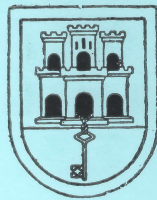


GIBRALTAR

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

24TH APRIL, 1998

NO. 148 TO NO. 278

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

24th April 1998

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ORAL

NO. 148 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - STUDENT NURSES

Can Government state how many student nurses were in employment in the Gibraltar Health Authority undergoing enrolment training as at the 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Gibraltar Health Authority had 18 pupil enrolled nurses at 31 March 1998.

NO. 149 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - NURSING AUXILIARIES

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of nursing auxiliary in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question Nos. 150, 151, 152, 153 and 154 of 1998.

NO. 150 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - NURSING ASSISTANTS

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of nursing assistant in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question Nos. 149, 151, 152, 153 and 154 of 1998.

NO. 151 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - ENROLLED NURSES

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of enrolled nurse in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question Nos. 149, 150, 152, 153 and 154 of 1998.

NO. 152 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - SENIOR ENROLLED NURSES

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of senior enrolled nurse in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question Nos. 149, 150, 151, 153 and 154 of 1998.

NO. 153 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - STAFF NURSES

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of staff nurse in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question Nos. 149, 150, 151, 152 and 154 of 1998.

NO. 154 OF 1998THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO**GHA - SISTER/CHARGE NURSES**

Can Government state what was the approved establishment in the Gibraltar Health Authority for the grade of sister/charge nurse in the financial year 1997/98 and the actual numbers in employment as at 31 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The breakdown of approved establishment and actual incumbents in nursing grades at 31 March 1998 is as follows:

	<u>Approved establishment</u>	<u>Whole time equivalent</u>	<u>Actual numbers of staff</u>
Nursing auxiliary)	126	23.5	29
Nursing assistant)		69.5	91
Enrolled nurse	87	75	91
Senior enrolled nurse	12	10	10
Staff nurse	70.5	85.5	91
Sister/charge nurse	36	32	32

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 149, 150, 151, 152, 153
AND 154 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I ask whether it is intended to cover the umpteen posts or are any changes being contemplated to the approved establishment? There are gaps in most areas and there are some over and some under but in the areas that are under is it intended to cover or is it intended to reduce the complement in any of those areas?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The situation of approved establishment is an inherited one from the previous administration. There have always been places where there have been theoretical over-complement staff nurse, for example, and a theoretical under-complement in the nursing sister grade, so that is an inherited situation. If we actually look at the staffing levels today as compared to the last staffing levels available to me before the election, in January 1996, there is very little change either way with some increases in some areas like enrolled nurses because the intake of student enrolled nurses has now finished but there has been very little change as to the situation before the election. The issue of approved establishment is, of course, under review because of the nursing review because the Government have to consider the manning level recommendations made in that report. We expect to take a decision, as I mentioned in the last House of Assembly, within the next three months.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does it follow from that then that the estimates for the current year which are contained in the figures that have been tabled in the House today are based on this approved complement that he has given?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Obviously the estimates cover the actual numbers in post. They also cover the new intake of student pupil nurses that we expect to start their course on 12 May and the Government will have to review the estimates if we take a specific view of the manning levels, of course.

HON J J BOSSANO:

That was not the question. He has answered the question but I am not sure whether he intended that to be the answer. My question is, are the figures based, which I think was the way it used to be done, on the complement including making provision for the unfilled posts or are they based on the actual numbers of people in employment?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Yes, I understand that to be the case.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Let us be clear, the figures are based on bodies in post plus vacancies in establishment, are both provided for in the estimates even though vacancies are not filled, some of that expenditure will not be incurred.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

As the Minister has mentioned the nursing review, could he state whether the Government have decided whether to make the nursing review public already?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I indicated in the last House of Assembly that we would take a decision on both questions within the next three months and we intend to do that.

NO. 155 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME

Can Government state whether the provision of £390,000 for the Capital Works Programme of the Gibraltar Health Authority was completed in the year ending 31 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Authority spent approximately £360,000 from the capital works item in the year ended 31 March 1998.

NO. 156 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - EXPENDITURE ON NEW EQUIPMENT

Can Government state how much has been spent in the last financial year by the Gibraltar Health Authority in the purchase of new equipment?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Authority spent approximately £500,000 during the last financial year in the purchase of new equipment.

ORAL

NO. 157 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - ST BERNARD'S HOSPITAL - KITCHEN

Can Government state when the works in the kitchen at St Bernard's Hospital are expected to be completed?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question No. 158 of 1998.

NO. 158 OF 1998THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO**GHA - ST BERNARD'S HOSPITAL - PRIVATE WARD**

When do the Government expect that a private ward will be operational at St Bernard's Hospital?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Chief Executive of the Authority is planning the use of existing space at St Bernard's and is discussing the matter with the Management Board.

At the moment management would like to utilise any space available for rehabilitation purposes but remains conscious of the existing need to provide for a private ward facility somewhere within the Hospital.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 157 AND 158 OF 1998

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

I do not believe I have had an answer to the works relating to the kitchen, when they are expected to be completed?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I am sorry if I was not explicit enough. What I meant was that Lewis Stagnetto Ward went into private corridor with the kitchen going into what was Lewis Stagnetto Ward. As the hon Lady will recall, I have said previously in the House that we do not expect Lewis Stagnetto to move from its existing location and therefore the space available at the Hospital includes where the kitchen was - the kitchen is where Lewis Stagnetto Ward was - that space available is being considered by the management to provide space for rehabilitation which is an area where at the moment in the Hospital we are having serious problems. The hon Lady will recall from her time as Minister for Health that the 100 per cent figures of occupancy of the geriatric wards and the difficulty that elderly patients have in receiving physiotherapy and rehabilitation is an area that the management are trying to address by expanding the possibility of rehabilitation within the Hospital. Having said that, of course, there is the staff and the management and the government are aware of the terms of the will of the late John Mackintosh which obliged a private facility to be included within the new wing of the Hospital and so within the playing around of space those are the factors that move the management. First, they have their own managerial priority which is to provide rehabilitation facilities for the elderly and, secondly they are aware of the terms of the will which obliged the use of space in a particular way. Relocating the kitchen to its original place is below those two priorities and so at the moment the management are looking at expanding rehabilitation in the area where the kitchen was.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes, I have taken in everything the Minister has said but unfortunately he still has not replied to my Question No. 157 which says specifically when are the works in the kitchen at St Bernard's expected to be completed?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Well, the management are weighing up all those factors that I have just stated and the works on the use of the facility where the kitchen was have not commenced. The costings are awaited I understand from JBS and the Management Board has to take a final decision on how to use the space. So at the moment the works have not commenced in any particular way. That is my understanding.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Am I correct in assuming that the Minister is referring that all the works related to the kitchen have still not commenced? Is that what he is saying?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I understand that the position is that the bulk of the work has not commenced, yes. Not all the work but the bulk.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister explain why the delay since, when we were in Government, round about in 1994 I believe, the works commenced? We are now talking that nearly three years have elapsed and the Minister is still saying that the bulk of the works have not commenced. What has been the delay?

HON K AZOPARDI:

No, my understanding from the management is that when the hon Lady talks about the works the works do not actually include the kitchen itself, the works were to Lewis Stagnetto Ward so that the kitchen could move in to there. Then the workers that were working within that - that is why I say the bulk was not done - area had to urgently tackle the issue of Children's Ward because of the leakage we suffered last year. After that happened and the works at Children's Ward were completed, which took a number of months because of the severity of the leakage which involved having to actually re-roof part of St Bernard's, the Chief Executive arrived and wanted to assess before any further work was conducted the issue of space and so he is now assessing that matter with the Management Board.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it the case then that the actual work in refurbishment of the existing kitchen was not scheduled for the last financial year in the amount provided in the estimates for minor works? It was not included in it?

HON K AZOPARDI:

There was a sum of money provided and there was a projection that we would do work in the kitchen but events took over that projection because of the Children's Ward issue. So we had to divert manpower resources and financial resources to fixing that urgent matter first.

HON J J BOSSANO:

What is the Minister saying that after that happened they did not go back to carrying on with the work that would have been done in the kitchen but they decided to reconsider the whole issue and maybe put the kitchen somewhere else, is that the point?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Because the original plan that the Authority had was actually to carry on the work to the kitchen, move the kitchen back to where the kitchen was, move Lewis Stagnetto back to Lewis Stagnetto Ward and then reopen private corridor. Those plans have now changed, we do not see that we will move Lewis Stagnetto in the foreseeable future and against that background the Chief Executive then wanted to reassess whether we should move the kitchen back to where it was given that it is already in a suitable facility and there are far higher priorities on his agenda for the use of the space available.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

But whatever the plans for where the kitchen was prior to being moved to Lewis Stagnetto Ward I suppose it will not be used as it has been used now to store old furniture and mount up of rubbish, will it?

HON K AZOPARDI:

If the plan to use it for rehabilitation purposes proceeds, of course it will not be used for that purpose.

HON A J ISOLA:

May I just ask, what quote is the Minister waiting for from JBS, in respect of what?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Of the works to convert the space into space which is suitable for rehabilitation purposes. I do not exactly know what the technical requirements that have been submitted to them are but that is what we are awaiting.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Can the Minister confirm whether the Government are considering the old Lewis Stagnetto Ward to be converted into a private corridor?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Not at the moment but the Authority obviously has to weigh up the fact that the will imposes an obligation that there should be a private facility available somewhere within the hospital. But the answer to the question is no, not at the moment.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Has any money actually been spent on the existing kitchen location as if it were going to be reopened as a kitchen or, in fact, that never happened?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Money was spent in the sense that the kitchen was literally dug up with a view to refurbishing it substantially but works did not go beyond that. So to a degree the answer is yes, and to a degree the answer is no because it can still be converted into anything else.

NO. 159 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - ST BERNARD'S HOSPITAL - SECOND THEATRE

Have the Government now considered the construction of a second theatre at St Bernard's Hospital?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Government have not taken a final decision on the possible development of a second fully functioning theatre at St Bernard's.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 159 OF 1998

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Has the Minister received any representations from the medical and nursing staff at St Bernard's for the construction of a second theatre?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I would not say I have received any formal representations from them. I think that in conversations that I may have had with the nursing union they have sometimes said that the staff conditions within the theatre, locker rooms and so on, have to be improved substantially but I would not say that I have formal representations from any lobby group or nursing union that we should build or we should expand the second space available into a fully functioning theatre. It has been talked about but no formal representations have been made.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Then it is not the case that the demand for theatre space cannot be met with the existing facilities, is that correct? It is not that there is a need, not because of the staff but because of the patients for a second theatre?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Well, the throughput of operations continues to be the same statistically as it was when the previous administration were in Government. I think ideally perhaps if there was much more space at the hospital we would like to expand the second space available into a fully functioning one. We would also like to expand the facilities of the recovery area and provide better conditions for the staff. So the answer to the question would be that though statistically the throughput of operations continues the same, we would like to develop the space and provide better conditions if it were possible. But as I mentioned in answer to the previous question, the Authority has far more pressing priorities to tackle and we are looking at those ourselves.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

When we were in office we had plans produced by a local firm for the construction of two theatres in the John Mackintosh Wing. Has the Minister been shown these plans by the management?

HON K AZOPARDI:

No, I have not been shown any plans by the management.

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Will the Minister ask the management to show him the plans?

HON K AZOPARDI:

Yes, indeed, I will endeavour to ask the management to see the plans but no doubt if they thought they had value they would have shown them to me first.

NO. 160 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - HEALTH CENTRE - HOUSE CALLS

Can Government state how many house calls were attended to by Health Centre doctors in the last financial year?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Requests for house calls have only previously been logged if made during the hours of 9 am to 11 am.

The Authority logged 5,618 requests for house calls in the year 1997/98 during those hours.

As from this financial year the Health Centre will log afternoon requests for house calls also.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 160 OF 1998

HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO:

Out of the 5,618 that the Minister has quoted, is he in a position to tell the House how many, out of that number, are exempted patients?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The separation of exempt from non-exempt patients is not available. I cannot tell the hon Member.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Do all the doctors at the Centre share the workload of house calls on the same basis or is there a system which decides which doctor goes or whether one doctor does more than another? Does he have any information on that?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I understand that the system is that there are a number of doctors that will do house calls and they will share the house calls amongst each other. Not all of them do house calls every day but those who do will share them out.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it that every doctor that is employed by the Health Authority at the Health Centre is required to do, if he is on duty that day, house calls or is there an element of discretion or preference involved as to who does the house call and who does not? Is it an obligation on the part of the doctors?

MR SPEAKER:

You answer it but this is hardly a supplementary on the answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

If the answer is that there are 5,618.....

MR SPEAKER:

But not if the doctors are obliged.

HON K AZOPARDI:

I believe that they are contractually obliged to do house calls. They certainly, on my information, all do house calls but they do not all do house calls on the same day. They will distribute the work amongst each other.

NO. 161 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - ST BERNARD'S HOSPITAL - PATIENT ATTENDANCES

Can Government state of the 52,805 patient attendances which took place at St Bernard's Hospital in 1996, how many were accidents and emergencies?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Statistics for the period January to 7 March 1996 are unavailable. During the period 7 March to 31 December 1996, GHA staff attended on 13,775 accident and emergency cases.

NO. 162 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - WAITING TIMES - CONSULTANTS/SURGERIES

Can Government give a breakdown of waiting times for appointments to see consultants and waiting times for surgery?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Waiting times for out patient appointments and surgery will depend on the circumstances of each case and therefore while the following breakdown of average waiting times can provide guidance, it cannot be an inflexible medical yardstick.

A. Surgery

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| (i) | General Surgery | - non-urgent | - 6 months |
| | | urgent | - no waiting time |
| (ii) | ENT | - male | - 5 months |
| | | children | - 6 months |
| | | female | - 6 months |
| (iii) | Ophthalmic | - cataract | - 1 year |
| | | minor | - 1 week |
| | | squint | - no waiting time |
| (iv) | Gynaecology | - major | - 2/3 months |
| | | minor | - 4/6 weeks |

Average orthopaedic and trauma waiting times are unavailable as the consultant is currently away from Gibraltar. I undertake to write to the hon Member with the information as soon as this is available.

B. Out patient Appointments

- | | | | |
|-------|------------------|---|-----------|
| (i) | Ophthalmology | - | 10 weeks |
| (ii) | Gynaecology | - | 4 weeks |
| (iii) | Orthopaedics | - | 7 weeks |
| (iv) | Paediatrics | - | 3 weeks |
| (v) | General Medicine | - | 5/6 weeks |
| (vi) | ENT - adults | - | 1 week |
| | paediatric | - | 3 weeks |
| (vii) | General surgery | - | 8 weeks |

NO. 163 OF 1998

THE HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO

GHA - COST UK TEMPORARY VISITORS

Can Government state what is the latest available cost to Gibraltar of treating UK temporary visitors?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The latest available cost to Gibraltar of treating UK temporary visitors is approximately £118,000.

NO. 164 OF 1998THE HON J J GABAY**EUROPA POINT - LANDSCAPING**

Will Government consider landscaping the immediate surroundings of the long white pipe that runs along the western slope of the Rock above Europa Point?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Government do not have immediate plans for doing so. However, a golden opportunity to achieve landscaping was lost when the pipe was installed in 1992 as the previous administration did not make this conditional on permission for use of the land.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 164 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

Putting aside the question of comparison of what was done or what was not done, would he not agree, despite the amusement of the Chief Minister, that many people see it as an industrial intrusion, in fact, and that one might well conceal it behind a row of hedges or at least paint it in a colour which might blend with the rockscape?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I am quite sure that a lot of people see it as quite a visual intrusion but I am not sure if we can put the small matter of what was done or what was not done aside because, frankly, the best opportunity to achieve landscaping was back when it was installed it should have been made perhaps a planning condition on condition of the use of the land and the Government were able, at the time, to do that and they did not.

HON J J GABAY:

I think it is a useless and negative exercise to continue over small matters like this to find excuses for not doing something simply because it was not done before. Does the Minister not agree that perhaps when they themselves create the number of things that have been created before that then we might find a reasonable balance and cease this business of making comparisons as an excuse for not taking action?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, the answer to the hon Member has to be no. It is not a question of comparisons between what was done before and what was not done before. The Government, happily for Gibraltar, are doing many things now that were not done before. The point is that there is an element of richness, which the hon Member cannot put aside as if it were a small irrelevant matter, to press the Government to do something now at taxpayers' expense which they could have done at the time at the

expense of the contractor to whom they allowed access to the land. He may think that that is a small matter of complete political inconsequence but he has to acknowledge, and I personally subscribe to his view on the issue and that is that that pipe is an eyesore and it would certainly amount to an improvement if it were not visible. But for the hon Members who presided over it for six years and did not take that view when they could have done so, to now press the Government to do it, look we can discuss it on its merits but he will understand that it is legitimate for the Government to retort with, "Yes we agree but we would much rather that you had done it six years ago when it would have been paid for by somebody else and not by the Gibraltar taxpayer".

MR SPEAKER:

In the same way as I told the Hon the Leader of the Opposition about supplementaries, insofar as you are concerned you can ask questions from the Minister but I do not think you can reply. Once a reply is given by a Minister the other Members may ask questions but I will not change the rules to what has been happening in the House, I am just drawing Members attention.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not quite sure what Mr Speaker is saying. If he is saying that the Chief Minister is not free to stand up and take part in an exchange on questions which are not addressed to him, he is of course free to do it but he would be changing 35 years worth of practice in this House.

MR SPEAKER:

Maybe a bad practice, I am not changing it but I am just drawing the attention.

HON J J GABAY:

Talking about richness, the only richness that I see, perhaps the House might agree, is the richness in the expression of the Chief Minister over what is a small matter of a practical nature and he ended up saying that he agreed on the practical aspect of it. So might he not just simply be exceptionally magnanimous once in his lifetime and say that this might be done for the general good of an area which is important?

ORAL

NO. 165 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EUROPA POINT - MOSQUE

Do Government propose to take any steps to remedy the current state of the former garden in the vicinity of the Mosque?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Answered together with Question No. 166 of 1998.

NO. 166 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EUROPA POINT - NUN'S WELL

What steps are being taken to protect Nun's Well from vandalism?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Government are currently considering steps that can be taken to enhance and better protect the area of Europa Point and Nun's Well.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 165 AND 166 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

I am pleased to hear that but would the Minister not agree that that manicured garden that appeared there as if by magic on the official opening of the Mosque has now really degenerated - and this has happened during the present administration and not during the past - into an ugly patch of desert? Since he says it is an important tourist spot, would he again not consider doing something about it and indeed in respect of Nun's Well which is a historic site, with some immediate sense of concern? And in respect of Nun's Well, I am sure that he is quite aware of the historic aspect of that monument, the underground Moorish cistern; the fact that the nuns used to look after the Shrine of Our Lady of Europe, it is also associated of course with the Duke of Kent's futile attempt to curtail drunkenness in Gibraltar by setting up his own brewery there and I think shutting down 50 of the 91 houses available at the time, an interesting story for visiting tourists, would he not agree therefore that it is in a sorry state? The iron gates hang loose, the iron grills across the windows are torn and it is fast becoming a rubbish dump.

HON K AZOPARDI:

I thank the hon Member for his customary long question. Dealing with the garden area itself first, the hon Member will recall that that garden area sprung up at the time of the Mosque opening, it was done precisely by those who were interested in the opening of the Mosque. At the time we mentioned to them that it would be very difficult for a garden like that to survive climatically in such an area. Indeed, maintenance was costed at £100,000 a year and the Government took the view at the time and indeed insisted in those who installed that garden area that we could not make ourselves liable for those maintenance costs precisely because of the extent of them and because some of the plants would not survive in that area. What we have done is we have tried to salvage, I would say, on that final point, notwithstanding our comments to them they took no steps after the Mosque opened to maintain that garden area that they themselves had established. Notwithstanding that we have tried to salvage as many plants as possible from the area. We have taken some of the palm trees and other plants and put them in the custody of garden centres around Gibraltar. I will give the hon Member an example, the palm trees are with Greenarc; other plants have been placed with Greenarc and the

Botanical Gardens or with Gibraltar; other plants have been used in beautification projects or donated to organisations or the Church itself who has requested plants and so we have tried to find a home for these plants as much as we can to salvage the greenery because climatically they would not have been able to survive with lack of maintenance in that area. In the meantime, we have also set up a committee which is led by the Tourism Ministry to review the area of Europa Point and Nun's Well. That committee has been established recently and it will look to measures that can be taken to beautify the whole area. In respect of Nun's Well specifically, the Government received a proposal to restore Nun's Well and to commercially develop part of the non-sensitive heritage area for cafeteria purposes on the outside area. That project itself has the support of the Heritage Trust, it is fully backed by the Heritage Trust and the Government are in negotiations with the Trust and with that third party who is interested in the commercial development, to see whether it can come to suitable terms to enable a lease or a licence to be granted over the area so that the Nun's Well area which the hon Member rightly says is very heritage sensitive, can be protected, enhanced and developed in a sensitive way.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Out of curiosity, the Minister mentioned the plants and the palm trees. Why is it that the palm trees were not used for the beautification of Winston Churchill Avenue and the Government had to buy new palm trees when they already had those available?

HON K AZOPARDI:

My information is that some of the plants that were taken from the garden centre were used in beautification projects. I cannot tell the hon Member whether a specific palm tree was used at a specific location. He will understand that my gardening knowledge does not extend to that level but I am sure John Cortes could identify the plants by name.

HON A J ISOLA:

Does the Government not think they have enough committees without having to set a new one up to look at Europa Point? Is this committee specifically for Europa Point?

HON K AZOPARDI:

The hon Member responsible for Heritage has emphasised the importance of the Europa Point Nun's Well area and so I think he may be in disagreement with his own spokesman for Heritage on that point. The Government place substantial importance on that area visually and in a heritage sense and accordingly we have taken steps to address that.

HON J J GABAY:

Actually I am not in disagreement with my hon Colleague for the simple reason that I was seeking action not the formation of committees.

HON K AZOPARDI:

Action can only come in that manner.

NO. 167 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - EDINBURGH HOUSE

Can Government state how many of the workers actually working on the refurbishment of Edinburgh House are Gibraltarians?

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

A reply to this question cannot be given with a very high degree of accuracy. The main contractors, Mackley Tricon and Cubiertas, have further sub-contracted some other tasks. I can state that in all the companies involved with the construction works there are 12 employees who are Gibraltarians. What I cannot give accurately is how many of these are employed at this site, bearing in mind that employees are rotated between other construction sites.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 167 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO

Therefore there is nothing when awarding a Government tender to any contracting company that they should employ a certain amount of Gibraltarians?

HON J J NETTO:

Generally speaking, of course, the Government when awarding tenders and bearing in mind that the Tender Boards are independent from the Government, looks at matters as to employers who maximise employment for local resident people. I would say in this particular area that in relation to the subject matter of relationship between local people working as a percentage in the Construction Training Centre, that if anything the situation is slightly better under this Government than it was under the previous Government. I can say for instance that in relation to a Question, No. 63 of 1991, the answer given by the Minister for Labour and Social Security, the Hon Robert Mor, he said, "Clearly a normal increase of this nature cannot be immediately absorbed by the labour market particularly as the skills available do not necessarily match the vacancies that exist. For this reason Gibraltar has continued to import construction workers for the same period". In a further supplementary to the same question the Minister said, "Of course, Mr Speaker, we are always running the scheme, the Vocational Cadet Training Scheme, in a way that can adapt to whatever changes are needed at any time", but despite what was said in the House at the time in relation to the percentage of workers and in 1991 there were 1,047 workers in the construction trade of which there were 239 Gibraltarians which is 22.8 per cent of the total. Today there are 2,051 workers in the construction industry, there are 694 and that represents a 33.8 per cent of Gibraltarians within that particular industry group. So therefore what I can say is that there are, at this moment in time, more Gibraltarians within that particular construction.... [HON J J BOSSANO: *Than in 1991.*] Than in 1991, yes.

HON J J BOSSANO:

But what he cannot tell us is whether there are more than in 1996, is that the answer? He is taking the credit for what happened between 1991 and 1996?

HON J J NETTO:

Well, if he wants a full answer I can tell him that during 1990 out of a total of 648 there were 184 which is 28 per cent; in 1991 there were 1,047 total of which 239 were Gibraltarians which is 22 per cent; in 1992 there were a total of, which shows the construction boom at the time and the highest point ever, 2,895 in total and there were 499, 17 per cent Gibraltarians; but then we see that in 1993 it came down to 2,016 in total of which there were 470 Gibraltarians which was 23 per cent; and in 1994 there were, again the trend coming down, 1,667 a total of which there were 459 which is 27 per cent Gibraltarians out of the total. And I can go on but the point I am trying to make is that while in the original question the hon Member is saying, "Do Government take into account the number of companies in terms of the composition of local people in awarding the tender?", not necessarily does it mean the independent Board awarding the tender that necessarily gives the highest or the lowest participation of Gibraltarians. What I can give in general terms is that today there is a higher percentage of Gibraltarians in the construction industry than there were at the time.

HON J J BOSSANO:

No, what he can say is that there is a higher percentage today than there was in the year 1991 and 1992. Does the Minister not understand that if we have tomorrow 3,000 construction workers because there is a building boom it would be a sheer physical impossibility, unless there was also a baby boom to accompany the building boom, for enough Gibraltarians to exist to take the 3,000 jobs? Therefore if he wants to quote the share of the Gibraltar labour content can he say that what he is telling the House is that the numbers of Gibraltarians in the construction industry is higher now than it was in 1996? The fact that it was higher in 1996 than in 1991 has nothing to do with it. Is he saying that it is higher today than in 1996? Because if he is saying that we will see whether he is right when the figures eventually get published.

MR SPEAKER:

That is hardly a supplementary on the original answer. If you want to answer it you can.

HON J J NETTO:

The answer is yes. The answer is that in 1996 there were 1,864 in total in the construction industry and today there are 2,051, in June 1997.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I am asking him, is the purpose of all the figures he has volunteered to the House trying to demonstrate that there are more Gibraltarians in the construction industry now than there were in 1996? Otherwise the whole business of all the quotes of percentages is meaningless unless he is telling us that. If he is telling us that, then I want confirmation because I believe he is wrong and I believe that the official figures which eventually will get published in a year's time will prove him wrong.

MR SPEAKER:

That is not a supplementary on the original answer and strictly speaking it is not an allowable question. I have been very lax all the time but if you want to answer it you can.

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, as I said, in 1996 there were 1,864 in total of which 651 were Gibraltarians. In 1997 there were 2,051 in total and there are 694 Gibraltarians so there are more Gibraltarians today. I do also take the other point that the Leader of the Opposition has said, that whenever I give figures from the ETB source I do it with a caveat that there are employers obviously who on termination of employees do not necessarily inform the ETB of that respect. Once we finish the current exercise, by 1999, obviously we will have a much greater picture because the terminations will have been cleared by then.

HON R MOR:

Going back to the original question.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the original answer. Supplementaries come from the original answer which we have lost sight of.

HON R MOR:

Can the Government say what is the total number of workers engaged on the Edinburgh House works?

HON J J NETTO:

I think I have already answered that question. In the original answer I said, "A reply to this question cannot be given with a very high degree of accuracy because the main contractors, Mackley Tricon and Cubiertas, have further sub-contracted other tasks. I can state that in all the companies involved with the construction works there are 12 employees who are Gibraltarians." But, of course, that depends because they have other construction sites where workers are rotated from one site to the other.

HON R MOR:

I understand that but I am asking what is the total number of workers engaged on the project?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is not a matter for which this Government are answerable in the House, how many employees a private construction company has in a particular site is not a matter that is reasonable for Opposition Members either to call the Government to account, still less to expect the Minister to have breakdowns of information about how many plumbers Cubiertas has on the site or Mackley Tricon has on the site.

HON R MOR:

The Minister has already given the figure that there are 12 Gibraltarians involved in the work at Edinburgh House. My question is, as a supplementary, if there are 12 Gibraltarians he must know what is the total number of workers engaged in that project?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, Mr Speaker a question is asked and the Opposition try to get the answer to that question, not to every question that the hon Member could possibly think he might ask. He might ask how many men with blue eyes are involved in the site and the Minister would not know that either.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I think, the Minister has not understood the question. The question is, if he knows that there are 12 people working on a given site, does he know how many others that are not Gibraltarians are on that same site, not in the rest of Gibraltar? Does he know that?

