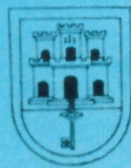


GIBRALTAR

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

28TH JUNE, 1996

NO. 32 TO NO. 76

INDEX
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

28th June 1996

Questions 32 – 76

SUBJECT	NO(S)	PAGE(S)
Airport Agreement	76	100
Arrivals to Gibraltar for 1995	43	33
Cable Link with Morocco	64	78
Careers Service	57	67
Careers' Masters	56	66
Container Trans-shipment Facility	42	30
Cruise Liners	46	46
Customs Social Club	61	74
Demonstration at Convent Place	74	98
Director of Tourism	47	47
Engineer Car Park	63	77
Enrolment Training by GHA School of Nursing	33	3
Family Allowances	75	99
Ferry Service to Algeciras	44	38
Fibre Optics	65	80
Financial Assistance	66	82
Financial Support to Camp Emmanuel	51	54
Flats at Scud Hill	49	50
Funds to Organisations	68	86
Gibraltar's Heritage	32	1
Housing Applications	50	52
Illegal Immigrants	72	94
Inmates in Prison	48	48
Lathbury Barracks	53	59
Main Street Drainage System	37	10
Orange Bastion Depot	60	72
Prescription Charges	36	8
Prince George's Block	69	89
Private Education	54	61
Proposed Plans for Casemates	45	40
Pupils Ability	58	69
Refurbishment of Main Street	38	12
Registered Gibraltarians at ETB	39	15
Relocation of Health Centre	34	4
Revenue and Expenditure of GHA	35	6
Satellite Tracking Station	71	92
School Moves	55	63
Social Assistance Fund	73	96
Social Insurance Pensions Scheme	52	56
Spanish Frontier Workers	40	20
Traffic	59	71
Traffic	62	75
Vacancies at the ETB	41	25
Victoria Stadium	67	83
Windmill Hill	70	90

NO. 32 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

GIBRALTAR'S HERITAGE

In matters of heritage, what are the Government's intentions in terms of financial provision and administrative structures and, much to the point, what particular plans are there for the uncluttering and refurbishment of our city's defensive walls?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Government attach great importance not just to the preservation of our heritage but indeed to its sensitive exploitation for economic purposes, especially tourism. Government's financial provisions for heritage will be reflected in a future budget. A statement about changes to the administrative structures will be made later this year. Government have not specific plans for the uncluttering and refurbishment of Gibraltar's defensive walls but our plans certainly include examining the scope for doing this.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 32 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

I appreciate the general statement made but I feel it would be pertinent to pursue the matter a little further, still on the general basis, and ask the Minister whether it is the intention of the Government to amend in any way the Gibraltar Heritage Ordinance 1989 and in particular with regard really to financial provision which is the specifics of my question, and also the powers at the moment being exercised by the Gibraltar Heritage Trust.

HON K AZOPARDI:

I have had several meetings over the last few weeks with GONHS, the Heritage Trust and indeed the Museum. The purpose of those meetings were to meet the personalities behind the bodies. Government's policy was reflected in the manifesto which we had in the 1996 election. We intend to set up a Heritage Commission by statute. That Heritage Commission will be used to channel all the heritage policy of the Government, it will certainly review the Heritage Trust Ordinance, the powers of the Trust and indeed the whole structure. It will also develop a strategy for heritage.

HON J GABAY:

May I also, Mr Speaker, continue with another question based on my first question which I believe is relevant?

MR SPEAKER:

It must be a supplementary question.

HON J GABAY:

It is relevant and stems from my former question. Has the Minister had time to study the plan which was worked out some time ago with regard to the refurbishment of Wellington Front as a first step in the uncluttering and refurbishment of our city walls which we consider of primary importance?

HON K AZOPARDI:

No, Mr Speaker, the plans are on my desk. I have not had an opportunity to discuss these with the professionals in the field but if the hon Member wants to ask me in a few months time I am sure I can give him an answer.

NO. 33 OF 1996

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

ENROLMENT TRAINING BY GHA SCHOOL OF NURSING

Can Government confirm that they will continue with enrolment training by the Gibraltar Health Authority School of Nursing as started by the GSLP administration?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Government committed themselves in their 1996 election manifesto to conduct a review of, inter alia, nursing levels and training. As yet that review has not taken place. The Government will await the recommendations of those charged with the review of nursing manning levels and training, before we decide how to approach the issue of the level of training some nursing staff currently receive.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 33 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister confirm whether in the meantime they will continue what we started before we left Government office?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I anticipate that the review body will be set up shortly. In the meantime enrolment training is indeed taking place. The first intake started in January 1996, as the hon Member is well aware, and it will continue pending the recommendations.

NO. 34 OF 1996

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

RELOCATION OF HEALTH CENTRE

Can Government confirm whether they are looking at the possibility of moving the Health Centre from its present location?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Government are considering the possibility of relocating the Health Centre but no firm proposals exist yet.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 34 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister say why they are thinking of moving the Health Centre, the reasons why?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Government stated during the election campaign that we had substantial plans for the redevelopment of Gibraltar as a tourism centre. Amongst that we are looking at the possibility of enhancing the Casemates area. It has also been brought to my attention that perhaps the premises at the Health Centre are restrictive in that there is shortage of space.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister confirm whether they have intentions of demolishing the building?

HON K AZOPARDI:

No specific plans at the moment exist either for demolition or indeed for relocation. Government are merely looking at the possibility of it.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister confirm whether they are looking at a specific area for moving the Health Centre?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The answer to that is no, Mr Speaker.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister confirm whether there are other areas that they intend to move as well as the Health Centre?

HON K AZOPARDI:

In the Health Authority, Mr Speaker?

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes.

HON K AZOPARDI:

The answer again to that is at the moment no.

NO. 35 OF 1996THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO**REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE OF GHA**

Can Government give a full breakdown by item on the projected revenue and expenditure of the Gibraltar Health Authority for the financial year 1996/97?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

An estimate of projected revenue and expenditure at the Gibraltar Health Authority had been prepared prior to the recent general election. Government are in the process of examining these estimates with a view to their approval or amendment.

This estimate is known to the Opposition Members, but is:-

<u>REVENUE</u>	<u>1996/97</u>
Group Practice Medical Scheme	13,624,200
Hospital Fees	66,000
Laboratory Fees	14,500
Other Receipts	94,050
Social Assistance Fund	<u>9,000,000</u>
TOTAL	<u>22,798,750</u>

EXPENDITURE

Personal Emoluments	7,488,300
Overtime	999,100
Allowances	1,462,600
Gratuities	<u>122,000</u>
TOTAL PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS	10,072,000
General Office Expenses	40,800
Running costs of motor vehicles	3,300
Electricity and water	200,000
Provisions	266,000
Laundry	216,000
Hardware, uniform, linen	92,000
Dressing/medical gases	466,000
GPMS	4,660,000
Medical Equipment	177,500
Patients appliances	55,000
Fuel	22,500
Funeral expenses	3,600
Medical books	15,000
Wages	1,060,000
Cleaning expenses	44,000
Courses of training	45,600

Expenses of visiting consultants	65,000
Official visits abroad	1,000
Sponsored patients	2,275,000
Printing/stationery	28,000
Telephone service	85,000
Drugs/pharmaceuticals	720,000
Medical and surgical appliances	275,000
Official entertainment	5,000
SIS	665,000
Relief cover	239,000
Study leave	33,600
Recruitment/contracting	279,000
Ex gratia payments	5,000
Cash losses	100
New equipment	500,000
Minor works	400,000

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 35 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister give me the total?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The total that was prepared prior to the general election was £23,015,000.

NO. 36 OF 1996THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO**PRESCRIPTION CHARGES**

Can Government confirm that like the GSLP administration they will not increase prescription charges for medicines under the Group Practice Medical Scheme?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Government presently have no plans to increase prescription charges for medicines under the GPMS. The Government however reject the implication in the hon Member's question that under the previous administration the cost of medical care was not increased. In fact the GSLP Government increased by 10 per cent every year between 1989 and 1995 the employees' part of the GPMS contribution of social insurance stamps.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 36 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

The Minister has deviated himself from the question because I am asking about medicines under the GPMS which has nothing to do with the reply he has given me. In relation to the question that I am asking about prescriptions, can he confirm what the Government policy is on the national formulary for Gibraltar?

HON K AZOPARDI:

On a point of order, I wonder whether that question forms part of the original question. It is designed to ask for an answer on prescription charges and I have given it, it is not on the national formulary.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

No, he has not.

HON K AZOPARDI:

Well, the answer to the hon Member's question is that Government presently has no plans to increase prescription charges for medicines under the GPMS.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Therefore in relation to prescriptions, Mr Speaker, I am asking the Minister whether he can confirm what his Government's policy is on having a national formulary for Gibraltar which is relative to this question. If the hon Members do not know what it is I

MR SPEAKER:

I know what it is but it does not form part of the question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have no difficulty in admitting, Mr Speaker, that I have not the remotest idea what that means and I am quite happy to be educated on the subject by the hon Lady.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Or by the Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

I cannot talk, I can only interfere.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I accept her offer and perhaps now she would like to deliver on it.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

It is a list of items by which the doctors are given a guideline of what they are able to prescribe and this happens to be a formulary which is in existence in every European country.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government have indeed considered on a preliminary basis the subject matter that the hon Lady has just explained. We are considering whether a case can be made in balancing the interests of the taxpayer to save money and indeed the interests of health service users to have the best possible medications available to them free or as free as possible in terms of the prescription charges that exist under public medicine through the Gibraltar Health Authority. In striking a balance between those two competing factors, we are looking to see whether a case can be made for restricting the list of medications which are presently available on prescription through the Gibraltar Health Authority. It is a matter, obviously, upon which the Government, there being no doctors amongst us, will take careful advice after due consultation with doctors and other professionals in the field. But certainly if taxpayers money can be saved without compromising the quality of health care available to users of the public health service, this Government will not hesitate to curtail the list of medicines or better still, branded medicines as opposed to generic medicines available through the Gibraltar Health Authority.

NO. 37 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

MAIN STREET DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Will Government check that the new drainage system which is resulting from the Main Street beautification scheme is adequate and will therefore not result in sections of Main Street flooding during heavy rains?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Heavy rains caused some flooding in the north end of Main Street prior to the elections.

Indeed the previous Government were aware of the degree of the potential problem before the establishment of the beautification scheme.

The Government through their representatives on the Main Street Beautification Trust are ensuring that methods of drainage are being considered to deal with any potential incidents which could occur as a result of rain.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 37 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

In order to minimise the possibility of this happening, could the Minister check with the contractor whether what was envisaged at the initiation of the project continues to be the case because I understand that the north part of Main Street was brought to the attention of the contractor but now, looking at the finished work, it would seem to some people who are experts in the field that the drainage is not as adequate as the contractor stressed would be the case at the initiation of the project?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The project designers have indeed been made aware by Government of the importance of correct drainage. Indeed this has been taken up by the trustees of the Beautification Trust amongst which are two representatives of Government, we have stressed the importance of that to the project supervisor and I have asked him to make recommendations together with the project designer. Those recommendations have been made to the Trust and the Trust is considering the proposals. But for the assistance of the House, if I can refer to a letter which contains the recommendations and indeed the Government policy and intention on this matter, it is a letter from the project supervisor to myself but it contains, as I say, the Government's intention in this regard. I will read a couple of paragraphs, Mr Speaker, for the assistance of the House, "It has been the designer's intention to improve, where possible, the existing drainage system both to quickly eliminate surface water from Main Street itself and to cope effectively with what run off from the streets which naturally slope on to Main Street. Generally the improvement in

Main Street itself is being achieved by providing two continuous drains almost the whole length of Main Street while the run-off from adjoining streets is being diverted to similar drains placed across the path of the flowing water. This will ensure that most of the water is being taken to the drainage system before it reaches Main Street, something that has not been the case to date. Generally the new system will not be dependent on small square gutters which easily become blocked with debris and plastic bags. It must be added that the basic drainage infrastructure is not being modified as this is outside the scope of the project. And in relation to the north end specifically, and in relation to the flooding that occurs there, the cause of this is attributable to two main problems, plastic bags and other debris blocking the small gutters with subsequent flooding until these are cleared and the inability of the infrastructure to cope with exceptional and continuous downpours. It has been established by the Highways Department that the problem may account for as much as 80 to 90 per cent of the floodings while the rest is due to the basic infrastructure problem which is caused by a bottle neck below the building known as Ocean Heights. As such the drainage changes which are being carried out at present should alleviate the situation substantially since it will be very difficult for continuous drains to become blocked along its whole length".

HON J C PEREZ:

If the Minister is satisfied with the explanation there is nothing more to say.

HON K AZOPARDI:

I will chase up the explanation and make sure that I am aware of the technical aspects to the explanation that has been given to me.

NO. 38 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

REFURBISHMENT OF MAIN STREET

Can Government confirm that once the refurbishment of Main Street is complete, it will be the Roads Section of Support Services that will continue to upkeep and maintain Main Street, and if so, will materials be made available to the section for such works?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Main Street Beautification Project is being carried out by the trust set up for that purpose. Once it is completed responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance will pass to the Government. Government have been informed that such upkeep and maintenance will, given the nature of the materials used in the project, require a degree of training of the personnel that will be involved. Government are presently considering how we will wish to undertake this task and are identifying the personnel to be trained.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 38 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that the arrangements that have to be put in place in order for this to take place will have to be agreed with all the sections and companies that have to open up the area for services such as Gibraltar Nynex and Lyonnaise des Eaux because they would be contributing to the cost and therefore the cost of using a particular labour would have to be agreed with them beforehand?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Government are aware of that through the Beautification Trust and discussions are being conducted at the moment by trustees and indeed by the project supervisor specifically with Lyonnaise des Eaux for that purpose.

HON A ISOLA:

Might I ask the Minister when does he envisage the arrangements being put in place for the maintenance of Main Street?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Because of what has been explained to me, Mr Speaker, there needs to be a certain degree of training of the personnel because of the stones that have been used. Certainly as the project is envisaged to terminate by January, we want to expedite the appointment of some personnel so that they are given training by the contractors that are actually laying the stones.

HON A ISOLA:

Bearing in mind that the works are being completed in phases, would the Minister ensure that the phases that are completed, some already, are maintained as best possible pending the training of the personnel to maintain them fully afterwards?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Yes, that is a continuing concern of the trustees and steps are being taken to ensure that that is indeed the case.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Minister confirm that the people who are to be trained will be employed directly by the Gibraltar Government?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The answer to that is that that is at present under consideration. It may be direct labour from the Government or it may be labour contracted from outside for this specific purpose. A policy decision has not yet been made on that matter.

HON J C PEREZ:

So it is possible that the Government would either consider contractorising part of the work or even a private firm taking over work that would normally be done by employees of the Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government are not in a position to discuss this matter hypothetically. We have not yet made up our minds who will do this work. The precedent for contractorising out of the public service, street cleaning functions that were presently within the public service was invented and deployed in large measure by Opposition Members when they were sitting on the other side of the House so I hope that the hon Member's supplementary is not intended to note a cautionary note.

HON J C PEREZ:

No, Mr Speaker, the idea was in order to check that the Government would keep to the commitments that they have given to the electorate which were against the policies of the previous Government which we supported but they were against.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member can rest assured that we will keep all our commitments to the electorate in this as in all other areas.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

May I ask a question? There will be people who will be trained, do the Government know of how many people we are talking about who will need training?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

As I said at the beginning, the whole thing is under consideration and we are not in a position yet to make specific answers to narrow questions like that.

HON A ISOLA:

Will the Government take every step to expedite that decision, not only on the policy but on the numbers and on the training because parts of Main Street are already open and looking in a rather sad state at this stage and I therefore urge the Government to expedite those decisions, to have people trained and to have the cleaning started as soon as possible.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The Government, as Opposition Members know, have the assets to carry out such maintenance and such cleaning. What we are looking at here is something completely different on a much larger scale and that is what is being studied. In the short term it can be done.

NO. 39 OF 1996

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

REGISTERED GIBRALTARIANS AT ETB

Can Government state how many Gibraltarians were registered as unemployed at the ETB on 30th April broken down under females and males and in age groups of under 25 and over 25?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
AND BUILDINGS AND WORKS

The number of Gibraltarians registered unemployed at the ETB on the 30th April 1996 was 331. Of these 110 were under 25 of which 47 are males and 63 are females. In the over 25 year old age group there were 131 males and 90 females making a total of 221.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 39 OF 1996

HON J L BALDACHINO:

As I understood it correctly the total is 331 and the total of over 25 is 200-odd that the Minister has mentioned, is that correct?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, that is correct.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Do the Government estimate that this unemployment figure will dramatically go up or decrease during the year or do the Government think that it will remain static?

