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, is the answer given by the Minister also inclusive of joint ventures that GSL has entered into or is the answer restricted to Government interests and not GSL interests?

HON M A FEETHAM:

The question refers to Government and I am answering as far as Government interests are concerned.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, does the Hon Minister not think, for the sake of openness, that perhaps he could also give us a list, in addition to those which might have been entered into when the last question was put in the House in November, on what GSL has entered into as a joint venture?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I can only answer what I have been asked and I am limiting myself to that. I don't answer here for GSL, Mr Speaker.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, for the sake of openness, is the Government then not prepared to say whether GSL has entered into more joint ventures since the last question was put? Is that not something that the Government is prepared to provide to the Opposition?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The position is that GSL may invest in any company as, I think, it did under the previous Government invest in Bond Instrumentation Ltd and the matter never came to the House. If the Government itself takes a shareholding in a company, then the Government will provide information to the Opposition. However, if any company in which the Government itself has a shareholding then invests in something else, then it is a matter for that particular company to decide and its Board of Directors that it is a sound investment or whatever. In the case of GSL, if the Government is not providing the money, it has no responsibility for those investments.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I think this is alarming. My question said 'will the Government give a breakdown of all joint ventures in which it has acquired an interest?' If we are going to be so technical and get into legal niceties, I expect the Government if it is 100% owner of GSL to give this House information concerning what joint ventures GSL has gone into.

MR SPEAKER:

No, with respect, I think we have had, and I think the Hon Leader of the Opposition will verify this, we have had this question many times. Government is not answerable for the day-to-day management and investments of a private company in which they have a share and may I go a bit further, most certainly the accounts of GSL are tabled every year and that will give the Opposition an opportunity to question anything they wish on the accounts. However, the Government, and although it may surprise new Members, is not answerable for the activities of a private limited company in which they are shareholders.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, the Rules may be that, one way or the other, but the Government has politically accepted responsibility for GSL and fought an Election saying "We accept political responsibility for GSL and we have a Minister for GSL". It is not really a private company, in any sense of the word, it is a public company that is 100% owned and I think the spirit of my question surely includes those interests that GSL has. What are we talking about here? We are talking about debating something that is technical or we are talking about.....

MR SPEAKER:

We are not debating, that is the problem we are facing, you are asking questions. I have been exceptionally liberal but one has to draw the line somewhere.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Does the Government accept it has political responsibility for GSL and that therefore it should come to this House to tell the people what ventures GSL has got into?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government in the Election, Mr Speaker, accepted the political responsibility for curing the mess that GSL was in and which had been created by the AACR. It accepted the political responsibility for stopping the redundancies in GSL. It accepted the political responsibility for turning the company round, from losing money to breaking even. It accepted the political responsibility for getting rid of A & P Appledore.....

HON A J CANEPA:

There is no need for electioneering, Mr Speaker.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, Mr Speaker, I am answering the question. The Hon Member, Mr Speaker, asked me to confirm whether the Government accepts political responsibility for GSL and therefore I am telling him all the things for which we accept responsibility and when I finish that, I will tell him the things for which we do not. The political responsibility we accept is for getting rid of A & P Appledore that were being paid by the previous Government £350,000 a year. We accept political responsibility for having got rid of all the expatriate managers. However, what we do not accept is that we have now got to provide information, now that it is no longer going to be depending on public subsidies, when the previous AACR administration had refused to provide such information

even when they were coming to the House for money. In December, 1987, barely a year ago, the House was asked to give £2m to GSL and they refused to say how it was going to be spent or what it was going to be for. As far as we are concerned, in 1989, GSL operates as a commercial entity at arms length from the Government and we accept the responsibility to make sure that the investment that has gone into GSL in the past is now made to bear fruit. We are certainly not prepared to go beyond that, which is more than has ever been done before.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, we are all impressed by the Chief Minister's digression and rhetoric but, I think, if I may, coming back to the thrust of the question and supplementaries arising therefrom, which haven't, in any way been answered, and with respect, it was not surprise that we were showing earlier when you said that it was established procedure not to talk about the day-to-day management of GSL. What we are talking about in the question is the basic principle of the interests that Government has acquired in joint venture companies and the principle that my colleague.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, with respect.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The question is, Mr Speaker, that if GSL is 100% owned by Government, companies entered into by GSL represent an interest acquired by the Government and we are asking the question: "Can we have a breakdown of joint venture companies in which Government has acquired an interest?"

MR SPEAKER:

With respect to you. I have given an answer to that. They are not, under Standing Orders, and if you wish me to quote it I will do so, they are not responsible to answer for the day-to-day management and commercial decisions taken by a company to which they are shareholders. It is under Standing Orders and that is sacred.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I accept that that is sacred but that is not what I am asking.

HON A J CANEPA:

Maybe, Mr Speaker, Standing Orders require to be restructured and perhaps a joint venture company of the Government and the Opposition should be created to look into the Standing Orders which date from 1951.