HON J J NETTO:

In the same way that the 12 Gibraltarians could be 12 people today if we were to go to the site tomorrow it could be six, as far as Gibraltarians. Well the same happens to that supplementary question from the hon Member as far as non-Gibraltarians. We could go down today and it could be 30 but tomorrow there could be 10. It all depends from the manager of those various contractors where in different circumstances they say, "Today I want two masons" but the following day he has got other pressures in other construction sites and instead of having two masons down in that particular project he would take one mason and leave another mason on another site. I cannot give that with any certainty.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer is you do not know.

HON J J NETTO:

No, I do not know.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Then it must follow he does not know about the Gibraltarians either? That is to say, it may not be that there are 12?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He said that as well.

NO. 168 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government state what was the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of October 1997 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 169, 170, 171, 172 and 173 of 1998.

NO. 169 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government state what was the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of November 1997 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 168, 170, 171, 172 and 173 of 1998.

NO. 170 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Are Government now prepared to provide the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of December 1997 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 168, 169, 171, 172 and 173 of 1998.

NO. 171 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government state what was the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of January 1998 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 168, 169, 170, 172 and 173 of 1998.

NO. 172 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government state what was the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of February 1998 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 168, 169, 170, 171 and 173 of 1998.

NO. 173 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO**ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS**

Can Government state what was the number of Gibraltarians unemployed actually registered with the ETB at the end of March 1998 giving a breakdown of males and females aged under 18, 18 to 25, and over 25 years?

ANSWER

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

The information is as follows:

MR SPEAKER:

Before you start, this number of questions are really suitable for a written answer but you want an oral question and that has been so for the past 35 years. In order to help, if the Minister does not mind I will give the part of the written answer to the hon Member so that he can follow you, otherwise he will not be able to follow.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Perhaps if Opposition Members agree, rather than sit and read can we just not put the answer in Hansard and move straight on to supplementaries?

MR SPEAKER:

Well, it is entirely up to him, you give the oral answer on this occasion because they have been oral questions and maybe next time we have some written questions.

HON J J NETTO:

<u>October 1997</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	32	84	215	331
Females	28	72	135	235
Total	60	156	350	566
<u>November 1997</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	35	70	199	304
Females	29	67	128	224
Total	64	137	327	528
<u>December 1997</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	33	72	204	309
Females	32	66	107	205
Total	65	138	311	514

<u>January 1998</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	39	82	221	342
Females	36	73	148	257
Total	75	155	369	599

<u>February 1998</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	40	91	222	353
Females	36	70	139	245
Total	76	161	361	598

<u>March 1998</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>18 to 24</u>	<u>Over 25</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	29	80	207	316
Females	34	78	117	229
Total	63	158	324	545

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 168, 169, 170, 171,
172 AND 173 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

There has been a drop from the month of February to the month of March. Can the Minister tell us, out of the males of 18 to 24 and over 25, which are minus 11 in the range of 18 to 24 and minus 15 in the over 25; and of the females, even though there is a plus in the 18 to 24, there is a minus in the over 25 of 22; how many of those were employed in Cammell Laird and the Bottling Plant?

HON J J NETTO:

In order to give that information he will have to give me notice.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is it that the Minister does not know or is it that he does not want to give out the information?

MR SPEAKER:

He has just said to give him notice.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Presumably, without being able to give the figure he knows that employment in those two areas is principally responsible for the decline because that is the explanation he has already given in a press release. He has said that the drop in that month is due to those two employers, so he knows that that is accurate does he?

HON J J NETTO:

I think the Leader of the Opposition is misquoting my press release. I said in the general trend of figures that generally the economy is looking better because we have new businesses such as Cammell Laird and the Bottling Plant. Of course there are other activities going on elsewhere in the economy so not necessarily

everybody who got employed happened to be in that particular two, which the hon Member has quoted. The other factor, of course, as the hon Member knows, the number of people registered is an administrative count therefore if they do not happen to come in that particular month and do not happen to sign on whether they are employed or whether they have not necessarily gone to register as unemployed, therefore could influence the figures as well.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The statement which I am quoting, which is Press Release No. 70/98 says, "The falling trend during the quarter is the result of new business coming into Gibraltar such as Cammell Laird and the Bottling Plant". The falling trend during the quarter cannot be presumably one person less in February than in January, from 599 to 598, because that is hardly a trend. So it must be, we assume, that the change between February and March, which is the only falling figure, one month, which is something like 54 less people registered in March. If it is not accurate then certainly, will the Minister not agree, that the impression created is that the 54 less people unemployed is due to those two employers coming into the market in the month of March? If it does not mean that, what does it mean?

HON J J NETTO:

Well, of course, the hon Member would have seen in my interview in relation to that press release which he has quoted, that I went further than what he has just quoted there and I did say that they were absorbed probably in the wider economy as a result of the activity taking place. Either it is a result of that or it is also the factor which I allayed just before in relation that when people - he has quoted 50 less for March to February, it could also well be that some of those 54 perhaps did not sign on in February therefore they are not reflected as well, that is a factor to take into account.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

That is not a factor to be taken into account when one is giving the figures because those persons who have not bothered to register.....

MR SPEAKER:

What is the question?

HON J L BALDACHINO:

The question is, is it not correct that the people who have not registered as unemployed will not be shown in any of the figures published and therefore the analysis that the Minister arrives at saying that there are people who might not have registered, does not show in any of the unemployment figures anyway? Is that correct or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It seems to me that Opposition Members wish to make an issue out of where one does not exist. He knows that the unemployment statistics are the people who register for the purposes and therefore if there are people who are not on these

statistics it is because they have not registered as unemployed. And there are two reasons why they might not be registered as unemployed. One is because they might be employed and the other is because they are unemployed and not interested in seeking employment, and that has always been the case.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

That is precisely what I am saying but he should tell that to his hon Colleague who does not seem to understand. His hon Colleague has said in this House - if I may put it as a question, let me see if I can do it, there might be when I make reference to the figures on the drop in which I ask, is there any of the drop or any of the persons that have been employed in either Cammell Laird or the Bottling Plant, how many of the numbers already given which is 11 of the 15 and the 22 for females over 25 - the Minister said that there might be other people that might have been employed but are not registered as unemployed, which is what the Chief Minister has just said. I agree entirely with him. So the answer has nothing to do with what I have asked previously anyway, the answer his hon Colleague, the Minister for Employment, has given before.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

And all that that shows is that the hon Gentleman tries to give as much information as possible whether or not it is directly relevant to the question that the hon Member asks. If the hon Member wants the Minister to curtail the amount of information and attempt an explanation that the Minister gives, I tend to agree with the hon Member that he would be wise for him to do so because, frankly, all it does is get used by Opposition Members to complicate a question and answer session beyond the necessary.

HON J J BOSSANO:

We are not trying to complicate anything. What we are trying to establish is the accuracy of a Government Press Release that says, "the dropping trend" and we are seeing the dropping trend in the answer to the original question so we are now saying where is the dropping trend due to the Bottling Plant and Cammell Laird quoted in press release No. 70 given that we have got the figure in the original answer to the original question.

MR SPEAKER:

I know what you want but that is not a supplementary to the original answer. Please stick to the rules but if he wants to answer it, let him answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

If the original answer is that the figure for March is lower than the figure for February and that has been described publicly as the result of a drop in trend due to employment in two employers, is it not a legitimate question to say how many of the 50 is due to those two employers?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Of course it is a legitimate question but he has got to give notice of it.

MR SPEAKER:

Wait a minute, I will not allow you, let me speak. I know you are very experienced, far more than me but an allowable supplementary is to the original answer, there cannot be a supplementary to a supplementary, that is what I was trying to point out. Now I allow the Chief Minister to speak, it has taken me some effort. What do you want?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

What I want and what I am sure the Leader of the Opposition wants, is to clarify the matter which is that of course it is a legitimate little piece of information. If the Hon Mr Baldachino wanted to know how many persons from the reduced number of unemployment, how many of those reduced figures are as a result of people engaged in Cammell Laird and in the Bottling Plant, well he could have asked and should have asked that information and if he had asked that question he would now today have that answer.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

I could not have asked that question because the press release came after I gave notice of questions, so I am asking now, that is the reason why I am asking now.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 174 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - WORK PERMITS

Can Government state the number of work permits issued for the month of March 1998 giving a breakdown by nationalities and trade?

ANSWER

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

The total number of work permits issued were 33. The breakdown by nationality and trade is as follows:-

Moroccans 25, from which 14 are in the construction trade, 1 domestic, 1 mechanic, 1 manager, 2 catering and 6 in other trades. Swiss 2 - 1 administration and 1 manager. Indian 1 - manager. Pakistani 1 - medical. South African 1 - medical. Malaysian 3 - professional.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 174 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Of the 25 Moroccans, did they all have work permits before or is that they are new entrants?

HON J J NETTO:

I am prepared to answer that question with notice.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Then I am giving him notice, could he be prepared to give me the answer at a later date?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He can ask two things, he can ask the Minister to give him a written answer in private which he can certainly do now, not by giving notice but by asking the Minister to provide him the information or he can give notice in the proper form by putting down an explicit question next time there is a question session in the House of Assembly but he certainly cannot stand up there now and say that he gives notice of a question.

MR SPEAKER:

Well you give notice that you are going to ask the question. Do you want the Minister to give you the information in writing?

HON J L BALDACHINO:

What happens is, if we go back in Hansard the Minister always needs time in any supplementary anyway.....

MR SPEAKER:

That is not a question and I will disallow that.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Well, let me put it this way as the Chief Minister put it, I am asking will the Minister give me the information in writing?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes.

ORAL

NO. 175 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - VOCATIONAL CADETS

Can Government state how many vocational cadets were engaged by the ETB for the month of March 1998?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 176 and 177 of 1998.

ORAL

NO. 176 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - VOCATIONAL CADETS

Can Government state how many vocational cadets have terminated their employment with the ETB for the month of March 1998?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 175 and 177 of 1998.

NO. 177 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - VOCATIONAL CADETS

Can Government state what was the total value of payments to vocational cadets for the month of March 1998?

ANSWER

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

Cadets engaged for the month of March 1998 were 18.

Cadets who have terminated their employment with the ETB for the month of March 1998 were 26 and the value of payments as at the end of March 1998 was £78,417.63.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 175, 176 AND 177 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does the Minister know how many vocational cadets there were at the end of March after the engagement of the 18 and the termination of the 26, what was the balance of vocational cadets left?

HON J J NETTO:

This is information which again I would need notice, it is a different question, it is not of relevance to the main question.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the question of relevance is up to me. He has asked a question, whether you can answer it or you need notice, but the question of relevance is entirely up to me. If you do not want to answer it that is your prerogative.

HON J J NETTO:

No, I will answer but he will have to give me notice.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Looking at the figures for December, January, February and March, I have seen that he has answered the three questions in one and comparing the vocational cadets that are engaged to the vocational cadets that have terminated, am I correct in assuming that there have been less vocational cadets being taken on than the vocational cadets who are terminating their employment? Is that a correct assessment?

HON J J NETTO:

That is correct.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Does the Minister know what is the factor for this happening? Is it that there are less employers who are interested in taking on vocational cadets?

HON J J NETTO:

I have answered this question on several occasions. The general trend is that yes, less employers are calling now to get cadets; yes that is the answer.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

That is the only factor in the equation that the Minister thinks, there is nothing else is there?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, I think that is the only factor.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

I was referring to employers. If they do not shoot cadets I suppose they are shooting employers.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

ORAL

NO. 178 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - CAMMELL LAIRD

Can Government state how many of the remaining 27 vacancies that had been notified to the ETB by Cammell Laird have now been filled giving the nationalities?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question No. 179 of 1998.

NO. 179 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - CAMMELL LAIRD

Can Government state if any new vacancies have been notified to the ETB by Cammell Laird?

ANSWER

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

Out of the 27 remaining, eight have now been filled of which six are Gibraltarians and two British.

I was just about to say, which is the information I was passed on, that there were no further vacancies being opened but after sending the information on Wednesday 22nd, we did have 10 new vacancies which have been opened with us and the 10 new vacancies are requesting welders.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 178 AND 179 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Of the six Gibraltarians, does the Minister know if they were six ex-Kvaerner employees?

HON J J NETTO:

No, I do not.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

I am asking the question even though the Chief Minister.....

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, I know that, he has already answered you, he does not know.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

No, he laughs. I am asking because I thought that priority would be given to ex-Kvaerner employees because his hon Colleague the Minister for Trade said in an interview.....

MR SPEAKER:

That is not a supplementary.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

The two British, does the Minister know if they are management or are they on the workforce?

HON J J NETTO:

No, I do not.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Of the new vacancies that have been opened for 10 workers, will the ETB be sending people who are registered with them as unemployed to the employer or is it that the ETB expects people to go directly to Cammell Laird? What is the position?

HON J J NETTO:

The position is exactly the same as when he was Minister for Employment, whenever a vacancy is opened for people who are unemployed, the Employment Officer does everything possible to get submissions to be sent to employers. So I should imagine that the answer to the question is that in the same way as it was done before, the Employment Officer in the ETB will get hopefully Gibraltarians or local resident people who are within those particular skills and submit them to the employer either to Cammell Laird or to any other one for that matter.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So what the Minister is telling us is that the ETB will be submitting names to the employers or will they be providing a card so that they can go to the employers, which of the two is it?

HON J J NETTO:

Exactly in the same way as was done by him as Minister, by submitting cards.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

But that did not happen and I am referring now to the 27, with the other 27 it happened exactly the same, with the vacancies that have now been filled with the eight and the two?

HON J J NETTO:

My guesstimate is that the Employment Officer will be doing today the same as they were doing for the hon Member when he was the Minister.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the hon Member is asking whether there has been any change in Government policy the answer is that there has not been. On the other hand, the Minister is not the Employment Office Manager either. It is Government policy which we then assume is properly and faithfully implemented by the officials but there is no change of policy. The operation of the office, ETB remains as he left it.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

I am asking this question because maybe I have been given the wrong information and maybe the Chief Minister can clarify it, but previously, initially when Cammell Laird started recruiting people what people had to do was put their CV's in a box in the ETB. That is not the same procedure that we had, was that the case or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is not a difference in policy, this is one employer coming into the market trying to recruit a large number of people with specific skills and in order to simplify the recruitment process the ETB has got to be in a position to demonstrate to the potential employer the qualifications of the people that it is sending along. It is not possible to set up a shipyard from scratch on the basis of sending cards. The fact that applicants were asked to provide a CV may be a difference in practice but it does not reflect any change in system or policy.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So in fact, what the Chief Minister is saying is that it is not the case that the CV's were simply passed on to the employer and then the employer called whoever they wanted; the ETB actually sent people with cards?

HON J J NETTO:

I am telling the hon Member that whilst my office is not within the Job Centre and I am not looking at what they do for eight hours every day, I have good faith that my Employment Officers will be doing the same things that they were doing for the previous Minister.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

That is not the issue. The Minister has not got to be eight hours on the front line serving people. He well knows, I do not know if he gets it but I used to get.....

MR SPEAKER:

What is the question?

HON J L BALDACHINO:

My question is, does he get daily reports of people who are being employed and people who are registering as unemployed or does he not get that; does he get that or does he not?

MR SPEAKER:

Yes or no?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Therefore it is correct for me to assume that for him to have certain knowledge.....

MR SPEAKER:

I am sorry, it is not correct for you to assume, it is correct for you to ask another supplementary question.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is it correct to assume then that he already has the information available to him daily?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, I do have the information of people filling the vacancies, yes.

NO. 180 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - VACANCIES

Can Government state how many vacancies were opened at the ETB in the month of January 1998 with a breakdown by trade and how many vacancies were filled showing the trade and nationality of the persons employed?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 181 and 182 of 1998.

NO. 181 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

ETB - VACANCIES

Can Government state how many vacancies were opened at the ETB in the month of February 1998 with a breakdown by trade and how many vacancies were filled showing the trade and nationality of the persons employed?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 180 and 182 of 1998.

NO. 182 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO**ETB - VACANCIES**

Can Government state how many vacancies were opened at the ETB in the month of March 1998 with a breakdown by trade and how many vacancies were filled showing the trade and nationality of the persons employed?

ANSWER

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

The information is as follows:

January 1998

<u>Vacancies Opened</u>	252, cancelled 55
<u>Vacancies Filled</u>	Gibraltarian 103, British 35, Spanish 49, Other EEC 2, Other non-EEC 5 and Moroccan 11
	Total filled 205

Vacancies filled by Nationality and Job Codes is as follows:

Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers Gibraltarian 4, British 5, Spanish 3

Professionals Gibraltarian 3, British 1

Technical & Assoc Professionals Gibraltarian 11, British 6, Spanish 4, Other EEC 1, other 1.

Clerks Gibraltarian 25, British 5, Spanish 1, other 1.

Service workers and shop and market workers Gibraltarian 18, British 10, Spanish 6, Other EEC 1, Moroccan 5, other 2.

Skilled agricultural & fisheries workers Moroccan 1

Craft and related trade workers Gibraltarian 14, British 3, Spanish 29, Moroccan 1.

Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers Gibraltarian 4, British 1, Moroccan 2.

Elementary occupations Gibraltarian 24, British 4, Spanish 6, Moroccan 2, other 1.

February 1998

Vacancies Opened 340, cancelled 52

Vacancies Filled Gibraltarian 134, British 38, Spanish 66, Other EEC 12, Other non-EEC 5 and Moroccan 10

Total filled 265

Vacancies filled by Nationality and Job Codes is as follows:

Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers Gibraltarian 6, British 3, Spanish 1, other EEC 2, others 1.

Professionals Gibraltarian 4, British 2, Spanish 1, other EEC 1, others 3.

Technical and Assoc Professionals Gibraltarian 14, British 4, Spanish 1 and other EEC 2.

Clerks Gibraltarian 30, British 4, Spanish 1, Moroccan 1 and other EEC Nationals 4.

Service workers and shop and market workers Gibraltarian 20, British 8, Spanish 17, other EEC 1, other non-EEC 1, Moroccan 3.

Craft and related trade workers Gibraltarian 18, British 10, Spanish 28, Moroccan 3, other EEC 2

Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers Gibraltarian 20, British 1

Elementary occupations Gibraltarian 22, British 6, Spanish 17, Moroccan 3.

March 1998

Vacancies Opened 469, cancelled 33

Vacancies Filled Gibraltarian 205, British 56, Spanish 121, Other EEC 11, Other non-EEC 10, Moroccan 28

Total filled 432

Vacancies filled by Nationality and Job Codes is as follows:

Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers Gibraltarian 1, British 2, Spanish 1, Other non-EEC 2.

Professionals Gibraltar 2, British 4

Technical & Assoc Professionals Gibraltar 1, British 8, Spanish 2.

Clerks Gibraltar 14, British 4, Spanish 2

Service workers and shop and market workers Gibraltar 28, British 5, Spanish 8, other EEC 1, Moroccan 4.

Craft and related trade workers Gibraltar 4, Spanish 8, Moroccan 4.

Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers Gibraltar 4, British 1.

Elementary occupations Gibraltar 17, British 3, Spanish 2 and Moroccan 5.

NO. 183 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

VARYL BEGG ESTATE/SIR WILLIAM JACKSON GROVE

Are Government aware that the area in the Varyl Begg Estate which runs parallel to the wall that separates the Estate from Sir William Jackson Grove is covered with scattered construction debris and other waste?

ANSWER

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

Government are aware that for a considerable number of years the area between Varyl Begg Estate and the boundary wall with Sir William Jackson Grove has been and continues to be used as a dumping place by some tenants of the Estate.

The area in question has been cleaned on a number of occasions but this problem persists. The Department will clean the area again and will monitor the situation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 183 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister not aware that the main reason for the construction debris is that his department gave permission to some tenants to build a chapel of some sort and that the department actually initiated the works with two of their masons which were later withdrawn and that the debris is as a result of what the department initiated but did not complete?

HON J J NETTO:

I am not aware.

HON J C PEREZ:

Could the Minister investigate and see that it is not necessarily as a result of a number of years used as a dumping ground but because that situation arose and that is why there is construction debris scattered in the area?

HON J J NETTO:

Since the hon Member seems to be quite aware of the kind of debris left there, I will ask the department to look into it.

NO. 184 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

VARYL BEGG ESTATE - CAR PARK

What improvements are to be carried out to the existing car park at the Varyl Begg Estate?

ANSWER

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

Improvements to be carried out to this existing car park at Varyl Begg Estate consists of the following:

- (i) Completion of outstanding areas of paving including the provision of drop-kerbs and the replacement of broken and/or loose tiles.
- (ii) Remedial works to existing drainage channels and removal of defective gratings.
- (iii) Provision of flip-poles to the parking bays.
- (iv) Provision of planted areas and trees to embellish the area.

I can also say that the contract includes for additional drainage works to eliminate flooding problems at the boundary wall between Varyl Begg and Montagu Gardens which is the cause of water penetration problems to some garages at Montagu Gardens. These works became necessary when the Gibraltar Land Reclamation Company carried out the Westside reclamation thus blocking the storm water outlet from Varyl Begg. Although the work should have been carried out by the Gibraltar Land Reclamation Company, the previous administration undertook to carry out the works for a sum of £16,034. The money was paid into the Government General Account by Gibraltar Homes Ltd but the works were never carried out satisfactorily and the problem persists hence the need to include it in this contract as well.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 184 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Although I accept that the Minister might need notice, could he perhaps give me in writing, if he has not got it readily available, how much of the £67,992 of this tender is related to the provision of concrete base for new garages and how much for the other related works on the improvements of the car park?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, I can.

NO. 185 OF 1998THE HON J C PEREZ**VARYL BEGG ESTATE - LOCK-UP GARAGES**

Can Government state how many new lock-up garages are to be constructed at the Varyl Begg Estate and what will be the purchase terms once completed?

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

Twenty-four lock-up garages will be constructed. These will be sold for £4,000 each payable as follows:

£500 deposit on order

£1,500 payable on commencement of works

£2,000 payable on completion of works.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 185 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that there are obviously some people in the Estate who see that the construction of garages takes away parking spaces and that unless the existing car park is not restricted to tenants of Varyl Begg only they see that their parking facilities are less and less when the garages are built? I remind the Minister that when the garages were built originally the car park was there and the intention was to close the car park for Varyl Begg tenants only. The car park is open to everyone and tenants complain that the more lock-up garages there are in the Estate, unless the existing car park is not closed for tenants of Varyl Begg only, what happens is that there are less parking areas for the tenants that cannot afford a garage.

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, there is merit in what the hon Member is saying in that particular argument. What I can say is that in order to maximise parking facilities for the use of the tenants in Varyl Begg Estate, what we are actually doing, quite apart from the lockable garages and quite apart from the open space parking which we are going to put the flip-poles, there are going to be further meetings between the department and colleagues in the Road Department and the Tenants Association to carry out a survey to see how much more we can maximise those opportunities albeit in the light of what the hon Member has said, to try and leave those spaces available for the tenants in the Estate.

HON J C PEREZ:

The Minister is referring to the car park for which the improvements are being made? The car park for which the improvements which we have talked about in the other question are being made? That car park originally was done to replace the lost parking spaces in the Estate when the lock-up garages were constructed. The argument of many tenants is that unless the car park is restricted for tenants of Varyl Begg Estate only then there are more parking spaces lost to the tenants as more garages are built because people from other estates and other places park their cars there in preference to the tenants of Varyl Begg.

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, that is quite right and that is the reason why in that particular area which he is now referring to we are going to have the flip-poles and the flip-poles will be for the purchase of persons from the Estate thereby disallowing, so to speak, people who are not resident in the Estate getting to that particular area and further areas within the Estate, not necessarily there, those spaces, yes.

HON J C PEREZ:

But the Minister is talking about selling parking spaces.

HON J J NETTO:

Well, the last time the question was asked by the hon Member I remember saying that it was going to be at a very, very low cost, if I remember rightly. Obviously we are not talking about lockable garages, we are talking about the open space car park and it was going to be at a very, very low price in order that that facility was available for the tenants of the Estate only.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

When that consideration is arrived at, will he also take into account to make parking facilities for persons, especially pensioners, even though it might be a very low price they might not have the financial backing to be able to pay for a parking space. Will he also take that into consideration that some parking spaces may be given free to elderly people especially pensioners?

HON J J NETTO:

Again there is merit in what the hon Member is saying but, of course, I have to put a caveat and the caveat is that in assessing such a possibility they will have to be means tested somehow because most people will say, "I cannot afford it" and obviously that particular number could be too big. In looking into that would have to be on the basis of some form of being means tested.

ON J L BALDACHINO:

I accept that may be the position. The other thing is, will he also take into consideration leaving spaces for motorcycles and that it is not just cars, there are also a lot of motorcycles in that area? Will he also be designating certain areas for motorcycles? Will he take that into consideration?

HON J J NETTO:

I can well imagine that in the consultation process between the department and the Tenants Association that will be up in the mind of the Tenants Association.

NO. 186 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of October 1997, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 187, 188, 189, 190 and 191 of 1998.

NO. 187 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of November 1997, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 186, 188, 189, 190 and 191 of 1998.

NO. 188 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of December 1997, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 186, 187, 189, 190 and 191 of 1998.

NO. 189 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of January 1998, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 186, 187, 188, 190 and 191 of 1998.

NO. 190 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of February 1998, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 186, 187, 188, 189 and 191 of 1998.

NO. 191 OF 1998THE HON R MOR**ETB - UNEMPLOYED GIBRALTARIANS**

Can Government now give a breakdown of male and female unemployed Gibraltarians aged 18 years and over at the end of March 1998, receiving:

- (a) Unemployment benefit
- (b) Social Assistance
- (c) No payments?

ANSWER

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

The information is as follows:

<u>October 1997</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>
Unemployment benefit	48	31	79
Social Assistance	109	47	156
No payment	142	129	271
<u>November 1997</u>			
Unemployment benefit	41	23	64
Social Assistance	120	53	173
No payment	108	119	227
<u>December 1997</u>			
Unemployment benefit	43	19	62
Social Assistance	107	50	157
No payment	126	104	230
<u>January 1998</u>			
Unemployment benefit	34	22	56
Social Assistance	127	56	183
No payment	142	143	285
<u>February 1998</u>			
Unemployment benefit	38	14	52
Social Assistance	121	56	177
No payment	154	139	293

March 1998

Unemployment benefit	28	22	50
Social Assistance	119	61	180
No payment	137	115	252

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 186, 187, 188, 189, 190
AND 191 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister indicate where in these figures is reflected the large fluctuations from one month to the next which he told us last year was the reason why one should look to quarterly averages instead of monthly figures? Can he point us to where in these figures is the evidence of those large fluctuations that made him believe he needed to produce averages?

HON J J NETTO:

If he would bear with me one second. In answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question I will quote the Chief Minister in part answer to a supplementary Question No. 22 of 1994 when he said, "Mr Speaker, I think we have dealt with this point also previously and we said in fact that the figures would fluctuate moreso if somebody, for example, did not register in January but comes back in February and we produce monthly figures, first of all, there would be wide fluctuations which would be less indicative of the trend. Secondly, on a month to month basis the figures are more difficult to correct". We have changed the monthly figures, as I have said before, to a quarterly basis and I think that we have not invented the wheel, that is to say, that in the UK, as the Opposition Member knows, they have monthly figures which is basically just an administrative count coming from the Employment Survey from the Job Centre as we do here in Gibraltar but there are also the quarterly figures which is the household survey, the labour force survey which actually sorts out any fluctuations which is in the manner of my answers in the past. So there are good reasons for doing it and as I said the reasons that we are doing it today are the same reasons as when he was Chief Minister. In fact, not just because he said it but also because in another quote, the then Minister for Labour and Social Security, the Hon Robert Mor, in answer to No. 172 of 1992, he said, "Unemployment statistics as at 15 November 1992 are not available. As is normal practice the Government will however continue to provide these on a quarterly basis". Again let me quote, "Mr Speaker, it is not impossible to do it" - referring to the provision of unemployment figures on a monthly basis - "it just means that we would have to devote people to producing these statistics at regular intervals of more than a quarter. We have not done this since 1990 and we do not see the need to do it so we are only prepared to provide them on a quarterly basis". A most adamant and most categorical statement indeed though not least uncharacteristic of the then Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition today.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does the Minister think that he is being paid as the Minister for Labour not to provide information to this House about what was happening in the last six months but to spend all his time reading the Hansards of the last 20 years? Is that what he thinks he is getting paid to do?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He is getting paid to do both.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Well, if he is getting paid to do both with the full approval of the Chief Minister, will the Chief Minister tell his Minister that at least he should devote as much time to one as the other because he seems to be able to answer questions by quoting what happened in 1991 and yet if we ask him about what happened last month he needs notice. He is more familiar with the entire history of the GSLP administration than what has been happening in Gibraltar since he took office, is that not the case?