HON J J NETTO:

Well, I have collected some of the figures showing a particular turn from the past and what I can say is that in December 1994, under the 25 there were 256 and over 25 there were 344, making a total of 600. Previous to that, in March 1995, there were under 25 - 225, over 25 - 351, making a total of 576. And in December 1994 there were under 25 - 212 and over 25 - 260, making a total of 472. It is obvious that the trend appears to be slowing down.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So the Minister envisages that this figure obviously during the course of the year will be coming down, is that his answer?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government's economic policy is designed to expand the economic base and therefore generate additional employment. Within that the Government intend to target especially job opportunities and indeed training and apprenticeship opportunities as highlighted in our election manifesto for the under 25 year old group, although obviously not exclusively for the benefit of that group. The immediacy of the impact of the Government's economic policy, as the hon Member knows, may well exceed the period of what is left of this year but certainly at the end of our four year term or at any reasonable interim moment during the four year term, he can certainly measure the success of this Government's economic policy by reference to the impact that it has had on employment prospects in Gibraltar.

HON J BOSSANO:

Do the Government consider, in fact, Mr Speaker, that a level of unemployment of Gibraltarians of 331 which I believe is around the 3 per cent figure constitutes mass unemployment as we were being told very recently by some people?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government do not, when considering the problem of unemployment and the steps that need to be taken to address it, exclusively have regard to the incidence of that problem on what the hon Member describes as Gibraltarians but which I suppose he means Gibraltarian belongs generally. This figure of Gibraltarians is a sub-division, albeit the most important sub-division, of the category of persons presently included in the realms of the problems of unemployment in Gibraltar, our policies will be targeted at the whole range of persons so affected and 331 out of a current labour force of perhaps, we have not got the exact latest figures but possibly somewhere in the order of 12,300, is not by comparison to other countries in itself as a sub-division mass unemployment but the total figures of unemployed in Gibraltar, including those under-employed, including those in part-time employment who would like to be in full-time employment, are certainly a matter of concern to this Government and a problem to which we attach considerable importance and will dedicate resources in addressing it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does that mean, Mr Speaker, that they intend to produce a new definition by which to measure unemployment from the one that is used in Gibraltar and to my knowledge everywhere else in the European Union?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I know of no European Union country that measures its unemployment statistics on the basis of a particular category of nationality. When the United Kingdom publishes the figure of unemployment, 3 million or whatever, no one says that there are 3 million white Englishmen unemployed, there are not 3 million British Citizens unemployed, they say, "There are 3 million unemployed". In those 3 million unemployed there will be foreigners, there will be immigrant workers and there will

be all sorts of people who fall into different categories. I do not accept the premise of the hon Member's supplementary which is that in Gibraltar it has been done in the past only by reference to Gibraltarians. That is a device that he started and which we challenged continuously from the Opposition benches because we always asked for the figures of unemployment not just for Gibraltarians but indeed for non-Gibraltarians as well.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it that the Chief Minister does not remember that his first question in 1991 after he got elected to this House for the first time in a bye election was precisely phrased exactly like the one that he has now been presented with and asked exclusively for the numbers of unemployed Gibraltarians? Is it that the Chief Minister has forgotten that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, the Chief Minister has not forgotten, Mr Speaker, that for the last four years we have on every opportunity, that is to say, on every question time, asked for the statistics not by reference only to Gibraltarians unemployed but to Gibraltarians and non-Gibraltarians and that this is a departure from that style of asking the question exclusively limited to Gibraltarians. If the hon Member is interested only in the statistics that affect Gibraltarians then of course he is limited to asking the question in that limited way. The responsibility of the Government is broader than that as he knows.

HON J BOSSANO:

But, Mr Speaker, is it not the case that the first time the question was phrased in that way in this House the information was sought by the Chief Minister and that what we are doing is following the precedent he created in 1991 and that the information we are seeking - and this question is to seek information - is the information that he sought in 1991?

MR SPEAKER:

I am sorry, I do not think that that is part of the question. I think that the supplementaries have exhausted.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I am asking a supplementary in relation to the answer I have received and the answer I have received from the Chief Minister is that we are doing something peculiar in asking a question about Gibraltarians unemployed and I am pointing out that all that the Opposition are doing is what he himself initiated in 1991. We are seeking the same information.

MR SPEAKER:

Point taken but I think we should go to the next question.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, can I ask a supplementary which does not follow from what I have just said but is also on the original question? Can I ask the Chief Minister whether in fact in relation to the initiative that he is talking about the implication of his answer is that such initiatives will not have priority of unemployment for Gibraltarians?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member knows that whilst we were in Opposition and, indeed, my answer to his earlier supplementary indicates that we regard the category of Gibraltarians unemployed as the most important category of unemployed persons and all I have said is that it is not the only category of unemployed persons and certainly he knows well that when we were in the Opposition we attached importance to what my hon Colleague, then responsible for employment used to call practical measures to give priority to Gibraltarians. That will remain the case although the hon Member knows that it will be done by means other than the application of the 1st July law.

HON J BOSSANO:

I have not asked about the 1st July law, Mr Speaker. What I am asking is if the Chief Minister in his previous answer said that the impact of the measures that they propose to introduce will have an effect other than the 331, does that mean that the people eligible to benefit from such measures in training or whatever will not be just the Gibraltarians but that all nationalities will be included?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member is certainly entitled to assume that the broad package of measures which the Government will take to expand the economy and to ameliorate the unemployment problem and to enhance the training prospects of people for whom this economy is responsible will not necessarily be limited to the 331 individuals which he describes here as Gibraltarians. That is absolutely correct, he is entitled to assume that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can I just correct the answer that the Chief Minister has given me? I have not described them as Gibraltarians, we have asked a question. We are assuming that the answer we have got is accurate and that there are 331 Gibraltarians as described by them.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Under the 331 of the figure mentioned by the Minister, is it correct that not strictly speaking Gibraltarians also means that within those figures are also included people who are married to Gibraltarians and British nationals who are long-standing residents in Gibraltar?

HON J J NETTO:

The figures were prepared by the staff within the ETB and include just Gibraltarians.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Just Gibraltarians, Mr Speaker?

HON J J NETTO:

As far as I am aware just only Gibraltarians.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Would the Minister be so kind as to find out if that is correct and let me know?

HON J J NETTO:

Absolutely.

NO. 40 OF 1996

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

SPANISH FRONTIER WORKERS

How many Spanish frontier workers are legally employed in Gibraltar according to Government records and what do the Government estimate are the number of such workers employed illegally?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING AND BUILDINGS
AND WORKS

Spanish frontier workers working legally with open contracts at the ETB as at 24th June 1996 are 1113. Government to this date do not have an estimate of the extent of Spanish illegal labour because during the eight years of GSLP Government no mechanism was put in place to detect such illegal labour and very little was done to curb such activity.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 40 OF 1996

HON J L BALDACHINO:

If that is correct what machinery does the Minister intend to implement to find out how much illegal labour there is in Gibraltar?

HON J J NETTO:

The hon Member should realise that during the term of office of the GSLP administration they dismantled the DLSS inspectorate where there was one HEO, who was head of that section, four EO's who were labour inspectors, and one clerical support. As a result of the dismantling of that unit two labour inspectors were employed in the ETB. No hand-over period was done by the previous administration, no training was given to the two new labour inspectors and that is exactly what I have inherited. Undoubtedly in terms of looking at any illegal labour, regardless of nationality, we will put in place the necessary mechanism to deal with the matter.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is the Minister saying that the two inspectors who are employed in his department are not qualified to carry out the inspection, is that what he is saying?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Minister said that at the time they were appointed they were not given any training and that is true. That is what the Minister said.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

No, the Minister has answered that due to the past administration having dismantled the inspectorate at the DLSS, that the two inspectors who are now at the ETB are not qualified. I am asking him, Mr Speaker, whether he considers that those two inspectors are not qualified to carry out inspections to find out if there is illegal labour?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Such expertise and qualifications as they have acquired they have acquired on the job and subsequent to their appointment because when the hon Member appointed them he offered them no training, that is a fact, that is what the Minister has said. As far as we are concerned, regardless of the level of their expertise, it is self-evident that they have not been effective either at curtailing or indeed monitoring the extent of illegal labour in Gibraltar, a fact which is notorious and accepted by everybody except perhaps Opposition Members.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister say what training he thinks was provided to the labour inspectors that preceded the labour inspectors in the ETB?

HON J J NETTO:

For a start, Mr Speaker, there was not even a hand-over period. All the files were passed on from the DLSS, planted on top of the desk of the ETB and they told them to get on with the job.

HON J BOSSANO:

That is not the question I have asked, Mr Speaker. I do not know whether they put them on top of the desk or on top of the cupboard. I have asked specifically, given the fact that the Minister says that the ETB inspectors were not trained, what training does he think the predecessors had?

HON J J NETTO:

As far as I am aware they had the training of the civil service plus additional training by the court and the police in terms of court proceedings in order for cases to be processed in court, something which has not been done during the ETB period.

HON J BOSSANO:

If as far as he is aware then in fact the Minister is admitting that he does not know that and is it not a fact, Mr Speaker, that when the inspectorate was part of the civil service the occupants of that post were clerical grades who were freely transferable to any other job in the civil service?

HON J J NETTO:

I have to say that the staff in the labour inspectorate, many of them had five, 10, 15 or even 20 years training specifically within that particular department.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it not the case that when the Minister is talking about training what he means is that as a result of doing the job for a very long time, like the present ones have done it for eight years, they acquired a level of expertise that newcomers did not have? Is that not what he means? They were not actually sent to be trained as an inspector anywhere.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The position is this, what the Minister said in answer to the original question was that such is the attitude and approach of the Opposition Members to the question of illegal labour that they dismantled the existing system that there was with all its virtues and faults and replaced it with two new individuals with no experience to which they then gave no training, hardly a situation likely to lead to an improvement in the curtailment of illegal labour. This Government are not responsible or answerable for what the position might have been prior to 1988. What the hon Member is entitled to question us about is about our policies and our intentions and our policy and our intention is to ensure that there is available within the public service an adequate capability to curtail and monitor and when there are infringements to prosecute matters connected with illegal labour in order to enhance the job security of those who are legally employed in Gibraltar. That is the policy of the Government and it will not take very much longer for him to know and to learn how we are going to go about achieving it.

HON J BOSSANO:

When I want to be given lessons by the Chief Minister I will write to him and ask him for it but that is not what I want. What I want is information and therefore if the Chief Minister intends to devote resources to a problem I assume he must have an estimate or an opinion or a view as to the size of the problem that he is tackling. The question we are asking is: what in the judgement of the Government is the magnitude of the level of illegal labour where figures have previously been paraded of thousands that needs to be tackled given the fact that in the original answer the information was not provided. Do they have any idea of the magnitude or size? Are we talking about hundreds of illegal workers, tens or thousands?

HON J J NETTO:

What I said before was that the previous administration did not leave any mechanism whatsoever in order to quantify the extent of the problem.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept that there is no mechanism to quantify the extent of the problem now and that there was not one in 1988 when it was being done by the DLSS, no such figures have existed now or then other than the very reduced number of attempted prosecutions most of which have always failed. What I am asking is, in the estimate of the Government the monitoring and the curtailment of the level of illegal labour means that they expect to be tackling what, an existence of thousands of illegal workers or hundreds of illegal workers? Can he tell me which of the two?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, I will. In the estimate of the Government which is no more than an estimate, we calculate that there could be up to a thousand persons employed illegally in Gibraltar and of course there are many ways of being illegally employed, by reference to whether one is paying one's social insurance, by reference to whether one's employer has registered oneself for PAYE, by reference if one needs a work permit and a residence permit whether one has them, there are many categories that lead to the status of unemployment. We calculate, but it is a very rough and ready guesstimate, that the problem is of the order of about 1,000 individuals. But, of course, it could very well be greater than that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can I ask the original question as to the number of legally employed Spanish nationals who are frontier workers, we were given the figure of 1,113 open contracts. Can the Minister confirm that the implications of this is simply that the ETB has not been notified that the people may have left employment in Gibraltar and that the open contract does not necessarily mean that they are still here?

HON J J NETTO:

It is possible, yes.

HON J BOSSANO:

And is it not a fact, Mr Speaker, that according to the Employment Surveys which are based on PAYE records the figure that appears regularly is of the order of 550 which is half this, so does the Minister consider that it is that there has been an increase in the legally employed or that there is discrepancy between the two figures?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There appears to be a discrepancy between the two figures because I am aware of the fact that the figure that appears in relation to PAYE deduction cards is one of the order, I think it is slightly higher than that but certainly between 500 and 600 in respect of Spanish workers as far as the PAYE authorities are concerned. Of course there is a possibility that employers open contracts at the ETB but then delay longer in complying with their obligations under the Income Tax Ordinance to return PAYE records. One of the things that we want to do precisely is to improve the communications and the flow of information between all the various Government departments such as the Employment Department and the Income Tax Department to make sure that they are both working with the same information and that there is not somebody paying social insurance but not PAYE and vice versa. One possible explanation for the paradox that the hon Member identifies is that there may be some people who are properly documented at ETB but not properly documented at the Income Tax Office.

HON J BOSSANO:

So in fact the Chief Minister is confirming that this does not necessarily imply that there are more but simply that the discrepancy may be there all the time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Until we put in place the mechanism to properly assess the situation as it is, we have to recognise that every hypothesis is possible.

NO. 41 OF 1996THE HON J L BALDACHINO**VACANCIES AT THE ETB**

How many vacancies were registered with the ETB in the month of May and

1. in what trades
2. how many have been filled
3. the nationality of the persons filling the posts?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
AND BUILDINGS AND WORKS

The number of vacancies registered at the ETB in the month of May are 286.

Breakdown of trades are as follows:-

Accountants and auditors	2
Air Traffic Controller	1
Art and craft operatives	1
Beautician	1
Bunkering assistants	6
Carpenters and joiners	3
Chefs, cooks and kitchen hands	12
Cleaners	18
Clericals	33
Computer technicians	4
Consultants	3
Croupiers	6
Delivery drivers	12
Divers	1
Doctors	2
Electricians	6
Electronic fitters	1
Fieldworkers	1
Floor layers	1
Gardeners	1
Graphic designers	1
Ground workers	2
Hairdressers	4
Interior decorators	3
Labourers	25
Managers	11
Masons	6
Mechanics	2
Messengers	5

Meter readers	1
Night auditors	1
Nurses	3
Panel beaters	1
Plumbers	1
Production trainees	1
Radiographers	1
Receptionists	6
Refrigeration engineers	1
Seamen	1
Secretaries	11
Security guards	4
Sheet metal workers	1
Shipbrokers	2
Shop assistants and sales representatives	40
Shutterers	1
Stock controllers	1
Storemen	5
Structure specialists	2
Trainee Philatelists	1
Typesetters	1
Waiters and bartenders	22
Welders	1
Works Supervisors	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	<u>286</u>

Breakdown of nationality filling the vacancies are as follows:-

Gibraltarians	106
British	20
British married to Gibraltarians	3
Spaniards	16
Moroccans	-
Portuguese	1
Polish	1
Danish	-
Irish	2
Russians	4
Italians	1
French	1
United States	1
Others	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	<u>159</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 41 OF 1996

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister clarify whether the implication of the figure is that there is now a balance of unfilled vacancies which can be arrived at by deducting the 159 from the 286?

HON J J NETTO:

That is correct.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is it also correct to state that those nationalities that do not fall under the category of Gibraltarians and married to Gibraltarians - and when I say Gibraltarians I mean even British people who have been here a long time. That is how I interpret Gibraltarians. The ETB have not sent the other categories for interviews. Is that correct?

HON J J NETTO:

This is the coding that was inherited in terms of classification of nationalities. I am glad to see that the hon Member has a new definition.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

No. My definition has always been that and he can check Hansard on what is Gibraltarian. I even said it during the election campaign so it is not a new definition. It is a definition that exists in the ETB. That is not my question. My question is if those nationalities like Spaniards, Polish and others which he has mentioned are not people who the vacancy having been registered at the ETB and the ETB has sent those persons for interviews. Is that correct? The employment of those other nationalities have been employed by the employer directly and not necessarily the vacancy and the person being sent by the ETB.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Minister cannot possibly know the answer to that question by individual and a case by case basis. There may be some that resulted from the intervention of the Employment and Training Board. Some may have been direct employment with the approval of the Board. If the hon Member wants to know what the position is in respect of each of these 40-odd individuals certainly we have no difficulty in getting that information and giving it to him but he cannot expect the Minister to have it.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

My question is that it was the policy of the ETB when we were in Government not to send people to fill vacancies of the categories I have mentioned of Gibraltarians but not Polish or Spanish. Has that changed or is that the case still?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Nothing has changed just yet.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Then I am correct in assuming that the other nationalities have been directly employed by employers?