HON J E PILCHER:

There is one already, Mr Speaker.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, can I ask on what basis, other than the technical matter of Standing Orders, is the reason why the Government is reluctant to give information openly to the people and to this House as to all the interests that Government has either through a fully-owned GSL company or otherwise? Why can we not have all the information?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member has asked us to give him a breakdown of all the joint venture companies and we have given him a breakdown, we gave it to him in November and we have said to him that there has not been any change since we gave the answer in November in any new company being set up by the Government or in which the Government has acquired an interest which is the question that he has asked. We have also told him, as he should know, that the directors of those companies are public knowledge and that he can obtain that. And we have told him, thirdly, that any company in which we have an interest which subsequently invests in any other company is not something on which we are prepared to be held responsible because constitutionally we do not have that responsibility and no Government has ever had it. We have also told him that, in fact, GSL already had, prior to our coming into Government, shareholdings in other companies which were never discussed in the House, brought to the House, explained to the House or questions answered in the House. All that we are doing is; we are giving him more information than has ever been given before by any previous Government to any previous Opposition. It may be insufficient to satisfy him. I can tell him that every previous Opposition in the last sixteen years had to be satisfied with a lot less and that is as far as we are prepared to go.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Is it then the Chief Minister's contention that the Government does not have an interest in a joint venture company acquired by GSL?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

My contention, Mr Speaker, is quite simply that the Government will give the Opposition, as requested in Question No.28, the information that they have asked for which is the joint ventures in which the Government itself invests. But it will not give the Opposition information on what its company in which we have an investment subsequently invests in because there is no limit to how far that could go and those are

commercial decisions which those companies take. And if any company, in the course of its business, decides to buy a shareholding in a supplier, well then that company takes that commercial decision and as far as we are concerned what we look at at the end of the day is the performance of the company in which we have an investment, not every investment that that company itself makes. That is nothing new because that is how it has been until now in respect of GSL which was and continues to be 100% owned by the Government. If the Government previously, under the AACR, argued that it did not have to give any explanation for its 100% owned company investing in another company, why should this administration have to give an explanation for companies in which it may well have a minority interest? For example, we have got a situation where we have got 37% in the Land Reclamation Company and the Opposition may feel that we then have to tell the Land Reclamation Company that every time they invest money in something they have to come and clear it with the House of Assembly because of our 37% holding. Well, we are not going to do it.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, all I want to say is that it seems.....

MR SPEAKER:

With respect, I think we have gone far enough. I would most certainly allow you to ask any question you wish to ask but seeking information.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Does the Government not accept that the policy that they have just enunciated is a form of camouflaging, nothing else, the interests the Government has?

MR SPEAKER:

No, next question, please.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I would like to answer it.

MR SPEAKER:

No, you are not going to answer it because I have not allowed it. Next question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, I wouldn't like him to get away with having said that we are camouflaging anything because we haven't got anything to camouflage.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON A J CANEPA

Will the Minister for Trade and Industry make a statement about the proposed development of the former caravan parking site at Catalan Bay?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, the site of the former Caravan Parking at Catalan Bay which was awarded, as the Member opposite knows, by his administration, has been re-possessed by Government due to the failure on the part of the developer to sign the Licence Agreement and pay the £250,000 premium.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 29 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

I am grateful for that information, Mr Speaker, which was not available to me. Has the Government decided what it is now going to do with that site now that they have repossessed?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, we have a number of proposals which the Government are at present considering and will make a decision in due course.

HON A J CANEPA:

Is the Government ruling out the possibility of considering the other tenders that were received at the time or inviting retendering on a closed basis?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, the Government has its own policies on maximising land and we will make a decision in due course but I can assure Members opposite that we have had quite a lot of proposals submitted from a very wide cross-section of the community, at least people who are constantly involved in development.

HON A J CANEPA:

Has the Government or the Development and Planning Commission taken a decision about the use to which the site will be put? Is it intended to have any departure from the previously indicated use?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, we have our own policies on economic development and whatever decision is taken will reflect that policy.

HON A J CANEPA:

Does that mean, for instance, that that is going to be reflected in the new City Plan to be exhibited? Is there any departure from what will be shown there about this site being of a tourist orientated nature? Is there any indication in the City Plan that it is going to be any different?

HON M A FEETHAM:

The City Plan will reflect Government's own input.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, Catalan Bay, a special place that has special characteristics, will the Government consult the residents and the leaders of Catalan Bay when putting together what is proposed for that site? Because it is going to hang over their village and I think it would be relevant and useful if the Catalan Bay residents were also brought into the process of consultation, at least talked to.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I have no qualms about any representations that may be made in this respect.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Will the Government undertake to approach them so that they can be informed about what the Government's proposals are?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, the residents in Catalan Bay have been very much aware that the caravan site was due for development, which as I have already explained, the previous administration awarded for a particular development. Since then we have repossessed the site because the developer had not met the requirements and we have not had any representations during the ten months we have been in office regarding the future development of the site from the Catalan Bay residents.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

I appreciate that, Sir, but I am looking for something a little more positive.

MR SPEAKER:

I think the answer that has been given to you is that no, they are not prepared to approach the Council, that Catalan Bay residents are aware what is happening and they have a right to approach Government. Next question.

THE HON A J CANEPA

Will the Minister for Trade and Industry give details of the "state of play" of the proposed hotel to be built on the piece of waste ground adjacent to St Martin's School?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, the proposed development on the site on the waste ground adjacent to St Martin's School allocated by the previous administration is being reviewed in discussion with the developers to maximise benefit in connection with a wider Government policy for the development of land areas in the North district.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 30 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

Does that mean, Mr Speaker, that in fact the Government does not intend to allow the project to go ahead?

HON M A FEETHAM:

It does not mean that. What it does mean is what I have said, that we are discussing the future use of that land with the developer to see whether we can come to some agreement based on our own thinking for the area, which needs to take into account a number of things that we wish to do, particularly in the surrounding areas.

HON A J CANEPA:

Is the Minister then not ruling out the possibility of a small hotel there on that site in addition to whatever else the Government may want to have on that site?

HON M A FEETHAM:

We have not ruled out that possibility but it does not necessarily follow by this answer that it may happen.

HON A J CANEPA:

When he refers to other Government ideas about the use of that site, does that include the possibility of re-provisioning St Bernadette's Occupational Therapy Centre adjacent to St Martin's School?