HON J J NETTO:

That is not the case. What shows up in Opposition Members trying to make a storm in a teacup every time that I quote what they have said shows their double standards and hypocrisy. They start moving in different directions and it wonders whether this is part of the film of the stampede of Jumanji as opposed to a coherent Opposition Party prepared to take seriously what they have said in the past and not prepared to do it now.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I do not know whether the Minister sees himself as Jumanji, we are certainly not seeking to stampede on him. Will the Minister not accept that it is perfectly legitimate to question him on a statement he made in the House previously in which he said not that he wanted to move to quarterly figures because he thought we were doing very well and he wanted to copy us or because he wants to copy something that is done by service in the United Kingdom but because there were fluctuations on a month to month basis which distorted the figures and I am asking him, now that he has been kind enough to give us the figures, can he tell us where these fluctuations are? That is all I am asking him. The answer is he cannot tell us where the fluctuations are and it has nothing to do with what we did in 1996, 1991 or what they do in the United Kingdom. Will he now accept that in fact there do not appear so far, of the figures we have had so far, it may happen tomorrow we never know, but so far there appears to be in fact quite a narrow range of movement from one month to the next in the figures he provides.

MR SPEAKER:

The question is, in the figure you provide there is little fluctuation.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Can we just remember that we are discussing a question about receipt of social security benefits. It is three quarters of an hour since we finished discussing statistics about levels of employment and unemployment. The question relates to the number of unemployed people receiving (a) unemployment benefit (b) social assistance (c) no payment. The statistics on employment they got in answer to Question No. 173 an hour and a half ago. The hon Member will see that in terms of the total unemployed persons the figure for October was 566, for November 528, for

December 515 and in percentage terms those show large fluctuations. Did we not discuss the last time we were in the House the distorting effect that it has on one month's statistics when one specialist form of employer, I think we even mentioned a particular supermarket, advertises vacancies for a particular type of job which only appeals to a particular type of person in the community who would not be interested in doing any other sort of work, for example, if the supermarket says, "I want part-time cashiers" there may be 100 ladies in Gibraltar who want to be part-time cashiers but are not otherwise interested in full-time employment and that would distort that month's statistics. If they ask for the statistics that month of registered it would reflect that fact but on a quarterly basis the distorting effect of that blip would have been ironed out although not eliminated until future quarters are accepted.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Would the Minister not agree that that is precisely the point that I am trying to make. Having made that statement there is nothing in these figures to show the distorting effect in one month of 100 ladies applying for part-time cashiers which is in fact the point that we are making. Before the figures were provided, would the Minister not agree, we had to take that explanation on trust because we were not able to check it? Now that we have got the figures provided in this House we look at it and we do not see what he says. Will the Minister also not admit that in fact, his opening remarks that this has nothing to do with the levels of unemployment or the explanation that I was given is in fact incorrect because in answer to Question No. 44 the Minister gave average figures for the numbers of unemployment benefit the average for three months. Well, why does he need to give an average for three months of the numbers of unemployment benefit when the numbers on unemployment benefit is 79, 64 and 62 and instead of saying there were 79, 64 and 62, he says, "I am going to tell you that if you add the three together and divide by three you get 69 and that removes the blip". What blip? What are we talking about? The figures do not in fact sustain the explanation that was given at the time and therefore the supplementary is as valid about these figures as it is about the previous figures because the same explanation was given for both. The explanation was given in relation to Question No. 44 of 1998.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In respect of the two points that he has made. First of all I did not say that it had nothing to do with it, I simply pointed out the fact that hon Members were raising as a supplementary under a question dealing with social security payments an analysis of unemployment statistics which arise from the unemployment statistics which we discussed three quarters of an hour ago and do not arise from the social security recipient statistics. The hon Member says is it not clear from the facts now that we have them that there is not a blip? The answer is I do not agree with him. At the end of December 1997 there were 514 Gibraltarians registered as unemployed. At the end of January there were 599. Does the hon Member know what might have happened over the Christmas period to produce an additional 80-odd unemployed Gibraltarians in that particular month, in January 1998? These blips, these sudden surges from one month to the next in the number of people unemployed, we all know they happen in June or September because there is a school leaving year and there may be an injection of ex-students into the labour market. If there is a large redundancy in some place or another, that generates an increase in a particular months level of unemployed. But if there is a jump of that degree without there being some identifiable reason for it, it is a distorting blip. We have analysed those

figures and no one has been able to give me an explanation about why January 1998 there are suddenly, what happened during Christmas that meant that there were all those extra people employed before Christmas but unemployed 30 days later.

HON J J BOSSANO:

First of all, of course, unless the Minister had a crystal ball he could not possibly have told us in September that he was doing this for the figure of October because he knew what was going to happen in January and we are in fact asking him.....
[Interruption] I will give him an explanation for the example that he has chosen because it is not a good example and I will put it as a question so that he gets the answer. I do not accept that the supplementary does not follow from the information that is being provided about benefits because they also said about benefits that they would now produce quarterly averages of recipients of benefits. That is the point that I am making. They said on unemployment benefit the average number of people in the period ending in December 1997 the average is that there are 69 people receiving unemployment benefit. Well, what is the explanation about fluctuations when we know now that the 69 figure which could have been obviously the result of 100 in one month and 50 in another month producing 75 and that would have been a big fluctuation, it would have been a doubling. But if you have a figure which is 79, 64, 62 it is obvious that the explanation is wrong, in saying, "We are smoothing something about by telling you the average was 69 in those three months". So the Chief Minister is wrong when he says that the supplementary does not arise because the same explanation was given perhaps inadvertently for both phenomena. Secondly let me tell him that there is in fact, does he not know or has he not been told, that there is a well-known pattern that in December because the construction industry closes down for a fortnight and because of the number of holidays that are there the number of people taken on in December is lower than normal and because the number is lower than normal in December the people who do not bother to go and maintain the registry in December is higher and therefore there is a tendency that people that will not have come in December to maintain the registration will reappear in January. I think if he cares to ask for the names or identification of the people from the ETB he will find that much of the movement upwards in January is related to people who were registered in November dropped out of the register in December and reappeared in January and if he looks at the filling of vacancies in December he will find that it tends to be lower than other months. So that is the explanation we were given at the time for what is not an unusual pattern. Therefore the question that I am asking is, if they do it quarterly because they want to do it quarterly it is their prerogative, but if the answer is, "We are doing it quarterly because of the need to produce an average to smooth out the big fluctuations", well we would like to be pointed to where the fluctuations are which are being smoothed out because we do not see it in these figures. Furthermore, would the Minister not agree that in fact nobody on this side of the House has quoted one months figure to suggest that that is a trend of anything? Whenever there has been a statement from the Opposition about the trend of unemployment we have always taken three months or six months so it is not true that the information is being used to suggest that because one month shows an increase it means that there is a calamity. That used to be the case in the past but not anymore if he cares to look back before 1996.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not accept the hon Member's attempted explanation for that particular blip. As I have understood his suggestion it is that because the construction industry is laid off, more or less, over the Christmas period or there are extensive holidays, companies as Christmas approaches who might have employed people say, "No, I am not going to employ them in November and December, I am going to wait until January and employ them in January, that way I do not have them on my books during the Christmas period and I do not have to pay them". That would explain the opposite of this, that would explain a higher level of unemployment in November and December and a falling level of unemployment in January when the employers say, "Now that Christmas has finished and I do not have to pay them lengthy holidays, now I am going to do the employment that I delayed before". What we have here is the opposite. We have higher unemployment at the end of January by 84 when the employers are now rushing to engage the staff that before when he says employers are holding off from employing people. So frankly I would not think that the explanation that he has given would be a credible explanation for the opposite of these statistics.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Would the Chief Minister not acknowledge that he has failed to understand the explanation that I have given him and therefore will he consider in fact that the explanation given, which he can get verified by the people in the ETB, is that people registered as unemployed in November tend to lapse in December in the knowledge of the unavailability of vacancies and to re-register in January? I have said that if he cares to get the people to check how much of the increase in January is not new but people coming back after one month, he will find that that is correct. In fact if they want to smooth out the fluctuations would he not consider the possibility of not lapsing people after one month but in fact checking whether they should be kept on a register if they are coming on and off all the time?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No one has ever offered that explanation to me when I have asked but certainly I am very happy to consider any suggestion that eliminates unrepresentative fluctuations because at the end of the day all we want is to produce information which gives a proper indication of where the economy is in relation to employment and unemployment and we do not want to have to be diverted from the business of Government dealing with speculation and uninformed comments from people who may not understand that a month's figures does not necessarily mean what that month's figure says. The hon Gentleman may not fall into the trap of doing that but there are others in Gibraltar who do.

ORAL

NO. 192 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - PRIVATE SECTOR - GIBRALTARIANS

What was the number of Gibraltarians employed in the private sector in October 1996 and April 1997?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 193, 194 and 195 of 1998.

ORAL

NO. 193 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - PRIVATE SECTOR - UK NATIONALS

What was the number of UK nationals employed in the private sector in October 1996 and April 1997?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 192, 194 and 195 of 1998.

NO. 194 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - PRIVATE SECTOR

What was the number of persons employed in the private sector in October 1996 and April 1997?

ANSWER

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

Answered together with Question Nos. 192, 193 and 195 of 1998.

NO. 195 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

ETB - PRIVATE SECTOR - SPANISH NATIONALS

What was the number of Spanish nationals employed in the private sector in October 1996 and April 1997?

ANSWER

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

The number of employees in the private sector in October 1996 are as follows:

Gibraltarians 5,369; UK nationals 2,114; Spanish nationals 1,024 out of a total number of 9,910 employees in this sector.

Similarly in April 1997 there were:

Gibraltarians 5,325; UK nationals 2,146; Spanish nationals 1,065 out of a total of 9,955 employees.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 192, 193, 194 AND 195 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister confirm that these in fact are based on the returns made to date from PAYE certificates by private sector employers?

HON J J NETTO:

No, I can confirm that they come from the ETB source.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So the figures that he has given for October and April 1997 are based on contracts and not on tax paid?

HON J J NETTO:

That is correct.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister confirm then that on that basis there is no available figure for, say, April 1996 because the April 1996 figure given in the House was based on PAYE so one is not comparable with the other, is that right?

HON J J NETTO:

I am not quite sure if the April figure which he is now quoting was an answer which I gave before.

HON J J BOSSANO:

No, he did not give the answer but when we put a question to the Government we do not tell them who has to answer the question. When we put the question the last time the answer that we got was based on PAYE certificates submitted to date. In order to be able to assess the implication of that answer we need to know whether it is legitimate to compare it with the last figure given or it is not.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, with respect to the hon Member, I think he is slightly mistaking the position. I think he is referring to a question that I answered last time and that was a question which he asked a question not along these similar lines but a question linked to PAYE. I am talking from memory but I think he said how many people are paying PAYE? And the information we got from the Income Tax was along the lines that the hon Member has just said. It may be that the hon Questioner has asked in this question in relation to October and April because he knows that those are the two relevant months for survey purposes and that therefore he asked with that knowledge in hand. The Government have given the information in respect of October and April from ETB sources and if we decouple it from income tax of course that information, I am told, is available, they can work out how many UK nationals are employed as far as the ETB is aware. That is my recollection of the comparison that the hon Member made. I am sure he is referring to a question that he asked or which I answered last time.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister is right in saying that there is a reference to the same question in a previous question answered by him where he said it was possible to do it for the months of April and October because that was additional information given. [*HON CHIEF MINISTER: Yes.*] But the question had been asked prior to that about the previous figures for the comparable months in 1995 and 1996 and what I am trying to establish is whether the answer that we have had today is based on the same source as the previous one which I understood was the Tax Office and if it is not therefore it follows that there need not be any comparability between the two figures, is that correct?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, I think that that is correct.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

The figures that the Minister for Employment has quoted is for open contracts, is that correct?

HON J J NETTO:

Yes, I understand that to be correct.

NO. 196 OF 1998

THE HON J L BALDACHINO

HOUSING - Nos. HOMELESS

Can Government state how many persons are categorised as homeless, and if any, what are their housing needs in rooms requirement?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

As at 20 April 1998, there is one family that is categorised as homeless. They require a 3RKB flat.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 196 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

It is the family that is actually, not in the street but in an institution, have gone there and are staying there in that place; is that the family the Minister is referring to?

HON H CORBY:

That is the family that is staying in that institution and they have already approached the Housing Department and we are looking at the case so that we can reallocate them from there.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Seeing that they have been categorised therefore is the conclusion of the Housing Advisory Committee and the Housing Allocation Committee that this is a genuine case?

HON H CORBY:

It is a genuine case.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Therefore, seeing that it is a genuine case, will they be giving priority especially on one hand to find something that is suitable for the family and in second place if there are any repairs to be done will it be given priority above everything else?

HON H CORBY:

This family from what I gather had a fight with one of the members of the household and they came out of the flat. They will certainly be given any assistance that they want inasfar as that is concerned because there are also children involved.

NO. 197 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO**HOUSING - PRE-WAR/POST-WAR UNITS ALLOCATED**

How many pre-war and post-war housing units allocated have been given to successful housing applicants on the "do it yourself basis" broken down for each month since 1 June 1996, and how many have been allocated where the works have been carried out by Buildings and Works?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The allocation of post and pre-war flats allocated on a "self-help" basis and those allocated after being refurbished by Buildings and Works is as follows:

		<u>'Self-help'</u>	<u>Refurbished</u>
<u>June 1996</u>	- post-war	6	2
	pre-war	1	0
<u>July 1996</u>	- post-war	7	2
	pre-war	1	2
<u>August 1996</u>	- post-war	3	2
	pre-war	0	0
<u>September 1996</u>	- post-war	3	2
	pre-war	0	0
<u>October 1996</u>	- post-war	5	6
	pre-war	2	1
<u>November 1996</u>	- post-war	5	4
	pre-war	6	0
<u>December 1996</u>	- post-war	2	0
	pre-war	0	0
<u>January 1997</u>	- post-war	4	1
	pre-war	0	0
<u>February 1997</u>	- post-war	2	0
	pre-war	1	1
<u>March 1997</u>	- post-war	8	6
	pre-war	2	1
<u>April 1997</u>	- post-war	10	5
	pre-war	1	1

<u>May 1997</u>	- post-war	3	4
	pre-war	6	2
<u>June 1997</u>	- post-war	13	2
	pre-war	1	3
<u>July 1997</u>	- post-war	5	2
	pre-war	4	0
<u>August 1997</u>	- post-war	3	1
	pre-war	2	0
<u>September 1997</u>	- post-war	6	2
	pre-war	1	0
<u>October 1997</u>	- post-war	7	6
	pre-war	0	0
<u>November 1997</u>	- post-war	2	1
	pre-war	1	1
<u>December 1997</u>	- post-war	3	2
	pre-war	3	1
<u>January 1998</u>	- post-war	6	1
	pre-war	2	0
<u>February 1998</u>	- post-war	1	1
	pre-war	2	0
<u>March 1998</u>	- post-war	0	1
	pre-war	2	1
<u>April 1998</u>	- post-war	0	1
	pre-war	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
		<u>144</u>	<u>70</u>

NO. 198 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL SECURITY - CLOSED LONG-TERM BENEFITS FUND

Can Government state what was the balance of the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund as at 31 March 1998, showing the amount from UK and local funds and the expenditure to former Spanish workers and to pensioners from local funds?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

As the hon Member knows the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund receives no contributions and its relevance in financial terms is now limited to a bookkeeping entry. Shortfalls in that Fund resulting from payments of pensions due under the Closed Scheme are financed from the Open Long-Term Benefits Fund as necessary as envisaged in the legislation. All the local pensions monies are now contained in the Open Scheme fund. The Closed Scheme Fund contains a small balance of about £35,000 representing the residue of UK monies held in respect of Spanish pensions.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 198 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is the Minister saying, in fact, that the payment which is due under the Ordinance which provides for the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund are actually being made out of the Open Fund?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As the hon Member knows, there is no flow of contributions into the Closed Scheme Fund and therefore the capital of that has been depleted. Just as before it used to be funded out of current contributions it continues to be funded out of current contributions but, of course, those current contributions are paid into the Open Scheme and monies are transferred from the Open Scheme Fund to the Closed Scheme Fund in order to enable the Closed Scheme Fund to make its payments to local pensioners. Therefore the balance as at 31 March, if the hon Member wants to see a copy of the account of the Fund that is a different matter, but the actual balance meaning the amount of money in the Fund is a very small amount of course because it is just a carried forward figure and it is always a carried forward figure of UK funds. In other words, of the monies that the UK sends from time to time for the payment of the Spanish pensions, we are holding £35,000 which must have been left over. Yes, the hon Gentleman is correct in saying that the Funds are now all in the Open Scheme. He will remember when we debated the two bits of legislation that there are provisions for the one Fund to transfer monies to the other as and when needs basis.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister will recall that I questioned whether there was provision in the Ordinance for this to happen other than the provision that says that the Financial Secretary may move money from.....

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, we are not relying on I think section 20 of the Public Finance (Control and Audit) Ordinance which I think is the section to which the hon Member is referring. There is specific provision in the Open Long-Term Benefits Fund Ordinance and in the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund Ordinance for this to occur otherwise it would not have been possible to create different funds because one fund is receiving all the contributions and the other is receiving none of the contributions. When they were all lumped as one fund that did not matter but now that the payment of benefits flows from different Ordinances and therefore technically out of different funds, there is a need to bridge financially the two which did not exist at the time when current contributors and past contributors, now pensioners, were really all contributing into and being paid out of the one Special Fund.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I do not dispute any of that. What I am disputing is in fact this provision that is said to exist in the law and I questioned him previously and simply the fact that he says that it is does not seem to be sufficient as far as I am concerned. Can he confirm that in fact this is the first month for which this has happened?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I cannot. If the hon Member firstly does not recollect what is in legislation that was debated in this House and on which he voted in favour of and, secondly does not trust my statement of what the law provides, which of course he is perfectly at liberty not to do, I think that the correct thing for him to do is not to say across the floor of the House that what I say is not sufficient but to read the law for himself and form his own view. If he is then of the view that there is no statutory provision for this, that will be a different matter but I can assure him that that is not the case, that this is a matter, I am giving him now the same answer as I did then, that there is statutory provision in both Ordinances, one to pay and the other to receive.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it not the case, and certainly I do not think the Chief Minister has to come to the conclusion that either I am accusing him of lying or..... [*HON CHIEF MINISTER: No, I am not coming to any conclusions, he has said so.*] No, the other contribution is that notwithstanding all his attributes, infallibility is not amongst them and that he could be mistaken, that is possible as well, or is that impossible?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, of course it is possible but if the hon Member does not know what the position is and I am telling him that the position is (a), it seems to me that from his position of admitted ignorance of the matter he is not well placed to undermine the validity of what I am saying. Let him undermine the validity of what I am saying when he has taken the trouble to research what the position in relation to the matter actually is.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The point that I am making and will the Chief Minister not accept it is that having looked at the Ordinance from the beginning, from the beginning I said that in fact we did not agree that there was a provision there other than the provision in the Open Fund for the Financial and Development Secretary to transfer money from the Fund if the Fund does not require it. I have asked on several occasions is that the provision that is being used? That provision in the Open Fund Ordinance is there exactly the same as in the Public Finance (Control and Audit) Ordinance. When that provision was there and we debated it in this House I asked the Chief Minister why he needed to put something there which was already in the Public Finance (Control and Audit) Ordinance and he said that it was simply for the sake of clarity so that if somebody read the Ordinance he would not have to go to the other Ordinance to find out. On each occasion that I have asked whether this provision is the one that is being used I have been told no. Well, what is the other provision? I do not recollect from my looking at that Ordinance that there is any provision for a charge on the Fund to be that one of the legitimate charges on the Open Fund is money to make payments from the Closed Fund. I do not recall that having been put there.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

He would have to read the principal Ordinance and of course the Regulations made thereunder.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So the Chief Minister is indicating that in fact it was not in the principal Ordinance when we debated it and it has been put in the Regulations, is that what he is saying?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not indicating anything to the hon Member. As the hon Member has stated that what I indicated to him is not enough for him, my position is that I am not indicating anything to him at all. I will answer his questions and then if he wishes to research the legality of the situation he should. If the hon Member believes that the Accountant General is transferring millions of pounds worth of public funds from one Fund to the other without the proper legal basis to do so, then I can assure the hon Member that he is entirely mistaken.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I am not accusing the Accountant General of anything anymore than I am accusing him. Perhaps the Chief Minister is beginning to doubt now whether in fact he is right and he is already looking for a scapegoat to blame which is now the Accountant General. When he thought he was right two seconds ago it was his decision and his interpretation, now it seems it is the Accountant General. My question is a very simple one, if we are told that there is no money in the Fund because the Open Fund is funding the benefits of the Closed Long-Term Fund, I have asked is this the first time that has happened in the month of March because in previous answers to this same question we have been given balances for the other months before?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The fund has reduced to zero at some point in time. I cannot tell the hon Member without notice whether that happened in January, February or March and if it did whether it was on the 26 or 27. At some point in time, from the last time that there was a substantial balance, the Fund reduced to zero so I cannot tell him, without notice, whether this is the first month in which there was an inter-fund transfer. But if he is interested in knowing I shall certainly have the information provided to him.

HON J J BOSSANO:

It is not a question of whether I am interested in knowing or not. Is it not a fact that in answer to this question in respect of previous months a figure was given which was the balance of local funds at the end of the month, up to the month of February. Does that mean that in fact until February the position was that the reducing balance was still sufficient, is that the position or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the premise of the questions that he is putting is correct, in other words, if a question has been answered that says that as at 28 February there was £1.5 million or £2.5 million left and in March he gets an answer that says that as at 31 March it is £35,000, well I would have thought it was self-evident mathematics that the reduction from the February figure to the March figure must have occurred between the end of February and the end of March.

HON J J BOSSANO:

But what is not self-evident from that is whether that is the result of money having been transferred from the Open to the Closed Fund during February which then left a surplus at the end of February or whether in fact is the result of declining. That is why I am asking whether in fact the first time that this has happened is during March or whether it was happening before March? He cannot tell me the answer to that.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If what the hon Member is now asking is whether funds are transferred from one to the other unnecessarily, in other words, if funds were transferred from the Open to the Closed Scheme even though there was a sufficient balance in the Closed Scheme to meet its on-going commitments, the answer is that I cannot tell him that but I cannot think why the Accountant General would wish to organise affairs in that

way but he might have done. My understanding of the position is that funds have not began to be transferred until there has been a need to transfer funds and therefore until the Fund is reduced below the level of the month's commitment, then there has not been a Fund transfer but, of course, it is possible that it might have been done differently and of course I will find out for him.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So on the basis of the answer that has been given unless we are told the contrary, the fact is that the month of March is the first time that this has happened because if there was a surplus at the end and if he thinks that it is absurd to suggest the Accountant General was putting money that was needed, then I take it that it is not inconceivable that March is the first month when this has happened?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, there is a difference between it being conceivable or inconceivable and the hon Member being free to assume it. He may take nothing, I have answered his question carefully, I have told him that I cannot tell him whether March is the first but that I would be surprised if there had been fund transfers before the need and that if he was told that in February there was a balance left, then I would be surprised if there had been a transfer before February. But if he suspects that there might have been, I will go to the trouble of finding out and having him informed of the certain answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Would the Chief Minister accept that I do not suspect anything, I am just trying to get a simple answer to a simple question. Was the transfer done in March for the first time or was it happening before March? That is all I want to know.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not keep the Government's books on my bedside table at home, he might have done when he was Chief Minister, and therefore if he had wanted to know that he should have asked it in his question and if he had asked it in his question I would have got my bookkeeping officials to provide me with the information which I would then have gladly given to him. But why does the Leader of the Opposition think that the Chief Minister should carry around with him in his head the exact date of particular cash transfers from one Government fund to the other? It is just not a proper approach to the office of Chief Minister.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Will the Chief Minister not accept that the question is not addressed to him? He has chosen to answer it so we are not asking him to carry any figures in his head at all. We are asking the Government, and would the Chief Minister not further accept that we could not ask the other question because the question that we have asked arises out of the answer that we have been given to the original question. We did not know that there was no money left in March so since we did not know there was no money left in March we could not ask where did the money come from. We have just been told in answer that there is no money left in March and therefore since we had previously been told there was money left in February, look we can in fact

instead of putting 130 questions put 260 questions and try and put potential supplementaries ahead of getting answers. It is a well-known fact that supplementaries, subject to your ruling them, has not been legitimate.

MR SPEAKER:

No, supplementaries on supplementaries are not allowed but supplementaries on the answer are allowed.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I would have thought it was legitimate to ask, having been told that this happened in March to say, is it the first time it has happened because it is the first time we hear of it?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member has asked what was the information as at 31 March and that is the information that he has had. As at the 31 March the information was that there were £35,000 left in the account and I have gone into the trouble of explaining who that £35,000 actually belongs to and it is not us. The information that he has had is the information that he has asked for. The hon Member wants, following from that answer, to have more information and I say fine, if he wants more information ask for it and it shall be given to him but he cannot ask and make assumptions on the basis of detailed supplementary information which cannot reasonably arise from the question.

HON J J BOSSANO:

When the answer was prepared, surely.....

MR SPEAKER:

One more question and one more answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

There is in fact a part of the question that I do not think has been answered which is the expenditure to former Spanish workers and to pensioners from local funds?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

What the question asks is the balance..... [*HON J J BOSSANO: And the expenditure.*] No, the balance showing the amount from UK and local funds and the expenditure to former Spanish workers, yes for the whole year. What the hon Member is asking.....

HON J J BOSSANO:

The same question is put every month. The balance at the end of the month and the expenditure during the month, every month, it has been given in every previous month what is the mystery about this one?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Nothing at all. The answer to the hon Member's question is that the payments to Spanish pensioners from UK Government funds have been £1,082,000 and the payments to local pensioners has been £910,000.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Now that we have got the original question answered, can the Chief Minister tell us of that £910,000 that was paid to local pensioners, how much of that was met from the Open Fund and how much was met from the residue within the Closed Fund?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In respect of the month of March only?

HON J J BOSSANO:

In respect of the figure we have been given for the month of March.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Even though the question does not say in respect of the month of March, the question speaks as at 31 March, but in respect of the month of March the best information that I have is that £846,000 appears to have been transferred to the Fund. That is not strictly necessarily the answer to the hon Member's question because there is a question of balances carried forward and balances brought forward but in respect of the month of March, £846,000 was transferred into the Fund.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Then in fact does the Chief Minister not agree that this in fact is consistent with my previous question that there was a balance at the end of February which added to the £846,000 produces the £910,000 and that therefore the £846,000 is the first transfer that has taken place?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

It is possible, it is one interpretation of events. Certainly the figures are consistent with that but I cannot stand up here giving the hon Member an assurance that that is necessarily the case. Certainly the figures are consistent with the hon Member's supposition. If he wants it confirmed that it is not just consistent with the hon Member's supposition but that it is in fact what happened, that is what I offered him 10 minutes ago to have checked for him and communicated to him.

NO. 199 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL SECURITY - CLOSED LONG-TERM BENEFITS FUND

Can Government state what was the number of pensions being paid or with entitlement to payment in March 1998, from the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund giving a breakdown of pre-1969 Spanish pensions and locally funded pensions showing the number of Gibraltarians/UK nationals, Moroccan and other nationalities?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The following pensioners were in receipt of payments from the Closed Long-Term Benefits Fund in March 1998:

Pre-1969 - Spanish pensioners	8,787
British pensions (Gib and UK nationals)	4,663
Moroccan pensioners	877
Other nationalities	<u>251</u>
Total	<u>14,578</u>

NO. 200 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL SECURITY - SOCIAL INSURANCE CARDS

Can Government now state how many social insurance cards were in issue as at 31 December 1997?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

As explained in my answer to Question No. 76 of 1998 at the previous meeting of this House, the information requested is not available at this moment in time. The final figure of how many insurance cards were in issue as at 31 December 1997 will not be available until the posting exercise has been completed. The full exercise which is carried out manually and also includes extracting the non-compliance lists will hopefully be completed in June/July 1998.

NO. 201 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL SECURITY - SOCIAL INSURANCE CARDS

Can Government state how many of the social insurance cards in issue as at 31 December 1997, have been renewed to date?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The number of 1997 social insurance cards which have been renewed to date is 10,606. This is broken up as follows:

Gibraltarians and British	9,123
Other nationalities	<u>1,483</u>
Total	<u>10,606</u>

NO. 202 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

SOCIAL SECURITY - SOCIAL INSURANCE CARDS

Can Government state what is the total number of social insurance cards in issue as at 31 March 1998, to:

- (a) Gibraltarians
- (b) UK nationals
- (c) other nationals?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

The information requested is not available. I am advised that details of insurance cards in issue cannot be readily extracted on a given date as no provision for this has ever been made in the manual record system currently in use at the Department of Social Services. For practical reasons the information can only be extracted on an annual basis as at the end of each year.