HON J J NETTO:

If there is any particular case that the hon Member wishes to know about he can write to me and I will give him an answer.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Further to that answer, the hon Member knows that the implication that he seeks to draw cannot possibly be correct because he knows that it was the policy of his Government especially, for example, four Russians. Well these are four Russians that he knows that his Government encouraged to come to work in Gibraltar. I have a pile this high of applications on my desk for work permits for Russians and residence permits for their wives and their children and the Opposition know that they were allowed to by-pass the system that he is now describing of the ETB not sending foreigners to fill vacancies because these people were allowed to come without the publication of vacancies.

HON J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister appears to misunderstand the nature of the question. The question is does the ETB keep a register of unemployed Russians which it sends to vacancies that are registered or is it that it considers applications from employers as was the established policy when an employer opens a vacancy and specifically requests for a particular individual with a particular skill to fill that vacancy? That is the nature of the question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member knows that the law requires all vacancies and all employment propositions to be notified to the ETB so if a particular company, for example, Crown Trade and Finance for which the ex-Minister for Education now works, wants to employ four Russians they are required by law to open those vacancies. He also knows that the Minister for Employment pursuant to the policies of the then Government of the day, will instruct the Employment and Training Board to approve then the filling of those vacancies by four named Russians all the way from Moscow because we all know that we do not have a long-standing Russian population in Gibraltar. These Russians did not come from Moscow in the hope that they might find employment in Gibraltar. They came to Gibraltar on the undertaking of the Government to allow them to be employed when they went through the motions of complying with the law. And the motions of complying with the law were that they should notify the vacancies but they should not worry because the ETB would approve it. That is exactly what has happened and I do not necessarily criticise the hon Member for doing it. But he cannot then stand there eight weeks after he did exactly that suggesting that the answer the Minister has given suggests that the ETB is sending Russians in preference to Gibraltarians to fill vacancies.

HON J BOSSANO:

Apart from the fact that the Chief Minister does not seem to be able to give information without getting himself very excited and hot under the collar, I can assure him that we are going strictly by the provisions in the Standing Orders which he rarely did when he was in the Opposition and asking for information without making insinuations. Whether it is an ex-Minister of Education that is employed or a client of his father-in-law that makes the request is not a relevant factor in either asking the question or giving the answer. All we are trying to establish is that the information we have been given is as a result of a continuation of the policy which we had and which we are prepared to defend. The answer appears to be yes and I do not see why else he needs to introduce extraneous matters.

MR SPEAKER:

I think we have finished with this question. Let us go to the next one.

NO. 42 OF 1996

THE HON A ISOLA

CONTAINER TRANS-SHIPMENT FACILITY

What plans do Government have for a container trans-shipment facility in Gibraltar?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

The Government wish to develop the container and cargo trans-shipment potential of the port as a source of economic activity and jobs. Government are aware of one scheme by Brazilian business interest, which Government are interested in pursuing. Government will also seek out other opportunities.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 42 OF 1996

HON A ISOLA:

Do they have any plans for these proposals from interested investors?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government of Gibraltar are not property developers and we are not port operators. We create political climates and political policies which make it possible for private commercial interests to pursue economic activity profitability and in a way that creates employment. That is the function of the Government of Gibraltar. We do not have our own, by which we mean, does the Gibraltar Social Democratic Party have aspirations to be port developers or have plans for port development? The answer is most certainly no. But we have approaches from private businessmen who want an indication from the Government about whether the Government would support that sort of economic development and the answer is that the Government are very interested in those such proposals and we will give it all the political support that we possibly can.

HON A ISOLA:

Is the one the Minister mentioned the only proposal that Government have on the table for a trans-shipment facility?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

On the table, the hon Member as well as such of his hon Colleagues who were in Government before know that the process of projects being on the table is a very long and fluid process, from the moment that somebody mentions to one an interest at a cocktail party to the time when they actually deliver a business plan and anything that the Government can seriously consider to be a project proposal that can be evaluated and tested for viability, the answer is that we have one and that reached us before we came into Government as I am certain it was also put to the

Opposition Members whilst they were in Government. There is a second one of which Opposition Members are also aware which is by an Italian company, which is a very ambitious project which has enormous logistical implications. If it could be pulled off - that is not the one referred to in the answer - I think it would be good for the economy, I have my serious doubts as to whether it is viable in implementation but we are going to consider that one as well to make sure that we are not rejecting any valuable economic project unnecessarily.

HON A ISOLA:

Am I right in saying that there are then two, the Italian and the previous one mentioned by the Minister?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, it depends two of what; there is one party talking to us that is interested with a project that we think is viable immediately and there is another one, which is the Italian company, that has been around us, as the hon Member knows, for a long time and that is still around but the matter has been taken no further to where it was when the hon Members were approached on it. So if that is his definition of projects there are two.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it the case that these two possible developments of trans-shipment facilities are considered to be mutually exclusive? That is, if the Government were to accept the one they seem to think has most chance of success, does that mean that automatically there would be no room for the other?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Not necessarily. In other words, the Government will not give any degree of exclusivity to any particular operator in any sector of the market but, of course, the Government are responsible and the Government will not wish to have established in Gibraltar the sort of employment instability that would result from Government attracting a particular operation to Gibraltar and then immediately undermining its viability by encouraging or allowing further operators to participate. I do not envisage that the port operations that we are discussing fall into that category because this is international trade on the whole. Most of the people who come with projects have their sources of work and they are separate sources of work and the only connection with Gibraltar is that it is a convenient physical location to do their cargo trans-shipment. So whilst there are sectors in which the Government may need to tread carefully to make sure we do not undermine a brand new operation, we do not envisage that this sector of the port activities falls into that category.

HON J BOSSANO:

I do not think the Chief Minister quite understood the thrust. I was not thinking so much that a new operator would undermine the viability of the existing one but that physically they might be competing for the same, that is, that they are alternatives of the use of the same facility and that if the facility is given to one then the others cannot come in because there is nowhere for them to come in. Is that the case?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, the physical constraint is real. He knows that the Italian proposal involved reclaiming large areas of new land. The existing proposal would involve the allocation of an area of sea frontage which would make it difficult for that to be a shared facility between that operator and another operator because it is not just cargo trans-shipment, it is not just container trans-shipment, it is cargo, storage, cargo consolidation and re-consolidation, cargo break-up and re-export. That requires a working space. It is not just stacking containers one on top of the other which can be done by several operators on the basis of a shared yard. Because this operation is more sophisticated and involves the break-up of bulk cargo into smaller units and the re-export into the market place in which those products are going to be consumed, I suspect that it would be difficult for that operation to be conducted on shared facilities but it is one of the aspects that we will certainly keep in mind when we consider these projects.

HON J C PEREZ:

Could the Chief Minister state whether the new project, not the one that was there before, envisages the passing of containers through the land frontier or whether it is only a trans-shipment from ship to ship?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The project as it has so far been explained to the Government substantially relies on re-exporting by sea. The operators, however, wish to reserve the right, which of course is theirs, to do that part of the re-exporting which is to the immediate vicinity of Gibraltar by land. Obviously the Government would not wish to stand in their way to doing so but have explained to them what possible difficulties they may find in their path in exporting cargo from Gibraltar in large quantities via the land frontier. They are aware of the problems and they appear to be content to proceed notwithstanding that.

NO. 43 OF 1996THE HON A ISOLA**ARRIVALS TO GIBRALTAR FOR 1995**

Will Government give the statistics for arrivals to Gibraltar for 1995 in respect of the following:

1. numbers of coaches coming to Gibraltar
2. numbers of passengers arriving on coaches
3. numbers of cruise liners
4. numbers of passengers arriving on cruise liners

and in each case what is the percentage increase, if any, on the previous year?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

The statistics are as follows:

In 1994 the number of coaches coming to Gibraltar was 8,311 and that compares with 1995 a figure of 10,292 signifying a 23.8 per cent increase. In 1994 the number of passengers arriving on coaches was 415,550 when compared with 1995 where the figure is 514,600 representing a 23.8 per cent increase. In 1994 the number of cruise liners was 118 compared to 1995 where the figure is 138 signifying a 17 per cent increase. In 1994 the number of passengers arriving on cruise liners was 69,429 compared to 1995 where the figure is 83,696, this represents a 20.6 per cent increase.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 43 OF 1996

HON J BOSSANO:

Given the increase that there was in 1995 in the number of visitors from these sources over 1994, do the Government consider that in fact retail sales to visitors were down in 1995 compared to 1994 as was being suggested at the time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Leader of the Opposition knows that certainly the most numerous of these categories, that is to say, number of coaches coming to Gibraltar are the least valuable tourists in terms of the spending per capita. He knows, I am sure, that the average expenditure by visitors in coaches is about £12 per head and the reason for that, as I am sure he also remembers, is that these are pre-packaged day excursionists where they come even with their little packed lunch in a box, they walk around the streets and spend very little money in the economy. So therefore the

fact that there is an increase in coach tourism, welcome as it is, we do not demean it as an improvement, is not necessarily relevant to be taken into account when analysing the figures of Main Street retail trade because these are not tourists of the sort that spend money in Main Street. Cruise liners, on the other hand, are more high spending in Gibraltar and certainly one would expect increasing number of cruise passengers to result in increased expenditure from cruise passengers on the Main Street but this might very easily have been offset by falls in visitors to Gibraltar of other sorts of high spending tourists. So the fact that there has been an increase in shopping in Main Street by one category of tourists does not necessarily demolish the assertion that Main Street sales are overall down because there are other categories of visitors to Gibraltar who have been coming in less numbers, as the hon Member knows, and they are mainly the high spending shopping Spanish tourists from places like Jerez and Seville and Madrid and places like that and the hon Member, I am sure remembers, that the position of the Chamber of Commerce and traders is that such tourists have been discouraged by the long queues at the border. So whilst recognising that in respect of coaches and cruises there has been an improvement in 1995 over 1994, I do not accept the insinuation in the hon Member's question that that necessarily disproves any assertion to the effect that Main Street figures cannot be worse during the same period.

HON J BOSSANO:

Let me say I am not aware whether the high spending Spanish tourists from Jerez have been declining or not. But is it in fact the case then that the Chief Minister is saying that the number of visitors across the frontier other than by coaches was lower in 1995 than in 1994?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am not saying that. I am saying that one cannot assess the impact on Main Street sales by a crude look at the numbers of people. It is the composition of that number of people. In other words, what number of them are higher spending, what number of them are lower spending, that is what determines the relationship between the prospects for Main Street trade and the number of tourists that cross the frontier. It is the composition of that number because if all five million were coach tourists then we know that if they spend on average £12 one could almost work out what the sales of main Street would be.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept, Mr Speaker, that as an inevitable logical consequence if there are more people coming and there is less money being spent then the individuals concerned must be spending less. But what I am trying to establish is whether, in fact, in terms of future policy in this area, the information that has been provided by the Government is that across the frontier 23 per cent more coaches came and of the ships 20 per cent more passengers landed and yet if this appears not to have been capable of even maintaining visitor spending in 1995 as compared to 1994. Would it not indicate that the ability to increase expenditure in the economy or to promote sales from the private sector to these visitors cannot be guaranteed by the numbers.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He is absolutely right, it means absolutely that, that is what I have said in the previous answer. The fact of the matter is that numbers is not by itself a sufficient factor to take into account, it is the composition of those numbers. It also shows why we have been saying for a number of years that we ought to be making greater efforts to attract the tourist that stay in Gibraltar, as opposed to the day visitors, both coach visitors and cruise liner visitors are at most day excursionists, many of them staying just for a few hours. That is why we believe and our policy will be calculated to enhance the presence in Gibraltar of tourists that stay in our hotels overnight for as long as possible because that creates not just economic activity and revenue for hotels but increases the chances that they will spend money on the Main Street. Of course, another factor that the hon Member I am sure will not wish to overlook is that the sales to tourists is offset not just by the increase in the number of low spending tourists and the decrease in the number of high spending tourists but indeed in the decrease in expenditure by local residents as a result of the incidence of such things as mortgages and home ownership and things like that. Main Street is not just about tourists.

HON J BOSSANO:

What the Chief Minister is saying is that the explanation for the presumed accuracy of the sad state of the business activity in 1995 may after all not be due to the decline on the number of visitors since these have increased but, in fact, to the diversion of domestic spending to things other than mortgages and therefore is he suggesting that in future people will not have mortgages?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I propose to keep my answer serious. The Leader of the Opposition must know because it is only 17 or 14 weeks since he was sitting in this chair that the vast majority of the people that come into Gibraltar, although not on coaches or on cruising are coming to Gibraltar to buy specific items such as petrol, they come in their cars. What I am saying is that in answer to his suggestion earlier to my hon Friend that the increase in the number of coaches and the increase in the number of cruise liners puts in doubt the accuracy of assertions made at the time by traders that Main Street sales were down, as I have understood what the hon Member was saying is, well how can that be true if in fact there were nearly 2,000 more coaches and nearly 100,000 more passengers from coaches and 20 more cruise ships visiting and I am telling him and I think it is a self-evident reality that the fact that there is an increase in one source of visitors to Gibraltar cannot be held up to prove that Main Street trade must necessarily not have deteriorated because it presupposes that all the other sources of business for Main Street trade have not fallen by more than has been contributed by the increase in the number of visiting coaches and visiting cruise ships and that must be a logical and self-evident fact.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept that that is a logical consequence if one accepts, as the Chief Minister apparently does, that the assessment that was being presented and the picture is the gospel truth and cannot be questioned. But if the possibility is that it may be wrong then it could be that business was not doing so badly as the Government Member who is now a Minister and was then the President of the Chamber of

Commerce thought at the time. Is it in fact the case that there is evidence that expenditure from other sources was declining by a greater amount than the increase in expenditure which, even if people spend no more money in 1995 than they did in 1994 and we do not know whether they did or they did not, but if we assume they spent the same then if there were 20 per cent more people it is not an unreasonable assumption to say this category spent 20 per cent more in 1995 than in 1994. Therefore if the total spent was less in 1995 than in 1994 do the Government have any information available to them which would indicate that the fall in spending from other sources was greater than the increase in spending from these sources and that therefore the global figure was down as was being suggested at the time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government do not have such information except to the extent that I have just seen, as he used to see, certain import and export statistics which the previous Government chose not to make public from which he knows a start can be made in doing the sort of analysis that he is now asking for. But one thing is for certain, I do not accept the premise of his question which now appears to suggest that trade in Gibraltar got together to submit false returns to the Chamber of Commerce questionnaire and to describe as unhealthy a situation which he now suggests may have been healthy. I do not know if what he is suggesting is either that the ex-President of the Chamber of Commerce and its committee which includes members who are known to more supportive of his party than mine, that they all got together to doctor the results of the questionnaires submitted by traders or that otherwise the traders all got together and decided to paint an inaccurate picture of how their businesses were doing in order, presumably he must think, to create a climate of bad economic scenario to assist me in beating him at the forthcoming general election. I can only assume that that is the picture that is taking shape in the Leader of the Opposition's mind.

HON J BOSSANO:

I have the difficulty, Mr Speaker, of not being able to explain to the Chief Minister why all his assumptions are wrong because I am required to phrase my answers to his questions as if he was asking questions instead of answering them, I suppose it is because he got so used to asking me questions that he cannot get himself out of the habit. Will the Government agree that the wild deductions that the Chief Minister has made as a result of my innocent question are not justified because, in fact, it is not unreasonable to assume that any businessman who is asked whether water, for example, is too expensive in 1996 notwithstanding the fact that it is at the same price that it was in 1984, is more likely to answer yes than no and that therefore it is not so much the questionnaire and the answers but the political manipulation of those answers to present a picture of an economy facing a bleak prospect and an economy about to collapse because of the collapse of visitors and of visitor expenditure that I am asking the Government whether they are still of that view and that that is the manipulation that was made by the Government Member and not by the innocent traders?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It seems to me that the time to have argued this case was during the general election campaign which the Leader of the Opposition did without success. The fact of the matter is that as I recall the Chamber of Commerce surveys they ask questions about the prospects that traders thought their businesses had in the forthcoming years and that not all the questions were capable of political manipulation, some of them asked straightforward factual information. Frankly, I note that the hon Member persists in his view that the Chamber survey therefore did not create a bleak economic picture. Well, there is the survey, there are the members. If the Opposition Member thinks that trade is good and that employment is OK he is going to have to find some explanation for why he is sitting there and I am sitting here.

MR SPEAKER:

This is the last question because we are departing from the original question.

HON J BOSSANO:

With all due deference, Mr Speaker, I think the answers are departing more than the questions.

MR SPEAKER:

Both of them. So that is why you have a final question.

HON J BOSSANO:

The final question, Mr Speaker, is it in fact therefore the case that the Government now consider that increasing the number of visitors to Gibraltar other than people staying in hotels will not produce an increase in economic activity which will be sufficient to change the negative view that either they held or they chose knowing it not to be true to promote so assiduously over the last six months?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government do not accept that.