HON M A FEETHAM:

That and other matters, yes, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 31 OF 1989

RAL

THE HON A J CANEPA

In a way, Mr Speaker, this question has been answered by the Hon Mr Juan Carlos Perez earlier on.

What plans does the Government have for the Main Street Post Office building once the Post Office is moved elsewhere?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, Government has not taken a final decision with regards to the future use of the Post Office building, should the Post Office ever be moved elsewhere.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 31 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

When the Government considers the matter, will it take into account the special historical character of the facade of this building, in particular the fact that a considerable sum of money was spent, I think, on improving the facade and that, therefore, if any alternative use is to be made to that of a Post Office, that the use should be in character and that a real effort should be made to preserve the facade?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Yes, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON A J CANEPA

When does the Government propose to draw up and exhibit a new City Plan?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, all amendments to the Structure Plan Drawings and Written Statement have been completed. Once the Development and Planning Commission has given its final approval we shall go ahead with the exhibition for a period of three weeks, as required under the Town Planning Ordinance.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 32 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

Is the Minister aware that there have been reports last weekend over GBC to the effect that the City Plan would be exhibited in February and can he confirm whether that is accurate?

HON M A FEETHAM:

We are programming on that actually happening during February or March.

HON A J CANEPA:

Was the Government responsible for giving that information to GBC?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Not as far as I am aware, no.

HON A J CANEPA:

So the Minister will confirm that neither he nor his Department nor the Press Office imparted that information to GBC? I ask that question, Mr Speaker, because I think there is a principle involved in that if last Monday, in fact, I had given notice of my question beforehand but it might not have been distributed to Government offices until last Monday, last Monday I gave notice of this question and a few days later there is a report on GBC Radio and Television that

appears to be answering the question of which I had given notice and, naturally, I am glad to see that the Minister is not responsible because I might have been adopting a more aggressive attitude in respect to that and I do not wish to do that.

HON M A FEETHAM:

I know, Mr Speaker, that that used to happen quite often before but.....

HON A J CANEPA:

No.

HON M A FEETHAM:

In fact, if I may enlighten the House, I think that that may have arisen because that information is available at the Mackintosh Hall about meetings for the foreseeable future and GBC may have picked it up there.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, I am sorry that the Minister has said that that used to happen before and therefore I would ask him how often, between 1984 and 1988 when he was in Opposition, I answered questions of which he had given prior notice through the media? I do not think I ever did that in respect of the numerous questions that he ever put to me. Will the Minister now agree?

HON M A FEETHAM:

No, Mr Speaker, I recall very clearly that when we presented questions in some instances the information was made public before to pre-empt.

HON A J CANEPA:

I never did that, Mr Speaker.

HON M A FEETHAM:

No, I did not say the Hon Member did, I said the Government did.

HON A J CANEPA:

I am not here responsible for what other people did.....

HON M A FEETHAM:

Neither am I.

HON A J CANEPA:

I am now the Leader of the Opposition, I have asked a specific question, I expect the Minister to deal with me with the same courtesy that I dealt with him in the last four years or is it that power has now made him so arrogant that he cannot do that?

MR SPEAKER:

Order, order.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, I am trying to be as honest as possible in my replies.

HON A J CANEPA:

You are failing and the Hon Member knows that he is failing in that respect.

MR SPEAKER:

Let us have a question.

HON M A FEETHAM:

But what am I failing in?

HON A J CANEPA:

The Hon Minister is failing in affording me the same courtesy that I have accorded him during all the years when he was a Member in the Opposition. That is all I am asking for. If he does not wish to do so then I know where we stand and that is the end of the matter, Mr Speaker.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the position is that the Minister has already said that he has not leaked the answer to GBC before giving it to the Hon Member and although it happened in the past and since the Hon Member has got more time available than we have, I think, he can go back and check how many times it happened. We take the point that he is making that it is not really the proper way to deal with questions from the Opposition and it will not be the practice of this Government to answer the Opposition's questions that are tabled for the House before the House meets.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, doesn't the Hon the Chief Minister think that the fact that he is now the Chief Minister of the Government, that the time has come when I, as Leader of the Opposition today when we have a number of new Members, should no longer be treated in whatever manner they felt that previous Governments treated them? That the time has come, because there is a view which is increasingly gathering strength that he can afford to be, if anything, a little bit more magnanimous? That is all that I am asking for, the common courtesy which an elected Member of the Opposition is entitled to moreso when he himself when in Government played to certain proper rules. That is all I ask and I thought that the Hon Minister had indicated as much at the beginning of his intervention, I was happy with the answer that he gave but then he had to go and spoil it.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, all that we are doing is saying yes, we accept what the Hon Member has said and we accept that he is now responsible for the Opposition and that therefore we cannot hold him to account for everything the AACR did in the last sixteen years but at the same time he has to accept that if we feel we are going further with him and with his colleagues in dealing with their questions and with their requests for debates and information than was ever the case in the sixteen years that I was there, it is not that we hold him responsible for everything that went wrong in the sixteen years but we are also saying to him: "What you are complaining of is still better treatment than has ever been the practice in the past". That is all that we are saying. Nevertheless, fine, we accept the point that he has made and this is what my colleague has said, we have not sought to pre-empt his question and it is not the policy of the Government to pre-empt the questions of the Opposition and if the Opposition have any questions in any future House of Assembly or in this one which they feel has been answered before we got here, it will only happen because it has happened inadvertently and by mistake and not as a deliberate policy because the policy that we have is that they are entitled to put their questions and they are entitled to receive their answers here and that is what we shall do.