NO. 203 OF 1998THE HON R MOR**SOCIAL SECURITY - SELF-EMPLOYED INSURANCE CARDS**

How many self-employed social insurance cards were on issue to frontier workers as at the end of 1997, giving a breakdown by nationality and of these how many have been renewed up to 31 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

At the end of 1997 there were 42 self-employed social insurance cards on issue to frontier workers broken down as follows:

(a) Gibraltarians	Nil
(b) UK nationals	23
(c) Spanish nationals	16
(d) Other EU nationals	2
(e) Non-EU nationals	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>42</u>

For the reason stated in my answer to Question No. 200 of 1998, it is not possible at this moment in time to confirm how many cards have been renewed up to 31 March 1998.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 203 OF 1998

HON R MOR:

Do the Government accept that a total of 42 is very different to the reply given to us to a similar question where the total of frontier workers was given as eight?

HON H CORBY:

I have not that information with me but I will look at it and give the information to the hon Member.

HON R MOR:

I cannot find the question at the moment but it was a question asked last month in the House, it was answered by the Minister for Employment and the total given was that there were only eight frontier workers. A short surprise from the Chief Minister that reflected on my having been surprised at the answer but this is precisely the reason which I have been surprised because in answer to a previous question again the figure had been much higher than the eight.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Would the hon Member like to refresh the House's memory of what the question that he asked last time was?

HON R MOR:

The number of self-employed frontier workers, that was the question that was asked.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If that is the question that he asked I very much doubt that there could have been an increase of 34 which would represent something like 400 per cent in one month. If it is the same question and if that is the answer that he got it must have been mistaken. If he has now found the question perhaps he could just like to assure himself that it was exactly the same question.

HON J J BOSSANO:

It was question No. 47 and it was, "What is the latest number of frontier workers classified as self-employed broken down by nationality?" And the answer was four UK nationals, three Spanish nationals and one EU national.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That is a very different question. [*HON J J BOSSANO: Is it?*] Yes, because one thing is how many frontier workers are classified as self-employed and the other is how many social insurance cards have been issued to self-employed frontier workers because we could easily have 34 frontier workers registering for one thing but not for the other.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So the Chief Minister thinks it is not unusual that people should have insurance cards and not be registered as working? Would he not agree that, if anything, what would be usual would be that there might be eight with insurance cards and 34 without, but that there should be 34 with insurance cards and not registered is unusual, no?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Not registered at the ETB, yes it is not impossible. [*Interruption*] The hon Member should bear in mind that it is legally possible, although in breach of the ETB rules, but it is possible for EU nationals to obtain employment in Gibraltar on terms that would enable them, administratively. One of the reasons why we want to computerise Government departments and link them together is precisely so that the records of one department dealing with employment and registration and the records of another department dealing with social insurance matters, does not produce such manifestly different pictures as the one which the answer to that question and the answer to this question produces. I accept it is not a situation that should be so but it is so and it is a combination of the fact that both operate manual records and that they do not speak to one another.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Would the Chief Minister not agree that if they spoke to one another they might find who the 34 are?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, in an ideal world that would be so but the hon Member knows that in the practice of it it is not that straightforward.

NO. 204 OF 1998THE HON R MOR**PRISON - NUMBER OF INMATES**

What was the number of Gibraltarians and other different nationalities held in prison on 31 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS

On the 31 March 1998 there were a total of 31 inmates held in prison. The breakdown is as follows:

British (local)	17 (including one female)
British (UK)	2
Spanish	9
Moroccan	2
French	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>31</u>

NO. 205 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - PORT STUDY

When will Government make public the recent Port Study commissioned by Government?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

As announced at the time that the Port Study was commissioned, Government do not intend to publish the full text of the study as part of the analysis contains commercially sensitive information. As originally envisaged, an abridged version of the Port Study will be made public and this will contain all the recommendations made by the consultants.

It is envisaged that the abridged version of the study will be published before the end of April 1998.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 205 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Will the elements of the study that are made public coincide in any way with the recommendations which the Government are seeking to undertake or accept?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Can he repeat the question?

HON A J ISOLA:

Yes, does the abridged version of the study in any way reflect the recommendations which the Government have accepted? *[HON CHIEF MINISTER: All the recommendations are in the abridged version.]*

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

The summary will contain all the recommendations that have been made by the consultants and obviously it is up to the Government to accept or not accept all the recommendations that are contained in that report.

HON A J ISOLA:

Have Government as yet formed a view on which recommendations they will or will not accept and, if so, when will they make those public?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Government have obviously analysed the full text of the report and have taken a view. However, the implementation of some of the recommendations will now be considered in the format that there will be an appointment of a Steering Committee to be able to implement some of the recommendations that are contained in the report. We want to ensure that any recommendations that we actually implement are not going to, in any way, jeopardise the existing commercial interests that currently exist and therefore we will be carrying out a process of consultation to make sure that the recommendations are implemented without any damage to the existing business and commercial entities.

HON A J ISOLA:

Is the purpose of the Steering Committee therefore to steer the recommendations forward in consultation with the private sector or is it the purpose of the Steering Committee to reach a decision on which should or should not be accepted?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I think there will be an element of both. I think Government have taken a view as to the vision of the way forward for port development and obviously with that in mind we will be having members of the private sector forming part of that Steering Committee in order to enable us to deliver on our programme for development.

NO. 206 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - YACHT VISITS

Do Government expect the number of yachts calling at Gibraltar to increase this year over last year?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Government do indeed expect the number of yachts calling at Gibraltar to increase during 1998 compared to 1997.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 206 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

On what premise is this expectation based?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Well, the expectations are on the fact that some of the causes for the drop in yacht arrivals during 1997 were due to, first the fact that the unfavourable peseta/pound exchange rate and, secondly the effects of "El Niño" which is a maritime atmospheric scenario which has cut down the number of yachts crossing the Atlantic. We hope that this will not be the case this year. Obviously in addition we are targeting a lot of our marketing and efforts within the Gibraltar Tourist Board towards yachting and yacht related activities.

NO. 207 OF 1998THE HON A J ISOLA**VISIT BY GROUP OF TRAVEL WRITERS**

What was the cost to Government of the recent visit by the group of travel writers and to whom were these monies paid?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The total cost to Government of the recent visit by the group of top travel writers was £11,310.57.

This amount was paid as follows:

Doug Goodman Public Relations	£2,800.00
Sign Design Gibraltar	100.00
Strait Vision Productions Gibraltar	450.00
SRS Gibraltar (Sound System)	475.00
Copywrite Gibraltar	280.00
Betasnaps	144.00
123 Printers	35.00
Orlando Charvetto	10.00
GB Airways	5,950.00
Philatelic Bureau	48.00
Red House	200.00
Post Office	13.57
Stakis Casino Club	805.00
	<u>£11,310.57</u>

There were other costs involved with the press trip but these were covered through sponsorship.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 207 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Can I ask how many people were in the group?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

There were 33 journalists plus Doug Goodman and an assistant, so a total of 35.

NO. 208 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

REDUCTION OF SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO MANCHESTER

Do Government expect a reduction in seat availability between Gibraltar and Manchester in the 1998 summer season over the 1997 summer season?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Yes, Government do expect a reduction in the seats available.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 208 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Are Government satisfied with the reduction?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Not at all, representations were made to GB Airways who operate the Manchester/Gibraltar route at the time when we were informed that they would be reducing the size of the aircraft on the Manchester/Gibraltar route but, unfortunately these are commercial decisions that are taken based on the availability of actual flights, the financial viability of the route and the availability of slots. We have put proposals at the time to GB Airways that seeing that the aircraft that was available was a 146 aircraft, that they ought to consider putting on two flights a week, one on Wednesday and one on Sunday which would enable us to promote short break holidays in Gibraltar. Unfortunately it is not possible to arrange that for the coming summer but something that is being considered by them for their winter programme and at the same time they are also looking and it looks as if there is a possibility that they may be able to revert to a 737 aircraft once the winter programme is announced. But their decision has been based basically on the non-availability of 737 aircraft.

HON A J ISOLA:

Have Government received any representations from the operator as to the possibility of the service actually being cancelled for the forthcoming winter season?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

No, no representations or discussions have been undertaken in this respect.

HON A J ISOLA:

The Government are not aware of that possibility then?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

No, we are not.

NO. 209 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

BRITISH MIDLAND AIRLINE

Have Government received any interest from British Midland to fly to Gibraltar?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Government participated in Routes '97 held in Oslo in September last year. There I met representatives from British Midland and expressed Government's desire to expand services to Gibraltar. The present situation is that British Midland is evaluating the possibility of a UK/Gibraltar route. Among the factors which have to be considered by the airline are the financial viability of the route, aircraft availability and slot availability. At the time of our meeting in Oslo, I provided the airline with full data and statistics on Gibraltar airport.

Government continue to pursue our policy of seeking new scheduled and charter operators on Gibraltar routes.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 209 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Are Government aware that British Midland pilots are actually flying into Gibraltar alongside other pilots on carriers to familiarise themselves with the Gibraltar airport and, if that is the case and they are aware of that, will they continue to press to pursue the possibility of them flying to Gibraltar from any one of the UK airports or other airports?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I am not aware that British Midland pilots were actually training coming into Gibraltar with their 'L' plates on their back but let me tell the hon Member that obviously we do encourage new schedule services and charter operators to Gibraltar and therefore it is an on-going process of negotiations and evaluations and we will continue to pursue that strategy.

NO. 210 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - HOTEL OCCUPANCY

Do Government expect an increase in the number of guest nights sold at hotels this year over last year?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Government do indeed expect increases in the number of bed nights sold at hotels during this year over 1997.

In fact, Government are encouraged by the increase in bed nights sold in 1997 which totalled 143,972 compared with 1996 when the total bed nights sold were 140,596. This represents an increase of 3,376 bed nights sold.

More significantly, expenditure by visitor arrivals in hotels has increased from £8.43 million in 1996 to £17.36 million in 1997, representing an increase of over 100 per cent.

NO. 211 OF 1998THE HON A J ISOLA**TOURISM - AMOUNTS DUE AND OWING TO GOVERNMENT BY HOTELS**

What amounts are due and owing to Government by hotels broken down by items and in respect of which periods these monies became due?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The total amount due and owing to Government by hotels broken down by items, as at 27 March 1998, is as follows:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Periods</u>
PAYE	£293,581.06	1995/96 to 1997/98
Social Insurance	£334,064.26	1991 to 1997
Electricity	£300,496.97	1993
Rates	<u>£70,815.24</u>	1993/94 to 1997/98
	<u>£998,957.53</u>	

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 211 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Would the Minister agree to let me have the details in respect of each hotel in writing at a future date?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I do not think it would be appropriate to provide particular information about particular taxpayers, I do not think it would be proper at all.

NO. 212 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - HOTEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

What is the total amount paid out and to which hotels by Government in respect of the soft loans under the Hotel Assistance Scheme?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The total amount paid out in respect of soft loans under the Hotel Assistance Scheme as at 20 April 1998 is £1,026,210.

The hotels which have received soft loans are:

The Elliott Hotel in the sum of £441,258.
The Rock Hotel in the sum of £574,952.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 212 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister say what are the terms of the soft loans, that is what is it that makes them soft?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Those details are not available from memory. Certainly they are available to the Opposition because the Leader of the Opposition's Colleague is involved professionally in the matter. The softness of it relates to the length of the loan, in other words, the loan period which would not normally be available on commercial terms, but if the hon Member is interested in the specific terms of the loan, as I have said, we can certainly provide him with the information. There are quite a lot of terms, incidentally, they do not all relate to finance, it is a lengthy loan agreement.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Given the fact that it covers such things, I would be interested if we had a copy notwithstanding the fact that professionally my hon Colleague may have access to it, we would not expect him to give that to the rest of us if it was something he had on behalf of a client. Can I ask, is there not something or was something not mentioned about the European Union having to approve the element of subsidy that made the loan cheaper than a commercial loan? Was that statement not made in the House at the beginning?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The capitalised value of the softness in relation to the interest rate element of it has to be within the State Aid provisions of the European Union but all this has gone up to Brussels and there has been no comeback and I think the view has been taken that it has been approved.

HON J J BOSSANO:

In providing the information, can the Government identify that for us so that we can see how that mechanism works because probably by looking at the Loan Agreement we would not be able to arrive at that figure ourselves?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Since I am sure that the hon Member is as concerned as we are not to cause unnecessary problems for the Government and for important parts of the local economy, it is not an issue that he will wish to highlight, whatever the position is that he finds in relation to the EU aspect of it.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I am not seeking to create difficulties for anybody, I am seeking information.

HON A J ISOLA:

Obviously the Chief Minister would not expect any information professionally obtained to be politically shared. But notwithstanding that, how many other hotels have indicated that they would also wish to participate in the scheme for soft loans?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Initially there were two other hotels that expressed an interest in soft loans and these were the Caleta Palace Hotel and the Bristol Hotel. Subsequently the Bristol Hotel has withdrawn their interest and it is only the Caleta Palace which at the moment is in the process of having a loan agreement put into place in line with the rest of the other two hotels.

HON A J ISOLA:

Is the loan agreement an integral part of the Hotel Assistance Scheme in the sense that if people participate in one aspect being the soft loan or the grant, are they entitled to the same benefits in the remainder of the package?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Given what he has just said I assume that he continues to be in political and not in professional mode. *[HON A J ISOLA: Of course.]* The Government have devised the scheme as a package and it should not be assumed that the grant will be available to those that do not participate in the scheme. But having said that, it should not be assumed that the Government would consider any particular permutation of participation on its merits and would respond favourably or unfavourably to the application on a case by case basis.

HON A J ISOLA:

I am referring to the only question in relation to arrears. At the time that the scheme was announced it encompassed the waiver on import duty on monies either through grant or soft loans, the reduction in rates, electricity and water charges, grants, soft loans and a freezing of arrears. Is that one package? Could somebody say, "I am not prepared to take a soft loan but can I do this?" Is that something that the Government considers?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, they cannot have access to the package at all without regularising the arrears situation.

NO. 213 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - HOTEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

What is the total amount paid out and to which hotels by Government in respect of the grants under the Hotel Assistance Scheme?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The total amount paid out by Government in respect of grants under the Hotel Assistance Scheme is as follows:

Bristol Hotel	£ 46,216
Caleta Palace Hotel	£100,000
Queen's Hotel	£100,000
Rock Hotel	£100,000
Emile Youth Hostel	<u>£ 1,417</u>
	<u>£347,633</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 213 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

So these are amounts actually paid out or is this the total?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

That is the information that has been supplied to me by the Treasury as having been paid out. In other words, cheques having been issued.

HON A J ISOLA:

Are there any other hotels which will be receiving grants or is this it?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Well, the Cannon Hotel and the Continental Hotel were both offered an element of grant but they still have not come back with any proper proposals which would enable the Government to assess whether they would be feasible or in line with our thinking in terms of meriting the support in the form of a grant.

NO. 214 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

TOURISM - HOTEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

By when do Government expect improvements to hotels under the Hotel Assistance Scheme to be completed?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

There have already been significant improvements to hotels as a result of the Hotel Assistance Scheme. Government expect an important part of the hotel refurbishment to be completed by June this year.

Government further estimates that it will take another 12 to 18 months for all refurbishment to be completed.

NO. 215 OF 1998THE HON A J ISOLA**TOURISM - AVERAGE EXPENDITURE**

Can Government say what was the average expenditure per person per day by tourists staying in hotels during 1997 and the number of tourists involved?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The average expenditure per person per day in 1997 excluding hotel accommodation was £46.34. The expenditure per person per day inclusive of hotel accommodation was £92.34. The number of tourists involved was 28,853.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 215 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister say whether it is on the basis of these figures that the tourist expenditure by people staying in hotels which he quoted in answer to an earlier question of £17 million is produced?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

The question refers to the number of tourists and therefore it does not include business people that come to Gibraltar which are not strictly tourists. The figure of £17.3 million, which I referred to earlier on in one of the questions today, is actually proposed on the same level of expenditure on an average of 4.22 days stay. The number involved includes tourists and people staying in Gibraltar for business and therefore classified as visitors and can be totalled at 48,420. Therefore if we get the 48,420 tourists and multiply it by 4.22 and multiply it by the £84.67 which is the expenditure on average per day, we come up with £17.3 million.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister say how it is that the expenditure excluding accommodation given in the survey where the £17 million appears which has been tabled by him today, in fact, shows the average expenditure per person per day as £36? This is on page 4 of the Tourist Survey Report tabled today.

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

Well, I am assuming here that obviously the figure of £36 refers to UK flight departures as everybody staying in hotels in Gibraltar does not come in by air strictly speaking. There are those that arrive in Gibraltar through the land frontier and stay in hotels and through other modes of entry into Gibraltar. So the figure of expenditure quoted of £46.34 is based on the survey being carried out by the Statistics Office on people actually staying in the hotels and not actually on people arriving through UK flights under this category called departures.

HON J J BOSSANO:

In fact, every other category is less than £36 according to this. Does the figure that he has given not reflected anywhere in the report? There is no way of knowing that people in hotels are spending £46 because even though the flight departures is £36, everybody else is less than £36.

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I understand the point the hon Member is trying to make. I asked for clarification of that from the Statistics Office and that was the explanation given to me by the Government Statistician as to how those figures had been arrived at. I can only assume that there is a possible error in the actual sampling of these surveys but they are worked out on the basis which I have explained earlier on.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Given the fact that the Minister in his supplementary to the previous question not only quoted the £17 million of this year but the £8 million of last year by visitors in hotels and expressed his satisfaction that it had gone up from £8 million to £17 million, can he say how the £8 million was calculated?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I am assuming that the figure is calculated on the same basis. In other words, on the same formula but obviously the change being by the drop in the number of tourists coming in and staying in hotels in 1996 and possibly a drop in the actual expenditure figure per day and the length of stay. I cannot really give this information, I have not got this information readily available here in front of me but I am assuming the basis for calculations has been on the same basis but obviously with different mathematical changes made to it to arrive at a much lower figure for the previous year.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Minister obtain that information and provide it because obviously what we are looking at is the accuracy of the estimates which acquire a particular reference given his satisfaction that expenditure by people staying in hotels has gone up by 100 per cent even though the people staying in hotels have not gone up by 100 per cent and even though every other item of expenditure by every other category of tourists in the same survey is actually less this year than last year. So for some unexplained reason it appears as if whereas every category of visitor/arrival shown in the survey report produced today is down, the people who stayed in hotels stayed twice as much in addition to the accommodation cost and that does not seem to be consistent. So would he investigate that and let us know the explanation?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I will give the hon Member an analysis on how the 1996 figures were calculated. I am sure they will be based on the same as for 1997 but obviously with the variations that have been done because there may have been changes into actual patterns on people's levels of expenditure. But I will provide the information for him.

NO. 216 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

ROAD WORKS - UPPER ROCK

What is the nature of the works to be done in the Upper Rock for which Amey Constructors have recently been awarded a tender?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The works in the Upper Rock consist of resurfacing, as follows:

1. St Michael's Road
overlaying to a compacted thickness of 40mm with hot asphalt an area of approximately 650m².
2. Signal Station Road
overlaying to a compacted thickness of 40mm with hot asphalt an area of approximately 1850m².
3. Queen's Road
patching up approximately 20m² of pot-holes.
4. Engineer's Road
reinstatement of the wearing course of a trench by the entrance to the Nature Reserve of approximately 120m².
5. Spur Battery
overlaying to a compacted thickness of 60mm with hot asphalt the existing concrete road, an area of approximately 60m².

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 216 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is it the intention of the contractor to do the works in late evening or night in order not to coincide with the tourism vehicles in the peak season which is now on?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I know that yesterday there was a site meeting between Sights Management, members of the Gibraltar Tourist Board and the contractors in order to work out a programme to avoid minimum disruption to the flow of traffic in the Upper Rock. I am confident that they will be able to overcome some of the difficulties which the hon Member has highlighted. The works are intended to start next Monday and those who make regular use of the Upper Rock like the Taxi Association and public service vehicles will be advised as to any possible disruption so that they can take this into account bearing in mind the traffic that is expected in the Upper Rock as a result of cruise liners being in port on specific dates. So there will be monitoring between the different departments to ensure minimum disruption.

ORAL

NO. 217 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

DUDLEY WARD TUNNEL

Are Government aware that the two-way traffic signs at each end of Dudley Ward Tunnel have been missing for some time?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

When the Roads Department of the Ministry for Transport became aware that the two-way traffic signs, and other safety measures, in the vicinity of Dudley Ward Tunnel had been removed or vandalised, steps were taken to have them replaced.

I am informed that the replacement of the necessary signage and safety works at Dudley Ward Tunnel have been completed.

NO. 218 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

BUS SERVICE STUDY

Can Government state what are the terms of reference of the study being undertaken into the bus service in Gibraltar?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The terms of reference of the study being undertaken in the bus services in Gibraltar can be summarised as follows:

The Board appointed by Government will enquire into and make recommendations on the following:-

The condition and appearance of public buses; the needs of different sectors of the community and the extent to which they are met; routes, fares and time tabling (including the effect of traffic congestion on timetables), bus tickets and passes; bus shelters; bus inspectors and their terms of reference; all matters relating to bus companies and the desirability or otherwise for public assistance to certain services and the form this should take; the training and appearance of drivers; the desirability of introducing new forms of public transport.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 218 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

So basically included in it is the possibility of some of these bus routes being in some ways subsidised by the Government if they are seen by the Committee and the recommendations are that they might be uneconomical because the problem always with the bus service has been on the uneconomical routes and the turnover of the companies and their ability to replace buses.

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I would not like to pre-empt any of the conclusions or recommendations that this team will recommend to Government but the terms that the hon Member has mentioned could be a possibility and it is something that Government would consider but not on a term in isolation, it would have to form a package of much wider issue which would obviously improve public bus services which is what the Government are trying to achieve.

HON J C PEREZ:

What I am saying is that actually the terms of reference could include that given the mention of public assistance as part of it?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I have said it could be included but it will not be a matter of just issuing out an assistance to the bus service and leave the bus service as it is today. *[HON J C PEREZ: Obviously not.]*

NO. 219 OF 1998THE HON J C PEREZ**BUS SERVICE - BOTH WORLDS**

Are Government prepared to extend, during weekends, the complimentary bus service for residents at Both Worlds introduced as a result of the closure of Sir Herbert Miles Road?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Government do not intend to extend the complimentary bus service for residents at Both Worlds during weekends.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 219 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that when the service was first introduced it was introduced on a five day basis on the strength that the No. 3 route would, during weekends, go through Dudley Ward Tunnel up to Sandy Bay and that this has not happened?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

My understanding of the situation is that when representations were made to Government on this issue the bus company that actually operates route No. 3 was offered the possibility of being able to extend the route in order to cover the need for residents of Both Worlds. Unfortunately the proposal that was put to the Government was totally uneconomical and too expensive for Government to consider and therefore we had to move away from the idea of subsidising this bus company to try and deliver on this service and we set up a temporary service using the Government Support Services garage. I was totally unaware that part of the negotiations included the weekend and I was involved in a lot of this so I just could not see how that could have been something that was committed to and has not been delivered.

HON J C PEREZ:

I was involved in the preliminary discussions although not actually in implementing it and one of the things that the operator of bus route No. 3 said that it was uneconomical for them to cover that part of the route during the weekdays and there was discussion that bus route No. 3 would cover up to Sandy Bay during the summer and in that way provide a bus service for residents who are unable to leave their place to come into town other than by taxi if they have not got their own private

cars. It is impossible otherwise because Sir Herbert Miles Road is closed and will be closed up to the end of January according to what we have heard in the last meeting of the House. The proposals from some of the residents there, some of which have bought houses as part of the surge to sell houses to retired people from UK is that if bus No. 3 does not provide the service for them at weekends, could the complimentary service be extended given that they are totally isolated there?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I think the first thing is that I still continue to state that I am not aware that the bus operator of route No. 3 were meant to carry out any of this service over the weekend. The second thing that one has to bear in mind is that nobody has made representations to me in respect of the bus service over the weekend and I think most important of all we have got to bear in mind that Sir Herbert Miles Road up to the Caleta Palace Hotel will actually be opened by June and therefore people in Both Worlds will be able to use the service which services up to Catalan Bay and the road up to Both Worlds will be open after June.

HON J C PEREZ:

Will be open by June for pedestrian traffic, I presume? I think we were told in the last meeting of the House that the road would be closed up to the end of December?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

The road will be closed up to the end of December , they will not be able to go right through it but it will be opened by sections..... [*HON J C PEREZ: Up to Sandy Bay?*] Yes, from the Caleta Palace up to Both Worlds will be opened, so vehicular traffic will have access up to the Caleta Palace, for example, via Europa Point area.

NO. 220 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

SANDY BAY - PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

Have Government any plans to introduce any special parking arrangements in the area of Sandy Bay during the bathing season?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Senior officers of the Traffic Department of the Royal Gibraltar Police have met with members of the Roads Department of the Ministry for Transport, on site, to discuss parking arrangements at Sandy Bay during the bathing season. The aim of the meetings was to maximise the car parking spaces available in a safe and organised manner which would not interfere with the free flow of traffic.

A report, consequent on these meetings, will shortly be submitted to the Traffic Commission for consideration.

NO. 221 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

LAGUNA ESTATE - HEATON ROAD

Will Government give consideration to the proposal of widening Heaton Road in Laguna Estate, contained in a petition signed by over 100 tenants in the Estate?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Government are at present undertaking a study at Laguna Estate in order to maximise the number of parking spaces in the Estate. This study is being carried out in conjunction with the Laguna Estate Tenants Association. The placing of barriers to prevent indiscriminate parking on pavements to the detriment of pedestrians responds to a long-standing and persistent request from the Laguna Estate Tenants Association.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 221 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

I have kept well away from the question of barriers given that I am aware, as most of the public is, that there are two viewpoints within the Estate over the barriers and everything else. But it seems to me that the proposal of the widening of the road at Heaton Road was one which made sense and I would urge the Minister in reviewing the situation to look at that aspect of it because perhaps that might go some way in allaying the concerns of many tenants in the Estate.

NO. 222 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRANSPORT - MOT TEST

Within what time limit, after the anniversary of their registration, do public service or goods vehicles have to undergo an MOT test?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Public service and goods vehicles have to undergo a road worthiness test on the first anniversary of their registration and thereafter annually on each subsequent anniversary.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 222 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

But how much time do they have at the time of the anniversary in order to comply with the requirement of having to undertake the test? Within what time limit do they have to undertake the test at the time of the anniversary?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

It is normal practice for the test to be asked for and requested prior to the anniversary coming into place. Obviously there is a certain leeway that one must realistically bear in mind but there is not a specified period by law which specifies a particular date by which the test has to be done other than it has to be undertaken by the anniversary.

HON J C PEREZ:

There was a specified period which has been changed recently in a Gazette on 5 March, the specified period was within 60 days of the anniversary which meant either 60 days before or 60 days after. That has now been changed and although the test can be taken 60 days before it seems that the change reflects the position where there is no time limit for taking the test after that. That is to say, one can have the whole year without taking the test according to the regulations how they have been changed, that is why I am asking the Minister.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not aware of what the hon member has just said but on the assumption that what he has said is an accurate statement of the position, it seems that there is no longer a statutory grace period but of course the test can be taken, it just would not be in compliance with the law after the anniversary period, then there is no question of administrative grace periods and all that sort of thing.

HON J C PEREZ:

Let me ask the Chief Minister if there was a period in which the test needed to be carried out, (a) why is it that the Government have decided to remove that period, and (b) if there was that requirement before and after the test, why maintain the requirement before the anniversary and remove the requirement after the anniversary?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I cannot answer the second part because I am not aware that the change has been introduced but obviously the idea being that there should be a reasonable interval of about 12 months between tests otherwise tests could be carried out so far in advance that it would in effect enable one at some stage to have an untested vehicle for anything up to 24 months.