ORAL

NO. 44 OF 1996

THE HON A ISOLA

FERRY SERVICE TO ALGECIRAS

Will Government take steps to support the establishment of a ferry service to Algeciras in accordance with Community law?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

Government will give all the political support that we reasonably can to any operator wishing to establish a ferry service to and from Gibraltar which would operate to the required maritime standards of safety.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 44 OF 1996

HON A ISOLA:

Will that extend to, if necessary, supporting a case in the event of a licence being refused by the Spanish authorities at Algeciras?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Politically yes.

HON A ISOLA:

Financial support, Mr Speaker?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Probably not. It depends on the commercial standing of the operator in question, on the commercial and political interest at the time in Gibraltar but we all understand that the establishment of Gibraltar's legal right within the European Union for there to be maritime communications between Gibraltar and Spain is something in which we all have an interest and Government would not be blind to that overriding political interest and would decide our policy as and when the time came in a manner which addressed that national interest.

HON J BOSSANO:

Do the Government not agree that it is the political interference with the Community right to provide inter-Community sea services that negatively affects the commercial viability of undertaking it and that therefore it is unlikely that somebody will be prepared to take the commercial risk when the cost of taking that risk is increased significantly by political factors?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Indeed and Gibraltar has experienced on the prospects of success of a more direct approach by a party other than a commercial operator when we went on the airport case but I accept that it is unlikely that any pure commercial operator will have a sufficient interest in establishing such a service that he would be willing to go through the time and expense of taking this all the way through the legalistic and political minefield that they will inevitably confront. That is absolutely correct, I share that view.

HON J BOSSANO:

Therefore do the government in fact agree that in sharing that view that if they also share the view that it is in Gibraltar's national interest to be able to successfully pursue a case which demonstrates that its Community rights are being violated and that will result in them requiring to be respected, that this is something worth considering as a sound investment in protecting our position in the Union?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It is no more worth considering in 1996 than it has been between 1988 and 1996 but certainly if what the Leader of the Opposition is saying is that they failed to give consideration to it and are now inviting that I should do so the answer is that I am happy to consider it.

HON J BOSSANO:

No, Mr Speaker, I am quite capable of managing more or less in broken English although I did not have the benefit of a public school education so I do not need to be constantly told in answers if what I am saying is (a) instead of (b), if I wanted to say (b) I would say (b) and not (a). What I am saying is, given the fact that it is the policy that we have developed to pursue such a course provided we can find somebody willing to go forward; would they agree that this is worth doing if they can find somebody to go forward? That is my question.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The answer to the question is clear. If an operator is willing to go forward the Government will give it all the political support that we reasonably can. In a supplementary the Hon Mr Isola asked whether we would extend political support to financial support and I said that we would be willing to consider even that but that we would consider it on the merits of the case put forward and on the legal advice that we had at the time about the prospects of success of such a case, an issue that I have not yet had an opportunity to consider. So it is not that we are saying that we will not lend financial support but we would certainly not lend financial support unless we were satisfied that we were not just investing taxpayers money in a lost cause. If we had a reasonable legal opinion suggesting that we had a reasonable prospect of success then I think that there would be sufficient interest of Gibraltar at stake to merit the investment of taxpayers money.

NO. 45 OF 1996

THE HON A ISOLA

PROPOSED PLANS FOR CASEMATES

Will Government give details of the proposed plans for Casemates as announced by the Chief Minister at the Ceremonial Opening of the House of Assembly?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

Government intend to convert Casemates Square into a focal point for tourism in Gibraltar. This will require the relocation of the Moroccan Workers Hostel and the conversion of the Casemates vaults into shops and leisure related premises such as cafeterias, restaurants and exhibition halls. Specific plans are not yet available.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 45 OF 1996

HON A ISOLA:

Are these plans of the Government or are they proposals from developers to the Government?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member knows from our manifesto and indeed from many statements that I have made in the House from the Opposition that the Government have, as a matter of political policy, the desire to see Casemates exploited to a greater extent for touristic purposes. We are therefore going to invest political and perhaps also financial resources in ensuring that Casemates develops in that way. These are not projects of the Government in the sense that we know politically what we want to see in Casemates but Government are not going to do the project ourselves. I do not know if that answers the question. But certainly the desire to see Casemates developed in a particular way is a matter of our long-standing policy which, as the hon Member knows, is in our manifesto. But it is not a development project of the Government in the sense that the Government are not going to necessarily do it.

HON A ISOLA:

I am not clear. In the first part of the answer the Chief Minister said they were going to give political and possibly financially support. In the latter part of the answer he suggests that it is mere political support. Could he tell us what part the Government will play in any proposed development at Casemates other than approving it politically?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We will procure the interest amongst developers to do this. We will probably make a public invitation for people to submit proposals to the Government of development projects and we will publish what the Government want done in relation to Casemates and then we will see what offers come back from property developers, both domestic and from abroad, and Government will in that way proceed to realise our desire to see Casemates used for touristic purposes and if our plans prosper Casemates will look very different to what it looks today.

HON A ISOLA:

Does the Health Centre form part of the plans for the overall Casemates development?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

We have already answered that question earlier on. The Government are willing to include in the uncluttering of other activities from Casemates even the Health Centre but there is not now a plan in front of the Development and Planning Commission receiving detailed consideration because there has not been sufficient time. I repeat that Government know exactly what we want Casemates to be developed into and will only accept development proposals which implement the Government's policy in relation to Casemates.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Do the Government have any ideas of where they intend to relocate the Health Centre?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That has been answered as well. The answer is that there are several possibilities, no one is actually giving this matter particular attention, it is not that we are looking around for a site for the Health Centre because that is something that we want to do as a matter of priority. We were asked whether there were plans or intentions or anyone was considering the relocation of the Health Centre and we said yes because this is something that we have considered but not considered in the sense of getting on and implementing it. In order to relocate the Health Centre we would have to find suitable alternative accommodation for it and also come to the conclusion that the economic benefits from moving the Health Centre out of Casemates compensated for the cost of relocating the Health Centre itself. All these decisions will have to be made at the time.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Chief Minister state whether the Government have received proposals for the development of parts of the Casemates or for the commencement of particular touristic operations within the area of Casemates which could form part of the overall project as foreseen by the Government?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Our plans for Casemates are plans that, as has been explained by the Chief Minister, are well-known and were reflected in our manifesto. We have already received private sector interest in the development of Casemates. Some of those plans, as Opposition Members will know, pre-date our election into Government, there has been interest in the development of Casemates for some time and we are already seeing considerable interest in reviving those proposals and in marrying them with the ideas of the Government of our own improvisation that will bring to the project.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Are those who are proposing investing in Casemates local companies or are they companies from abroad?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

At this stage, Mr Speaker, the interest we have received is from local developers, from developers that have long shown commitment to Gibraltar. As the Chief Minister has pointed out, it will be our intention to seek interest from a wide spectrum of possible investors but so far because of the degree to which knowledge of this is known in Gibraltar only, what we have received is local interest.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it the Government's intention to have Casemates vacant prior to inviting developers to make proposals or to vacate it only if they decide that proposals that they have received are going to be pursued?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

The plans with regard to Casemates are one of the show pieces of this Government's tourism project. We have not taken detailed decisions on how that would be implemented. Needless to say the project of the type we have in mind will involve a complete rethink of things like traffic flow in that area, access to Casemates and it is premature at this stage for the Government to advance anything more on how that could develop.

HON J BOSSANO:

That is not my question. I am not talking about access or anything else. My question is very simple and very clear. There are currently people living in Casemates. Is it the Government's intention to offer Casemates as a development site with vacant possession and invite proposals or to leave it as it is unless and until they have decided to accept proposals and only then to start vacating it, which of the two?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Again, I can confirm that it would be the case that the hostel would have to be vacated and Casemates as a building would be the subject of the development. We are not in a position at this stage to indicate when that process would start. Clearly the process is one that would tackle sensitivity and it would only be started when there was in-hand a project deserving of that procedure. So there is no question of emptying that in isolation, we will do so as and when this becomes relevant in the context of the project that the Government can approve.

HON J BOSSANO:

So the answer is effectively the second option. If it is going to go ahead then they will look at moving people otherwise they will....

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, when it is going to go ahead, not if. Casemates will be redeveloped. All that remains to be selected is the project and all that remains to be established is how soon the project will get going.

HON J BOSSANO:

Then am I to understand that if it is not if but when, a policy decision has already been taken which is based on knowing already even though all this international investors have not yet been identified, that there is a desire and there is capital and there is a willingness to go ahead and that this is already known?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course a policy decision has already been taken, it is included in our manifesto. The fact that the Government wish to and intend to and will convert Casemates into a focal point for tourism in Gibraltar is an important strand of Government's tourist policy which will be realised. That necessarily involves the movement of the Moroccan Hostel facility out of Casemates and whether or not there is private sector interest in developing Casemates on behalf of the Government, that will happen because certainly the Government are determined that during this first term of office the vaults which are presently used for hostels will be used as commercial premises for the enhancement of the tourist product and, if necessary, Government will do it ourselves.

HON J BOSSANO:

Then the answer is that the first answer I got from the Hon Mr Montegriffo is not the right answer and that the new answer I have now had is that independent of whether there is a viable private sector development or not, as a matter of Government policy the Government consider that those buildings are used better for a commercial activity than for the residents and that therefore they will definitely be moving the people out even if there are no commercial proposals that are acceptable to the Government and that they will do that at their own expense?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, what my hon Friend said was that the movement of the hostel would be correlated in time with the commencement of the project to convert Casemates from a hostel into commercial premises and that answer remains accurate whether that conversion is done by Government or whether it is done by a private developer. I do not see that there is any conflict or contradiction whatsoever between the answer that I have given and the one that my hon Friend, the Minister for Trade and Industry, has given.

HON J BOSSANO:

I am sure, Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister will be able to see it when he reads the Hansard because I am very clear, since I asked the same question several times, of the answer that I got. The answer that I got was that if there was no commercial development that was acceptable to the Government then the question of moving the people out would not arise. If whether there is or there is not, the present use is going to be changed, then presumably the Government are committed to that independent of the level of interest they get and that is, as I understand, the situation from the latest answer and I would be grateful if the confirmation that I am getting is that in fact the use of the Casemates as a hostel will be terminated as a matter of Government policy irrespective of whether a commercial developer is available or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, irrespective of whether a commercial developer is available or not because if there is no commercial developer it will be done by the Government. The Leader of the Opposition does not distinguish between a commercial developer and the conversion of Casemates into commercial premises and that is how he has misled himself into thinking that there has been contradictory answer. The original answer to the question says, "Government intend to convert Casemates Square into a focal point for tourism in Gibraltar. This will require the relocation of the Moroccan Workers Hostel and the conversion of the Casemates vaults into shops and leisure related premises....." etc. That is what the Government will do. We prefer not to invest taxpayers' money in doing it and therefore we are going to see if we can interest the commercial developer in doing it. But if there are no commercial developers interested in doing it Government will do it. In either case we will not relocate the Moroccans elsewhere two years before this is going to happen. Whether it is done by a commercial developer or whether it is done by the Government, the timing of the relocation of the hostel elsewhere, which is the issue that my hon Friend addressed, will be staged and timed in a way which is relevant to the need for vacant possession of the Casemates vaults so that either the private commercial developer or the Government can start the process of conversion of the vaults into commercial premises.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does that mean therefore that they do not expect that that move will take place in the current financial year?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It does not necessarily follow. It might take place in this financial year but certainly I cannot give the Leader of the Opposition any accurate estimation of the timing to that narrow extent.

HON A ISOLA:

Might I ask if the street market is included in the plans for the upgrading of Casemates?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is most certainly not.

NO. 46 OF 1996

THE HON A ISOLA

CRUISE LINERS

Will Government proceed as planned by the previous Government to invite cruise liner owners to Gibraltar to consider and discuss methods of improving the product with Government and all interested parties locally?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

A conference is planned in Gibraltar during August of this year. Invitations have been extended to the principal cruise operators already.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO: 46 OF 1996

HON A ISOLA:

Do they have any idea of who will be coming? Have all the invitations been accepted?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

What we have done is send invitations to the principal cruise liner operators which include P & O Cruises, Princess, Crystal, Royal Caribbean and Cunard and we are hoping to have a reply to them early next week. Once we know which are the ones that are actually accepting then we will call on others to join us but we really want to make sure that these principal ones are accepting and are coming to make the thing a success.

HON A ISOLA:

Which parties locally do the Government intend to invite to the conference also?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Obviously we will be inviting all the cruise liner operators which have an interest locally and mainly people in the tourism industry as well.

HON A ISOLA:

Does that include the taxis?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Yes, I think they do play a major role in the infrastructure in actually improving on the product that we have in Gibraltar and therefore they do have a very major important role to play in this.

NO. 47 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

DIRECTOR OF TOURISM

Do Government intend to recruit a new post of Director of Tourism from within the ranks of the Civil Service?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS
AND THE PORT

Government's plans for reconstituting the Tourism Department have not yet been finalised but Government will certainly play an active and direct role in the promotion and organisation of tourism.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 47 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Minister answer my question? Will he recruit the Head of that tourist section from within the Civil Service or does he intend to look for a person outside the Civil Service to head that department?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The question has been answered. The Government's plans have not yet been finalised.

HON J C PEREZ:

So the Government are leaving open the question of whether to recruit within the Civil Service or outside the Civil Service?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Absolutely.

NO. 48 OF 1996THE HON R MOR**INMATES IN PRISON**

What is the current number of Gibraltarian inmates and other different nationalities held in prison?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Of the current inmates at the prison nine are Gibraltarians and the others are of the following nationalities:

British (UK)	1
Spanish	8 (includes 1 female)
Moroccan	9 (includes 2 females)
French	1
Russian	<u>5</u>
Total	<u>33</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 48 OF 1996

HON R MOR:

If we discard the Russians who are in prison because of having immigrated illegally, the remainder would add up to 19 other nationalities apart from Gibraltarians. So it means that we have at least over two other nationalities for every Gibraltarian held in prison. If the Minister goes back in time he will find that that is roughly what has been the case over the years. How is it that we have heard not so long ago alarming reports of the increase in serious crimes in Gibraltar? Would he not accept that the situation appears to be static going by the statistics he has just given me?

HON H CORBY:

The hon Member was in charge of the prisons for eight years. I can give him what I have now which is what I am responsible for now and I can give him a breakdown if he wants of the Gibraltarians on remand, I can give him the British (UK) and what their related crimes are and I can give him the whole section of it if he wants me to read it out to him. Insofar as crime is concerned, we have great priority on law and order, whether it seems the same as it was eight years ago I can tell him through Government statistics that on the question of drugs it has gone up 400 per cent, that is drug offences and the rest. So it has gone up quite considerably. Whether they are fined and not taken to prison is another matter but even so crime is still on the increase in Gibraltar.

HON R MOR:

Would the Minister not accept that it is only when a serious crime is proven that a person would end up in jail? What I am saying is that I have gone back as far as 1985 when the border fully opened and that the statistics in prison have been very much the same as they are today. The frontier opened in 1985 which was before we had come into Government. Would he not therefore accept that even today the situation is very much the same as it was way back in 1985 and it is therefore not the question that there has been a very serious increase in serious crimes in Gibraltar?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can only assume that the Opposition Member is not living in Gibraltar. I do not accept his suggestion that because the prison population has not increased that there is not an increasing problem of law and order in Gibraltar. The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of serious crime regrettably goes undetected and unprosecuted and therefore unprocessed. Secondly, the hon Member knows because it was not that long ago that he was getting the figures that we are now getting and he therefore knows that the recorded detected instances of serious crimes not just in drugs but indeed offences against personal security in terms of offences of violence, traffic offences, they are on the increase. However, the hon Member does make a good point and it may well be that the legislature will have to address its mind to the question of whether judges are making sufficient use of prison terms in order to deter the commission of serious crime in Gibraltar because one thing is for certain, serious crime is on the increase, everybody in Gibraltar knows it except apparently the Opposition Member and if he believes that the extent of the prison population is a reflection of the trend of crime in Gibraltar then this Government are certain that he is completely mistaken.

NO. 49 OF 1996

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

FLATS AT SCUD HILL

Can Government confirm that the flats produced by the conversion of the old St Joseph's School at Scud Hill have been allocated according to the Housing Allocation Scheme by the Housing Allocation Committee?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Yes, I can confirm that the flats produced by the conversion of the old St Joseph's School at Scud Hill will be allocated according to the Housing Allocation Scheme by the Housing Allocation Committee.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 49 OF 1996

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Have these flats already been offered to people?

HON H CORBY:

The flats in question I believe are not yet finished but in the process of being finished. The rent for these flats are currently being assessed and will be computed in accordance with the current procedures for the calculation of rent for Government flats. They have not been allocated yet but they are in the process of it.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Can the Minister then confirm that no applicants for housing allocation have been offered these flats and that none have been to the flats to view them? Is that correct?