MR SPEAKER:

We will leave it at that. Next question.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, I have a number of other questions arising from the original question. Is the Minister in a position to give this House some indication of the extent to which the amended City Plan will differ from that exhibited by the AACR in November, 1987, in very broad terms?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, in some respects we will have to take into account the representations which have been made and obviously it will also have to take into account Government's own policies. As the Hon Member is very much aware we have entered into a land reclamation programme which in itself is what I would best describe as an escape valve which will give us time to produce economic activity on the land whilst at the same time we are trying, with the MOD, to produce a new land strategy for the development of land in Gibraltar and the release of land in Gibraltar. These things will also give us the opportunity to protect, as much as possible, the old City which if it wasn't for the reclamation of land on the one hand and the possible release of MOD land on the other, we would be subjected to the pressures that the Hon Member opposite was subjected to previously in terms of requiring to create economic activity in Gibraltar through development to have an increase in office space and commercial areas for sectors of the economy as a financial centre. That sort of thinking, in the Government's point of view, will have to be reflected in the City Plan as indeed it will be our thinking on the leisure complex and things like that which will also be reflected in the City Plan.

HON A J CANEPA:

Having regard to the fact, Mr Speaker, that the AACR Plan of 1987 contained proposals for quite considerable land reclamation, does the new City Plan, as amended, contain proposals that go beyond those, as I know is the case for Westside or are there land reclamation proposals in other parts of Gibraltar over and above what the AACR already had?

HON M A FEETHAM:

First of all, it will reflect some of the developments that we envisage will go on the reclamation areas that will be published in the City Plan which were not necessarily there in the one that the Hon Member published when he was in Government.

HON A J CANEPA:

There was reclamation at Montagu.

HON M A FEETHAM:

Yes, there was reclamation but nevertheless it did not stipulate the type of development that we ourselves have envisaged, for example, in the Westside Development whilst before the previous administration were talking in terms of industrial development in the area, we are talking about commercial and housing development in the area. Also we have made it public that we are pursuing the possibility of the East side development and the type of development that we wish to see in that area will also be reflected in the City Plan.

HON A J CANEPA:

Do the amended Plans contain proposals for the new road in the Upper Rock?

HON M A FEETHAM:

The answer to that, Mr Speaker, is that we are at present considering a proposal and should at the time that the City Plan is published, should we have made a decision, it will be reflected in it, yes.

HON A J CANEPA:

Has the Minister consulted the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, as I suggested that he do, about that specific proposal or does he expect representations to be made after the exhibiting of the City Plan?

HON M A FEETHAM:

If and when we decide that the proposal, which we have for consideration is a goer, then we will discuss it with any affected parties before any final decision is taken.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON LT-COL E M BRITTO

Will Government say what commitments have been reached with third parties covering the use of the land to be reclaimed within the Harbour on the West side of Gibraltar?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Yes, Mr Speaker. Two areas have been set aside for the construction of the Westside Developments comprising of 1,300 units of residential accommodation. Another area has been committed to a Danish developer for the construction of 60,000 square metres of office commercial development.

Other areas have been set aside to reprovide the Mediterranean and Calpe Rowing Clubs and the swimming pool.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 33 OF 1989

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Is Government retaining title to all the reclaimed land? Will it remain Government land or is any of it passing to the owners of the development?

HON M A FEETHAM:

All the land that is being reclaimed will be owned by the Government of Gibraltar.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Presumably the office accommodation will be on a long lease to the Danish company.

HON M A FEETHAM:

That is correct, Mr Speaker.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

On commercial grounds, Mr Speaker?

HON M A FEETHAM:

On commercial grounds reflecting market value.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

So they have a first option, effectively, almost.

2.

HON M A FEETHAM:

That is correct.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

THE HON M K FEATHERSTONE

What are the terms of the arrangements arrived at or envisaged in respect to the private hospital at Westside Development and what effect, if any, will they have on private practice at St Bernard's Hospital?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mr Speaker, the terms of the licence agreement are at present being finalised with the developer. When the agreement is signed a full statement will be made.

Insofar as the latter part of the Question is concerned, the private practice at St Bernard's Hospital is not connected with the development but is a matter under discussion between the Health Authority and the BMA.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 34 OF 1989

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Is it Government's intention with this private hospital that is going to be built to phase out private practice at St Bernard's Hospital?

HON M A FEETHAM:

Mr Speaker, as I have indicated in my answer that has nothing to do with it.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, basically then the private medicine under the GHA will be in competition with private medicine in the Westside Hospital.

HON M A FEETHAM:

In some respects, Mr Speaker, they will complement each other.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Absolutely, I don't deny that.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

24.1.89

NO. 35 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON LT-COL E M BRITTO

Will the Minister for Housing say what were the number of applicants on the Housing Waiting List on -

- (a) 1st April 1988
- (b) 1st July 1988
- (c) 1st January 1989

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING

Mr Speaker, in respect of items (a) and (b) the position was stated in my reply to Question No. 143 of November, 1988.

As regards item (c), the total number of applications processed to date is 1,200. However, I must stress that the lists have not yet been finalised.

Can the Minister for Tourism state why he thought it convenient to make public the proposed restructuring of the Gibraltar Tourist Office to the Spanish paper "Area" before disclosing such details to the public and press in Gibraltar?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GSL AND TOURISM

Mr Speaker, I did not make public the proposed restructuring of the Gibraltar Tourist Office to the Spanish Paper "Area" and I certainly did not disclose any details because as I have already stated publicly no such details are as yet available. The concept of a Commercial Agency to run the Tourist Office had been discussed with the employees concerned, the Unions, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Council and all the other interested parties. Similar observations to those given by me to the newspaper "Area" have already been made to the UK Press and members of the local press. The 1st April intended date was already made public in the case of other ventures and is simply the obvious date because of the end of the Government's Financial Year. I assure Mr Montegriffo that the public and the press in Gibraltar will be the first informed of the details when all the negotiations have been finalised.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 36 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister then not accept that there was an element of novelty in the news that he described to the Spanish paper. At least, that was certainly how it was apparently received generally by the press in Gibraltar.