HON J C PEREZ:

I refer the Chief Minister to Legal Notice No. 21 of 1998 of the 5 March, perhaps the Government might care to look at it and come back with the reason for this because I cannot understand the reason, frankly.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I ask, given that what the change appears to do is to say that a person may not take the test more than 60 days ahead but does not say how long after the date he can take the test, does it mean that it cannot be taken at all after the anniversary, is that what the regulation now means?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As I was telling the Opposition Member since we are not aware of the rule change that the hon Member is talking to, I can hardly explain to him what it means.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it then that the Acting Governor changed the rules without consulting the elected Government? We are talking about a regulation which is signed and published on 5 March and no elected Member of the Government is aware that the rules have been changed?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Minister for Transport will have to explain what his internal arrangements are but certainly the Deputy Governor makes no decisions of the sort that the hon Member has just said. There are officials in that area of Government business that have presumably made the decision and put it up for Ministerial approval and the Ministerial approval has been given. [*HON J J BOSSANO: Given?*] Presumably so. The Government do not collectively meet to decide points of that sort as I am sure he would not expect us to.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Quite apart from what I would expect or not expect, I would certainly expect that if the law was changed it was because the Government wanted the law changed and had a good reason for doing it and they would know that they were doing it, that I would expect. All that we have done in bringing the matter to the House is to try and understand the implications of the change because it is not readily visible to us by reading it. The whole purpose of changing the law and gazetting it is so that the citizens to whom this law applies need to know what their legal obligations are so that they are not breaking the law, presumably. Why gazette a regulation other than for the purpose of making it known to those who have to comply with that regulation? If the implications had been self-evident the matter probably would not have been raised and we would not have known that even the Government benches are not aware of this. But quite apart from how this has been arrived at, it seems strange that what appears to be linguistically the effect on the surface by reading the text, it appears as if before there was a time limit as to how long after the anniversary of the appointed day one can take the test and now that time limit has gone. What we are not sure is whether the disappearance of the time limit means that one cannot take it at all after the anniversary or that there is an unlimited period after, which would appear to defeat the whole purpose of the testing if there was not a time limit afterwards. Is it possible for anybody to answer whether the technical consequences of removing that extra date is either one or the other?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If what the hon Member is asking is for my legal opinion on the matter, on the basis of his reading..... [*HON J J BOSSANO: There is no other lawyer.*] ... on the basis of that part of the regulation that he has read and accepting for the purposes of this extended discussion that their interpretation of the meaning of that regulation and the effect of it is exactly as they are describing, none of which I would be able of course to be aware of because, as I said, I am not aware of the existence of that piece of legislation, it would seem that if there is not a statutory limit one may have one's test done at any time but that the day after the anniversary one is in breach but that does not prevent oneself, presumably, it would be my legal view without having examined it in detail, if the law does not impose a statutory limit by when one must have a test it does not mean that beyond the anniversary date one is forbidden to take the test so that therefore one is obliged to remain illegal for the next 12 months because one is not allowed to have one's test because one missed the deadline. It cannot possibly mean that and if that is how it is drafted it would have to be changed.

NO. 223 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRANSPORT - MOT TEST

Can Government state how many registered vehicles are required as from 1 January 1998 to undergo an MOT test as a result of the application of EU Directive 96/96, and of those, how many have now undertaken the test?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

I have discussed this question with the hon Member and have agreed that this question would be answered in writing on a confidential basis. This I have already done.

NO. 224 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRANSPORT - MOT TEST

Will Government state how many registered vehicles over 10 years old, which have received a fitness certificate at the MOT Test Centre in 1998, have had to undergo the test more than once?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The number of vehicles over 10 years old, which have undergone a road worthiness test more than once, as at 17 April 1998, is 343.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 224 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Does the Minister know whether this figure of repeating the test is in line with what happens in other years, is he aware of it?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I am afraid that I do not know whether it is in line with other years but the figure to me does not seem high especially considering that no vehicles over 10 years has actually attended the test more than once. In other words, they went for a repeat and all of them passed. So it does not seem to be abnormal.

ORAL

NO. 225 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRANSPORT - MOT TEST

Will Government state how many registered vehicles there are which are over 10 years old, and of those, how many have undertaken an MOT test in 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

There are 2,038 vehicles over 10 years old registered as at 17 April 1998. Of these, 1,226 have been issued with a road worthiness certificate.

NO. 226 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

TRANSPORT - MOT TEST

Will Government state how many registered vehicles over four years old which have received a fitness certificate at the MOT Test Centre have had to undergo the test more than once?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

The number of registered vehicles over four years old which have received a road worthiness certificate as at 17 April 1998, after undergoing the test more than once, is 1,092.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 226 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

May I ask the Minister whether the MOT test that is given to vehicles of over 10 years and the MOT test that is given to vehicles of over four years is the same or does the test in any way differ, is one more stringent than the other?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I am assuming that there is some similarity between the tests for vehicles over four years and those over 10 years but I am assuming this, I cannot categorically state it is exactly the same. I do not believe that it is exactly the same but I think it is similar.

HON J C PEREZ:

The Minister, I presume, is aware of the complaints that there are from the general public that they think that the test is too rigid and that they fail the MOT for matters which are not necessarily directly concerned with safety. Has the Minister perhaps checked with the MOT Test Centre whether this is the case and whether those complaints are warranted or not?

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

I have heard complaints of people's views on this and I have made my representations to the Chief Examiner in respect of this and his reply has been basically that there is a set of checks that have to be done under this directive and these are the ones that they are complying with. It is not something that is strict or not strict, it is a check list that has to be adhered to and it is not up to the discretion of the individual examiner as to whether people pass or not pass based on different levels and personal views on strictness.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is the check list that the Minister is referring to based on the directive from the EEC?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The check list that the Minister is referring to is part of the directive and is actually reprinted in the Ordinance, it sets out all the things which have to be examined.

NO. 227 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

HOTEL AND CATERING TRAINING SCHOOL

Is it still the intention of Government to open a hotel and catering training school?

ANSWER

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

The Government intend to open a School of Tourism including courses in the hotel and catering trades. This will form part of a training institution to be located at Bleak House which will cater for a wide range of professional and vocational courses related to the finance and business sectors. Bleak House will also house an information technology laboratory with facilities for interactive learning. Hon members may be aware that the information technology unit has been largely funded by Reuters Foundation.

Tenders were invited for the repair, refurbishment and conversion of Bleak House to accommodate the proposed aims and the contract has been awarded to Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd who commenced work last Monday 20 April with a scheduled time span of 10 weeks and the contract will be signed next Monday 27 April. Detailed logistical plans are now also well advanced for the resourcing and staffing of the Training Institute and the Ministry for Tourism and Transport has already made arrangements with a professional firm to run the hotel and catering courses once the Institute is suitably refurbished and resourced.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 227 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Why is it that the Minister states what has been the delay in implementing this? This was announced during the budget last year, it has taken a year to do the things that the Minister has said are now going to happen on 27 April, why has there been a delay?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I am not too sure about the delay, I think it is really logistical problems of getting the necessary drawings and going through all the procedures and processes involved in a contract of this nature. I know that European funds have also been sought for this project but in any case we should all rejoice that the matter is now in hand and we shall soon see, come into fruition, an excellent training institute in Bleak House for the good of the community.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

We are all rejoicing the only thing is that when they announced it I thought all these things had been put in place.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, all I can say to the hon Member is that given the conditions of some of the things that we found when we arrived in office on 16 May, I just wish the hon Members had taken a bit longer to do some of the things that they tried.

NO. 228 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHERS

What is the policy of the Government as regards the creation of a special grade of "superteacher" to be established in the UK as from September?

ANSWER

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

The Government have no intention of creating a special grade of "Advanced Skills Teachers" (otherwise named "superteachers") as proposed by the School Teachers Review Body in UK. The Government believe that the social and academic circumstances which have prompted these proposals in UK do not prevail in our local situation.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 228 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

Has the Minister considered the pros and cons properly? Has he reviewed the matter and sought the opinions of the GTA? It would be interesting to know whether the Minister has considered in fact the two models that are being considered in England. One is the narrower one being imposed by the Government and the other one suggested, by the Teacher Training Agency, which is a broader model, where the good teachers would be able to aspire to a particular grade and more handsomely paid rather than the narrower one suggested by the Government where the teacher would be labelled in fact as a "superman" and I would just simply like to know what the Minister has been considering in coming to his decision.

HON DR B A LINARES:

The Department has considered very thoroughly all these factors. The indications are that the GTA and certainly the teachers generally in Gibraltar would be, as indeed, the teaching unions in Britain are strongly opposed to the idea, I am sure the hon Member has also followed the controversy which these proposals have prompted in UK. When I refer to the differences in the local situation from that of UK, I am sure the hon Member is aware that this new grade is actually linked to another proposal by the Department for Education in Britain of creating education action zones in areas which are considered to be under-performing and in which these blitz approaches have to be targeted for support. This, of course, does not apply locally. The opinions that we have consulted, for instance that of the National Association of Headteachers in England, declare the proposals as implicit among staff, eroding differentials, worsened difficulties in recruiting deputy heads and headships. It would create an artificial hierarchy and cause resentment in the staff room and I think the best quote that I have found is from a headteacher in Lancashire who says, "The education of a child is very much a team matter and never the work of just one person no matter how much of a superman he is".

HON J J GABAY:

I am extremely pleased to note that the Minister has done his homework on this subject, I personally as well disagree with the advanced skills teachers and there has been a lot of adverse criticism on it. The fact that The Times Educational Supplement said that it would tend, in fact, to degrade the noble art of teaching and it would create a special class of teachers who, in any case, will be covering the work already done by heads and deputies of departments. So I am pleased to hear that answer.

HON DR B A LINARES:

So we end up by agreeing.

HON J J GABAY:

Indeed we are.

NO. 229 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - OXBRIDGE STUDENTS

Does the Minister for Education agree that potential Oxbridge students should be encouraged, briefed and assisted to pursue that target?

ANSWER

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

There are many factors, personal, social, intellectual, academic and professional which come into play in any guidance programme for Sixth Formers as they prepare for entry into university. Within this context, which is more complex than is suggested, with respect, by the hon Member's simple question, I can say nevertheless that a pupil who is assessed to potentially benefit from pursuing his/her higher studies in any given subject area in Oxford or Cambridge rather than in any other university in UK, should be (and I am satisfied that he/she is indeed) counselled, informed and specially tuitioned in his/her efforts to gain access to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 229 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

I wonder whether that is so, that adequate instruction and encouragement is given to those with the potential to obtain a place at Oxford or Cambridge. In my experience it has been mainly the initiative taken by cultured, academic parents pursuing their own children and helping them along the way to attend this but I would not accept that sufficient is being done, as is being done of course in the United Kingdom simply because they are aware now that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge are keen to attract an increasing number of students from the Comprehensive Schools and special seminars are being held every year to attract potential students to be able to discuss with dons, graduates, under-graduates and so on what these universities have to offer and to explain to them how to proceed in trying to obtain a place, of course without underestimating the difficulties, as we all know, since Cambridge rejected last year - and this seems to be an annual practice at both universities - 3,000 candidates with three 'A' grades at A-level. But the point I am trying to make, which might be of interest to us, is that an increasing weight is being given to candidates that show self-discipline, particular enthusiasm, the ability to think logically; they are looking for people with these qualities and these seminars have been extremely helpful in the United Kingdom and there has also been a publication of a guide as to how to proceed and I feel that our students would benefit from the specialised attention for those bright students who have the possibility of going to these universities. So therefore, I do not accept, I am not questioning.....

MR SPEAKER:

What is your question?

HON J J GABAY:

I am just coming to it. Therefore, would the Minister now partially agree that there is a need for polishing the system that would enhance the chances of our students in making their way to these two famous universities?

HON DR B A LINARES:

Yes, of course I agree but if the implication is that we are not trying our best in the current situation because one has to accept that the constraints that we have in the local set-up - distance, less accessibility to admissions tutors and registrars which are readily accessible, particularly to elitist public schools in UK because many of the State schools too in UK do not benefit from this accessibility. The point is that a disproportionate number of students in Oxford and Cambridge, as he knows, are still emanating from public schools and I would not comment on the often made accusation that there is a definite bias in Oxford and Cambridge towards, I would not comment on that but the fact is that public schools have this ready accessibility to all the machinery and all the procedures and even the personalities of the admission tutors which enable them to drill and prepare their students so much more effectively than we can but that does not mean that within these constraints in our local situation everything possible is being done by our teachers and our tutors to identify and to counsel and encourage and prepare. Indeed I know from my own experience how much time is given even outside school hours, even outside remunerated school hours by teachers and tutors in preparing individual students to enable them to access and gain entry into Oxford and Cambridge.

HON J J GABAY:

The views just expressed by the Minister shows that he is completely outdated, absolutely and completely outdated with regard to what is happening at Oxford and Cambridge because over 50 per cent now come from State schools, in fact the seminars are being held to attract even more students. The concern now is not for the aristocracy but for the meritocracy, this is what is happening, it is a revolutionary approach and it is within this new dimension that I am suggesting this. We agree that we do a good job but we must not be complacent and I think that there is need there for a special direction. This is all I am suggesting and it seems sensible to me, I hope it seems sensible to the Minister.

HON DR B A LINARES:

Of course it is sensible and I want to be positive about it. As regard my understanding of the situation and the change of approach in Oxford and Cambridge, I am perfectly aware of it but even by saying that 50 per cent of students now come from the State schools is still a disproportionate number of pupils coming from the public schools in relation to those that come from the State schools which are many more. I would not like to comment on the often made accusation, which is still made today, and I would not comment on the fact that there is a definite bias, I did not comment on that, I just quoted the often made accusation.

HON J J GABAY:

Does the Minister not realise that what I am pointing out is that this particular type of complacency is the only reason why it may remain at a 50 per cent? A lot of the closed scholarships have already been ended from particular public schools but if we still face, as the Minister seems to do, Oxford and Cambridge with the notion that only the refuge of the aristocracy and the privileged coming from the public schools, he is very mistaken.

MR SPEAKER:

All right, the Minister has got the last word and that is the end, if you want to answer. If you do not want to say anything it is all right.

HON DR B A LINARES:

I want to be courteous to the hon Member but, quite frankly, he then delves into areas which I am now at a loss because I am not too sure what he is aiming at and what he is getting at and what is the objective of his intervention.

HON J J GABAY:

I get the same feeling about the Minister's answers.

NO. 230 OF 1998THE HON J J GABAY**EDUCATION - OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITIES**

Can the Minister state how many pupils have obtained places at Oxford or Cambridge in the academic years 1993/94; 1994/95; 1995/96; 1996/97 and 1997/98?

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

Pupils who have obtained places at Oxford or Cambridge in the academic years 1993/94; 1994/95; 1995/96; 1996/97 and 1997/98 are as follows:-

	<u>Cambridge</u>	<u>Oxford</u>
In the academic year 1993/94	1 young lady	1 young lady
In the academic year 1994/95	-	1 young man
In the academic year 1995/96	1 young man	2 young men
In the academic year 1996/97	-	1 young lady (but
	actually declined it in favour of another university)	
In the academic year 1997/98	1 young man	1 young man

We know that there are also a few students over the last five years (but we have no exact records) who have indeed gained places in Oxford and/or Cambridge but have declined, for their own reasons, the offers made to them in favour of other universities.

NO. 231 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - GCSE REPEATS

Will Government comment on the new changes at Bayside Comprehensive School in respect of GCSE repeats?

ANSWER

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

No changes for the forthcoming academic year have been as yet finally approved at Bayside School. At present the school's administration is discussing with the Department of Education the best means of meeting the aspirations of students who having failed to qualify for A-level work, show some potential and definite commitment to repeat their efforts in GCSE English and Mathematics together with more vocationally oriented courses either in the school or in the College of Further Education.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 231 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

At this early stage has the Minister any preference in respect of continuing the structure as it exists at Bayside or handing it over to the College of Further Education to handle?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I would not like to comment at this stage because the matter is under consideration between the school's administration and the Department of Education.

HON J J GABAY:

Is there no such thing in these matters as Government policy so that one could discuss the pros and cons of these matters and not simply be told only that something is being studied in committee or that we are waiting for further information from the schools, et cetera?

HON DR B A LINARES:

The school has real problems in this respect and we have to be sensitive to these constraints and these problems. I will tell the hon Member what the background is so that we can be of one mind in this matter. The fact is that during the previous administration the Headmaster of Bayside, quite close to me personally, was denied an increase in staff to cater for the increasing number of pupils qualifying to follow A-level courses and also for those who wished to stay on in school to repeat GCSE courses and examinations. He was advised then to divert pupils who wished to repeat GCSE courses to the College of Further Education where they could be

entered for GCSE courses and examinations in English and Maths. In September 1996, this Government increased the staff complement as a whole by five teachers and devised a system of in-built supply teachers which I have explained in this House before, and this enabled Bayside School to offer post-GCSE pupils who did not qualify for A-level studies a curricular package made up of courses offered by the AEB, the Associated Examining Board, leading to a Certificate of Further Studies in Media Studies, Business Studies, Science Health and Safety, together with repeat GCSE courses in English and Maths. Unfortunately, the AEB is no longer offering these courses for the forthcoming academic year and, as I say, this presents the school's administration with a very real logistical problem of providing a viable and cost effective programme for these so-called 'repeat' students. That is why we are trying to be as sensitive as possible to the problems of the school but nevertheless also sensitive to the aspirations of the pupils who wish to renew their efforts this year in order to qualify at GCSE level.

HON J J GABAY:

I would like to ask the Minister if there is any truth in the rumour that in fact the repeat structure at the Comprehensive is to be ended in order to be able to choose and afford, within the same budget, a special scheme of a two-year course for students coming into the Comprehensive who are not considered of reasonable ability to be able to follow the GCSE courses?

HON DR B A LINARES:

That is a very shallow judgement and the source of that rumour obviously lacks an in-depth understanding of the constraints of the school in piecing together all the factors that go towards a well-balanced curriculum. I would not give any value or validity to that rumour, I assure the hon Member.

HON J J GABAY:

Can I therefore assume that the policy of the Government is not to institute this two-year special course which would label students going into the school as inferior material doing a special examination?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I am not saying that all, I am saying that one needs to look into all the different factors in order to arrive at a balanced conclusion. I am not excluding or accepting any particular decision at this moment until the matter is thoroughly discussed and considered in-depth with those in the field, with the administration and the teachers and the heads of faculties and heads of departments in the school.

HON J J GABAY:

The Minister has failed to answer my question.

MR SPEAKER:

He is fairly entitled to if he wants to but you are entitled to ask questions. He can remain silent if he wants to.

HON J J GABAY:

I just simply wanted to thank him for saying nothing.

MR SPEAKER:

No, you have taken advantage. You have not got the last word here.

HON J J GABAY:

I apologise, Mr Speaker.

NO. 232 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - CLEANLINESS CAMPAIGN

Have Government plans to promote and broaden the example of Bayside Comprehensive pupils and staff in their cleanliness campaign?

ANSWER

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

Bayside School's "Litter Free Campaign" which recently merited media attention is indeed one of many outcomes of the Government's wide-ranging and planned programme of environmental awareness in the community as a whole and in our schools in particular. The Ministry for the Environment and Health and the Ministry for Education are working together to support various initiatives in environmental education of which the Bayside School campaign was a particularly significant and praiseworthy instance.

The hon Member will be glad to learn that environmental education, as one of the cross-curricular themes in the National Curriculum, has always had a strong presence in our schools' curriculum both at primary and secondary levels, raising issues related to the pupils' immediate surroundings as well as wider global problems. Some of our schools have worked on programmes to improve their playgrounds and immediate environment while others encourage pupils to care and look after their own nature areas. The evidence of all this in our schools is truly impressive and the hon Member is welcome to visit our schools and see for himself.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 232 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

I wish to share that view and in fact, I would like to add my congratulations to the pupils and staff at Bayside for their excellent campaign which has actually blossomed out into the community at large and I would hope that the Minister might wish to pursue that matter further with other schools and perhaps even in other sections of the community so that some areas of Gibraltar that are still quite filthy might benefit from the momentum that is being created.

NO. 233 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - DYSLEXIA

Can Government state what system is being practised to diagnose the incidence of dyslexia and what programme of special tuition is currently being provided?

ANSWER

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

The policy of the Department of Education is not to over-medicalise with terms like diagnosis and certainly we do not refer to pupils as "dyslexics", thereby describing them by a disability. The policy of this department is to work with two broad categories: global learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties. We prefer to refer to these pupils as students currently having specific learning difficulties. The Government are, of course, very interested in all learning disabilities, including literacy difficulties. More specifically, the Government are increasing early detection of all difficulties through a Preventive Programme before statutory school age. This involves ensuring that pupils with early speech difficulties, which is a diagnostic feature, are caught as early as possible to receive support from teachers and speech therapists, and creating also a Child Development Centre for specialist Observation and Assessment by our team of therapists.

As well as a Preventive Programme, which I have described, we have a rather sophisticated Screening Programme which consists of the following:-

1. Early years screening through Croydon Profiles carried out during their first year at school. This Screening Programme is carried out in great detail by our Principal Educational Psychologist. Children with the early signs of specific difficulties are kept under review and assessed in greater detail, if necessary.
2. The very important place that oracy has in our schools, especially at Reception Level. The Department has invested in specialist material from the Dyslexia Institute that address this very important area.
3. As part of the staged approaches to assessment defined in the Code of Practice. At Stage 1 the case is kept under close scrutiny. Pupils may be registered as having special educational needs (which may be specific) and earmarked for special assessment.
4. At Stage 2, a child with specific learning difficulties may be assessed by the class teacher or by the Special Needs Co-ordinator using a "diagnostic" battery of tests such as the Aston Index.
5. When all these forms of assessment are applied, and staff still feel that further assessment and advice is necessary, the child may qualify for a detailed educational assessment from the Principal Educational Psychologist whose involvement is then sought.

6. Former screening continues throughout the service in the form of Standardised Group Reading Tests carried out at the following ages: 7+, 8+ and 12+. These results are monitored and investigated by the Education Support Services.
7. Finally, when pupils are approaching their GCSE's and their 'A' levels, all pupils whose difficulties are specific (not necessarily dyslexic) and which prohibit them from showing themselves at their best in their exams, also receive a formal assessment by our Educational Psychologist. This is prepared for the respective Examination Boards who are advised of the pupil's learning difficulties. Pupils who are adjudged to have specific learning difficulties may qualify for special consideration when taking their examinations such as extra time or even reading assistance from an aide.

If I may now turn to the second part of the hon Member's question, the tuition provided for pupils with specific learning difficulties depends on what those specific difficulties are and the extent of their difficulties.

The bulk of the tuition is carried out in the mainstream class where pupils are helped to access all areas of the curriculum. Pupils with specific difficulties need their music, PE, art, history et cetera. We must not undervalue the class tuition. This is where the literacy tuition takes place. This is where oral skills are developed in the group. This is where the child needs to have his support. This is where the child feels at one with his peers.

Some pupils receive extra support in small groups. Sometimes, a phonics programme or integrated multi-sensory work is best carried out in a small homogenous group by the Special Needs teacher.

And there is of course the provision of a peripatetic teacher service whose remit is solely to support pupils who have specific learning difficulties.

We welcome the support of voluntary agencies, notably GATES, which is an association of specialised teachers who give of their time unremunerated for homework service and for private tuition. The Government support these ventures and are happy to continue to provide funding for their resources.

But we look forward to improvements, we are not complacent. We look forward to the appointment of a new Special Needs Adviser next month. We look forward to the continuation of the training programme for special needs that we initiated for all teachers only a few weeks ago. This Government remain committed to this, and I am grateful to the hon Member for this opportunity to explain just how much is being done in this very special area of education by our educational administrators and our teaching staff to develop the fullest potential of each and every child within a defined code of practice and a declared policy of equal opportunities.

I hope this time the hon Member feels that I have said something.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 233 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

I too would like to express my gratitude for the volume of knowledge that has been expressed. But I would like to raise this question of dyslexia as a specific ailment and not to be reduced and diluted, as he did some time ago in answer to Question No. 156 of 1996 where he decided that dyslexia really was a vague term, it was an umbrella term and he proceeded to give us a lot of information about other disabilities and he has done the same today. There is no doubt in the world of education and research, in fact, that dyslexia is a specific ailment and those of us who have taught dyslexics know that they need very, very special tuition. Secondly, this question of dyslexics - and one should not be ashamed of the name because now it is an accepted term in the educational world and The Times Educational Supplement has been full of analysis in this and the latest research actually shows that there may well be a genetic component to the problem. But that being said, for the Minister to say that for literacy and so on they need to be kept with their peers, in saying so I feel that he is really quite misguided. In fact, if Governments are actually to pursue the standard which they claim to be pursuing of literacy for every child, there is no cheap way that that is going to be achieved for dyslexics because they need, not visitors now and again or extra-curricular attention as a luxury, they need very, very special attention actually within the mainstream education.

I would like to ask the Minister whether he read a letter in the Chronicle not so long ago by an ex-Head, called Mr Lawson from some school in Edinburgh, expressing his shock at the way dyslexic children are not getting what they ought to be getting by comparison to the more advanced schools in the country. If he has not read that letter I feel that he should read it because that is a detached assessment on a particular child, the mother wrote and this teacher actually wrote back in sympathy with the mother that the child was not getting the education that he was entitled to. To shorten this question, because I have not asked it yet, I came across, if the House will bear with me just for one moment, something which an expert recently said in the Times Educational Supplement and it reads like this, "What we really need is a test that spots dyslexics at the age of four months. Their families would then be able to emigrate to Spain where they would learn a more phonologically regular language than English". And I thought, in view of the Minister's overflowing enthusiasm for regional co-operation, that he might view this proposition with an element of favour.

MR SPEAKER:

There is no answer? Next question.

NO. 234 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

EDUCATION - DYSLEXIA

Can Government state how many pupils are currently receiving special tuition as dyslexics in Primary, Middle and Comprehensive Schools respectively?

ANSWER

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

May I, first of all, with respect and to avoid confusion, point out a matter of nomenclature: "Primary" includes "Middle". The hon Member clearly means First, Middle and Secondary in his question.

Dyslexia is a very contentious issue as has been clear in the course of this debate. Some people define it loosely as "word blindness"; others refer to all reading difficulties as "dyslexia"; others only call dyslexia what are reading difficulties in otherwise intelligent children; some people only use the term in its strictest neurological sense. All learned sources agree that there is a serious problem of definition.

Depending on the definition, people will attribute a certain rate of incidence. A very strict definition might imply a 3 per cent rate of incidence; a very loose definition as literacy difficulties might even be 40 per cent. Pupils usually referred to as having "dyslexic type of difficulties", (and we still prefer to call them specific learning difficulties), will be registered with the school's Special Needs Co-ordinator. Most schools detect between 18 per cent to 20 per cent of pupils as having special educational needs at some time or other during their schooling. Of these, 70 per cent have literacy difficulties and about 50 per cent of these will be specific as opposed to global and if we put the statistics together, in other words, there are about 6 per cent of pupils that we are currently supporting with extra tuition to meet their specific learning difficulties.

In rough terms this means that there will be one or two pupils per class of 20. We support these pupils primarily with the best tuition possible in as small a group as we can afford.

Some are identified for additional tuition. Some others receive an intensive course of additional tuition from the peripatetic literacy tutors. But these things are offered in cycles. Learning difficulties are not always permanent, and in some cases pupils outgrow some forms of special tuition.

We are grateful to the voluntary groups in UK and in Gibraltar who lobby to find better ways to reach the hard to teach. But I must warn the hon Member, in the context of references he made in the question before, that other learning difficulties, without an articulate lobby, also need our support. The Government are committed to support all our children within a policy of equal opportunities.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 234 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

Just one final comment, of course we all agree that children with various difficulties should get special attention but we must not, as I said earlier on, dilute the significance of dyslexia which is well recognised. In my own experience and I have taught quite a number of them, they are highly intelligent pupils and if they are not given the special help that they require from expert and patient teachers, they suffer a great deal of depression and low self-esteem. This is why we need, I think, to give it very, very special consideration. Would the Minister not agree with this?

HON DR B A LINARES:

I too have taught many children with these difficulties and of course my heart goes out to them and to the problems that this creates with their parents and I want to assure the Opposition Member that not only myself but pretty well the whole of the teaching profession and any teacher worth his or her salt will be as sensitive as he is to this matter.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I ask for clarification on the figure that was given of one or two in a class of 20 with special learning difficulties. Is it that there are one or two with the type of special learning difficulties that would be understood as dyslexia or is it that one or two is the global figure of all kinds of special learning difficulties of which in some cases it might be dyslexia and in some it might not? Which of the two is it because I am not very clear from the explanation?

HON DR B A LINARES:

One or two will be the special, I distinguished between global learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties. Specific learning difficulties will cover areas like dyslexia and dyspraxia, oracy problems, spelling problems of different types, sometimes even neurological, sometimes related to impairment of sight, hearing. These are specific learning difficulties and the percentage, the one or two per 20 that I was referring to covers all these areas.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So we do not have an answer really as to how many of those are dyslexics, which is the original question? The one or two does not mean that 10 per cent are dyslexic?