HON H CORBY:

No allocations have been made of these flats as yet.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

The Minister has said that the rent will be according to housing flats. Can he provide the information to what rates of rent is he referring to by square, is it to the Laguna Estate or to which Government rental accommodation is he referring that the rent will be similar to?

HON H CORBY:

I am told by the Housing Department that produce the rates for Government flats that these will be in accordance with the refurbishment programme and the rent allocated to a refurbishment of an old building. That is the rent that will be allocated to it.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So what he is actually saying, Mr Speaker, is that he will consider the rent to be as a pre-war dwelling which has been refurbished and that will be the rent, is that correct?

HON H CORBY:

It is pre-war and then there is a formula for the refurbishment and the cost.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Will there be any other charges apart from rent due to the fact that these flats do have provision for parkings?

HON H CORBY:

No, there will be no additional cost for the parking area. The parking area, I am told, will be if the tenants agree in the patio adjacent to the building.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Will the Minister also confirm if they are looking at to allocate a percentage of the flats to medical cases?

HON H CORBY:

No, nothing of that has come through my office but we will certainly allocate it on the basis of the housing waiting list. The flats below, as the hon Member may know, are two big bedrooms at the very bottom of the housing estate. Then the top half is three bedrooms and four bedrooms and there is one which comes through the back of the building which is another very small one bedroom flat but that will be allocated insofar as the Housing Allocation Committee.

NO. 50 OF 1996

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

HOUSING APPLICATIONS

Can Government state how many housing applications are categorised as:

1. medical cases by the Medical Housing Advisory Board in each category
2. social cases by the Housing Advisory Committee?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The position at present is that of the persons on the Government housing waiting list which are as follows:

7 are medically categorised A
6 are medically categorised C
10 are socially categorised A
6 are socially categorised B
1 is socially categorised C

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 50 OF 1996

HON J L BALDACHINO: 4

This is the medical cases I am referring to now, Mr Speaker. This is apart from other Government tenants who are waiting to be reallocated flats. In other words, they are not applicants but there are still other medical cases which are Government tenants, is that correct?

HON H CORBY:

That is completely correct.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Did I hear the Minister correctly when he said that there are only seven medical cases A?

HON H CORBY:

Yes, because the hon Member's question specifically states housing applications. What the Minister is stating is other persons which he is referring to which are people who live in accommodation which is adequate and I explained this to the Chief Minister a while back, for the needs but due to circumstances they now are either on medical or social list.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Am I correct then in assuming, Mr Speaker, by the answer he has given me that there are no housing applicants on the medical list categorised B or C, is that correct?

HON H CORBY:

There are six medically categorised C. I said that before.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

But no B?

HON H CORBY:

No B.

NO. 51 OF 1996

THE HON R MOR

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CAMP EMMANUEL

Will Government continue to provide financial support to Camp Emmanuel to assist in drug rehabilitation as was the case under the GSLP administration?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The Government are committed to the establishment of a drug rehabilitation centre in Gibraltar upon which it will consult with all the interested parties, including Camp Emmanuel Trust. When a facility has been established in Gibraltar the Government will have to review our position as to the provision of financial support to Camp Emmanuel in Spain.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 51 OF 1996

HON R MOR:

Until such time will the Government keep on financing Camp Emmanuel?

HON H CORBY:

The payments have been continuing as was the case with the previous administration.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

They have been started as was agreed by the previous administration. I understand that we made the first one.

HON R MOR:

Will the Chief Minister please clarify what he has just said?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, one of the first decisions that I had to make after polling day was whether to initiate the agreement that the previous Government had done with Camp Emmanuel on the £1,000 per week and the decision that the Government made was to continue with that arrangement until such time as the Government had reviewed the position.

HON J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister must have presumably been informed that this was a continuation of an agreement that previously existed which was related to paying £150 per person there and that this worked out at an average which was close to the £1,000 that he is talking about so it is not that they were getting nothing before. He is totally misinformed about that.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

But the arrangement about the £1,000 a week, yes.

NO. 52 OF 1996

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL INSURANCE PENSIONS SCHEME

What is the current position as regards the replacement of the old Social Insurance Pensions Scheme?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The current position is what it was immediately prior to the 16th May 1996 in keeping with the arrangement entered into by the previous administration with Her Majesty's Government.

Arising from this, the Government intend to establish a closed scheme to pay benefits arising from the former Social Insurance Fund, into which Her Majesty's Government will pay amounts necessary to cover payments to pre-1969 Spaniards, and Gibraltar will pay those amounts needed for all other beneficiaries. The closed scheme will require legislative effect as a matter of some priority and it is therefore intended to introduce the necessary regulations shortly. Benefits will be backdated to the 1st January 1994.

A new compulsory scheme, also backdated to the 1st January 1994, will also be established. It is intended that the new scheme will be operative on the 1st January 1997. This will require primary legislation which should hopefully be brought before this House later in the autumn.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 52 OF 1996

HON J BOSSANO:

The position that the Government have explained, Mr Speaker, was prefaced by saying that it was the same as it was before the 16th May. Are the Government not aware that before the 16th May there was a commencement of a process of discussion between the Government of Gibraltar and the Government of the United Kingdom where the Government of the United Kingdom through their technical experts that they sent to Gibraltar made a number of proposals some of which were considered acceptable and some of which were considered unacceptable and is therefore then Government saying that they consider unacceptable what was unacceptable before the 16th May and they consider acceptable what was acceptable before the 16th May?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, what the Government are saying is that those proposals are being studied by us because what was unacceptable to them may not be unacceptable to us. The room for manoeuvre is not great because really there are not too many controversial points at issue in respect of the closed scheme at least and that list of UK proposals

is presently being studied by officials on behalf of the Government of Gibraltar with a view to entering into a final agreement as to the drafting of the closed scheme negotiations, or discussions rather, have not yet commenced in respect of the open scheme which will commence from the 1st January 1994 onwards. So the answer to the Leader of the Opposition is that the exact detail of the UK proposal is under review insofar as it relates to the nitty gritty, so to speak, of the closed scheme but that the Government are bound by what he agreed in the Heads of Agreement which I have in front of me, with the British Government.

HON J BOSSANO:

Let me make absolutely clear to the Government, Mr Speaker, that they do not need to feel bound by anything they are told by the British Government that they are bound by because if I had accepted that philosophy in 1988 I would have found myself bound by, for a start, having to pay £1.5 million to Spanish pensioners which the previous administration said they had to pay and I refused to pay. I would say that the Government should, in looking at this, assume the responsibility of rejecting anything they feel that we accepted which is not in the best interests of Gibraltar and I would like confirmation that he will be prepared to take that stand.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not necessarily prepared to take the stand that he took on all issues because as he well knows we had different opinions on different matters. I do not know why he should think that I am being directed by the United Kingdom when I spoke of officials, I had thought that he would assume that I meant Gibraltar Government officials. Unlike 1988 when he arrived in office I do not regard independent professional civil servants with suspicion. Gibraltar has an Administrative Secretary that served him and now serves me and the persons who are guiding me on these matters are the Administrative Secretary of the Government of Gibraltar and indeed other civil servants available to the Government of Gibraltar with expertise on matters of pension. So I do not see why he should jump to the conclusion that I am dancing to the tune of British Government officials when he must know that I have access to papers and access to advice designed to ensure continuity between one administration and another and that that advice is local advice and not UK advice.

HON J BOSSANO:

I was not talking about any advice that he is getting from anybody, I was talking about the fact that he chose in his reply to say that he had in front of him a piece of paper which is the result of agreements between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Gibraltar which he has to continue with and I am telling him that if there is anything in those agreements that he would not have done then he should feel free not to be bound by it. It has nothing to do with the advice he may get from the Administrative Secretary or not get from the Administrative Secretary, it has to do with the freedom of political action that he has and which I would not accept he has had removed from him prior to the 16th May.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not agree. The document that I have here in front of me as to what the previous Government of Gibraltar agreed has been given to me by the Administrative Secretary so I assume that it is an accurate statement of what the previous Government of Gibraltar agreed. As far as I am concerned this is a technical matter, I am having it confirmed to me that the terms of the agreement are as had been agreed and if that is confirmed to me, as far as I am concerned, I feel that a commitment entered into on behalf of Gibraltar by the previous Government is a commitment which the new Government in a technical matter of this nature should be bound by and that is the view that I will take.

HON J BOSSANO:

The point that I am making to the Chief Minister and I want confirmation on is that if we agreed to carry out certain steps by July is he saying that he is bound to carry out those steps by July even though he would not wish to carry them out or is he saying that he would carry them out because they make sense and they are fundamentally different things on which we wish to have a reply because if he is saying the former then I am telling him that we in the Opposition do not accept that the nature of the undertakings that we gave the British Government as to what we would do after the general election were anything other than based on the caveat provided we were elected to do it. There was absolutely no question at any stage that there was any undertaking given to the British Government that would have to be honoured by a different administration.

NO. 53 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

LATHBURY BARRACKS

Can Government confirm that the option on the possible use of the site at Lathbury Barracks by Sheffield University has been extended and if so, until when?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

I can confirm that the option on the possible use of the site at Lathbury Barracks has been extended in conversations held between the Minister for Trade and Industry, myself, representatives of the University College Gibraltar Ltd as partners of Sheffield University and also Coopers and Lybrand who are currently carrying out a feasibility study on their behalf have been held. It is expected that this feasibility study will be concluded by September this year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 53 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

Much as we would welcome obviously the institution of a university at Lathbury Barracks, a project in fact strongly recommended by the former Minister for Education, is it not ironic in principle that the Government should extend an option on the site to a commercial consortium without it being subject to open tender particularly when we refer to the Chief Minister's comment recently on the dangers, presumably, of exclusivity in investment?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think it is peculiar at all. If the hon Member cares to read our election manifesto he will see that it makes careful distinction between contracts for the supply of goods and services to the Government in respect of which we will apply strict tender conditions and contracts for the allocation of Government lands to projects that are deemed to be of importance to the overall economy which will not necessarily be put out to tender. That distinction is clearly made in the manifesto so I do not see why the hon Member should have come to the conclusion that it is peculiar.

HON J GABAY:

What I had in mind, and it does touch on the tender system, whatever may have been said in the manifesto, if an option in my opinion is actually extended it should not be open-ended. There ought to be some clause explaining the reason for the extension and perhaps even the penalty if the end result is not what would be required.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

This is not an enforceable contractual option, this is a decision by the Government to hold in abeyance allocating Lathbury Barracks to some other purpose to give people who have put an interesting proposal forward, time to establish whether that proposal is viable, that is all that has happened. There has been no award of any proprietary interest in the land, there is nothing that they can demand from the Government, there is nothing that they can sell, they have nothing of value, what there is is an agreement by the Government not to allocate the land for some other purpose until they have been given a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate to the Government that their plan is viable. If they show that their plan is viable then the Government will very probably agree to allocate to them all or such part of Lathbury Barracks as the Government are persuaded is necessary for the establishment of a university in Gibraltar.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Chief Minister perhaps state whether by, say, the end of the year if the proposals do not materialise into a formal proposal for a university, if the idea does not materialise into a formal proposal, whether Government would reconsider the idea of having the College of Further Education located at Lathbury Barracks as was planned prior to the general election?

HON DR B A LINARES:

The answer is yes.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

And I might like to add that it is not December or the end of the year, the answer to the question says that they have until September.

HON J C PEREZ:

I am giving the hon Member some leeway.

NO. 54 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

PRIVATE EDUCATION

What is the Government's policy as regards private education?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The establishment of a private school is a constitutional entitlement. The Government respect this constitutional right.

The Government, however, are also responsible for ensuring that any private school conforms to certain standards required in Part V of the 1974 Education Ordinance. May I add as a personal note that I am proud to have been instrumental in the enactment of this Ordinance as I was a member at the time of the Education Ordinance Commission. The section in the Ordinance that I have referred to I would quote to be absolutely explicit, reads like this, "The Director shall not grant approval for the establishment or conduct of an independent school unless he is satisfied that the following requirements will be complied with, that is to say:- (a) the school premises shall be suitable for a school; (b) the school premises shall be adequate and suitable having regard to the number, ages and sex of the pupils to be accommodated therein; (c) efficient and suitable instruction shall be provided at the school, having regard to the ages and sex of the pupils for whom instruction is to be provided; (d) every person engaged in teaching in the school shall be a person of suitable character, educational qualifications and training, having regard to the purposes for which he is to be employed; (e) the need for such school shall be established; (f) there shall be no unreasonable refusal of admission of pupils to the school". Government policy as regards private education is well defined within the parameters of this Ordinance.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 54 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

The purpose of the question of course was not in fact to put into dispute the question of choice in private education. It was merely to try to find out whether the Minister has the set-up and the inspectorate, given the complexities of the national curriculum, to monitor and ascertain that the required standards are being maintained particularly in schools with very small numbers and limited perhaps physical facilities.

HON DR B A LINARES:

Yes, indeed, I am satisfied that the Department of Education has the resources in terms of inspectorate to monitor precisely that private schools, particularly those established recently, come up to the required standards. In fact, it has already been agreed in conversations with the President of the Jewish Community and the headmaster of the Jewish Girls' School recently established, that there will be a comprehensive inspection of the school in a positive sense, in terms of assistance, in early September.

NO. 55 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

SCHOOL MOVES

Do the Government envisage that the school moves recently announced by the Minister for Education will be satisfactorily implemented, without undue disruption of classes, by the beginning of the new school year in September?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

We have assurances from the Government Technical Officer in charge of the works programme related to the school moves that these will be completed well in time for the beginning of the school term in September. The schedule of works has been drawn up in consultation with the headteachers of the schools involved in these moves, that is, the Headteacher of Governor's Meadow, the Headteacher of Bishop Fitzgerald and the Principal of the College of Further Education and they are perfectly satisfied themselves with the specifications in this schedule of works as meeting their requirements totally and ensuring an adequate provision for the children and students at the beginning of the school year.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 55 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

Further to that answer, Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware that the staff of Bishop Fitzgerald School have voiced serious anxieties at the manner in which the move is being currently conducted and feel aggrieved at the lack of timely consultation in preparation for the move?

HON DR B A LINARES:

There have been a few voices raising these cries of alarm, disgruntled voices. I would not agree that this has been the staff globally of Bishop Fitzgerald School. I have indeed before me the prospectus which has been published by Bishop Fitzgerald School by the Headteacher to parents, a recently beautiful publication in which she explicitly states, "In September 1996 the school will be housed in what used to be St George's School. The location will have ample accommodation for the classrooms and specialist rooms as well as a hall, two playgrounds and spacious open areas between blocks. At long last the school will be contained within one single site". The Teachers' Association which also represents the feelings and anxieties and the aspirations of the teaching profession, including staff at Bishop Fitzgerald, have stated in their latest news and views bulletin, "We are confident that the quality of teaching, once the school moves are implemented, will not be affected by the proposed moves". I have a letter from the GTA in which the anxieties that the hon Member mentioned from some members of Bishop Fitzgerald

and really they were not really intended in the spirit of criticism but rather alerting the department and I welcome that form of contribution, to specific aspects of the refurbishment programme and the needs of the school, as I say, I welcome those contributions but we have carefully actually gone through all the specific items that they have proposed and are quite satisfied that they have been included in the schedule of works.

HON J GABAY:

Further to the initial question, is the Minister aware that normal classes have been disrupted as a result of improperly planned packing of essential equipment and that consequently for the last two weeks very little proper teaching, from what has come to my notice, has taken place?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I am not aware that there has been any major disruption, I think in all honesty the hon Member and all of us will agree that at the moment, towards the end of term when there are these moves which are, I am sure the hon Member will agree, absolutely necessary, there will be a certain element of excitement in the school but I do not think there is any cause for alarm that this is going to have any long-term disruption in the educational process and the educational advancement of our children. I am sure the hon Member will agree in realistic prospective that this is the case.

HON J GABAY:

Although the answer given appears reasonable, we have both been in the management of schools and we easily realise that very often there is a tremendous loss of time depending on the way things are organised. My point is, could it not have been possible for some of this packing of the equipment to have been done during the holidays so that the problem of not teaching the children properly does not arise, particularly with the holiday feeling, as he well knows, that creeps in towards the end of term when summer hours are instituted?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I leave these practical arrangements to the practitioners in the field, the Headteachers, the teachers in which I have full confidence.

HON J C PEREZ:

Coming back to the original reply of the Minister, could he say whether in the work schedule the works for the annex of the College which I understand goes into the Mackintosh Hall has also been included?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Yes, indeed, I am very happy to confirm that.

HON J GABAY:

I was kindly interrupted by my hon Colleague, I have a couple of questions pertinent to the initial question. Can the Minister pronounce on the state of the pre-fab building into which the pupils of Bishop Fitzgerald will be moving into? From what I am told this pre-fab building had an intended life of 10 years whereas it is currently 28 years old.

HON DR B A LINARES:

My information is totally contrary to that. I think the hon Member has been incorrectly informed.