HON J E PILCHER:

Yes Mr Speaker, I do accept that it was received in Gibraltar in that way. However, I think the only novelty was in the association of the date, 1st of April, to the Gibraltar Tourist Agency Limited. Although the 1st April date had already been associated with other Joint Ventures it had perhaps not been associated to this particular Venture and I think that was the novelty, and which was used as a headline by the newspaper Area. I think it was more the headline of the news more than anything else because if you read the article itself you have seen that all that it said was what the concept was and that the intended date would in fact be the 1st April. This is what I told Area, as indeed I had said to other members of the UK press and I think also to people in the local press.

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I must however emphasise that I did not say to Area that the 1st April would be the date, what I said was that the 1st April was the intended date, and it still is the intended date for the commencement of this Joint Venture as well as for the others.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Will the Minister for Tourism make a statement on the proposed non-Government commercial Tourist Office and extended airport terminal and give an undertaking that there will be an opportunity for debate in this House prior to any such arrangements being finalised?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GSL AND TOURISM

Mr Speaker, at this point and as explained in answer to Question 36, there is still some negotiation to be done on the proposed 100% Government owned Gibraltar Tourism Agency Ltd before being in a position to debate this. On the Gibraltar Airport Services Ltd, the joint venture between the Gibraltar Government and the British Airport Services, negotiations are still under way and no details can be made public at this stage. A public announcement will be made through the local media when these are available. It is the policy of the Government to proceed with the implementation of its programme on joint ventures without holding a debate on each occasion a new business is introduced.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 37 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I am aware of that but here we have a major restructuring of an extremely important element in the Tourist Industry and would it not be desirable that it should be the subject of a debate? The Government has a majority in this House and will be able to pass the required legislation without any difficulty so would it not be sensible that the general public should have the right to debate the matter and then the Government would use its majority and proceed with its policy?

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, I think that what has to be understood is that there is not going to be any major change in the use of the resources available to the Gibraltar Tourist Office and in any case, Mr Speaker, all the interested parties and the affected parties have already been informed and we are negotiating in some instances and seeking advice in others about the best way forward. Let me remind the Member opposite, or inform the Member opposite, that one of the criticisms made by the trade of the way that the Gibraltar Tourist Office used to operate in the past was that they were not commercial enough in their thinking and that because there was a Civil Service syndrome they could not keep up with the rest of the Tourism Industry.

which was a commercially oriented industry. With regard to the introduction of the Gibraltar Tourism Agency Limited I have received nothing but praise and advice and that it should commence quickly because I think the trade in general has welcomed the fact that the Gibraltar Tourism Agency Limited will then be operating under a commercial guise and therefore operating in the same world as the rest of the Tourist Industry.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I appreciate that, but what is the point of a debate after a decision has been taken? The point at the end of the day is that if there is merit to the restructuring, which is the Minister's view and apparently the view of the industry, is it not therefore useful that this House should be told about the merits and that people should have the opportunity to debate the matter. We, the Opposition consider ourselves an interested party and I as Shadow Minister for Tourism consider myself, Mr Speaker, an interested party and should also have an opportunity to hear about it before a final decision is taken.

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, first of all that is not a question. I honestly feel that the matter, particularly this morning, has been more than amply exhausted. The policy of the Government is to implement its policy across the board and which is something that is included in our manifesto. It is the Government's responsibility to implement that policy and I feel Government's policy should be to consult and seek the advice of the interested parties, and then to stand or fall by our decision.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Can Government make a statement on the present position regarding the Gibraltar Heritage Trust and specifically Government's view on the future of the following:-

- (i) The Northern Defences
- (ii) The Garrison Library

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GSL AND TOURISM

Mr Speaker, the present position regarding the Gibraltar Heritage Trust is the same as it was since its conception by the previous Government. It is the Government's intention to change the function of the Trust and I am in the process of discussing this change with the interested parties and a public statement will be made when the changes are finalised. Government's view of the future of the Northern Defences and the Garrison Library will be put to the respective owners of these two sites when they resume negotiations with Government on the future of the sites in question.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 38 OF 1989

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, will these two matters be areas that should be dealt with by the Heritage Trust and the decision be taken by the Heritage Trust?

HON J E PILCHER:

No Mr Speaker. In respect of the Northern Defences and the Garrison Library, as I have already mentioned, it is up to the Government to discuss the future with the owners. Once the areas have been passed to the Government their use will be discussed with the Heritage Trust. However at the end of the day, Mr Speaker, the first step that has been taken is the transfer of the land from the present owners, in the case of the Northern Defences as far as we are concerned it is still owned by the MOD although the intention has always been to transfer the site but it has not so far been done. This is part of the negotiations of the Lands Memorandum. With regard to the Garrison Library it is still under the trust of the Garrison Library Committee and has not yet been passed over to Government. So, as I say, the first step has to be the transfer, the physical transfer of the areas to the Government before the Government can decide in consultation with the Heritage Trust, what to do with these areas.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Sir, my understanding was that the Heritage Trust itself

would have these properties vested in it and it would be up to the Trust to decide the best use for the properties. If that did not happen the Trust would be purely consultative?