HON DR B A LINARES:

It does not mean that one or two per class are dyslexic in the strict sense of the word but I want to advise the Leader of the Opposition that there is sometimes very grey areas between an element of dyslexia and an element of short-sightedness and various aspects like this. It is very difficult to be clear-cut in defining, within narrow parameters, one particular ailment which I do not like using that word because we do not want to over-medicalise but it was used by the hon Member.

NO. 235 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

GBC - PENINSULA PRODUCTIONS

Can Government confirm that the most recent proposal on broadcasting by Peninsula Productions foresees the gradual elimination of the Government subsidy?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

The Peninsula Productions proposals to the Government in respect of GBC are commercial in confidence and Government are not prepared to comment on their content at this delicate stage of the matter.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 235 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is the Minister aware that this information has already been published in the pages of the Gibraltar Chronicle?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I am not answerable for whatever the Gibraltar Chronicle publishes.

HON J C PEREZ:

Can the Minister say whether the Government have considered this new proposal or are in the process of considering the new proposal?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

The Government are in the process of considering both, this proposal and GBC's own proposals.

HON J C PEREZ:

Given that GBC has indicated publicly that the proposal now is for a one channel TV, is it not possible to accommodate both proposals given that there are two channels available?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

I repeat what I said in answer to the original question, this is not a subject on which I am prepared to comment further at this stage.

NO. 236 OF 1998THE HON J C PEREZ**GIBTEL/NYNEX - COMPLAINTS**

Are Government aware whether the Spanish Government have now responded to the European Commission over the two complaints on telecommunication matters made by Gibtel and Nynex respectively?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND SPORT

Yes, the Government are aware that the Spanish Government have now responded to the European Commission over the two complaints made by Gibtel and Gibraltar Nynex Communications.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 236 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Will the Minister perhaps be able to give us an indication of what that response is and what is going to be the action of the Commission, if he has an indication as a result of it?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

All I can tell the hon Member at this stage is that the Spanish Government's reply was predictable and is on the lines that the hon Member would expect, negative and based on the misconception that the 350 regional code is prejudicial to its sovereignty claim.

HON J C PEREZ:

But given (a) that we can certainly prove that the 350 code has nothing to do with it because it has been granted to Gibraltar by the ITU in Geneva and (b) Spain's recognition of the telex code historically, that would possibly reinforce the position of the Commission in deciding to take steps against Spain as a result?

HON LT-COL E M BRITTO:

Indeed, these two arguments have been deployed in the past, both in the complaints and outside the complaints and continue to be deployed.

HON J C PEREZ:

So what does the Government envisage would be the next step of the situation?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member, I know that he is aware but he should not lose sight of the fact as we discuss it but, of course, the Government are not a party to the complaints; the complaint by the two telecommunications companies, a complaint directed by them to the Commission. So whatever might be the Government's influence as a shareholder in those two companies, ought not to be confused with having certainly the public impression which should not be created that this is litigation that is being driven by the Government, it is not being driven by the Government. It is driven by the telecommunication companies and we have been advised, as a Government and the companies have been advised, as companies, that their complaints have a better prospect of success if it is not seen to be driven by the Government but rather by them on purely commercial complaints basis. So I would just like the hon Member, when he draws us out in this discussion, not to lose sight of that fact but the position is that the complaint will now continue and on the basis of that response it seems unlikely that it will be possible for an interim relief arrangement to be entered into on terms that the Government, if consulted, will be able to support it.

HON J C PEREZ:

On a point of clarification, I understand the commercial aspect of the complaint. But is it not the case that the Chief Minister himself informed the House that the level at which the complaint was being looked at had changed and that it had become more political as a result of the matter being moved to a different level which is when the United Kingdom Government were asked by the Chief Minister, I believe, to take a view and the position of the Government themselves publicly has been the recognition of the 350 code as being the solution to the problem?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, indeed. The transfer of the case to the more political Article - I cannot remember the number of the Article - about which I gave the hon Member information last time, does not of course mean that the company ceased to be participants or the complainants in the litigation but it does mean that the Commission requests the British Government to reply on behalf of UK member states on these issues and obviously the position of the Government of Gibraltar continues to be as it has always been that the UK should field the views of the Gibraltar Government when the UK Government, as opposed to one of the complainants, is asked for a view. Therefore to the extent that the Commission contacts the UK Government to explore the possibility of the political acceptability to the UK Government member state of particular suggestions and possibilities for interim settlement, our position is that the UK Government should respond in accordance with the position in relation to that issue by the Government of Gibraltar and so far that is what the UK Government have done.

NO. 237 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO**I&D FUND - KONVER PROJECTS**

Can Government give a breakdown of the Konver projects that have been financed from the £1.5 million provided for this purpose in the Improvement and Development Fund in the last financial year?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Two Konver projects have been approved to be part financed from the £1.5 million voted in the 1997/98 Estimates of Expenditure. These are the Bleak House and Casemates projects.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 237 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

But these projects have not yet started, have they?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

As my hon Colleague has mentioned, Bleak House has just started and Casemates is in the preliminary phase but the hon Member is right in highlighting the fact that the projects have been essentially approved but no significant expenditure has been yet made on them. So in fact the expenditure will be carried forward into this financial year and be expended during this financial year.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The figure of £1.5 million that was put in the Improvement and Development Fund last year, am I right in thinking that that is of course including the Government element, can the Minister say, now that these projects presumably are going ahead, what is the share? Is it 50/50, Government and Konver?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

That depends on the project and the type of expenditure. In the context of Casemates the total expenditure there, as will be clearer when the estimates are debated, is in the order of £2.9 million, 50 per cent of the square will be paid for by the EU funds and 40 per cent of the cost of the conversion of the barrack will be paid by the EU funds so it will be matching funds from the Government of Gibraltar, various sums of 50 per cent and 60 per cent for those two aspects of the project. With regard to Bleak House, there will be 50 per cent of the Bleak House expenditure paid for by Konver funds, namely, £150,000. As my hon Colleague mentioned, the balance of the funds will not entirely be Government funds because Reuters is making a contribution towards part of the equipment that will go into Bleak House.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So the money that has been spent on the two projects up-to-date has been on plans and things like that and not on any physical restructuring, is that correct?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

That is right.

NO. 238 OF 1998THE HON J L BALDACHINO**PRINCE GEORGE'S BLOCK**

Can Government state if Prince George's Block has now been handed over by the MOD?

ANSWERTHE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Prince George's Block has been offered for transfer and it is expected that the formalities of transfer will be completed as soon as outstanding issues can be agreed.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 238 OF 1998

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Has the Minister asked for a survey report from the MOD on the condition of the block?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

We did not actually ask for one but we were provided with one, they had one. The survey report, I am sure the hon Member will be interested to know, basically indicates that the condition of the block is very bad, beyond what in our view is economic repair. The report essentially identifies a figure of £1.5 million to £2 million to actually refurbish the block so it is unlikely that that will be an option that the Government would seek to want to pursue.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

So based on the answer that the Minister has given, and this is something that the MOD have done in the past and carries on doing, that they hand over buildings which are beyond economic repair and therefore if the Government take it over they will have obviously to pay for the demolition and things like that. Are the Government considering asking the MOD that they demolish the building prior to it being handed over?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

In general terms that is the philosophy that this Government continue to adopt. In general terms the Government are not keen to take over what essentially is a liability rather than an asset but we do not take a completely dogmatic and inflexible view of that. There are circumstances where it would be possible and conceivable in which we would be prepared to accept a transfer of a building that requires demolition if it facilitated the unblocking of other issues which caused difficulty under the current structure of the Lands memoranda and which hold up a whole series of other matters. Similarly, if a developer, for example, were interested and

we felt that a plot could be developed and the cost of the demolition would fall to be part of the cost of the developer we would be taking on board, again we might take the view at a pragmatic level that the development of the plot was important enough to justify taking a particular position on such a transfer. But in general terms, the sentiments of the hon Member are shared by the Government.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I take it from the answer we have had that in fact at the moment there is no pre-conceived use for Prince George's Block when it gets passed over to the Government? It is not that they have got it earmarked already with a potential use for it, have they?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

No final decisions have been taken other than to indicate to the House that it is most unlikely, in fact, I dare to say, impossible that the Government would refurbish the block so it is the potential of the site rather than the potential of the building that is of interest to the Government.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Is the Minister aware of how much it would cost to demolish the building?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Our estimates are in the order of £100,000.

NO. 239 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSIONER

When does the current Financial Services Commissioner's contract of employment expire?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The contract in respect of the Financial Services Commissioner expires on the 24 July 1998.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 239 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

By when do Government intend to recruit or seek a suitable replacement for this position and how will it go about doing that?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Firstly, I would remind the House that it is not the Gibraltar Government that recruits the Financial Services Commissioner but the steps taken to identify a successor are already well in hand. Interviews have been held in London with prospective candidates and we expect to be in a position for there to be a hand over, if not on or around July of this year, certainly very shortly thereafter.

HON A J ISOLA:

Has the position already been advertised?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Absolutely, the position has been advertised in Gibraltar and in the international press and there were two adverts that went out; one was in respect of the position of Financial Services Commissioner and the other in respect of Banking Supervisor, the Banking supervisor is also due to move and there have been interviews for both in respect of the Financial Services Commissioner and Banking Supervisor.

HON A J ISOLA:

Would the Minister be aware of how many applications have been received in respect of these two posts?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Speaking from memory I could only give the hon Member a rough guide. There were more applications for Financial Services Commissioner than for Banking Supervisor. There would have been in the order of perhaps 12 to 15 for Commissioner and about five or six for Banking Supervisor but as invariably happens with these things, the short list of applicants becomes much more considerably reduced. The post, in particular of Financial Services Commissioner in Gibraltar is a rather difficult position to fill because it obviously requires a mixture of credentials, not just regulatory, on an on-shore environment but also some experience of the off-shore world and also some element of EU background. So it is often the case that although there are a number of applicants it really trickles down to three or four that are effectively the front-runners.

HON A J ISOLA:

Could I ask the Minister what the selection process is? Who would interview the prospective applicants or the short listed applicants and ultimately who would select the appropriate successful candidate?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

As I indicated, the formal appointment is actually an appointment made by the Foreign Secretary through the Governor but the process of selection and interview has been a fairly broad based one. This has involved an invitation by London for the Government to participate in the perusal of the applications and to form part of the interview process. There has, as the hon Member would expect, been representation in that interview process from the Bank of England, the Treasury, the Foreign Office, independent members including a member from the Commission itself and myself on behalf of the Gibraltar Government. The methodology will involve a recommendation made by that board formally to the Foreign Secretary for an appointment to be made.

NO. 240 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

FINANCIAL CENTRE PAGE - GIBRALTAR CHRONICLE

What is the cost of the financial centre page in the Gibraltar Chronicle to Government?

ANSWER

THE HON THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Government do not make any payment to the Gibraltar Chronicle in respect of the financial centre page published in the Chronicle.

The production of the financial centre page does involve work by a freelance contributor who is paid a contribution of £100 a week from the Department's marketing budget.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 240 OF 1998

HON A J ISOLA:

Is the view of the Government that the financial centre page is in fact a contribution towards Gibraltar's marketing plans?

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Well, it is in the context of the local scene. The main purpose of the finance centre page is really to provide a vehicle of communication from within the industry so that people who feel they might want to access opinion can use the page. Also we felt it necessary to perhaps transmit information that we think is being delivered internationally, to transmit that information locally because there is a lot going on internationally that we were of the view that Gibraltar opinion was not aware of. So it is really more a communication page, it is a very open concept. We are very much welcoming private sector involvement and it is very much open to therefore participants to contribute to it and to seek to use it in the development of any issue that would be of interest to the centre. Of course the Chronicle does have as well an element of distribution up the coast. I have no doubt that there are ex-pats as well that do read the Chronicle and to that extent it is an element of marketing and advertising through that media.

NO. 241 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - PAYE COLLECTED

Can Government state how much was collected in PAYE tax from the construction sector in the financial year 1997/98 and the comparable figures for 1996/97 and 1995/96?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The PAYE tax collected in respect of the construction industry sector in the financial years 1995/96, 1996/97 and 1997/98 was as follows:

1995/96 - £1.44 million; 1996/97 - £1.4 million; 1997/98 - £2.41 million.

NO. 242 OF 1988

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - CONSTRUCTION SUB-CONTRACTORS

Can Government state how much was collected in payment of tax by or in respect of construction sub-contractors in the financial years 1997/98 and 1996/97 and the number of such sub-contractors in each year?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The answer that I am about to provide him is on the assumption, which is not specified in the question, that he is asking for information in respect of the Income Tax Construction Sub-contractors Regulations. In other words, the element of statutory withholding by principal contractors from sub-contractors is, of course, there may be a sub-contractor's bill to pay corporation tax in their own respect on profits and that is not included in this answer.

Tax totalling £670,000 was collected in respect of construction sub-contractors in the financial year 1997/98. In the financial year 1996/97, the sum collected was £630,000. The Tax Office computer system does not provide the number of sub-contractors as is requested by the Leader of the Opposition but arrangements are being made to provide him with this information at a later date.

NO. 243 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - DIRECT ASSESSMENTS

Can Government state how much of the tax due by direct assessments on individuals amounting to £13,491,754 as at 31 December 1996 was by 31 March 1998, (a) paid; (b) still outstanding; (c) otherwise discharged and the number of assessments in each category?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

I suppose I could prefix this and other questions by saying that the systems of information reporting that we have available to us are more or less the same ones that he had when he was in office.

The information requested by the Leader of the Opposition cannot be produced in the time scale allowed to the Income Tax Office. I am informed that a reply to this type of question requires programming changes to the computer system. These have been sought from the Information Technology Unit of the Government. The information will be made available by Government as soon as this is produced.

NO. 244 OF 1998THE HON J J BOSSANO**INCOME TAX - DIRECT ASSESSMENTS**

Can Government state what was the amount of tax paid as a result of direct assessments on individuals in the financial year 1997/98 and the number of such assessments?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The sum of £3.75 million was collected in respect of direct assessments on individuals in the financial year 1997/98. The Income Tax computer system does not provide, as management data, the number of assessments.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 244 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Given the fact that the question has been put can the Chief Minister say whether it could be possible as assessments are done from now on to keep a record of the numbers so that at the end of the day that information will be available?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The policy of the Government is rather than to invest additional management time and administrative resources in extracting more information from an antiquated manual system, rather to invest management time in the design of and public funds to resource a comprehensive computerisation programme so that much of the information that hon Members ask, which I would have thought they might have known from their terms in office, would not be easily available but that it is information that the Government are perfectly willing to provide and it just does not relate to income tax matters. This morning we had the example of a very different view that the ETB on the one hand, and the Department of Labour and Social Security had on the other, on the question of frontier workers. Hon Members will see when they examine the estimates that have just been tabled, that there is a substantial provision there to make a major start on a process of computerisation in Government that will enable access to information, will enable information to be pulled down from the system notwithstanding the form in which the question is put and indeed it will provide the Government with management information. I acknowledge that we could do what the hon Member has just asked but I would hope to make more rapid progress in making more sophisticated the computer system in the Income Tax Office and other areas and indeed the departments that I have just mentioned are amongst the priority for computerisation and more sophisticated facilities than are presently enjoyed on the Government's list. So if the hon Member will just bear for a while longer I hope that by this time next year he will have access to information which presently would require an awful amount of administrative resources to pull out.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Given the fact that such exercises have been attempted before and seemed to have produced no great impact on the system, in the eight years that I have been familiar with improvements on paper which somehow did not materialise in practice, would the Chief Minister not agree that if in fact we are talking about direct assessments on individuals - I do not know whether we are talking about 100 individuals or 1,000 individuals but I would have thought it is not too difficult - I can understand the difficulty of going back and trying to establish information that is not readily available in the form in which the question is put but if one were to say, well can a record be kept of how many assessments on individuals are sent out from the beginning of April 1998, I would not have thought that would require a great deal of cost or administrative time or computer time, it is just a question of somebody making a little cross on a piece of paper every time they post an assessment and at the end of the year we will have either 500 crosses or 5,000 crosses.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

That observation might have been more relevant in relation to the hon Member's other questions but, of course, we are on Question No. 244 and that asks, "What was the amount of tax paid as a result of direct assessments?" So one would not have to keep a tally on the assessments as they are posted, every time one gets a cheque in the post one would have to make a note of the number of assessments that are paid. This is not about assessments issued, the question relates to assessments paid. But nevertheless, if the hon Member really believes that it would assist him in something that he regards as important to have particular types of information in a particular form, if he will write to the Chief Secretary on it I will ask him to pass the information on to the Commissioner of Income Tax to see if this can be done without too much upheaval and if it can be done it will be.

NO. 245 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - CORPORATION TAX

Can Government state what is the total amount received in respect of corporation tax and the number of companies assessed in respect of such tax for the tax year 1994/95?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

A total of 1,401 companies paid corporation tax totalling £10.3 million in respect of the tax year 1994/95.

NO. 246 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - CORPORATION TAX

Can Government state which is the amount of corporation tax at present due and payable in respect of the tax year 1994/95 and the number of tax assessments involved?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The sum of £1.39 million in respect of 383 1994/95 corporation tax assessments is currently outstanding.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 246 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Are the Government in a position to know whether, in fact, these two figures now represent all the assessments for that particular tax year or are there still some pending which could change those figures?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not have obviously that information with me now but it occurs to me that there can only be two ways in which that figure could change at this late stage given that it is 1994/95. One is that there may be companies that have not yet reported and have not yet been assessed in respect of those years and at some time in the future they may get back assessments for a long period covering this one or that there are arrears of tax outstanding in respect of this period. No, it can only be the one category because otherwise it would be included in this answer. But I would expect any such future modification of that figure to be minimum in terms of the people that have not yet reported.

NO. 247 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - CORPORATION TAX

Can Government state how much of the corporation tax paid by companies in the financial year 1997/98 was in respect of the tax year 1997/98 and the number of assessments involved?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

In the financial year ended 31 March 1998, the sum of £2.7 million was collected in respect of corporation tax on assessments for the tax year 1997/98. The number of assessments was 90.

ORAL

NO. 248 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

INCOME TAX - BANKING SECTOR

Can Government state how much was collected in PAYE tax from the Banking Sector in the financial year 1997/98?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The sum of £3.1 million was collected in PAYE tax from the Banking Sector in the financial year 1997/98.

NO. 249 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

GOVERNMENT DEPOSITS - GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

What was the total amount on deposit from Government controlled funds in the Gibraltar Savings Bank as at 31 March 1998 in:

- (a) On-call accounts
- (b) Debentures
- (c) Fixed term bonds
- (d) Ordinary accounts?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Understanding the term "Government controlled funds" as meaning companies, pension funds, Government monies; anything over which the Government have control even though they may not be available to the Government to spend, all such monies are actually on on-call accounts. So for the other three items it is nil and for On-call investments accounts it is £87.5 million.

NO. 250 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

GOVERNMENT DEPOSITS - GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

What was the total amount on deposit from members of the public in the Gibraltar Savings Bank as at 31 March 1998 in:

- (a) On-call investment accounts
- (b) Debentures
- (c) Fixed term bonds
- (d) Ordinary accounts?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

No public deposits are held on On-call investments accounts, so that is nil. In the case of Debentures it is £48 million, that is the biggest item. Fixed term bonds is £4.5 million and Ordinary accounts is £10.1 million.

The Ordinary accounts includes holdings of Trust funds such as the Supreme Court Fund and the Public Trustee Fund amounting to £800,000 which is not really public funds.

NO. 251 OF 1998THE HON J J BOSSANO**GOVERNMENT DEPOSITS - GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK**

Can Government give the breakdown of the amounts deposited in on-call accounts with the Gibraltar Savings Bank by:

- (a) Government Special Funds
- (b) Government Owned Companies
- (c) Government Deposit Accounts

as at 31 March 1997 and 31 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The breakdown of the amounts deposited in On-call investments accounts with the Gibraltar Savings Bank as at 31 March 1997 and 31 March 1998 were as follows:

	<u>31.3.97</u>	<u>31.3.98</u>
(a) Government Special Funds	£43.8 million	£45.8 million
(b) Government Owned Companies	£11.1 million	£8.2 million
(c) Government Deposit Accounts	<u>£16.6 million</u>	<u>£33.5 million</u>
	<u>£71.5 million</u>	<u>£87.5 million</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 251 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is there a particular reason for the very large increase which is almost double in the Government deposit accounts?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can only assume that it is the fact that the reserves are increasing. If the hon Member has a quick glance at the estimates again that have been laid on the table, there is a substantial budget surplus being run and I can only imagine that it is that but if he is interested in the answer to that *[Interruption]* Yes, it is basically the same answer. That includes a rise in what is now the Consolidated Fund Reserve.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I will not go into debating the estimates which we will do when we return. But, in fact, surely the difference to which the Chief Minister refers is in the estimated figure, not in the actual figure. The actual figure has not shown 100 per cent increase in the reserves?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I dare not give the hon Member a different explanation without checking it back. Certainly there has been a substantial increase which might well account for the lion's share of that 100 per cent increase in the Consolidated Fund surplus generated during this year. But if the hon Member will just await I will have that figure broken down for him and the information provided to him on Monday.

NO. 252 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

NON-PAYMENT OF ARREARS TO GOVERNMENT

In respect of how many companies or individuals trading in Gibraltar has Government commenced proceedings in respect of non-payment of arrears due to Government?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The breakdown is as follows:

1. In respect of individuals	None
2. In respect of companies	
Statutory demands initiated by Central Arrears Unit	270
Rates summonses	<u>40</u>
	<u>310</u>

NO. 253 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS 1997

Can Government state what was the value of imports and exports in 1997 excluding petroleum products?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The value of imports/exports in 1997, excluding petroleum products, was as follows:

Imports	£339,620,207
Exports	£34,831,230

NO. 254 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS 1997

Can Government state what was the value of imports and exports in 1997 in respect of petroleum products?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The value of imports/exports of petroleum products during 1997 was as follows:

Imports	£24,566,672
Exports	£18,232,814

NO. 255 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

IMPORTS 1996/97

Can Government state what was the value and volume of imports of soaps, perfumes, clocks, watches, photographic equipment, detergents, household cleaning materials, nappies and clothing in the financial year 1996/97 and the revenue yield in this period in each product?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The values (volume is not available) in respect of the items requested for financial year 1996/97 is as follows:

Soaps, detergents, household cleaning materials:

Value - £1,546,730 Duty - £131,207

Photographic equipment:

Value - £432,944 Duty - £45,987

Clocks and watches:

Value - £1,211,394 Duty - £142,005

Perfumery and Cosmetics:

Value - £4,630,888 Duty - £546,853

Clothing:

Value - £4,049,388 Duty - £385,752

Nappies:

Value - £53,304 Duty - £5,330

NO. 256 OF 1998THE HON A J ISOLA**IMPORTS TO 31 MARCH 1998**

Can Government state what was the value and volume of imports of soaps, perfumes, clocks, watches, photographic equipment, detergents, household cleaning materials, nappies and clothing in respect of which import duty was abolished for the six month period ending 31 March 1998 and the revenue yield in this period in each product?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The values (volume details are not available) in respect of the items requested for the six month period ending 31 March 1998 is as follows:

Soaps, detergents, household cleaning materials:

Value - £856,044	Duty - £4,238
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Photographic equipment:

I feel that this figure must be in error and I would ask the hon Member to give me an opportunity to correct it at a later date, the answer that has been prepared for me says -

Value - £4,504,526	Duty - £1,674
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Clocks and watches:

Value - £700,835	Duty - £43,037
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Perfumery and Cosmetics:

Value - £1,838,865	Duty - £122,916
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Clothing:

Value - £2,075,568	Duty - £117,094
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Nappies:

Value - £90,621	No duty applicable
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NO. 257 OF 1998

THE HON A J ISOLA

EXPORT DUTY

Can Government state which bonded stores outside New Harbours are affected by the elimination of the 2 per cent export duty; what goods are affected and the value volume and revenue yields of these exports in the financial year 1996/97 and the six months since 1 April 1997?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The elimination of the 2 per cent export duty applies to all bonded stores and all commodities except cigarettes and tobacco. The duties involved are minor as there are only a few bonded stores outside New Harbours. These imported a range of goods on which 0.25 per cent to 2 per cent duty was applied on export, depending on the commodity.

In 1996 the total value imported was £980,476, yielding a total duty of £14,786. In 1997 the total value imported was £589,110, duty collected amounted to £8,284.

NO. 258 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

GONHS/SPANISH FISHERMEN

Can Government explain the nature of the discussions taking place between the representatives of the Spanish fishing vessels and the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The discussions that took place between representatives of the fishermen of La Linea and Algeciras on the one hand and the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society have been of a technical nature. The Society has explained to them the extent of Gibraltar's nature protection laws and their relevance in relation to the European Habitats Directive, the United Kingdom Wildlife and Countryside Act and Spain's own laws with regard to conservation and fisheries.

In turn the Spanish side has presented its arguments for being allowed to fish in Gibraltar waters. These arguments have not been accepted.

It is not yet clear whether further discussions will take place.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 258 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

We wish to express our appreciation obviously to the GONHS for their excellent work in protecting our natural environment at home and abroad and I would say significantly in Spain but, of course, at a non-political level. However the problem is a purely political one in our recent confrontations stemming from the reiterated view of Spain that we have no territorial waters. It is therefore, in my opinion, the sole responsibility of the Government to discuss or negotiate with what the Chief Minister himself has described as an orchestrated body of Spanish fishermen. Would the Chief Minister not agree that under the present circumstances where the central issue is our jurisdiction and not simply our conservation views that the Government should be the single advocate and arbiter?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I certainly agree with the hon Member that the underlying issues are political. As to whether they are the Government's responsibility is another matter, there is one particular local newspaper that seems to take the view that I should say absolutely nothing on this issue, it not being any of my business. That is not a view which I share nor are such articles in such newspaper likely to be - do not worry, it is not the hon Member's party's newspaper, it is another one - and certainly I do not think that it would be appropriate for the Government of Gibraltar to discuss issues of sovereignty and jurisdiction and territorial waters with fishermen from La Linea which is the level at which these conversations took place. So certainly I do not

think that this was what the hon Member was suggesting but I would not think it helpful for the Government to have participated in those talks instead of the Ornithological and Natural History Society. If anybody was going to talk at that level I think it should not have been the Government, certainly not in respect of political issues. Coming back to this question of responsibility, of course I think that we are probably at one on both sides of the House on the issue that ultimately it is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom to assert, protect and enforce its jurisdiction over these waters and that certainly whilst the Government of Gibraltar, as indeed one would expect the Opposition to do, express what their political views on the issue are and do what we can in discussions, in meetings as to the provision of resources necessary et cetera, to facilitate that, that is not to say that it is our responsibility in the sense of Gibraltar only being able to achieve on this issue what its Government can achieve because we all know that that is necessarily limited when it comes to deploying perhaps significant resources into this area. So the hon Member in his supplementary said nothing with which I would disagree and I am not certain whether he was just stating his own position and asking whether I agreed with it or whether he is trying to analyse it in some other way but I hope that I have made my own position clear on it.

HON J J GABAY:

If I may clarify the point, to make certain there is no dilution of our stand by giving the fishermen the idea that this is merely a matter of conservation and they can come to an understanding with the Natural History Society, that was my concern.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can tell the hon Member the Natural History Society have themselves made it clear to the fishermen that that is not the position.

HON J J GABAY:

Bearing on the political aspect again of this problem, I would like to refer to Press Release No. 7 of 1998, we have had many others since, on the 8 January where the Minister for the Environment referred to a meeting with Mrs Juana Maria Lasry, Diputada for Cadiz, in the Andalucian Parliament and quoted, "In order to establish an initial contact for future possible discussions on matters of environmental interest". Therefore I would like to ask the Chief Minister to explain or the Minister for the Environment to explain whether this has been pursued and, if so, with what success?

HON K AZOPARDI:

I met Juana Lasry at her request. She mentioned when she came to see me that she is a deputy of the ruling PSOE in the Junta de Andalucia Government, she mentioned that they were interested in establishing whether there was a possibility of environmental co-operation. Since then I am still waiting for them to come back to me. So the answer of the Government obviously is that we are interested in establishing discussions in areas of mutual interest like, for example, oil pollution; like I said when I met the Mancomunidad representatives about 18 months ago, the experience of the Government though is that while it is open to discuss matters on that level which I confirmed to Mrs Lasry, once that is said to the Spanish representatives we then get no comeback. The initial apparent willingness to

exchange information which can be of assistance in a non-political way does not seem to come to fruition. The answer to the question is there has been no progress on any front even though I confirmed that we were open to the idea of environmental discussions but it was not, I stress, in the context of nature protection or fishing. The areas that I am more concerned about is given that Gibraltar is a big bunkering port and a shiprepair facility and given Cadiz also represents a big port, I am more interested in establishing some degree of interchange of information in case there should be an oil spill in the Bay of Gibraltar we know what resources and what assets are available to address any potential difficulty. But I stress the issue of fishing was not discussed, she did not raise it, I did not raise it, I did not see that it was an area where we need discuss any matter, that matter is being addressed by the Chief Minister directly in the manner that he has stated to the House.