HON J GABAY:

I shall check on that information. Finally, there is one more question. What traffic plans do the Government have for what is going to be a dangerously congested area, since at the beginning of September we are going to have a concentration of three schools in a very confined area which is already difficult traffic wise? Given the fact that there will be approximately 1,600 pupils arriving and leaving school at the same time, I feel that this will require very, very special attention.

HON DR B A LINARES:

I share the concern validly expressed by the Opposition Member. The plans we have, having been studied by the experts technical officer is that there is a wasteground to the west of St George's complex which is now used for parking, we are aiming to tarmac and level out this wasteground which will provide a lay-by for cars bringing the children to drive in, deposit the children, there is the gate to the school adjacent to that waste ground and we are satisfied that that will provide a safe entry to the school for these children but I am grateful for the concern shown by the hon Member.

HON J C PEREZ:

Was that waste ground not earmarked as part of a playground for the children?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Not at this stage. That is not within the schedule of works and the plans that the technical officers have.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Will the Special Unit at Bishop Fitzgerald also be moving to the new premises?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Yes, indeed.

ORAL

NO. 56 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

CAREERS' MASTERS

Is the Minister dissatisfied with the service currently being provided by the Careers' Masters at the Comprehensive Schools?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

I am totally satisfied with the performance and the function of the Careers' Masters in both Comprehensive Schools.

NO. 57 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

CAREERS SERVICE

I failed to respond to the last question I put because it is very intimately linked with the following question.

What specific arrangements are envisaged in terms of personnel and facilities for the Schools Careers Service?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The Government are committed to the re-introduction of a properly set up Schools Careers Advisory Service which existed and functioned successfully in Gibraltar until 9 January 1990 when it was effectively scrapped by the GSLP Government. At this early stage we are now picking up the pieces. We have held discussions with those officers who were then engaged in this valuable service to the schools and who are now disbanded either in the existing Youth Service or in the Employment and Training Board. I can happily state that these officers have shown real enthusiasm to renew this service and support the schools. This will be of benefit not only to the students but to the job market providing properly prepared young people to serve the needs of a developing economy. But it will take some time before we can, to answer more directly the question, in consultation with relevant personnel make specific and practical arrangements to implement the service on a sure footing.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 57 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

Would the new unit when eventually established replace the role of Career's Masters in the Comprehensive Schools or will that be a continuing role?

HON DR B A LINARES:

This arises from a lack of understanding of the distinction between careers education which is an intrinsic part of the school curriculum enabling pupils in a process of self-assessment, of assessment of their own interests and their own skills and their own potential, decision-making skills, etc. This is an educational programme and quite distinct from the careers advisory service which is carried out by specialists from outside the school and who support the school's careers programme with factual information and advise and guidance concerning opportunities and prospects in the job market. This service, as I explained before, existed in Gibraltar under the auspices of what was called then the Youth and Careers Service until 9th January 1990 when this service was split up, one branch became the youth service looking after the clubs and the leisure activities of our young and the other what was called, I think, at the time, job centre, the precursor of

the existing Employment and Training Board. The latter was so engaged then as a mere employment agency and they no longer had time or resources to service the schools in the traditional manner. It is the intention of this Government to reintroduce this service as a service for the students themselves and as a useful means of preparing young people for the needs of developing economic activities in our community. I repeat, a clear distinction must be made between the careers education programme intrinsic to the schools and the support service of specialist careers advisers.

HON J GABAY:

I can assure the Minister that I am not labouring under any misapprehension about the distinctive roles mentioned. My question is, in fact, or may I put the question this way, that in a small community such as ours I think it is possible to combine both roles and centred in the schools where there is a personal interest and knowledge of the children concerned and also care for those children rather than a unit virtually operating separately and in some degree alienated from the pupils in the schools. I think that is possible and it is properly done in many independent schools.

HON DR B A LINARES:

That is a matter of opinion which I do not share and it is not shared generally by educators and specialists in this area of careers education. A teacher is well versed in the educational aspects of careers orientation but he cannot have knowledge of the particularities and the specific conditions of the job market outside, opportunities, prospects and that co-operation, that interaction between the careers master in the school, I agree with the hon Member that there has to be very close co-operation between the careers advisory specialist and the careers master but that one cannot replace the other. It is a matter of opinion and I am clear about my own.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Will the Minister state if this would also be advantageous to the one year courses that he introduced when he was the headmaster of Bayside which actually placed pupils who should have been in full-time employment with a full-time education with different employers and they only used to go to school for a day or two days? Is this what he intends to introduce with that also benefit those young persons?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I think it will, yes indeed.

NO. 58 OF 1996

THE HON J GABAY

PUPILS ABILITY

What are the Government's policy on the advisability of streaming pupils according to ability groups, a policy being propagated even by new Labour in the United Kingdom?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE DISABLED,
YOUTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Government policy is to ensure that every child is educated to her or his aptitude and ability. To achieve this the Department of Education will encourage differentiation in teaching practices. This differentiation in practical terms may be effected through a whole variety of teaching methods, that is, streaming, setting, banding, mixed ability, etc and these methods are adopted at different stages in different situations depending on the particular circumstances of the students learning situation and experience. It is not for the Government to impose or prescribe on the practitioners in the field any particular methodology but simply to monitor and ensure that whatever practice is put into effect is in consonance with the principle of differentiation, which I have explained is equal opportunities and "to each according to her or his needs".

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 58 OF 1996

HON J GABAY:

This comment on differentiation in fact has very little to do with the realities in a classroom and it is an important matter of educational philosophy therefore I ask this subsequent question, is it not a reasonable assumption that the general decline in literacy and numeracy is partly the result of teaching mixed ability groups under the myth of differentiation and that such grouping fails to maximise both the potential of the weak and also the potential of the talented alike thus creating dangerously a degree of mediocrity and this has drawn the attention of many educational experts and educational philosophers?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Once again we have here value judgements which are a matter of opinion and which I respect but which I do not share. I think my views on this are actually well echoed in the thinking of new Labour which the hon Member has referred to in his question, I might quote here as not at all well expressed in his idea that new Labour is all for streaming as such. This is a completely superficial understanding of what Tony Blair and Mr Blunkett have said recently explaining new Labour policy and I will quote from a speech by Tony Blair which was reported in The Times Educational Supplement and which we will see completely harmonises with the type of thinking that I explained in the first answer to the hon Member's question. Mr Blair said, "It is not of course up to the central government to prescribe classroom

organisation in 25,000 schools" - we do not have 25,000 schools but we have quite a few schools - "and it is not for the Government to prescribe classroom organisation of these schools. Professional judgement according to local circumstances is important". It goes on to say, "New Labour will encourage teachers to choose their methods on the basis of what works to make decisions on the basis of evidence which is what I was calling for from the hon Member opposite, not ideology that means using teaching methods that recognise and develop the different abilities and talents of children while an overly rigid system of streaming", if anything new Labour is not all that happy about streaming, "can lead to the same problems as the eleven-plus, not to take account of the obvious common-sense that different children move at different speeds and have differing abilities is to give idealism a bad name". May I add finally that I fear, and I have to say this in all sincerity and with respect, that the type of thinking behind the hon Member's questions tends to the very right wing ideological position on which not new Labour but rather the Tories in Britain are upholding at the moment - election, segregation and educational elitism.

HON J GABAY:

We have heard the usual words of idealism, ideology and so on and so forth coming from the Minister, no doubt we shall have an opportunity in the future to probe more deeply into these matters. The question remains that the ideology is usually coming from the side that claims to have no ideology but, as I say, this will be a subject for further discussion. Let me end with a question by saying, is it not possible that despite the Minister's idealism and so forth that he may find himself in the same unenviable position with regard to his children as Mr Blair?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Mr Blair sent his children to...

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

What unenviable position is Mr Blair? That contains a value judgement in itself.

HON J GABAY:

I thank the Chief Minister for his immediate intervention. The thing is the duality of standards often applied in which the sort of message given by the Minister is a theory propagated and put forward whereas in fact the reality of their own choices are really quite different. I think that the Chief Minister should understand the point that I was making already.

HON DR B A LINARES:

Dualism between my ideals and ideas and my practice has never been a common feature in my life. I think at the age of 60 I do not intend to engage in that type of dualism.

HON J GABAY:

I would like to answer that last remark without asking a question.

NO. 59 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRAFFIC

Now that the works initiated by the GSLP Government at Moorish Castle have been completed, will Government state when they intend to enforce a one-way system in the area?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Plans for the new traffic arrangements at Moorish Castle and Lower Castle Road were submitted to and considered by the Traffic Commission at the meeting No.10/96 held on Tuesday 18th June. The plan, as agreed, includes the provision of new signs and road markings and a one-way system in the area. The one-way system will be enforced as soon as it is gazetted.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 59 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Am I to understand that the Minister is quite rightly in my judgement allowing the Traffic Commission to continue to take decisions on matters of this nature which he so forcefully rejected when he was in the Opposition?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

In this area, like in many other areas, in the short time that this Government are in office, no substantial changes of policy have been yet implemented. So in short, the answer to the hon Member's question is, at the moment yes.

NO. 60 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

ORANGE BASTION DEPOT

Will Government continue with existing plans to move the Orange Bastion Depot of the Electricity Department to the site of the old Government Stores?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Government are aware of the poor conditions at both the Orange Bastion Depot, which is subject to severe flooding whenever heavy rains occur, and the offices and workshops still in use at King's Bastion. It is Government's intention to consider the relocation of these facilities to a suitable location.

In regard to the move to the old Government Stores in Rosia Road, a study to determine the layout of the site and disposition of facilities has been carried out. There is also a need to consult the relevant Government Departments in order to determine the exact extent of building work that this move would entail and the cost of these works. This is currently in hand. Once Government are satisfied that the move is feasible and offers the best possible land use for this particular site a decision will be made whether to transfer to this or another location.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 60 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that a decision had already been taken to move and that the plans that he is mentioning are under consideration had already been considered and approved prior to the general election?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

That might well be the case but if there is a small matter of a general election held on the 16th May which changes anything the previous Government may have decided in this area. I am not discarding the possibility, I am just saying that it is under consideration again.

HON J C PEREZ:

Then what I understand the Minister to be saying is that notwithstanding that the plans were there, they might not be carried out because the area in question might be used for something else?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

That is a possibility.

HON J C PEREZ:

Could the Minister take on board the urgency that there is to move both the people in King's Bastion and in Orange Bastion because of the heavy flooding and because of the bad conditions that there are prevailing in both areas? Could the Minister take a quick decision whether the move has to be taken on this site or on another one given the atrocious conditions and given that we have only got really the summer months to be able to effect the move?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The Government are aware of the severe flooding problems, just as the previous Minister was aware during his term of office, flooding is not something that has started in the last three weeks and therefore I will give it the same urgent consideration that the previous Government have given.

HON J C PEREZ:

Then I am sure that as the previous Government did a decision will be taken in the short term which is the decision we took prior to the small matter of the general election as the Minister says.

ORAL

NO. 61 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

CUSTOMS SOCIAL CLUB

Can Government state whether they will meet the cost of the refurbishment of the new Customs Social Club located at the old Frontier Guard House?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Yes, Sir.

NO. 62 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRAFFIC

Will Government proceed with a scheme which will divert traffic from the Upper Rock through the Great North Tunnel, by accessing it via the old Calpe Generating Station with outward access through Maida Vale in Engineer's Road?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The use of the Great North Road Tunnel as a public relief road although feasible would require a significant amount of new major works to ensure satisfactory operation and public safety. The tunnel was constructed in the 1940's and although acceptable for intermittent military use, is presently largely unlined, narrow in places, lacks adequate ventilation and access would be difficult for the emergency services in the event of a traffic accident. The Government are considering carrying out an in-depth study of circulation of traffic. Until such time as this is completed and the results evaluated, major projects of this nature will not be implemented.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 62 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that the Gibraltar Government together with the Ministry of Defence undertook a study and there was an order of cost of £1.5 million to effect the necessary removal of services on widening the road to the tunnel in order to facilitate this access?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I am not aware of this study but I am aware of the recommendations made by Kumagi Gumi to the previous Government where, amongst other things, they said, "We must advise that the use of the tunnel as a public thoroughfare is not recommended without significant new works to ensure the satisfactory operation and public safety". They also said, "The entrance at Maida Vale is a blast chamber with two blind right angle bends before entering the Great North Road. This alignment is unsatisfactory for public use".

HON J C PEREZ:

It would seem that the Minister is not aware of the updated situation with regard to that which is that between a cost of £1.5 million and £2 million there can be safeguards put in the tunnel as long as the tunnel is used on a daily basis only with security guards at either end. This would mean that the whole of the traffic of the Upper Rock would be out of the city centre, would decongest the city centre from

that traffic and it would come out at Engineer's Road. So work done over and above the recommendations of Kumagi Gumi suggest that expenditure to the tune of £1.5 million will be able to secure services that there are there and would be able to have roads widened to effect this in a cost effective manner.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

As the Opposition Member is aware, the files of the previous Government are not available to me and that is why I am not aware of the consultation he refers to. I will nevertheless make it my business to inform myself of the report he has referred to and of the recommendations contained therein. I will however repeat what I said in my original answer that it is the intention of the Government to carry out an in-depth study of traffic circulation in general in Gibraltar and therefore major projects like this cannot be implemented. The result that the hon Member was wishing for in his previous question is, of course, something that we would like to achieve, as we all would, to improve circulation and we will certainly be taking such factors into account in any studies that we make.

HON J C PEREZ:

Then I take it that the Minister is not rejecting totally the use of the tunnel and that it would be put into the study which has been taking place on-going....

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Yes, Sir.

NO. 63 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

ENGINEER CAR PARK

Can Government state whether they will agree to an existing proposal to construct a pay car park at the existing Engineer Car Park at Engineer Lane?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The proposal to build a car park on Engineer House car park site was put forward to Government by the residents affiliated to the Satellite Association of the area concerned. Their intention was to build garages and car parking spaces for sale and not a pay car park. The developer has been carrying out a marketing exercise in conjunction with the Association with a view to submitting formal proposals to the Government. Once these proposals are received, Government will consider them and make decisions in line with our overall policy of traffic circulation and management of parking.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 63 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Could the Minister give me a commitment that he will give this matter some urgency given the no parking restrictions that are taking place in Main Street as a result of the beautification scheme, there will be a lot of parking spaces lost there and that therefore the urgency to look at this project is greater as a result?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I already have arranged and had arranged before this question was put, a meeting next week with a prospective developer and no doubt I will be better informed about how the study that they have been carrying out has resulted. Until such time as the developer actually puts forward suggestions, the whole project is very much in the air but I take the hon Member's point of the urgency of parking and of course it is something that I am very conscious of.

NO. 64 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

CABLE LINK WITH MOROCCO

Can Government state whether they will proceed with plans to have a fibre optic submarine cable link with Morocco?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The Government will support proceeding with plans to have a fibre optic submarine cable link with Morocco at such time as this is considered to be technically necessary and commercially viable. Such circumstances may arise when the Afro-Asian Satellite project starts generating sufficient high volume of traffic minutes.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 64 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister perhaps not aware that given that there is a submarine cable called SEMEWE 3 which is to touch Morocco, that the link per se would attract telecommunications business to Gibraltar as a result of Gibraltar having access to two important world submarine cables such as is FLAG AND SEMEWE 3 and that Gibraltar could become an important telecommunications centre if it were to invest in having this link to Africa and is he not aware that any telecommunications business coming to Gibraltar will eventually need the security of that cable in order to ensure that obstacles are not put in their place by our friendly neighbours who like so much to dialogue with us in order to protect the business ventures that need to be established in Gibraltar and that that cable gives us independence because there is another cable link that goes from Africa, the Euro-Africa cable, into the UK and gives us the facilities needed there to protect any telecommunications business coming to Gibraltar?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Of course it is desirable to have as many possible links and have as many possible options. My understanding is that at present the situation is that the ASC project is considering passage primary outlets, the flag cable to which the hon Member referred to and also the SEMEWE 3 cable which is due to land in Tetuan in Morocco. There is also another alternative link which the hon Member has not mentioned and that is the microwave link to Morocco. The situation with the fibre optic submarine cable is very simple, as I indicated in my previous answer. At present times the indications are that it is not a commercial proposition and until such time as the ASC project is up and running and generating enough traffic, it will not be clear whether it is or whether it is not. The Government are waiting for that situation to arise to consider it in consultation and in conjunction with the incumbent telecommunications operators, both Gibtel and Nynex to consider whether in fact the fibre optic link is desirable.