HON J E PILCHER:

No, Mr Speaker, the Trust will not be purely consultative and the Member opposite is right inasmuch as this were the thoughts of the previous administration. I know this because I spent a considerable time at Question Time seeking this information and we were always told that it was the intention of the then AACR Government to transfer these areas to the Heritage Trust. The thinking of the present Government is not to do that. Phase I will be the restructuring of the Heritage Trust and as I mentioned in my initial answer this is something which we are now discussing with the Heritage Trust itself, with the Friends of Gibraltar in the United Kingdom and with the Museum Committee so that when we do restructure the Heritage Trust we have their comments built into what will hopefully be a new Draft Bill of the Heritage Trust.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, then the position of the Heritage Trust is not the same as it was before, and I was not here in the previous House, to vest in the Trust properties of this nature?

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, the intention of the previous AACR Government was to vest land in the Heritage Trust but it never happened and a lot of time has been spent and I think the overall view of everybody in the Trust is that the Heritage Trust, Mr Speaker, has not worked. The concept of what the Heritage Trust was created to do has not worked. This is not something that I am saying, it is something that people within the Heritage Trust and dealing with Heritage in one way or another accept. Because of many factors, not only the fact that the land was not transferred to them, the Heritage Trust as it supposedly is there to work today, has not been working.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Is the Minister in a position to indicate in broad lines at least to what type of use the Government would like to see these two properties being put to, bearing in mind that they are firmly committed to take the initiative in the matter?

HON J E PILCHER:

No, Mr Speaker, we do not have any preconceived ideas at this stage.

HON A J CANEPA:

They do not have any preconceived ideas, but they are going to exhibit a City Plan in a few weeks time? Are the Northern Defences being shown in the City Plan to be used for what purpose? There must be some indication, the Government must know what it is going to do with the Northern Defences.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

What I will do is I will look back and find out what the previous Government knew it was going to do in October 1987, when they published the last one and we will see whether we want to do the same thing or not.

HON A J CANEPA:

We knew that the Northern Defences were going to be put to a tourist orientated project. Now are they going to have a Joint Venture company on the Northern Defences for the excavation of granite for all I know?

HON J E PILCHER:

Mr Speaker, without wanting to transgress into the City Plan, the idea is still to use the area of the Northern Defences for a tourist orientated project. The Garrison Library is a different matter.

HON A J CANEPA:

In broad outlines.

HON J E PILCHER:

Well in broad outlines yes, but of course we do not have any preconceived ideas because as the Honourable Member opposite knows it is very easy to say, "well my concept is to do a tourism project there and the realities when you come down to look at the cost is that it is not feasible". Therefore the overall planning is obviously to use the Northern Defences for a tourist orientated project but we do not have any preconceived ideas because we are open to different suggestions of what to use the area for. But our main aim is to do so in a tourist orientated fashion, yes.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

As far as the Library is concerned will there be an undertaking that the Library, which is an invaluable asset to Gibraltar because of its cultural importance, will remain as a Library?

HON J E PILCHER:

I think there will be an undertaking that the building will remain, not necessarily as a Library.

Has the Government taken into account the anomalies which we have brought to their attention under the new Family Support Benefit Scheme and will they state how they intend to remedy such unfairness?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Government does not accept that there is unfairness in disregarding the income of wives for assessing entitlement to Family Support Benefit. It is Government policy to ensure the continuance in employment of women and the system introduced is consistent with this policy.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 39 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

Does the Government not accept that in a situation where husband and wife both in employment or for that matter deriving income from business and where their joint income is above a certain figure as against where the breadwinner, who could be a husband or it could be in the case of a single parent family with the wife working only and where those single persons whose income is also above that certain figure, that the fact that deductions are made on the level of benefit in the case of the latter and not in the case of the former, that that manifests unfairness?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No Mr Speaker, the Government does not accept it for the reasons that I have already given. It is Government's desire to provide an incentive for married women to work and we feel that if the husband's and wife's were aggregated, it would be penalising those who continue to work and would in effect not remove any unfairness. It would just mean that it would cast the net wider for those who would not qualify and the Government is trying to keep this to the minimum as the Honourable Member knows.

HON A J CANEPA:

But surely the purpose behind the former Family Allowance Scheme and this one which is replacing it had nothing to do with the encouragement of whether women worked or not. You give incentives to women to take up employment in other ways, by giving them tax relief.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have not said the Scheme has got that purpose, Mr Speaker, what I am saying is that in determining how we apply the

Rules of Entitlement, we have done it in a way which is not in conflict with the policy of the Government to encourage women to work. We consider that what the Opposition would like us to do and which is to leave more people out because their wives are working would be counter-productive and we are not prepared to do it.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, does the Government accept that the wife working at home with three children is working? I think quite frankly it is wrong, an insult might be too strong a word, but it is not accurate to say that a woman staying at home looking after three children is not working, it might not be gainful employment, but to prejudice a family who does not have a nanny and the wife stays at home working with three children in this way, does the Government accept that that work is work and therefore there should not be discrimination against such a person?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Government considers that the women who work, work both in the home and outside it, that does not mean that the women who work alone in the home do not work at all, the Government is not at this stage in a position to pay a salary for the housewife if that is what the Honourable Member opposite is suggesting, but certainly in the fullness of time when we have cleared all the other problems we have to face, we might be able to do that.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

No, what I am suggesting is that such a family should not be penalised, and that basically the income that that family receives from the state should not be dependent on the distinction which the Chief Minister has drawn and which is no distinction in substance, there is no reality, no real difference Sir.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Rules have been drawn in such a way that they have a minimal effect. We can demonstrate to the Honourable Members opposite, if they want to have it demonstrated, that it has a minimal effect. It is clear it is not what they are interested in because it seems to me that what they are saying is not that the Rules apply in such a way that people are suffering hardship, but that there are people who have complained about the fact that they have been affected, and in order to satisfy those who have complained, we ought to redraw the Rules. The Government is not prepared to do that. It has done the Rules in the way that it is consistent with its policies

and in a way that it will be least affecting those who need help and we are convinced we are doing the right thing. Now we can produce the evidence to the Opposition in confidence if they need convincing.