HON J J GABAY:

Would I therefore be right in coming to the conclusion that many of these initiatives in trying to co-operate regionally with the neighbouring area are faced with failure almost in every direction and branch that we undertake?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I do not think I can allow the hon Member the glee of writing off all forms of co-operation quite so quickly. I realise that he is anxious that one day I should stand up and answer that question in the affirmative, it is not the case. There are areas of co-operation where things are done and it is certainly in fewer areas than we would like, we would like there to be more. However, and I think I have said this to the hon Member before, the principal obstacle is that whilst whereas the Government of Gibraltar have the resources and the power and the faculties to deliver, our interlocutors whether it be the Junta de Andalucia or municipalities, in most areas that we touch on do not and in the areas that they do, because it is in the Spanish administrative political system of their jurisdiction, they tend to have to obtain permission to do it and that is given only depending on what the issue is. So certainly the amount of co-operation that takes place is certainly less than (a) is desirable, and (b) that would be the case between two friendly neighbours dealing through political institutions of equal power and jurisdiction, if the hon Member understands me.

HON J J GABAY:

The only thing I would like to correct briefly is that certainly I would not be gleeful to see it..... *[Interruption]* It would be excellent if it worked on the right basis of mutual respect and understanding. My objection to it, of course, is that we are trying at the moment the impossible and there is a danger that it weakens our position which I think is very reasonable.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Well, all that I can say is that regardless of whether things are pulled off or not, I have never dealt with at the level that the Government of Gibraltar deals with Spanish politicians which is, namely, at a regional and municipal level, I have never found anything other than respect and understanding.

HON J J BOSSANO:

It is quite obvious that if he has meetings with them he gets respect and understanding and if I had meetings with them they were described by him as boozing in marisquerias, no?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think I said boozing. I seem to remember long and wet lunches but not boozing.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I ask, in fact, was it the initiative of the Government to suggest that the GONHS and the Spanish fishermen got together to see if they could understand each other or understand the nature of the arguments?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, the Government judged that it was in the interests of de-escalating the situation that somebody should explain to the Spanish fishermen the exact nature of the issues at stake here and that they should not form views or take actions based on a mis-comprehension or a misunderstanding of the history and the legal legislative position and to that end the Government invited GONHS, firstly to take part in the meeting which they had in my office, and then to pick up the ball directly and run with it in a sense and explain these things directly to them. But GONHS's involvement was at Government's invitation, yes.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Has there been just one meeting which is the one that was publicised?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, there was one meeting at No. 6 originally which was publicised, then they have subsequently had, to my knowledge, if they have had any others I have not been informed, they have had two, one in Gibraltar and one in La Linea.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is there any indication, is there any feedback to the Government as a result of these meetings that presumably now that the position has been explained to them and they understand what our laws require, that has made any difference to their pretensions to fish in our territorial waters or is it now that they understand it the position is still the same?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The word "pretensions" is I think an unnecessary difficult one to deal with. Let me put it this way, now that they have had the position explained to them it has not diminished their desire to fish.

NO. 259 OF 1998THE HON J J GABAY**TERRITORIAL WATERS - ILLEGAL FISHING**

Can Government confirm that the statement, "Fishing would be acceptable in an informal way", does not mean that the RGP will condone low profile illegal fishing?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The hon Member has chosen to refer only to part of what the Gibraltar Chronicle quoted me as having said in its report of the 17 March 1998 on fishing incidents in the Bay. The quote attributable to me went further adding the qualification "providing they conform with Gibraltar law". It therefore follows that no form of illegal fishing would be condoned since any act of illegality cannot conform with the law.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 259 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

Let me invite the Chief Minister to compare these two quotations. On the one hand from him came an embattled cry of "I will not tolerate this", almost a martial cry. This to be followed almost in parallel with the full quotation that he is referring to, "Fishing would be acceptable in an informal way, in a moderate way in numbers, providing they conform with Gibraltar law as has happened over the years". Is this not really a classic example of contradictions and discordant signals that we have been mentioning all along? What are the implications, are we going to bend the law if a Spanish fisherman performs without making a fuss in some unobtrusive way? Does he know that their sort of fishing, whether formal or informal, is illegal or does he expect professional fishermen to fish with little rods like children off the piers? Is this not symptomatic of an approach which is full of sound and fury - I shall not complete the quotation - soon followed by concessionary fantasies?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, it is not evidence of anything of the sort. What it is evidence of is of the hon Member's complete ignorance of the legal issues at stake in this dispute. And indeed, if the hon Member wants to take the liberty of becoming sarcastic on an issue, the very least that he can do, if he wishes to save the space, is research the matter so that at least he does so on grounds that are defensible and in accordance with facts. Let me educate the hon Member so that next time he launches a political attack of that sort he will at least do so on grounds which bear some relation to the reality and to the truth of the matter. [*HON J J GABAY: Words speak for themselves.*] No, they do not, because the hon Member appears to believe that all fishing by Spanish fishing boats in Gibraltar is illegal and it is not. The law of Gibraltar does not say, "Spanish fishermen shall not fish in the waters of Gibraltar", the law says, "That no one" - whether they are Spanish or Chinese - "shall fish in the waters of Gibraltar using certain fishing methods", and therefore Spanish fishing boats that enter Gibraltar's territorial waters..... The hon Member may wish to

shake his head but is he interested in being corrected on the matter? No, I am not giving way, he will sit there quietly and take the medicine like the naughty boy that he has been. Therefore he should know that if a Spanish fishing boat enters Gibraltar waters and fishes, for example, by the method known as long-line, as some of them do, I do not know what he means about little fishermen with a rod and line, but many of the Spanish fishing boats that come into Gibraltar's waters do not fish illegally. Because the only definition of legality is the environmental illegality contained in the Environmental Protection Ordinance. What I have said repeatedly is that the Government of Gibraltar could not condone breaches of the law, in other words, the Government of Gibraltar cannot condone anybody coming into Gibraltar's waters and fishing by a means which is prohibited by the laws of Gibraltar, namely, the Environmental Protection Ordinance. But that if Spanish fishing boats came into Gibraltar's waters and fished using lawful fishing methods, in other words, not infringing the laws of Gibraltar, that and that is what the second quote that the hon Member tried to abuse refers to, that provided they did not breach the laws of Gibraltar by using illegal fishing methods, that their presence in Gibraltar waters would continue to be tolerated as it has been tolerated for the last 35 years including the last eight during which Opposition Members sat on this side of the House. I hope that having had the matter explained to him in relatively simple terms that he will now be able to distinguish between the point that the Government would not sanction breaches of the law on the one hand with the statement that informal fishing in discreet numbers would be continued to be tolerated provided that it did not breach the law. In other words, fishing by lawful means.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I just ask the Chief Minister, since he wants to be so technical, I know that I am being given 100 lines now that he is in a headmaster mode, surely there is nothing in the law about the, shall we say, manner in which the fishing is being done in terms of it being low profile or high profile, it is just a question, as he says, of whether they are using nets or not using nets?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, that is not the case as far as the Government are concerned, it might have been an attitude that he might have been willing to tolerate. For example, if Spanish fishing boats arrived in droves using lawful fishing methods but in such large numbers that it would scandalise local opinion or obstruct access to the port entrance or obstruct access to the marinas, the Government would not be willing to tolerate that even though the fishing method was not illegal and even though no law was being breached.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is he saying that this is what they have been doing in his time and they have never done it in the past? If the Chief Minister is making a comment in response to the problem that had arisen of fishing, is it not the case that the problem was not that they had arrived in droves like an armada and scandalised the population, if they scandalised anybody it was the fish. So his comment in the context of the question he was being asked about the level of fishing with nets surely that could simply have been answered by saying simply that they had to fish as the law provided. By appearing to qualify it, would the Chief Minister not agree, that he seems to be saying they have to be legal and they have to not draw a lot of attention to

themselves. That is the impression given by the statement the way that it was printed, he might not have put it like that himself but that is how it came across. That appears to give a message that provided they do not do it too visibly the law would not be implemented fully. That certainly has not happened in the past to my knowledge.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, it is not that it is provided they do not do it too visibly. The only thing that they could not do too visibly and get away with it is fish legally but I suppose theoretically the United Kingdom Government could take the view that whether they use legal or illegal fishing methods, incursions by unlicensed Spanish fishing boats into Gibraltar waters is not something that was going to be tolerated, it would not be in breach of any law of Gibraltar but I suppose that view could be taken. It is not the view that has been taken historically. [*HON J J BOSSANO: Never.*] Never, and therefore I just wanted to make it very clear that in indicating that lawful fishing would continue to be tolerated as it has always been tolerated, I added the qualification about the discretion and about the way in which it is done, to make sure precisely that no one could misinterpret this to mean that they could send in however many number of boats they wanted in the future and fish no matter what disruption they cause provided that they use the lawful fishing method.

HON J J GABAY:

I would like to remind the hon Headmaster that, in fact, sarcasm was warranted and that his words were misleading, that they were misconstrued in stark contrast with his "I will not tolerate it" and that our problem was with illegal fishing. So what is he talking about, the innocent fisherman who might come on a pleasure tour round our coast? This was a way merely of trying to deflate it by giving the wrong impression and I insist that those words convey that, the words speak for themselves.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 260 OF 1998

THE HON J J GABAY

TERRITORIAL WATERS - ILLEGAL FISHING

Can Government state, in respect of the period between the 13 and the 27 March 1998, how many instances of Spanish fishing boats illegally operating in Gibraltar waters have been recorded, giving a breakdown of the number of vessels and the dates of such incidence?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question No. 261 of 1998.

NO. 261 OF 1998THE HON J J GABAY**TERRITORIAL WATERS - ILLEGAL FISHING**

Can Government list the number of occasions, giving dates and number of vessels, on which Spanish fishing boats have illegally operated in Gibraltar waters since the 27 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Between the 13 and 26 March 1998 there have been a total of 15 instances involving 56 vessels. Since the 27 March 1998, there have been 16 instances involving 36 vessels.

The details are as follows:-

<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of vessels</u>
13.3.98	1
18.3.98	2
19.3.98	3
20.3.98	19
21.3.98	1
22.3.98	1
23.3.98	4
24.3.98	16
25.3.98	2
26.3.98	<u>7</u>
	<u>56</u>
27.3.98	8
30.3.98	8
1.4.98	2
2.4.98	4
4.4.98	2
5.4.98	2
6.4.98	2
7.4.98	1
13.4.98	4
14.4.98	<u>3</u>
	<u>36</u>

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 260 AND 261 OF 1998

HON J J GABAY:

Are we therefore to assume, since there has been a continuation of illegal appearances of these vessels in our waters, that we are unable to exercise our right to control our waters?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The hon Member, if he wishes me to answer that question, will have to be more specific about what he means by we.

HON J J GABAY:

By "we" I mean we the Gibraltarians because we share a common belief that we have jurisdiction over the waters so whether I say the Government or ourselves there is no distinction here. I think we share the same view.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The distinction that I was inviting the hon Member to make was not between him and me, it was between us and HMG. The answer is that his Government - that is us - do not control operationally the Police and we do not dispose of an Army, a Navy or an Air Force and we do not have a diplomatic capability of our own and therefore as the hon Member well knows the question of what we can do about it is not a constructive focus of this problem because it might suggest to uninformed listeners to the debate that there is something that we might do and are not doing which, as he knows, is not the case.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Government say what has changed since His Excellency the Governor confirmed that he now had the authority to give the necessary support to the RGP which I think happened on or around the 27 March? This is why we wanted to see the impact that his public appearance had made on the incidence. There appears to be no significant drop in the numbers unless it is that they have chosen to stay away because they were scared by what he had to say on television.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, what I think has changed mainly is the weather. [HON MISS M I MONTEGRIFFO: "El Niño".] No, this is not "El Niño", this is "el levante" and "el poniente". I do not pretend to have a complete grasp of these issues but I understand that they like to use our waters in levanter but not in the westerlies and we have been, what some would say, fortunate that the weather has intervened propitiously to discourage them from attending in the waters at the critical moments of this matter. The weather has now changed back to easterly and there has not been yet any report of incursions of that sort. The other thing that has happened, rather than changed, as the hon Member may have read in the press, is that the RGP, the GSP and the Marine Squadron have engaged in exercises to practice what they would do if and when they decided to do it.

HON J J BOSSANO:

In the actual dates when there have been, say, two or four or eight, can the Chief Minister say whether in fact there has been any resistance by these boats when approached by the GSP or the RGP and told that they had to leave our waters?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

My understanding of that is that pending the decision to actually intervene with all its consequences, the RGP's operational instructions are to take a record of infringements and not to attempt to intervene except in an orchestrated way.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Chief Minister say as from what date that has been? That is, when was the last time that they were told; when they stopped intervening and they started taking records?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Again, the hon Member should not hold me accountable for this information. My understanding is that that has been the position since the incident involving the helicopter. I do not remember exactly on what day that was.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

In those incidence after 27 March, does the Chief Minister know if the RGP asked for assistance from the MOD? I am referring to that because I think that the Deputy Commissioner came out on television and said that unless he had the backing he could just record the incident.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

My understanding of the matter is that the RGP did request assistance but that the rules of engagement under which the Marine Squadron operate in Gibraltar would not have permitted them to give the sort of assistance that was required without specific operational instructions from the United Kingdom. In other words, the local command structure is not at liberty to authorise the sort of intervention that was requested and would have been necessary and, indeed, that was the sort of authority that His Excellency the Governor has subsequently sought from London and my understanding is that it has been obtained but not yet deployed.

HON J L BALDACHINO:

Of the number of instances that the Chief Minister has given on the times the Spanish fishing boats have illegally operated in Gibraltar waters, are they just on the west side of Gibraltar or is it also on the east side, because they also fish there when the levanter is not in operation and the "poniente" is?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, one would have thought that what the hon Member says is true but again, without wishing to get drawn into the intricacies of the fishing business, I understand that that does not follow. It does not follow that they go to one side of the Rock or the other depending on which direction the wind is blowing. Apparently they are not interested in any part of our waters except in an easterly. My understanding is that the Government and the law enforcement agencies who have provided this information do not distinguish between British waters on the east or the west or indeed up the southern tip of the Rock and therefore the hon Member is free to assume and should assume that these are related to the whole area.

NO. 262 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

INCOME TAX - SPANISH FRONTIER WORKERS

What was the number of Spanish frontier workers paying PAYE in October 1996 and April 1997?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The figure for Spanish frontier workers in respect of whom PAYE tax was paid into Government was 605 in the month of October 1996 and 653 in the month of April 1997.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 262 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can I ask, this is obviously based on P8 certificates handed in. Is it as at this date or can he say at which date the cut off is for these figures?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I cannot but I think he would be entitled to assume what he has just said. In other words, that it is drawn on the same basis as the previous answer which I think was Question No. 143 of 1998 which he asked. In any case I will check it and have that provided to him.

NO. 263 OF 1998

THE HON R MOR

PRE-1969 SPANISH PENSIONERS

Have the Government made any representations to Her Majesty's Government in relation to increase the pensions of pre-1969 Spanish pensioners?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

No. The hon Member should not believe the nonsense that he reads in his own party's newspaper "The New People".

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 263 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Should we believe the nonsense we read in his party's newspaper?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No. The answer is that the advice would be the same but the need for him to rely on it would be much less because we tend to ascertain the truth of what we print.

HON R MOR:

The reality is that the public perception is that after his meeting with representatives of the Spanish pensioners he did indicate, when he was posed the question as to the Spaniards wanting an increase in their pensions, that all he could do was pass it on to Her Majesty's Government. That is what, I believe, he said in an interview and what was recorded in the meeting.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not believe I said even that but certainly I accept that there is a perception on this matter, a perception which I have no doubt has been caused or contributed to by Opposition Members together with many other perceptions which are calculated to increase the level of anxiety of pensioners in Gibraltar. For example, the widespread rumour which is so similar to the election campaign that the hon Members waved in 1996 that one can be forgiven for suggesting or for believing that they are at the root of this rumour now as well, for example, the completely false, baseless suggestion that the Government are contemplating reducing or eliminating pensions or Community Care payments. Those are cheap political strategies designed and deployed by people who appear to be more interested with their own partisan political fortunes than with the peace of mind of 4,000 elderly people in Gibraltar.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I think since the Chief Minister says that his paper makes sure it has got the facts right before they print it, which is a highly questionable statement, he himself ought to make sure the facts before he starts making accusations across the floor of the House. Nobody has said to him that he is going to do away with anything. What he has been told, of course, is that I am sure he will recall that he has got a tremendous cheek to stand in the annual dinner of the pensioners to say to them that they are still getting Community Care when the first thing he did after his election was to stop making any Government contribution towards Community Care Ltd because he said they already had too much money. But nobody has suggested he is actually going to take the money away from them. Can he say, in relation to the question which is the question on which we are trying to seek information, whether it is correct, as the Spanish pensioners who saw him claimed, that they raised with him the question of the frozen pensions and, if so, what reply did he give them?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Before I do I would just like to make clear that when the hon Member raises the question of the fact that the Government ceased to transfer funds to Community Care after the election, of course if he is willing for one moment to be objective about it he should ask himself what is it that he has asked, what conclusion he is inviting uninformed and anxious elderly people to draw from that? Could it be, for example, that the money is therefore going to run out and that therefore they are not going to collect the payments or was he really trying to convey to the elderly people in Gibraltar that the Government had made the judgement that for the time being Community Care was sufficiently resourced to meet its obligations and that those resources were better employed elsewhere or is the hon Member suggesting that the Government should continue for four years to pass money into Community Care regardless of whether Community Care needed those resources or not? As to the new supplementary that he has put to me, the answer is that the representatives of the Spanish pensioners raised with me, as I am sure they must have raised with him together with numerous other issues, the question of the frozen pensions and I informed them that the level at which pensions were paid to them was not a matter for the Government of Gibraltar given that this was being paid not from Gibraltar Government funds but by United Kingdom funds but that in any event, they were being paid pensions at the level provided by law and that they were being paid pensions at the same level as was being paid to Gibraltar resident pensioners.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So in fact did he tell them that not only were they getting the same level as any other nationality covered by the Closed Pension Scheme but also that the condition attached by the UK Government made it impossible for the pensions to be increased? Are they aware that it is not that we want them to have frozen pensions, it is that the British Government would not pay for the pensions on any other basis other than that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, I told them that but they were aware of it, presumably he must have told them on several occasions before me. They are aware of that, I have no doubt that the Spanish pensioners' representatives, at least, fully understand the position and I have found that they do not aim their guns in our direction. I think I remember the Leader of the Opposition when he was in this seat, I think I remember reading him as to have said something similar in the past, one does not know whether that attitude will change at any given time but for the time being they are fully informed and fully understand the ins and outs of this issue.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Following the meeting the statements that were made by the Spanish representatives to the press was that they having had that meeting they were now going to complain to the EU because their pensions were frozen. Do the Government have any knowledge whether, in fact, anything has happened in that area?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, we have no knowledge of anything having happened in that area but I certainly know that they appear to have access to a particular Spanish MEP whose name presently escapes me but who seems to be advising them on these issues in Brussels. But nothing has happened there in any formal sense.

ORAL

NO. 264 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

PAYMENTS TO BUILDING CONTRACTORS

Can Government state how much has been paid to building contractors in the last financial year giving a breakdown showing the amount paid to each contractor and in respect of which project?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

A total of £4,596,309 has been paid to building contractors in the last financial year.

The hon Member is aware the details are of 20 contracts, 20 contractors, I can stand here for 15 minutes reading it out or I can pass the sheet to him.

PROJECT	CONTRACTOR	COST OF PROJECT	PAID APRIL '97 MARCH '98
1. Road Widening Sir Herbert Miles Road	Sharrock Shand Ltd	£ 1,399,059.00	£ 981,327
2. Beautification Winston Churchill Avenue	Amey Construction	£ 299,718.00	£ 245,000
3. Extension Bishop Fitzgerald & Governors Meadow School	Profield Constructors	£ 609,088.00	£ 609,088.00
4. Promenade North Mole Rd	Amey Construction	£ 630,160.00	£ 630,160.00
5. Advanced Stabilization Works Camp Bay	Profield Contractors	£ 44,254.00	£ 44,254.00
6. Conversion Stone Block Buena Vista	H L Wilkie Ltd Sub-Cont. Sheriff	£ 218,833.00 £ 47,831.00	£ 187,733.00
7. Residential Development for the Elderly	Profield Contractors	£ 2,385,723.00	£ 526,781.00
8. External Refurbishment Edinburgh House	Mackley Tricon & Cubiertas Construction	£ 949,733.00	£ 166,162.00
9. Retaining Wall Loreto Convent	H L Wilkie Ltd	£ 74,021.00	£ 71,476.00
10. St Bernards Road Retaining Wall	H L Wilkie Ltd	£ 99,554.50	£ 50,942.00
11. New Roadworks Both Worlds Complex	Blacktop	£ 106,954.00	None
12. Main Street Beautification	Amey Construction	£ 304,165.00	£ 304,165.00
13. Proposed Promenade Harbour Views Road	Amey Construction	£ 418,228.54	None
14. Camp Bay Site Investigation	Bellilo & Partner/Geocisa	£ 28,000.00	£ 28,000.00
15. Europort Car Park	Blacktop	£ 76,654.00	£ 33,436
16. Sand Slope Stabilisation Works East Side	Mackley Tricon	£ 192,688.00	£ 82,639
17. Treasury Building Road Widening etc	GJBS	£ 250,000.00	£ 213,399
18. Demolition Sir Herbert Miles Road	Shelly & Co Ltd	£ 32,124.00	None
19. Demolition of Shed North Mole Road	Monteverde & Sons	£ 16,400.00	None
20 Ex-Treasury Building	GJBS		£ 421,747.00
		TOTAL	£4,596,309.00

NO. 265 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

IMPORT DUTY - MOTORCYCLES

Can Government explain why they decided to exclude motorcycles from the reduction of import duty on motor vehicles?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Government did not decide to exclude motorcycles from the reduction of import duty on motor vehicles. [*HON J C PEREZ: It was just never included.*] Well, the hon Members may giggle but, of course, there is a significant difference between the two. The Government's own review of import duties was limited to goods which were relevant to the attraction of tourism to Gibraltar and to household goods which attracted local shoppers to Spanish hypermarkets with the result that they did the bulk of their shopping there taking advantage of their presence principally to purchase those articles.

At about that time, representations were made to Government by the Motor Traders Association in respect of motor cars. These were considered by Government and were included in the review.

Representations have subsequently been made to Government in respect of motorcycles, and these representations are now also being considered.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 265 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

It was my understanding that representations had initially been made by the Motor Traders Association for both and that only motor vehicles had been accepted. That is why I put the question, to see what difference Government considered between motor vehicles and motorcycles in this respect. Whether it was just that Government might not be inclined to encourage the sale of motorcycles, for example.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I am not prepared to swear that some letter or other may have mentioned motorcycles but certainly I attended two meetings with all the Committee of Motor Traders Association and the conversation and the discussion focused exclusively on motor cars and nobody ever said, "Well what about motorcycles?" unless of course they assumed that they were included in motor vehicles - no, they could not have assumed that it was included in motor vehicles because the discussion centred

about the particular rates of duty. But different considerations do apply. For example, motorcycles under a certain cc, I do not remember if it is 50cc or 100cc, he will have to forgive me for that, already pay import duty and I think it is 12 per cent as opposed to 35 per cent or 40 per cent that some vehicles of certain cc were paying. So the case for the reduction was obviously much more cogent and much more obvious in the case of a commodity that was paying much higher rates of duty than in respect of motorcycles that were paying less. Of course there are some motorcycles over a certain cc that are also paying very high rates of duty and the Government are considering the representations we have now received in that context.

ORAL

NO. 266 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

CIVIL SERVICE - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT VACANCIES

Can Government state how many applicants there have been for the Administrative Assistant vacancies recently advertised in the Civil Service and of these, how many were from persons registered as unemployed?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Two hundred and nine applications were received in response to the Administrative Assistant vacancies recently advertised, 80 of which were from persons registered as unemployed.

NO. 267 OF 1998THE HON J C PEREZ**CIVIL SERVICE - ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT VACANCIES**

How many of the applicants for the Administrative Assistant vacancies in the Civil Service were shortlisted for interview and what criteria was used?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Of the 209 applicants, 128 were shortlisted for interview. The criteria for shortlisting for interview was established at the level of five GCSEs.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 267 OF 1998

HON J C PEREZ:

Is this not contrary to the advertisement that appeared that people only require three 'O' levels in order to be able to apply for the post of AA?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, it is not contrary to the advertisement. The advertisement did not say that everybody that applies for the job is going to be shortlisted for an interview. It is most unusual for any employer to interview every single person that applies for a job. The advertisement published was the minimum qualification for applying for the job. One can fully appreciate that if there are 209 applications either it is agreed to interview all 209 people, which in my opinion would be an unnecessary deployment of resources, or one takes the view that given that people have applied from a certain level of qualifications, in other words, that there are people with degrees, with 'A' levels and many 'O' levels, either everybody is interviewed or one takes the view that not everybody is going to be interviewed. If not everybody is interviewed one has to find some criteria by which to exclude those that are not interviewed. The view was taken that those people with less than five GCSEs and nothing else were unlikely to succeed in competition with the people that had applied, a lot of them with degrees and many of them with two or three 'A' levels and eight or nine 'O' levels. At the end of the day the policy is to recruit into the service the best qualified people for the job and that means that a degree of priority was given on this occasion, unlike what happened on the previous intake incidentally, in the application of this criteria a degree of preference was given to the most qualified people rather than to the least qualified people. At the time of the last intake a specific quota was reserved for the less qualified people.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Whilst accepting what the Chief Minister has said that not everybody is going to be interviewed, there is a problem in deciding what criteria to apply to select who is shortlisted. The decision that was taken de facto means that five GCSEs has now become the entry requirement for the civil service.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not think that is neither true nor justified by anything that I have said. On this occasion five GCSEs was chosen as the criteria for shortlisting for interview. On a different occasion a different criteria might be applied in deciding who is going to be shortlisted for interview. The hon Member knows that the minimum entry criteria into the civil service is stipulated, I cannot remember now if it is two GCSEs or something else but I am sure the hon Member, whilst we are all keen to give everybody a reasonable opportunity to aspire to employment for which they are qualified, the hon Member must appreciate that the Government want to recruit into the public service the best people that are available and that it would not make sense to pass over somebody with a degree, three 'A' levels and nine 'O' levels in favour of somebody with two 'O' levels.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Let me say that I do not agree because I do not think that the fact that somebody has done well at school necessarily means that in a particular area of the civil service..... *[Interruption]* As somebody who has been through the system and worked with people that left school early and worked with people that came out of university, I think the ability of an employee to perform well in giving a service to his employer or to his customers is not directly correlated to the number of GCSEs one obtains and I think it is wrong to assume that somebody who may not be well academically cannot do an excellent job for the Government or for the public otherwise we are condemning people really to say, "Well, your prospects of employment or unemployment are directly related to how many GCSEs you obtain and if you do not obtain more you finish up on the dole".