HON J C PEREZ:

What I am telling the Minister is that independent of the ASC project and in order to enhance the potential of Gibraltar to continue to attract telecommunications project, enquiries that have been made usually look at what they term as restoration position for the traffic that they could generate and that they therefore would need to have that cable link with Morocco in order to ensure themselves that the political situation with Spain does not lead commercial entities in Spain to accidentally tamper with connections which need to be legally given to Gibraltar and therefore as restoration and as a back-up they would want to see that link there and given that the cost of such a link is not that exorbitant, what I am asking the Minister is that independent of the ASC project, will the Government not consider the link per se by itself?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

At the moment the answer is that the Government, much as we would like to consider it and provide the necessary back-up, the information that we have is that the back-up is there through the microwave link and through the SEMEWE 3 cable once this is in place. The alternatives, although much desirable, at the moment are not commercially viable.

HON J C PEREZ:

The Minister does not seem to be aware of what the SEMEWE 3 cable is because if we will not access this unless we have got the cable so it is no use saying that the SEMEWE cable is there, it will not be there if we have not got the fibre optic link.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The SEMEWE cable is not yet there.

NO. 65 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

FIBRE OPTICS

Will Government consider investing in a scheme which would connect every household in Gibraltar via fibre optics into the existing fibre optic loop around Gibraltar laid by Gibraltar Nynex Communications Limited?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The Government are continuously monitoring progress in telecommunications technologies and does not discard the possibility of investing in a fibre-to-the-home scheme.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 65 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Minister give me an indication on when it is that they would be able to take a decision on this?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The cost of providing fibre optic to the home is presently quite expensive and would not provide any significant improvement in the quality of the basic telephone service to the customer. Although the fibre optic technology offers a very high capacity circuits, cable television etc, the cost of the conversion equipment needed at the customer's premises to convert the laser energy into a usable format such as for video and for audio is still significant. As technology advances, these costs are expected to decrease with the introduction of more equipment already designed for direct connection to the fibre networks so the Government would defray decisions until such a situation arose.

HON J C PEREZ:

I take the opportunity to remind the Minister that the information I have will be accessible by Gibraltar and that every modern society will be having to make use of it particularly in a developing society like ours and in a developing economy and that educationally, culturally and socially a fibre optic link in the home will be essential in the not too distant future given the changes in technology that are taking place and I urge Government Members to have a fresh look at it because it is essential for the development of our society and for keeping at the top range of the market in attracting business and in the educational field as well.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

We take on board what the hon Member has said and no doubt post-1st January 1998 where the situation will change drastically in Gibraltar with regards to telecommunications and planning towards that date, we will be in a better position to look at the situation.

ORAL

NO. 66 OF 1996

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Are the Government prepared to provide financial assistance to the Gibraltar Rifle Association in the construction of an indoor rifle range?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Answered together with Question No. 68 of 1996.

NO. 67 OF 1996THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO**VICTORIA STADIUM**

Can Government confirm that they will replace the Victoria Stadium roof, the outdoor floodlighting for the main outdoor pitch, and install a new floodlighting system at the second pitch, as the GSLP administration was committed to doing?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Almost immediately after coming into office, the Government were made aware about the state of the Victoria Stadium roof and of recommendations that urgent repairs needed to be carried out. Government were advised that the roof was in such a bad state that the uninterrupted sports programme for the Victoria Stadium hall for the forthcoming winter season could not be guaranteed. The deterioration in the state of the Victoria Stadium roof to its present unacceptable state occurred during the term of office of the previous administration. The new Government intend to replace the roof at the earliest possible opportunity. The contractors are at present preparing revised quotes and a time scale for the required works. The question of the outdoor floodlighting of the main outdoor pitch is under consideration, and the floodlighting of the second pitch is being actively considered and pursued by Government. Steps to do so had already been taken at the time this question was tabled by the Opposition.

Due to the constraints of the proximity of the airport, full floodlighting will not be possible and, as the hon Member knows, only a system which provides enough lighting for training purposes will be possible.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 67 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

I know about the floodlighting in the second pitch and I know that it is impossible to have full floodlighting but the commitment from the GSLP had been given previously before we were in Government. I take issue with the Minister because he has said that very soon after taking office he knew about the roof at the Victoria Stadium. That is not correct because when I was in Government the Minister when he was in the Opposition used to ask me questions about the roof. Our record on sport is unquestionable and we gave a commitment, before we left office, that we would replace the roof. Is the Minister now saying that he did not know about the roof?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I am struggling very hard to avoid making political points in my answers to questions but if I am provoked in such a manner my resistance may fail. Of course I am aware of the state of the roof, I asked the Opposition Member continuous questions from the Opposition about it and continuously she said that everything was all right. [HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO: No.] She said that the sports programme was not being

interrupted, that there was no danger to people using the hall and that what repairs were necessary had been carried out. Let me tell the Opposition Member that as she knows the leaking in the Victoria Stadium started about six years ago, according to the brief that I have; that over the past two years repairs were carried out by the previous administration and over the past two years these leaks returned and in fact got worse; that the leaks were substantial in number and volume and serious damage to the expensive sprung wooden floor was imminent; that the wooden floor was on occasions very slippery and consequently extremely dangerous. This is the brief that I have been given by the people concerned and responsible for these matters. A number of matches in various sports had to be cancelled during the past season; that the roof sheeting is beyond economical repair, that all the sheets have to be replaced or the problem will continue; that the very rough estimated cost at the moment is about £50,000, and that although commitments may have been made once again verbally, no actual provision was made under the previous administration in the 1996/97 Estimates of Expenditure, as these were considered new works.

HON J C PEREZ:

The Minister will recall that when he asked the last question my hon Colleague, the Hon Miss Montegriffo, was away due to her father's illness and that I replied on behalf of the Government and that he was informed that yes, we had been informed that the roof was in a bad condition and that yes, we were committed to making the essential repairs necessary during the summer season for the roof. What my hon Colleague is saying is that it should not have taken the Minister by surprise when he came into office given the reply that he was given when he raised the matter from the Opposition benches and where I was the one who gave the reply because my hon Colleague was absent from the House.

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The Minister was not taken by surprise, I will repeat the answer to the original question, "Almost immediately after coming into office, the Government were made aware about the state of the Victoria Stadium roof", the Government consist of eight people. This particular Minister was aware not just on the occasion of the question referred to by the hon Member but over the last six years at least or four years certainly when I have asked the question several times and, of course, I had been aware, of course I knew what the state was. What I did not know and what I was taken by surprise was how bad the situation was, but that is neither here nor there. They say they were committed, there was no provision in the Estimates, this Government are committed to doing it and it is going to be done so I fail to see what we are arguing about.

HON J C PEREZ:

If the Minister looks at Hansard he will see that the commitment was there because I gave it to him when I was sitting in the Government benches.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

So now we are both committed, what is the issue?

HON J L BALDACHINO:

What we have not got a commitment from the Minister is that it will be done during this summer period so that it is ready for the winter season, is that correct?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

It depends what he is asking if it is correct, if it is correct that I have not given a commitment then the answer is no because I have and I said it is going to be done this summer.

NO. 68 OF 1996

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

FUNDS TO ORGANISATIONS

Can Government confirm that they will continue providing funds for approximately 76 sporting, cultural and charitable organisations for whom the GSLP administration provided premises?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The Government have allocated the sum of £49,000 as grants to sporting societies in the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1996/97 tabled in this House today. This figure will be adjusted during the course of the financial year as and when it is considered necessary. It is the policy of the Government to establish a new democratically elected Sports Council which will act as the overall ruling body for sport, and will advise the Government on capital expenditure priorities and allocation of grants. Until such time as this new Sports Council is established, the existing Sports Advisory Body will continue to carry out this function and, in fact, has already met under the chairmanship of the new Minister for Sport and has discussed and approved grants to the Gibraltar Basketball Association and the Gibraltar Football Association for Junior Football. subject to further documentation to be presented, further grants will be approved for the Gibraltar Pool Association and the Gibraltar Amateur Athletics Association.

As regards the question of premises, the Government are aware that approximately 76 sporting, cultural and charitable organisations had been included in a list for allocation of premises. Some of these had already been offered premises by the GSLP Government, of which a number had finalised arrangements but others are awaiting policy decisions and/or structural works to the areas offered. The Gibraltar Rifle Association's case is amongst those awaiting a policy decision. There is also a number of organisations that had received no offers and had been left pending the availability of suitable areas.

I can confirm that this Government are reviewing the whole situation. The necessary policy decisions will be taken as soon as full consideration can be given to the matter.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 66 AND 68 OF 1996

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

I am very disappointed at that answer because when we were in office we started a process of giving premises to sporting associations whereby we gave them a commitment that we would actually provide funds for them for the refurbishment of their premises to the extent of giving them manpower and the materials. What the Minister has said as regards the £49,000 is actually a figure that is given to sporting entities for sporting activities but not in relation to the question that I am asking. The Minister has not either answered my question as far as whether the Government are

prepared to provide financial assistance to the Gibraltar Rifle Association in the construction of an indoor rifle range. Again, before we left office we were approached by the Rifle Association and we told them that we would look at the plans and help them in the construction of a rifle range. Does not the Government therefore feel that they should fill the same commitment?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

First of all, I am sorry that the Opposition Member is disappointed at my answer but I share her feeling because throughout the four years that I was in the Opposition it is something that I felt continuously in the answers that she gave me. However, it was not my intention to disappoint her. Let me say, first of all, that her question is ambiguous. She asks whether we will continue to provide funds to those associations for whom the GSLP had provided premises but she does not distinguish between the type of funds involved. That is why I divided my answer into two halves, to be as explicit as possible and I talked about the funds for sporting associations and I also talked about the premises. With regard to the premises, commitments that the previous Government made, and I find it invidious to refer to one particular association, I am talking in general and across the board, the situation is that instructions have already been issued to the effect that any works or licence, lease agreements in writing by the previous Government have been proceeded with and have not been stopped and this includes the provision of funds. Only matters which have not been either approved in writing, and I am sorry to tell the Opposition Member that she will now realise that there are many of those where very little is in writing, these matters which have not been approved in writing have been left pending the review that we are presently carrying out. This review is being dealt with with certain urgency, I have the next meeting on it is due to be held early next week, round about midday on Monday, and on matters of land generally the Government have a further meeting during the course of the week and it is being dealt with with that degree of urgency. But the short answer is those that were already committed and on-going and signed, sealed and delivered are still on-going; those where policy decisions are needed or which were not committed in writing by the previous administration have been temporarily held up pending this review that we are carrying out, that does not mean that they have been stopped necessarily, it does also not mean that they will necessarily carry on. It means exactly what I say, that they are under review. But there is no intention to stop things unnecessarily. I hope that answer satisfies the Opposition Member.

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister just clarify for my benefit that what he is talking about is a review as to the allocation of the premises but I take it that the actual refurbishment of the premises will be completed independent of the freedom that they have to allocate it to somebody else?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The situation, as I have tried to explain, is that there are some projects that have been signed, sealed and delivered, plans are ready or funds have been allocated and those that are still on-going, those remain on-going. But there are other projects that are in various stages of completion. In many cases the commitments have been verbal, have not been in writing and it is therefore those that we are looking at again. It would, of course, be unlikely that projects that are already on-going and

have been allocated and some work has been done, it would be unlikely that it would be taken away from one entity to give it to another. As I say, everything has been held up pending the review and once the review is carried out final decisions will be made. But it is not the intention to make changes, the intention is to carry out a review.

HON J BOSSANO:

I accept that it would not make sense to do anything different. The only thing I am trying to be clear is that the Minister is not saying that until they have carried out the review and decided who is going to be allocated the actual work on refurbishing the premises to make them habitable will presumably still be going on?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Not necessarily. If the review results in premises not being allocated as the previous Government had intended, they might not be refurbished because they might be intended for a new purpose for which either no refurbishment is necessary or for which a different kind of refurbishment may be necessary. So certainly the question of the refurbishment works is an integral part of the review of allocation.

NO. 69 OF 1996

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

PRINCE GEORGE'S BLOCK

Can Government state if Prince George's Block has been handed over to the Government by the MOD and if so what use they intend to make of it?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Prince George's Block has not been handed over to the Government of Gibraltar by the Ministry of Defence.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 69 OF 1996

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So I assume by that answer that they will decide what use they will make of it once it is handed over to them, is that correct?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

The hon Member is correct. If and when the transfer takes place a decision will be taken as to its use.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Logically it will not follow then by that answer that when his hon Colleague was in the Opposition, I am referring to the Minister for Housing, where he stated that all residential properties that would be handed over by the MOD would then be used for Government rented accommodation, it does not necessarily follow that that will be the procedure or the policy of the Government on any other building that the MOD hand over, am I correct?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

That is certainly the understanding that he should have, yes.

NO. 70 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

WINDMILL HILL

Can Government state whether G E Americom have now completed contracts with Government for the building and operation of a Satellite Teletracking Station at Windmill Hill?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Government have not yet completed a commercial agreement with G E American Communications for the construction of a satellite control centre and various antennas at a site in Gibraltar. There are several commercial and technical matters still to be resolved and I expect to hold my first meeting with one of the directors of G E Capital Satellites (Gibraltar), a subsidiary of G E Americom, within the next few weeks, to fully acquaint myself with the project.

The Government fully support this satellite project which will help to continue Gibraltar's development as an important telecommunications player in the world market. It will also provide employment opportunities in the local labour market.

The Government hope to be in a position to sign a commercial agreement with G E Capital Satellites (Gibraltar) in the near future.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 70 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

Given that the company was very nearly ready to sign contracts prior to our leaving office, does the Minister know whether there is any particular issue which is blocking the negotiations or stopping the contracts from being signed?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

I have eluded in my reply to both technical and commercial issues. On the purely technical issue, and by that I include legislation, as the hon Member will know Gibraltar's currently legislation on telecommunications is extremely defective and requires work on, in particular there is a need to look at the Wireless Telegraphy Ordinance implementing EU Directives and also have extended to Gibraltar the Outer Space Act. In addition to technical and legislative matters, there are matters of a commercial nature which I think the ex-Minister will have a feel for, which this new Government believe should be addressed to ensure that Gibraltar extracts the best benefit from the arrangements that we hope to bring to the Rock.

HON J C PEREZ:

I trust the Minister, whilst trying to extract the most benefit for Gibraltar will not kill the project completely and allow the company to leave and seek to establish elsewhere?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

The hon Member will well understand it would not be for my political benefit to allow that to occur. This project, like the one indeed that the hon Member will now have a question on, has the ability to generate not insignificant employment, employment that does not depend on frontier traffic or anything else to which we may be vulnerable from our neighbours and therefore it is the type of project which we give particular priority.

ORAL

NO. 71 OF 1996

THE HON J C PEREZ

SATELLITE TRACKING STATION

Can Government state whether the developers of the Afro-Asian satellite tracking station have concluded their negotiations with Hughes in the United States and whether as a result the satellites for the project are now being manufactured?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Afro-Asian Satellite Communications (ASC) are still in the process of finalising negotiations with Hughes Space and Communications International in the United States for the construction of the first satellite for their project. ASC and Hughes expect to be in contract within the next few weeks.

Development work on the satellites has been on-going for close on a year.

The Government support this project which, when fully operational in about two years time, will provide employment for people in the local labour market.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 71 OF 1996

HON J C PEREZ:

The Minister is probably aware that unless and until the negotiations from Hughes and the financing is not complete the project is in a state that it might not get materialised. Can the Minister state whether there has been any commitment to commence investment in Gibraltar by the developers in terms of a presence be that in brick and mortar at Windmill Hill or via the acquisition of offices in Gibraltar for the operation?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

There is no such commitment yet extracted from ASC. We hope that if the negotiations with Hughes conclude successfully, hopefully some time this summer, that ASC would invite tenders for the beginning of the clearance works on the site allocated. There is no commitment, however, from ASC on that basis. The matter is still very much at the stage of Hughes and ASC seeking to resolve the differences which the hon Member, I am sure, is aware of and which we are hopeful will successfully be concluded.

HON J C PEREZ:

If Mr Speaker will bear with me I might deviate somewhat from the question and ask perhaps the Minister for Education whether the realisation of this project would affect the specialisation of subjects of the university in respect of the study that is being carried out by Sheffield University? If these projects are realised, is that going to be taken into account in the study by Sheffield to see whether they would specialise in this field?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

I think the hon Member is right in everything that he has been saying in this session with regard to the desirability of Gibraltar having as up-to-date a communications connection with the highways information as possible and anything in that area will benefit not just residents but any educational establishment that we can attract to the Rock. Certainly with regard to the G E project in particular perhaps since they will be broadcasting fixed satellite information, that sort of benefit will be particularly relevant to the sort of establishment that Sheffield University is considering to introduce in Gibraltar. Certainly he can only help and we hope that that benefit will be for the University, for all our other educational establishments and for residents alike.

NO. 72 OF 1996

THE HON R MOR

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

What is the position as regards the five Russian and other North African illegal immigrants held in prison on the instructions of the Governor?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The position is as follows. The five Russian detainees applied for asylum in the UK. The applications were refused. They also applied for asylum in Canada. A decision from the Canadian authorities is currently awaited.