HON COL E M BRITTO:

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister says that it only affects a minimal number of people, why is that necessary?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I think the Honourable Member knows the answer. If he does not know the answer then the Honourable Member should ask the rest of the Members of the Opposition who had it explained to them in a meeting they had with me and which is also going to be dealt with in a question that follows this one, Mr Speaker.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, is the reason why the Government does not agree with the adoption of a different sort of means test that would not discriminate as between couples where both are in employment and where only one is in employment? If the reason is as given by the Chief Minister then why has not my colleague the Shadow Minister had a more substantial reply other than the offer of a cup of tea in the Honourable Mr Mor's office?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not know about the offer of tea, it may be in response to offers of teas that were made in the past. What we are saying, Mr Speaker, and for reasons that are already well known to Members opposite, is that we can give them the documentary evidence on a confidential basis, and they will see for themselves how it is working and what the effect is, then they may find that their misgivings about unfairness are not justified. The offer is there.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I would like to see the figures on a confidential basis.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Does the Government realise that because of lack of information, concern is being expressed by contributors to the effect that rather than contributing to the Social Insurance Scheme over the years they might have been better off by taking out a life insurance or annuity policy instead?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

I propose to answer Questions Nos. 40, 41, 42, and 43 together.

Mr Speaker on 5 December 1988, on my return from UK after seeing Mrs Chalker and Sir Geoffrey Howe, I held a meeting with the Leader of the Opposition and, at his request, all six other members of the Opposition. During this meeting which lasted over one hour I provided him and his colleagues with answers to questions he is now asking and many others. I gave him a full briefing on the negotiations with Mrs Chalker and how we planned to overcome the difficulties of the Social Insurance Fund including the fact that the records are in such chaos that it will take most of the five years to complete this and analyse how best to deal with the new situation taking into account the rights of all contributors. I also informed the Members opposite that the agreement with UK provides that the Government should not be making public statements which are open to being misinterpreted and misquoted and that this was the condition attached by the UK Government to their making up the shortfall in the Social Insurance Fund. I am astonished that knowing all this, full well, the Member opposite should recently have put in doubt whether it is true that Her Majesty's Government is meeting the cost of continued payment and should now be pressing the Government with questions to which he has the answers and on which we are not prepared to enter into a public debate. The Leader of the Opposition and his Shadow Minister for Labour and Social Security are of course welcome to raise any issues on which they may still have doubts with me and will be given full explanation confidentially. However what the Opposition cannot do is accept this offer and continue to pretend in public that they do not know what is happening. I wish to take this opportunity to say that whatever steps are taken will be in accordance with community law and on a non-discriminatory basis. I appeal to those who are in receipt of a pension or expect to get one, to place their trust in this Government who is acting in the best interest of those concerned, having inherited the problem through the failure of the previous Government to act in time prior to 1986.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 40, 41, 42 AND 43 OF 1989

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, let me say that I understand perfectly that the Government is labouring under certain difficulties on this matter, but I think that the Chief Minister has also to accept that we on this side of the House are also labouring under similar difficulties, and that we also have a responsibility to our constituents and to people who stop us in the street expecting answers to questions. The Honourable the Chief Minister has kept a very low profile on this matter. He was interviewed by telephone on television one evening from London, apart from that he has said next to nothing publicly on this matter and he can take it from me that there is a great deal of concern in town and not just from pensioners but from people who are approaching pensionable age and from those who are much younger. There is a limit to the extent that we can give them comfort in the absence of authoritative answers from the Chief Minister or from his colleagues. This very low profile, will he accept Mr Speaker, that the very low profile that he has been keeping on this matter is totally out of character with what he has been accustomed to do in the past, and that therefore the public does have a perception of this fact.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether I am qualified to judge whether this is in character or out of character with the way I behave or do not behave, but I think there is no secret as to the constraints. The Honourable Member opposite knows it and the public knows it, and we made it clear in the debate in this House prior to these questions being put. When we had questions in November, we told the Members opposite that they knew why we could not give answers to questions which could subsequently be misquoted elsewhere and put at risk something that is sensitive and which we are doing our best to produce and which is the kind of package that we are committed to and which the Members opposite asked us to be committed to and on which we said yes. Having answered that question already, in November and December and having answered the same questions in the debate on the amendment to the Ordinance and if the Honourable Member opposite is genuinely concerned about those, who have misgivings, must realise that if he keeps on asking the same questions and he keeps on getting the same answers, that that is not going to put anybody's mind at rest. If he feels unhappy then fine and I think that as somebody who has got a responsibility to a section of the electorate, the offer is there in my original answer and he can come along to me or the Minister for Labour and Social Security, come along and say "look, I am unhappy about this" or all seven can come to my office and I will spend an hour with them and they can ask me

any questions that they want about what we are planning to do over the next twelve months or over the next five years, subject to what I have said that we cannot be precise in saying we know exactly what is going to happen in a year's time to the Fund. I imagine that in a year's time we will be somewhere along the road of analysing the 90,000 records, which is what we have discovered, that we have. There are 90,000 people who at sometime in their life have made a contribution to our Social Insurance Fund and we need to establish who they are, where they are, are they still alive and what rights, if any, have they got. Now that is a mammoth exercise which we can only undertake because we have been promised technical help by the United Kingdom to get it done, otherwise we would not be able to do it.