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

In the real world that is precisely the situation. That is why people go for qualifications, that is why some people put in the extra work and the extra effort to attend colleges and universities to get qualifications because in the real world the more qualifications one has the more attractive one is to an employer and I think that Gibraltar should be an exception to that and that the public service in Gibraltar should be within Gibraltar an exception to that either. The hon Member has views with which I strongly disagree. The fact of the matter is that the hon Member appears to believe that qualifications count for nothing when it comes to suitability for employment. If that is his view I have to say I strongly disagree with him.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Well, if that was my view I would have said so, that is not what I have said. Because, in fact, if the Chief Minister thinks that it is just a matter of getting qualifications then why stop at five 'O' levels, why not say, "Well since there are only x number of vacancies and there are 128 we will only interview people with 'A' levels". He can draw the line anywhere along the system. Is he in fact saying that the results of the interviews of the people shortlisted shows that those selected were those with the highest qualifications and all those with the lowest qualifications within the five 'O' level to degree range failed the interviews and were not selected because that would be the logic of the argument that he is putting?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Certainly as a matter of Government policy that is what should have happened. In other words, subject to performance at interview, the Government would have been happiest to see those best qualified for the job subject to suitability, the extent it can be measured in a five or 10 minute interview, are the people that on this occasion should have been taken in. The hon Member has got to understand that tomorrow's Heads of Department come from today's AAs. Some of these AAs are going to stay at a low level of the civil service forever but 15 years from now some of these guys have got to be Directors of this, Heads of that, Principal Secretaries and if the hon Member really believes that the calibre and the competence and skill and the livelihood that an individual is going to be in the future of middle or senior management calibre is irrelevant, is unaffected by whether at the age of 18 or 20 he has two 'O' levels and a degree, three 'A' levels and eight 'O' levels, then all I can say in disagreeing with him is that he has an unconventional view of the value of education and qualifications.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I think he does not understand what the value of education is. Does he not realise that anybody - I suggest he asks his hon Colleague who has been an educationalist for many years who perhaps can explain to the Chief Minister that there is a difference between training somebody to do a job and educating somebody. What the educational system does is to produce human beings who are equipped to contribute as citizens to our society and to draw from the benefits of their education a benefit throughout their life whether they happen to be Heads of Department or happen to be collecting boxes in a factory. Having done jobs of all ranges I can tell the Chief Minister that I value education tremendously and would he not agree with me that the importance of educating our children is, in fact, what we do to broaden their minds and to give them extra knowledge? It is not just a question of training them to do a particular job in the civil service and he might well find that a graduate brought into the service as an AA long before he gets to be the Head of Department, after everybody in front of him has died, may not be giving such a good service as somebody with two 'O' levels or three 'O' levels. He may find that in the time that he is in office and he looks at the performance of people. So certainly would he not agree that to simply suggest that the way to recruit into the civil service at AA is simply to go down the list by qualification results at school or at university and assume that anybody that got a First Class Degree would make a better AA or typist than somebody who came out, for a variety of circumstances, they might not have had the opportunity, there are many people who develop later and at school do not perform well. Would the Chief Minister not agree that all those considerations matter where the Government are concerned? Perhaps a private sector employer with a narrower view might want to approach the position that he is adopting but would he not agree as a Government, his approach should be a wider one?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Frankly no. The hon Member appears to believe that the taxpayer, as an employer, should settle for lower standards than private sector employers. Why does he believe that the taxpayer should give preference in access to permanent and pensionable lifetime jobs to people who are not the best people? I just do not understand what criteria the hon Member believes makes every employer in the world wrong and him right or justifies the view that the standards of recruitment that

should motivate the public service ought to be less than the well-trying and tested standards of recruitment deployed by the private sector. I accept what he says only to this extent, that of course people can have less academic qualifications and perhaps perform very well let alone develop later, perform well in an interview or it could be the other way around. That is why people with more than five GCSEs were allowed to apply but one has got to exercise an element of judgement. The chances of somebody with two 'O' levels closing the gap during a five minute interview with somebody with a degree, three 'A' levels and eight or nine 'O' levels - the hon Member I hope will agree with me that of course it is possible that there is an Einstein lurking somewhere with only two 'O' levels because he came from a troubled domestic environment and never got a fair crack at the whip. I have no doubt that there might be exceptions of that sort but I hope the hon Member can agree that it would be very much an exception and that there is sufficient margin between five 'O' levels only and a degree, 'A' levels and 'O' levels at the upper end, that there is enough slack between those two standards to note more than sufficient allowance for the factors that the hon Member was describing and with many of which I agree. What the hon Member is really saying is that he believes the Government should interview everybody. If there are 500 applicants one interviews 500 applicants.

HON J C PEREZ:

I doubt whether the Chief Minister has this information available but it is information that is relevant to the discussion that has taken place and I would ask him to make this available to me if he has not got it. Using the criteria that has been used, how many of the ones that were unemployed have come through the criteria and how many of the ones that were already employed have come from that criteria? That is to say, of the ones that have been given an interview, how many came from the 80 that were unemployed?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I can provide him with that information but not now. But I can also tell him that as a matter of policy although it has not been a complete hard and fast rule, the Government's policy to the guidelines to the selection board was that subject to suitability and subject to qualification, that preference should be given to the unemployed and I will explain to the hon Member why that is the case. The Government have a fear that if somebody who is in a job, for example, in a bank, and there are several people in a bank that applied and the Government allow people to move from employment in a bank to the Government, first of all we are causing the private sector to throw away valuable training that they had invested in the financial services centre which is an area that we are encouraging financial services operators to invest in. Secondly, there is the real danger that if somebody leaves a job in a bank to come over to the civil service there is every danger that that employer from which the applicant comes will take the opportunity to eliminate the post and instead of there being a net gain to the job market we are simply replacing a job in the private sector with a job in the public sector. In the present climate there is a real risk that that might happen and the Government do not wish to take action unnecessarily, I say subject to qualification and subject to suitability, I think the Government's overall policy is not to destabilise employment in the private sector anymore than is necessary.

HON J C PEREZ:

Are all these policies under the auspices of the Public Service Commission?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government establish policy and the Public Service Commission scrupulously and independently implements it. In other words, Government plays no part in the application of the policy but certainly I think the hon Member will agree, as I would have in his favour, that it is a legitimate matter of Government policy to decide the calibre of recruiting into the public service.

NO. 268 OF 1998

THE HON J C PEREZ

CIVIL SERVICE - TRAINING OFFICER

Can Government state on what basis has the analogue for the recently advertised post of Training Officer been established?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The basis for the level of the post has been established in relation to the local current circumstances and needs. Because the responsibilities of the job were very similar to that of Education Adviser, it was recommended by the professionals to analogue to that salary, ie Point 10 Head teacher Scale.

ORAL

NO. 269 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS

What was the value and number of legal tender gold coins of weight 1 oz or less imported in the financial year 1996/97?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question Nos. 270, 271 and 272 of 1998.

ORAL

NO. 270 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS

What was the value and number of legal tender gold coins of weight exceeding 1 oz imported in the financial year 1996/97?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question Nos. 269, 271 and 272 of 1998.

ORAL

NO. 271 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS

What was the value and number of legal tender gold coins of weight 1 oz or less imported in the financial year 1997/98 up to 25 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question Nos. 269, 270 and 272 of 1998.

NO. 272 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS

What was the value and number of legal tender gold coins of weight exceeding 1 oz imported in the financial year 1997/98 up to 25 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The information requested is not available because prior to imposing duty on gold coins exceeding 1 oz (which are legal tender), all gold coins were classified as one commodity and therefore there is no breakdown by weights but the information will be available in future because of the change.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 269, 270, 271 AND 272 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does the Chief Minister have presumably a figure which is not giving a breakdown? That is to say, what was the value of all the gold coins irrespective of their weights? That presumably is available because even goods that do not pay import duty still have to be declared on importation?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I suppose that such information must exist but I do not have it in my back pocket right now but if he wants it I will have it provided to him.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I want it, yes.

NO. 273 OF 1998THE HON J J BOSSANO**LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS**

Can Government explain why they have decided to impose 6 per cent import duty on legal tender gold coins of a weight exceeding 1 oz as from 26 March 1998?

ANSWERTHE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

So that Government will collect 6 per cent of the value of such coins so imported, thus enhancing public revenue. The Government are however aware that the imposition of duty may adversely affect the trade in coins exceeding 1 troy ounce of gold. Government believe that it is in Gibraltar's interest to encourage trade in gold coins of less than 1 troy ounce.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 273 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

But why do the Government think that it is important to encourage it below 1 oz and to discourage it above 1 oz?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Because the Government believe that the demand for 1 oz gold coins constitutes a more conventional source of trade in business than coins in excess of 1 oz the demand for which tends to be from less conventional sources.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it not the case that the Government were aware that following the introduction of the 6 per cent import duty last October on bullion there was a move towards importing coins of over 1 oz in the trade that previously depended on gold bullion and that, in fact, that happened as a consequence of that and that the persons concerned did not hide the fact that this was in the Government's knowledge that this was going to happen?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, the Government were concerned that trade in gold bullion was not, what one could euphemistically call 'conventional trade', and therefore made the policy decision to make trading in gold bullion less lucrative by imposing a level of import duty. In doing so we did not want to disturb the legitimate different market for gold coins and therefore gold coins remained exempted. However, unknown to the Government, there is one country which curiously produces - and that was done by reference to gold coins that are legal tender in some countries, so gold coins that are legal tender in some countries were exempted from import duty. Unknown to the Government when we did that, the Government of Australia produces what can best

be described as an ingot rather than a coin, weighing one kilo of gold which can hardly be described as a coin and that by some quirk of Australian legislation this one kilo ingot is legal tender in Australia and because this one kilo ingot is legal tender in Australia it fell into the class of exempted imports in Gibraltar. The Government took the view that that device defeated the purposes of the initial policy and therefore moved to this device of the subsequent amendments to limit the exemption from import duty to gold coins of legal tender of one troy ounce or less which covers such things as the Kruggerand, the Maple leaf and the Sovereign. I have never seen an Australian walking around with a one kilo ingot in his pocket but I suppose that that is what they are entitled to do in Australia and we did not take the view that that was something which we wished to encourage here.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I do not know whether the Chief Minister wishes to encourage it or not but in fact when was it that they took this view because my understanding is that it was shortly after October that the persons that started importing the Australian nugget actually communicated with Government and told them that they were doing this and were told that there was no problem. So when did they come to this view?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Certainly it took the Government some time to react between realising that this loophole had been found and plugging it but that is in the nature of cumbersome public administration. The fact of the matter is that really the Government's concern was heightened when the volumes of these Australian nuggets had clearly taken over from having increased to such a level that what was previously importation of gold bullion was now simply being imported through the Australian nugget and the Government realised this, then add a bit of reaction time and consideration time and legislative drafting time and all of that and eventually the new measure was gazetted.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Would the Chief Minister not find it odd that this being the case as recently as February the Minister for Tourism in his capacity as a businessman should be making enquiries in London about importing one kilo coins?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not know if in his personal or any other capacity the Minister for Tourism has done that but certainly what it shows is that he was not part of that committee of the Government that was considering this matter.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So in fact when the Chief Minister says the Government came to the conclusion that it was not in Gibraltar's interest to encourage the importation of kilo coins, the Minister for Tourism was not a party to that decision?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Yes, I think the hon Member can assume that at that moment in time that was the case. The hon Member knows that Customs matters are primarily dealt with at the office of the Chief Minister, and that is me and that the Minister was not aware, unless the hon Member is trying to insinuate - which I think would be disingenuous of him to do - that the Minister for Tourism knowing that these things were about to be made illegal nevertheless set up the machinery to continue to import them in flagrant breach of the law. I sincerely hope that that is not what the hon Member is insinuating, and as I am sure he is not, the only other explanation is that he was ignorant of the intention to put it - not to outlaw these things but to put an import duty on them because the Minister for Tourism, as indeed the other gentleman whose brief the hon Member appears to be holding in this matter, are both still free to import gold nuggets provided that they contribute 6 per cent to the public exchequer. These have not become illegal imports, they have simply been subjected to a duty.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I do not know whether Standing Orders say anything about insinuations in answers, I always try to avoid making insinuations in questions where the position is very clear. All I am asking is

MR SPEAKER:

It is not all that clear but carry on.

HON J J BOSSANO:

If the position is not all that clear that would mean that I can make insinuations.

MR SPEAKER:

Not when the insinuation is that a particular Member has committed or is going to commit an offence. I am not giving any ruling, carry on.

HON J J BOSSANO:

But I think the record will show that I did not use the word 'offence', all I said is it not strange that in February a member of the Government would want to import kilo coins and that in March a 6 per cent import duty is put on the coins in the full knowledge that it will mean that these coins are no longer marketable in Gibraltar because they would be more expensive here than anywhere else.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

There can only be two explanations for the situation; one is that the hon Minister was ignorant and the other is that that situation stands as a monument of which I am proud to the fact that this Government are willing to take steps in the public interest of Gibraltar notwithstanding that it adversely affects the commercial interests of one of its members.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I think before they all rush to clap let me say that he was not successful in bringing the gold coins, it might have been different if he had been successful but in fact he was not actually bringing them so they did not actually put him out of business.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

On a point of order, all this tittle tattle that the hon Member is now using on the floor has reached the Government and is doing the rounds of Gibraltar and no doubt next week we will read it in *The New People*. The hon Member is responsible for the allegations that he makes across the floor of the House. The hon Member must know that golden nuggets are available for anybody to buy in various international markets and it is not a question of one person being allowed to bring in golden nuggets and everybody else do not. It is not possible to fail in an attempt to bring in golden nuggets, all one has got to do is go to any of the numerous gold dealers that exist anywhere in the world, buy them and have it brought over. So any little nefarious insinuation that those for whom the hon Member holds the brief which, let us be clear is the company adversely affected by the decision that the Government have implemented, any such insinuation is completely unsustainable on any logical analysis. Anybody that wants to bring gold nuggets is free to bring them, whether they are a Government Minister, a Member of the Opposition or a member of any particular company that has filled the hon Member's ears with all that he has filled the hon Member's ears with. And it is not possible to fail, obviously the hon Member is insinuating that because the Minister tried and failed and in vicious retaliation, which is the story that has reached us through the rumour grill, grinded God knows by whom, because the Minister failed to bring the wretched gold nuggets, in retaliation and spite the Government said, "Well if the Minister cannot bring it nobody can bring it". It is absurd. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to buy a golden nugget ... [*HON J J BOSSANO: I have already bought one.*] I will tell him where he can buy them. One cannot fail, all one has got to do is go with one's money and buy it. Therefore the connection that he makes between some supposed unsuccessful attempt by the Minister to bring nuggets to Gibraltar and the introduction of this measure which has been done entirely on the advice of Customs in Gibraltar and an analysis by Customs and Government of statistics and an analysis of the nature of the business that was being done, is completely unjustified.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Let me just say for the record ...

MR SPEAKER:

One more question and one more answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I wish to put on record that all I am doing is asking a question none of which contain innuendoes or stories. Whatever has reached the Chief Minister and whatever may have been said, for the record, has not been reflected in my question and I am sure that you would have called me to order if I had phrased any question in that way. All

I am saying is given the fact that the decision was taken in March is it that in February it was still undecided whether they were going to stop it or not? How long before the actual Legal Notice was that decision taken? It seems to have been sprung out of the blue on people.

MR SPEAKER:

One last answer.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If the hon Member wants to know these things, given that he has no intention "of accepting the genuineness of my explanations and therefore I have no reason to suppose that he will treat with any more credibility anything further that I might say on this matter in relation to dates. Let him write to the Collector of Customs and let him satisfy himself directly from the Collector of Customs, if he trusts him, about the date when these decisions were made, how the decision was made, why the decision was made and where the driving force of this decision originated and perhaps he will believe the Collector of Customs when he is not willing to believe me, that is up to him, it is his problem not mine.

HON J J HOLLIDAY:

On a point of order. I think I have to make clear the way he has presented this to the House as the hon Member insinuated that I went to London in February and met with a gold bullion dealer or a jeweller for that matter. Let me say that I represent a company called by the name of Sakata who have been trading in jewellery and gold for over 40 years. I have contacts in London to the tune of 40 or 50 people who deal with gold bullion, gold nuggets, gold jewellery. The rumour round town is that I went to London to obtain the agency for obtaining these nugget coins and that I was unsuccessful in doing so and therefore a decision was taken to put an import duty on this. Let me say that anybody, and as the Chief Minister has already pointed out, can buy any of these nuggets or any of these gold bullions in 350 establishments in London or in other places in the world. I do not need to seek any agency, one can get the agency for a specific brand of product but gold is a product that one can buy anywhere in the world, one can buy it in England, Italy, Spain. Therefore the insinuations that I went to London seeking to overturn an established business in Gibraltar and not being successful establishing an import duty in order to jeopardise the existing operator, is totally false and I do not accept it.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Let me just say

MR SPEAKER:

No, on a personal explanation there is no debate.

HON J J BOSSANO:

He has raised it on a point of order and therefore he is defending himself against an accusation that I have not made and I have at least on every supplementary repeated that whatever story may be going round nothing that I have said contains a reference to any of those stories' but I am entitled to ask the kind of questions I have asked. What is the point of order?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

With respect, if you will indulge me, Mr Speaker, for 30 seconds. The hon Gentleman has got to be a little bit more sincere than that. *[Interruption]* Yes, he must be a bit more sincere than that. The hon Gentleman cannot say, "I have not formulated in expressed terms an allegation", but he has got to be honest. What he has done is made remarks calculated to cause listeners to believe that there is some suspicious nefarious connection between the Minister's business dealings and the decision made by the Government and I challenge the hon Member later to take a straw poll from anybody in this Chamber and ask, or anybody that has listened to this debate on the radio, and to ask how many of them did not draw that conclusion from his non-accusation.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I think they probably will have drawn the accusation from the replies and not from the questions.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

NO. 274 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

LEGAL TENDER GOLD COINS

Can Government explain the nature of the change introduced by Government Notice No. 340 on 26 March 1998 correcting Government Notice No. 319 which introduced the imposition of 6 per cent import duty for legal tender gold coins of a weight exceeding 1 oz on 19 March 1998?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

There are no changes to the content of Government Notice No. 319. Government Notice No. 319 was wrongly numbered and was subsequently re-issued as No. 340 of Gazette No. 3033.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 274 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Government explain why it is No 340 says, "The public information notice on 19th March published as Government Notice No. 319 is corrected as follows" It does not say, "It is wrongly numbered and will be renumbered". It says, "Is corrected as follows" and there follows a text which is the same as the previous text except with a new date.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Except with a new date and a new number.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Well, a new number simply because between 319 and 340 presumably other notices came out.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

As the hon Member thinks that there is some suspicious reason for that as well, he should also add this to his letter to the Collector of Customs who originated this issue and perhaps the explanation that I have given him, which is the same one that the Collector of Customs will give him, will strike a truer tone to him coming from the Collector of Customs than he obviously does coming from us.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Chief Minister state in fact whether the original notice of the 19th March actually produced the imposition of the 6 per cent import duty which was stated in the notice?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I cannot but certainly the notice of 319 was not invalid simply because it had the wrong number on it. I think the decision to reprint it for the purposes of giving it a new number was simply to avoid confusion amongst those that might consult the law in the future. My understanding is that 319 remained valid until it was replaced. In other words, there was no interregnum, there was no change in commencement date.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Can the Chief Minister explain to me why it is that on the page of the Gazette, which is Gazette No. 3032 of 19th March in which Government Notice No. 319 appears, the next notice on that page is Government Notice No. 320 and that has not had the number changed?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I cannot give him an explanation for that without notice. It is clear *[Interruption]* Yes, as to the page numbers and everything else. This is not a matter of Government policy. The Government did not make a policy decision to republish this Gazette. This was dealt with at an administrative level by officials and those that publish the Gazette and if the hon Member is really interested in those issues it can only be because he believes that somehow this explains his theory. Well, I will get for him this administrative information which I assure him will not support his theory so that his mind will be put at ease.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The Chief Minister does not have to imagine any motive simply because I ask him a question, I happen to read the Gazettes which perhaps not many people do and if I see a Government Notice which says that it is correcting something, I go and see what is being corrected and if I see that what is being corrected is identical to the correction, it seems to me a peculiar way of doing Government business, that is why I put the question to the House. And the Chief Minister in his answer said that if I did not believe the answer that he had just given me which is that the reason for the change was that the number 319 was wrong, it is not that I am quoting new pages, I am just telling him on which page 319 is in case he does not know where to find it, but the point that I am making is how is it that the number 319 is wrong, that the notice before that one is 318, that the notice after that one is 320 and that the only one that is wrong is 319 because he has put it in his answer that I do not believe him because I do not believe anything he says and I do not believe him simply because the answer that he has given me does not seem to tally with the facts. If the 319 was wrong, as he claims, one would expect that everything after 319 would also be wrong. There is no longer a 319, it has disappeared. Can the Chief Minister say whether in fact on the 19th, when the first notice came in, the Customs were already aware, as a result of this notice which he claimed was done administratively and the department did it, was aware that they had to levy the 6 per cent import duty on 1 kilo coins arriving from the 19th, were they aware of that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I cannot answer that, my involvement in this matter has just simply not been to that degree. The fact of the matter is that the answer that he has had to Question No. 274 is the answer that officials have produced on the basis of the information that they have obtained from the department that initiated this administrative change. But I can assure hon Members that it has absolutely no connection with their suspicions in relation to the subject matter of the previous question.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I am not saying that it has any connection with any suspicions or anything. I am trying to find an explanation to something that appears incorrect or peculiar and the explanation that has been given does not seem to tally with the facts as I know them. Is he not aware that there was an importation on the 20th and that duty was not put on because the Customs did not seem to know they were supposed to be putting duty and he claims that the duty was decided by the Customs. Is he not aware that gold came in on the 20th and was not levied import duty?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

No, I am not aware. Clearly those that have briefed him in such detail have not briefed me in the same detail. The fact of the matter is that this is yet another example of the hon Member making insinuations and then withdrawing the hand. I cannot believe that the hon Member can be facetious to the point where he could ask this question about the reason for renumbering a Legal Notice which he can see does not change the text of the law one word immediately after asking a question on behalf of his clients in relation to gold coins and then have the temerity to stand up in the House to suggest that the two things are not connected. Well, if the two things are not connected I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition cannot find better things to seek to hold the Government accountable for at Question Time than the reason for the renumbering of a Legal Notice.

MR SPEAKER:

One more question and one more answer.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I know the Minister for Employment is overjoyed by any remarks that his hero makes but it is not the fact that it is renumbered, it is the fact that to my knowledge in the history of import duty one has never had import duty imposed on one day and removed the next day and reimposed a week later, that is not a normal way in which people apply import duty. It seems as if the Legal notice imposing the duty was put in and that this was not something that was known to the people who ought to know about it.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Who says that that has happened? The hon Member stands up, draws suppositions and assumptions from his interpretation of the facts and then we spend 45 minutes debating on the basis that it is the Gospel according to St Joseph. It is not, I am sitting here patiently listening to the hon Member draw one supposition upon the other and the fact that I sit here silently doing it does not mean that I am accepting the factual accuracy of what he is saying to me. He may be right, he may not be right but he cannot attribute to me from one answer to the next the consolidation of the fact of what he has surmised himself five minutes earlier. He is suggesting that there has been a suspension of import duty for one week. Well, there may or may not have been but it does not inevitably follow from anything that has arisen in this debate and it is certainly not something [*HON J C PEREZ: The hon Member has said*]

MR SPEAKER:

No, you intervened because you allowed him to, so you finish what you were saying before and he will have the last word and that is the end.

HON J J BOSSANO:

It is not something that I surmised and this is not the Gospel according to St Joseph or even the Gospel according to St Peter because in fact St Peter seems to know very little about it, he cannot even write half a page on the subject never mind the Gospel. Reading the notice what I read is that Government Notice No. 319 - incidentally No. 339 was the potable toilet so it could not have been a different number of 319 and 339 - introduced duty on the 19th March. My information is that gold came after the 19th March duty free. Legal Notice No. 340 differs from the previous one not simply in the number, it just happened to be No. 340 because the last one before that was the potable toilets which was No. 339. What Legal Notice does is it repeals the imposition of duty on the 19th and reintroduces it on the 26th. Is it not the case that the persons affected by the duty were making representations to the Department of Trade and Industry on the 23rd because nobody knew on the 23rd that duty had been put on the 19th, not even the Minister? Is that not the case?

MR SPEAKER:

You have got the last word and that is the end.

HON P C MONTEGRIFFO:

Representations have been made but I can tell the House that the advice we have received from Customs is that the methodology employed in the context of the announcements made in the Gazette are entirely in accordance with normal practice. Indeed the suggestion made by the company in question, with which it is possible to sympathise at one level, applies to every other company. Import duties are not changed with prior notice to industries either here or in Britain or anywhere else in the world and all that has happened in this case, as far as I am personally

aware, is that there is one particular company and one particular import that has suffered the consequence of being caught at a time when an order was made when they were not aware of a Gazette imposing a duty. But that is exactly what happens to every single importer of a product between the time that it places an order and the time that it becomes aware of regulations that have been effected introducing import duty and the specific advice, that I have received from Customs which I must say I concur, is that it would not be good practice to actually inform the industry in advance of changes in duty.

MR SPEAKER:

That is the end, I said it before. Next question.

ORAL

NO. 275 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

GIBRALTAR IDENTITY CARDS

Can Government identify who is the Commissioner responsible for pursuing the complaint of October 1995 made by UK in respect of Spain's refusal to recognise Gibraltar's ID card?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question Nos. 276 and 277 of 1998.

ORAL

NO. 276 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

GIBRALTAR IDENTITY CARDS

Can Government confirm which Directorate of the European Commission has been dealing with the issue of the recognition of Gibraltar's ID card?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

Answered together with Question Nos. 275 and 277 of 1998.

NO. 277 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

GIBRALTAR IDENTITY CARDS

Can Government state the date on which the Commission first approached the member states to seek confirmation that they accepted Gibraltar ID cards as valid travel documents?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

The Commissioner is Mr Mario Monti and the Directorate is DG XV. The commission approached member states on 5 June 1996 seeking confirmation that they accepted Gibraltar's ID cards as valid travel documents.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NOS. 275, 276 AND 277 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is this information that has been provided to the Government by the United Kingdom recently, because, in fact, my recollection was that the previous date in which it was claimed the Commission had been first approached was in 1995?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The question does not ask for the date when the Commission was first approached. The question asks on what date the Commission first approached member states and therefore it is not surprising that the dates are different.

HON J J BOSSANO:

So, in fact, the Commission then took a year to approach the member states between the date they were approached themselves, is that it?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not know whether it was a year or what because I do not have to hand the date upon which the Commission itself was first approached. The 5 June 1996 is the date upon which the Commission approached the member states, which is what the hon Member asked.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does the Chief Minister know, in fact, whether initially in 1996, the indications from member states, other than the neighbouring one, were that they were likely to accept the card? He must be aware that the initial reaction was that only Spain was likely to say no, does he have any information on that?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I do not have any detailed information. I am aware that one country or perhaps even two, went so far as to confirm that they would accept it. But I think the position has been, that most of the member states have never actually responded to the Commission.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Does the Chief Minister know when it was that Spain responded saying they would not accept it?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I believe that information is available to me but not here. I think it is a date that is mentioned on some file.

HON J J BOSSANO:

I take it the Chief Minister is willing to provide me with the date when he has the time to fish it out?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

If others have the time to fish it out yes, I do not intend to fish it out myself.

NO. 278 OF 1998

THE HON J J BOSSANO

PROPOSALS BY SR MATUTES

Have Government now received confirmation from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that the Matutes proposals of 10 December 1997 have been formally rejected?

ANSWER

THE HON THE CHIEF MINISTER

No.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO QUESTION NO. 278 OF 1998

HON J J BOSSANO:

Have the Government received any indication whether it is intended to reject it after the end of the EU Presidency by the United Kingdom which, according to the Spaniards, is when they are expecting a reply from UK?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

I have not had any indication from the United Kingdom whether they will be rejected and, if so, when. I have however been assured by the Secretary of State, as has everybody else, that the formal rejection or not does not prejudice the fact that they are unacceptable to the United Kingdom Government if they are unacceptable to the people of Gibraltar. The people of Gibraltar through their Government have made it clear that it is unacceptable to them and therefore I have invited the Foreign Secretary to take the view that it follows from that that he ought to reject them, he has not done so and that is where the position rests.

HON J J BOSSANO:

Is it the position of the Chief Minister that he would not proceed with meeting Señor Matutes if the proposals are still on the table or is he willing to go ahead with the meeting even if they have not been rejected?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The Government, not being a member of the SDGG, have not drawn the connection that they have drawn and made publicly in one of their recent press releases.

HON J J BOSSANO:

The Government, of course, are committed to self determination so I do not know why they are not members of the SDGG. I recommend to them that they join but that is not the question that I asked. I do not know what else he is a member of, he can be a member of the Yacht Club but I still would want to know whether he is going to see Matutes with the proposals on the table or not?

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

The position of the Government is that there is no direct connection between the rejection or not formally by Her Majesty's Government to the proposals and the willingness of the Government, my willingness to attend the talks with Señor Matutes but certainly the Government would prefer to see the proposals rejected and certainly it ought to be made clear that the Government are not willing to participate in discussions with Señor Matutes or anybody else for that matter, on the basis of a discussion of his proposals. In other words, any meeting would not be a discussion or a negotiation still less around this document although I suspect that in any meeting with Señor Matutes, he will want to raise his proposals and I of course will say to him in private what I have already said to him in public and that is that his proposals are not acceptable neither to the Government nor to the people of Gibraltar.