The United Kingdom is currently considering additional questionnaires which the Russians were asked to complete to determine what other possibilities might be open should their request for asylum in Canada fail.

As regards the 34 North African illegal immigrants, 10 were found to be holding Moroccan passports and it was therefore possible to return them to Morocco shortly after their arrival. A further 17, who had some form of identification, were provided with travel documents by the Moroccan Consular authorities from Algeciras and left Gibraltar on 14th June.

The remaining seven have no identity or travel documents whatsoever. They have been interviewed by the Moroccan Consular authorities who are currently trying to establish their identity. In the meanwhile, the seven are being advised to contact relatives or others in Morocco who may be able to assist in the identification process.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 72 OF 1996

HON R MOR:

Does the Government accept that the question of illegal immigrants is a constitutional responsibility of Her Majesty's Government and as such would it be the position that Her Majesty's Government should subscribe for the upkeep of such persons whilst they are here in Gibraltar? Is that the position?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not sure I heard the last bit. That they should subscribe to the cost? Yes, I can confirm that that is the position of the new Government and that I have transmitted it to the United Kingdom through the Governor. We are not prepared to accord them facilities in Gibraltar which will remove the pressure from the United Kingdom Immigration Authorities to urgently address their applications for asylum and certainly it is correct that this is a constitutional responsibility of the United Kingdom and, of course, the policy of the Government is not driven by lack of humane sensitivity. We fully appreciate that here are men who have been convicted of no

criminal offence and who are languishing, although they are allowed to leave the prison during the day, but they are certainly being incarcerated for much of the day and the whole of the night. The policy of the Government is driven not by lack of sensitivity to the humane aspects but to the fact that Gibraltar sits in the middle of a south to north route of immigration and of illegal immigration and if we allow these five Russians or indeed the seven Moroccans who are in much the same situation to simply integrate into the community whilst others are relieved of the need for an urgent decision as to a permanent status for them, then Gibraltar would soon be flooded by similar situations we will impose an intolerable financial burden on the Government of Gibraltar and I have informed Her Majesty's Government that we are not prepared to put the Government in that position.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Chief Minister aware that that same position has been put to the British Government on every previous occasion that an illegal immigrant has arrived in Gibraltar and that so far it has failed to produce any kind of positive response?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am aware of that which is why I am not willing to do anything that makes it easier for them to continue to take that line.

NO. 73 OF 1996THE HON J BOSSANO**SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FUND**

Can Government state what is the projected income and expenditure of the Social Assistance Fund for the year 1996/97 giving a breakdown by item?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Until such time as the Government complete the study on the restructure of the public accounts, the estimated income and expenditure of the Social Assistance Fund will be as follows:

<u>Income</u>	<u>£'million</u>	<u>£'million</u>
Import Duty		22.0
(Less)		
Customs Department - Administration Costs		<u>(2.7)</u>
		19.3
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Grant payable to Gibraltar Health Authority	9.0	
Grant payable to John Mackintosh Homes	0.7	
Social assistance Payments	1.6	
Family Support Benefits	0.8	
Rent Relief	0.3	
Elderly Persons Allowance	0.2	
Management Charges	0.2	
Other Expenses	<u>0.1</u>	

Giving a total expenditure of £12.9 million and projecting a surplus subject, I hasten to add, to the restructure of Government finances, a surplus of £6.4 million.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 73 OF 1996

HON J BOSSANO:

Can the Government confirm that in the first month of the financial year 1996/97 the Social Assistance Fund had already made an initial payment of £2 million to Community Care Trust in respect of the projected grant of £15 million in the financial year 1996/97 and if that is confirmed can the Government explain on what basis they have removed that payment from Community Care Trust?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government, to my knowledge, have not recovered from Community Care Trust any grant that had already been paid. If they have done so they have not done it on instructions from me. However, I can tell the Opposition Member that the policy of the Government is that the Community Care Trust appears to be presently adequately funded. We have not received a request for additional grants from the Community Care Trust, if we receive such formal requests we will of course give it consideration but I have to say that my view at the moment and I say without an outstanding receipt for grants from the Community Care Trust, is that that Trust and the objects for which it was created is already adequately funded.

HON J BOSSANO:

That is a matter of judgement and I have not asked for that view. What I have asked him is given the fact that there was an initial payment made in the first month of the current financial year, would the Chief Minister say that if there are no instructions from him for that money to be recovered it could well be that this has not been brought to their notice and that therefore that payment would, in fact, appear in the current year's expenditure?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As I say, if there has been a payment, to my knowledge it has not been physically taken back from the Community Care Trust. If the payment has been made, which is what the question implies, can only be returned by the recipient. The giver cannot, without the co-operation of the recipient, take the money back. If it has not already been made then the present policy of the Government is that it should not be made because with or without that first payment the Trust is adequately funded and I repeat that there are no outstanding requests for additional grants.

NO. 74 OF 1996

THE HON J BOSSANO

DEMONSTRATION AT CONVENT PLACE

What undertakings were given to the Moroccan nationals demonstrating at Convent Place in order that they should suspend their demonstration during the visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

As was made public in a joint statement by the Transport and General Workers Union and the Moroccan Workers Association at the time, the Moroccan nationals demonstrating at Convent Place decided, at my request, to temporarily lift their demonstration during the visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as a gesture of goodwill to the people of Gibraltar.

The Government have separately agreed to hold discussions as soon as is practically possible with representatives of the TGWU and the Moroccan Workers Association to address the issues affecting the Moroccan community in Gibraltar.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 74 OF 1996

HON J BOSSANO:

Are those discussions that the Government intend to hold on the basis of the proposed formula which would have involved the Ministry of Defence accepting a responsibility for meeting any costs of additional incentives for people to be repatriated voluntarily to Morocco which was the proposal for a number of years and which finally the Gibraltar Government did on their own and neither the MOD or anybody else in Gibraltar in the private sector subscribed to, is that still what we are talking about, that approach?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not aware that there is any outstanding proposal but certainly the position of the new Government of Gibraltar, as I have just during the lunch time informed the Director-General of the Moroccan Government's Immigration Ministry who is currently in Gibraltar, is that whilst the Government of Gibraltar wish to proceed as a matter of urgency with addressing these issues, equally we are convinced that the moral and financial responsibility for the ultimate solution does not lie solely on the Government of Gibraltar. That is the position which we agreed to from the Opposition benches and we have, of course, remained consistent to that view and that principle now that we find ourselves in Government. So certainly we will be putting to the British Government and, indeed, to the Moroccan Government, methods of financing any repatriation programme which will not be exclusively at the expense of the Government of Gibraltar.

ORAL

NO. 75 OF 1996

THE HON J BOSSANO

FAMILY ALLOWANCES

Is it still the policy of the Government that the payment of family allowances to Spanish workers for the period 1986 to 1989 has to be met by UK?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The Government are currently studying the matter and are therefore reserving our position.

NO. 76 OF 1996

THE HON A ISOLA

Will Government confirm that they intend to press Her Majesty's Government to formally terminate the 1987 Anglo-Spanish Agreement on the airport in accordance with the motion carried unanimously by this House?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The Government's position is as stated in the motion to which the question refers.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 76 OF 1996

HON A ISOLA:

Would the Chief Minister confirm that he will press the United Kingdom to put into effect the terms of the motion which were to ask the United Kingdom to formally terminate the Agreement?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Whilst the preference of the Government is that the Agreement should formally be terminated, it is the position of the Government, I understand shared by Opposition Members, that the Agreement is redundant in practice and therefore whether or not it is terminated formally in a legalistic sense is really quite irrelevant to the question of whether it can be implemented. The preference of the Government is that the 1987 Airport Agreement which is both inoperable and politically unacceptable should be terminated. If it is not terminated it must not be implemented and the position of the British Government, and it is a position that we accept, is that it will not be implemented without the consent of the people and the Government of Gibraltar. We consider that, whilst not being our first preferred position, to be satisfactory to the limited extent that it cannot result in the 1987 Airport Agreement being implemented contrary to our wishes. However, what the Government of Gibraltar will be dedicating our efforts towards will be the formulation of an Airport Agreement entirely on commercial lines, acceptable to the Government of Gibraltar and will be offering this to others to subscribe to. That will be our approach rather than wasting time in the sense that if they did not do it at the request of my predecessor no one should assume that they will do it at my request and that therefore it does not seem productive to dedicate one's resources and time exclusively to securing the termination of the existing Agreement, what we will be doing in parallel is trying to have it replaced by an alternative acceptable Agreement and, of course, if we can achieve that it implicitly involves the cancellation of the original one.

HON A ISOLA:

Is the answer to my question no?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, it depends what he means by pressing the Government. If he means am I going to write every week to the Foreign Secretary asking him to cancel the Airport Agreement the answer is no. But if he means will I make it clear to the Foreign Secretary that the present Government share the view of the previous one, I will certainly do that which is of course unnecessary because in the letter that my predecessor wrote to the Foreign Secretary I know he was at pains to make it clear that it was the unanimous decision of the House and since the Foreign Secretary knows that the then Opposition is now the Government, he also knows that the present Government share that view.

HON J BOSSANO:

Does not the Government agree that when we took that unanimous position in this House and put it to the British Government we were already aware that their position prior to us voting on that motion was that the Agreement signed in 1987 would not be imposed on Gibraltar because that announcement of it not being imposed on Gibraltar was made actually in 1987 at the time that it was signed? That is the first statement that was made in this House when the Agreement was signed. So therefore what is it that is any different about the response of the British Government which is that it will not be imposed in reply to saying we want it terminated?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The fact that we ask the British Government to terminate it does not enable us to terminate it, it is as he knows not an agreement to which the Government of Gibraltar is a party. Therefore there is nothing that we can do to force the British Government to terminate it. I do not share the analysis of the Opposition Member in respect to the position of the British Government and he knows that shortly prior to the general election I pointed out to him, indeed just two days before he issued a press release calling into question the reason and the position of the British Government and the reason why they held it and the effect to the British Government's position, Mr David Davis, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office with responsibility for Gibraltar, had told the House of Commons in answer to a question that the British Government would not impose the 1987 Airport Agreement contrary to the wishes of the people and the Government of Gibraltar. It seems to me that that is capable of only one logical and rational meaning which is that until the people and the Government of Gibraltar say yes, the British Government will not impose the Agreement. That position is not as satisfactory as the Agreement being terminated but is at least safe to the extent that one is willing to trust the word of the British Foreign Minister which I am on this issue.

HON J BOSSANO:

That is not what I have said, Mr Speaker, in my question. Is he not aware that the statement that he is quoting was not made for the first time last year, it was made for the first time in 1987 when not only did the Foreign Secretary state publicly that the Agreement that had just been signed with the ink not yet dry was a matter for this House of Assembly to implement or not implement but, indeed, Senor Ordonez himself confirmed so publicly in a GBC television interview? So my question to the Chief Minister is if he thinks that that is satisfactory surely when they voted in this

House to ask the British Government to terminate the Agreement, it was in the knowledge that for nine years the British Government had already been saying they would not impose it on the Government of Gibraltar. Would he not agree that what was peculiar in the response of the Foreign Secretary was this qualification which had never appeared before, did not appear in the House of Commons answer and had never appeared in any previous public statement which said, "For as long as the climate of public opinion is against it" which would suggest that it is on the shelf waiting for the climate of public opinion hopefully to change in the direction that some people may want it to change in the Foreign Ministries in either of the two Governments. Would he not agree that that is a reasonably accurate analysis?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I do not, Mr Speaker. The latest statement from the British Government, regardless of what might have been the first, was that made by Mr David Davis in the House of Commons just a few weeks before the general election and it was as I have stated, that the British Government would not impose the Agreement on Gibraltar contrary to the wishes of the people and the Government. That requires the Government to say, "I want you to implement it". This Government will not ever say to the British Government, "I want you to implement the 1987 Airport Agreement" and therefore I do not accept that the hon Member's analysis is at all correct. But I have to say this, regardless of what I think of his analysis. The statement that the Agreement would not be imposed for as long as the climate of public opinion is against it, referring as it does to the climate of public opinion in Gibraltar means that it would not be imposed whilst the people of Gibraltar do not want it imposed. I agree that that is something different to the question whether the Opposition Member wants it imposed but the criteria here is what the people of Gibraltar want and not what the hon Member may or may not want. But that is not the position of the British Government as last stated which is that it would not be imposed without the consent of the people and Government of Gibraltar which I think is a secure position providing that one believes them.

HON J BOSSANO:

We are not discussing and I am not asking the Chief Minister nor does my hon Colleague's question ask whether the position is secure. It is quite obvious that if the British Government had had either the political will or the ability to impose it they have had nine years in which to do it and they have not done it. So I am not suggesting that it is going to be imposed. What I am asking is, given the fact that we have known for nine years that there was an explicit and public commitment which is no different - what Mr Davis has said now is absolutely no different from what was said by Sir Geoffrey Howe the day he signed it. Given that we have still said in the knowledge that that commitment had been given we want it terminated. That is the point I am making. Therefore we knew that when we voted. Clearly the Chief Minister could have used the argument that there was really no need to ask for it to be terminated because of his confidence in the Foreign Secretary and because of the reliability of the Foreign Office and of how good friends the British Government have always been to the Government of Gibraltar and that therefore since they have been telling us since 1987 why vote? Well, we voted because we have said since 1987, and that is what the motion indicated, all attempts at changing the Agreement have failed and the danger of the Agreement being there, whether the British will impose it or will not impose it or the climate of opinion will change if the demography of Gibraltar changes at some future date with new inhabitants having

different climates of opinion and being more interested in an airport than it may be 1704, there we have got a situation where in any case Spain is being given undoubtedly a weapon which they constantly use by saying, "There is the Agreement and the first thing that the Gibraltarians should be doing is saying yes to the UK to the 1987 Agreement". Surely the Chief Minister recognises that that is the first thing he will be asked to capitulate on in the Brussels process?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

They may or may not ask me to capitulate on it. They know that I will not. Precisely one of the reasons why we supported the motion calling for the Agreement's termination was not because we were all lying awake at night worrying that it was going to be implemented over our heads because we were satisfied that it was not. It was precisely because if the 1987 Airport Agreement was off the table, out of the way, it might prove easier to persuade the Spaniards to accept an alternative one. Of course, I recognise that persuading the Spaniards to accept a new agreement when they still think that there is a perfectly good one on the table is harder than persuading them to accept an acceptable airport agreement when there is nothing else on the table. So that is why I said 15 minutes ago when this exchange began that our preference was that the Agreement should be removed and cancelled altogether but that we do not link that to the question of security about its imposition contrary to our will. It seems to me that my position is eminently logical.

HON J BOSSANO:

It may be eminently logical, Mr Speaker, but it is the Chief Minister who has chosen to make the link by saying he does not subscribe to a link which nobody else has made. The position is if we voted unanimously in this House to ask the British Government to act in a particular way on our behalf, does he not think that in every area where the British Government act for Gibraltar in respect of its external affairs, at the end of the day we should be moving into a situation when acting on our behalf means that they implement what is the unanimous view of this House and not simply ignore otherwise all that we are doing really is kidding ourselves that anything we say here makes any difference to the people in London.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Sometimes I am led to believe that these exchanges take so long that the Opposition Members forget what was said at the beginning of it. They asked me whether the position of the Government was still the same as it was in the motion unanimously carried in the House to which I said that it was exactly the same. So it is still the Government's position that we would want the British Government to cancel the Agreement. All that I have said subsequently to that is that because we are not a party to the Agreement we cannot cancel it ourselves and since I do not have Exocet missiles to threaten London with, I cannot do more than just invite them to continue to respect the wishes of the House. If they do not I am not prepared to declare political warfare on the British Government simply because they will not accede to this our request. But it is still our request, it is still my preference and the Government are still committed to doing what we reasonably can to persuade the British Government to go down that road. But I do not lie awake at night trembling with concern at the fact that they have not yet or might never agree to do it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Without being reduced to trembling awake at night or having to produce Exocet missiles which I have no doubt are no part of the Chief Minister's armoury whether with this issue or any other issue that may face our people, is he in fact going to press them at least to the extent of having it as a permanent feature of his agenda with the meetings with the Foreign Secretary saying, "This is a permanent feature of the policy of the House of Assembly" and we expect them to move in this direction. Is that going to be part of his conduct with the relations with the UK or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am certainly prepared to raise it with the Foreign Secretary but I am certainly not prepared to sacrifice the relationship between the British and Gibraltar Governments at that particular altar. There may be altars which are more important and to which I might be willing to sacrifice the good relationship between the new Government of Gibraltar and Her Majesty's Government but it is not that one. I will certainly raise it with him, I will raise it with the Minister of State on Monday which indeed the Leader of the Opposition may do himself and I will raise it with him at regular intervals but we attach the same or if not more importance to pursuing the alternative which is to having the Airport Agreement changed to something which is acceptable to Gibraltar. We think that that is more productive than banging our heads against the wall.