HON A J CANEPA:

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister is well known for the forthright, clear and plain manner in which, he has in the past, spoken publicly and he is not doing that on this matter any longer and the public finds that very puzzling. He can take it from me that the public does not understand why or what are the constraints which the Government is labouring under and which make it difficult for them to impart this sort of information. I, because of my association in the past with old age pensions, am stopped by groups of people, pensioners, in the streets and I can assure the Honourable Member that I give them helpful answers. For instance, to the question: "Is it a fact that we will no longer receive our pensions in five year's time?" That question is put to me by pensioners. I do not know if that question is put to any Honourable Members opposite but I am sure that those of them that continue to have contact with the general public, perhaps less than they used to in the past, because of their commitments in Government, in Government offices, I am sure that they also are asked that question. I do not tell those people, "no the Government is not going to give you a pension in five year's time....."

MR SPEAKER:

You must ask a question.

HON A J CANEPA:

Will the Chief Minister take it from me that one gives as helpful answers as one can, having regard to the confidentiality to which we are committed. "That they will be getting a pension in five year's time". However it is difficult to go further because although we know quite a bit about Government thinking on the matter, what Government would like to do and that what is going to happen over the next five years is not entirely clear but because we are committed to confidentiality I think however it

is in the Government's interest to dispel these sort of notions and will he accept that it is in the Government's interest to do so. The sort of notions are those such as the one that I have pointed out in Question No.40. For the first time ever, people are asking themselves that they might have been better off not contributing to the Social Insurance Scheme and instead have taken out a Life Insurance Policy? That sort of notion needs to be dispelled regardless of the constraints that the Government is labouring under.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well Mr Speaker, I can tell the Honourable Member who would certainly not have been better off contributing to a Private Social Scheme than to the Social Insurance Fund? These are the 5,000 pensioners who regrettably because of action not having been taken in the past are collecting a pension, because they are getting back £1,000 for every £1 that they put in and no Private Insurance Scheme in the universe would have given that kind of return. As regards the rest of us, all of us who pay into the Scheme, including all the Members in this House, what we have to do is in fact what I have said we have to do, accept that we have got a commitment to resolve this problem in the only way that it is possible to resolve it and that in order to be able to do that, we must not say things out of turn which could put at risk what we are trying to do, and also repeat what I have already said in my original answer: "That I appeal to those who already have a pension or to those who are expecting to get one and are contributing to the Scheme to put their confidence in the Government because ever since we entered into office we have been working on resolving a problem which as the Honourable Member opposite will remember, this time last year when I asked him what was going to happen when the money run out, he said that is something which the incoming Government, after the election will have to find an answer for and that is what the incoming Government has done, try to find an answer". I also think that time will tell whether in fact the answer that we have come up with meets the requirements that people are looking for and the reassurance that the people are looking for. Because if it is reassurance that they need, because they have doubts opposite, then Mr Speaker what I can do with them is what I have done with other interested parties who have written to me and I have said "Come and see me and I will give you certain explanations which I am not at liberty to give to you in public". That offer is there, and they take it or they do not take it.

HON A J CANEPA:

Because Mr Speaker, I am in the fortunate position that I understand how the Scheme works and because I have had meetings with the Chief Minister, I am able to understand and assess the extent that the Government would like to

take over the next five years. But one can only reach those people that one comes into contact with and it is a particular lacuna, will the Chief Minister accept that it is a lacuna, it is a glaring example of his not being able to do what he normally has been able to do and which is to speak frankly and clearly and bluntly to people and he has not done that in his New Year's message and he has not done that in an interview on television and these doubts exists. I can assure the Honourable Member, will he accept that I am not taking advantage, when I meet my constituents and when I meet the public in giving them wrong information or misleading information or making it appear that the Government are irresponsible. However there is a limit to the extent that one is able to help and patriotism is all very well, but in a few year's time in a future election I would like to be sitting also on that side of the House.

MR SPEAKER:

We are debating.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, I am not asking the Honourable Member to be patriotic, I am answering his questions and I am telling him that I cannot give him full answers for reasons that he knows, and he admits that he knows the reasons, but he says that even if he knows the reasons, he cannot forgo the opportunity of asking the question because it would damage his chances in the next election. Well fine then he can carry on asking the questions and I will carry on giving him the same answers, Mr Speaker, until you decide that the subject is exhausted and when I sit down if he asks me the same question I will give him the same answer because it is the only answer that I can give him.

MR SPEAKER:

I have come to the same conclusion that the subject is exhausted.

HON A J CANEPA:

I cannot accept Mr Speaker, that of the five questions that I have asked, he is not able to answer any of them. I cannot accept that he is not able to tell this House "Why it is that the Government has increased contributions in the manner in which it has done and benefits have not been increased". I can understand his difficulties about dealing with benefits but about the fact that contributions have been increased and that no explanation has been given publicly or even in the House today, I am sorry but that has nothing to do with the constraints that the Government is under.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member was given an explanation of that on the 5th December 1988, and if he cannot remember it, then he can approach me after the meeting and I will remind him of it.

HON A J CANEPA:

And I would submit that that sort of information can be made public without any detriment to the Government's overall strategy.

NO. 41 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON A J CANEPA

24 1 89

How does the Government intend to safeguard the rights of current contributors to the Social Insurance Scheme in five years' time and beyond?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Questions 40, 42 and 43.

NO. 42 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON A J CANEPA

24 1 89

Having regard to the fact that old-age pensions were not increased on the 1st January 1989, why has Government increased the weekly rate of contribution payable by insured persons and their employers?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Questions 40, 41 and 43.

NO. 43 OF 1989

ORAL

THE HON A J CANEPA

24 1 89

Will the Government give an undertaking that the purchasing power of the old-age pensions payable to Gibraltar pensioners (ie pensioners residing in Gibraltar) will be maintained at its January 1988 level?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Questions 40, 41 and 42.