



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 4.45 p.m. – 5.50 p.m.

Gibraltar, Friday, 25th May 2012

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 4.45 p.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. H K Budhrani QC *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: M L Farrell Esq RD *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

ENTERPRISE, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

GASA club premises
Meeting held by Hon. J J Bossano

Clerk: Sitting of Parliament, Friday, 25th May. Answers to Oral Questions continue.
Question 370/2012, the Hon. D A Feetham.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Well, we appear to have been relegated or exiled to the political equivalent of Siberia
– Friday afternoon at five o'clock!

Mr Speaker, was the meeting which the Minister of Employment held recently at the GASA club premises, where he addressed some fifty individuals, a meeting held by him in his capacity as Minister of Employment?

10 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): No, Mr Speaker.

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**Workers' Memorial Day event; May Day rally
Invitations to Minister for Employment**

20 **Clerk:** Question 371, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Was the Minister for Employment invited by UNITE to the Workers' Memorial day event organised by UNITE in the Lobby of Parliament and by UNITE or the Government on the May Day rally?

25 **Mr Speaker:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): Not to my knowledge, Mr Speaker.

30 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Does the hon. Gentleman not think it very odd indeed that he appears to have been the only person – Member of Parliament – not to have been invited, for example, to the Workers' Memorial day?

35 Does he not think that it is also even more odd that he has not been invited to the Government's *own* event held jointly with UNITE, the May Day rally?

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, to my knowledge, these were public events which required no invitations.

40 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, I was certainly invited to the Workers' Memorial day event and so were Members on this side of the House. Is it not the case that his non-attendance at both of these events shows an almost pathological dislike for the leadership of UNITE?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker.

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**Companies employing trainees
Contracts with Employment and Training Company Limited**

50 **Clerk:** Question 373, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: How many companies have signed contracts with Employment and Training Company Limited agreeing to pay back the wages of a trainee if that trainee is not employed permanently by that company since the last question and answer session of Parliament?

55 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): As at the end of April, Mr Speaker, an additional 24 employers have signed the partnership agreement.

60 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So that is 29 in total?

Hon. J J Bossano: That is correct.

65 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Does the Hon. Minister still believe that he is on course to meet his now varied manifesto commitment of employing all those people on the unemployed list – there is another question on the Order Paper on that – that will be invited on to the Future Job Strategy, plus also all the remaining trainees in private companies?

70 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, Mr Speaker, the biggest difficulty we have got are the people that we inherited from the VTS Scheme, of whom there are still 226.

All the ones that have come in new have all got a job at the end of the training, because the employer selects the trainee, not us. We send him a group and he selects one. So, on that basis, clearly, I want to go as fast as it is possible to go, but this is demand led. I cannot go faster than there are employers willing to take trainees.

75 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, but *he* devised this particular policy. We disagree on what exactly was promised to the electorate: *we* say that it was clear that what was promised was a job in a Government-owned company; you say no, the guarantee was a guarantee in a privately owned company.

80 Now, assuming the latter, is he happy that he is on course to be able to effectively meet what *he* says was the manifesto commitment, a guarantee of a job in a privately owned company for all those people that were trainees, effectively, that he inherited, plus also the unemployed by, for example, the end of the year, which is what he said in a recent *Viewpoint* programme that we both attended.

85 **Hon. J J Bossano:** What I said in the recent programme was, Mr Speaker, that, every month of this year, I would be able to report lower unemployment and higher employment levels. So there is a trend in which the numbers out of work are coming down and the numbers in work are going up and that is true of every month.

90 The speed at which that happens depends on the demand for labour in the economy, which we will not attempt to manipulate artificially. The jobs are there or they are not there. But certainly the response given, that this has been going on... The first people were required to sign up in March – five actually did it before they were required to do so, in February. There have been 24 further, coming up to 29, and what I am hoping, and indeed confident, is that we will be signing them up at the rate of four or five a week. We will see whether that does the result that I want it to have.

95 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Do I detect another U-turn in the statement that the hon. Gentleman has made just a few moments ago, from the statement that he made in the *Viewpoint* programme, which is to eliminate unemployment by the end of the year?

100 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, I do not know whether the hon. Member... The hon. Member seems to be so familiar with U-turns that he detects them at every corner! He can detect whatever he likes and maybe he is better at *detecting* than at being a politician.

I am telling him that, as far as I am concerned, I made it very clear that the unemployment would go down every month and the employment would go up. He can hardly expect me to be able to predict, without knowing how many of the people that are due to reach school leaving age this year, which we still do not know, are going to be joining the unemployment list or not. We will not know that until August, but it could be that we will be having a requirement for another 400 jobs, as a result of this year's school leavers – but it could be 200.

110 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is certainly giving me a lesson or two – or three or four – on how to perform political U-turns. That is for sure. But he has not answered my question.

My question is: is he in a position to say to this House, as he said to the people of Gibraltar on the *Viewpoint* programme, that he will eliminate unemployment by the end of the year? Yes or no?

115 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, I did not say there will be zero unemployment in 2013, and if the hon. Member believes I said that, then he did not understand me properly or he is making it up, so that he can accuse me of doing a U-turn.

But I can tell him one thing: I can *promise* him that the number of Gibraltarians in employment will be

higher than it ever was in the 15 years of the previous administration.

Several Members: Hear, hear! (*Applause*)

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**Gibraltar Development Corporation
Human Resources**

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Clerk: Question 374, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Minister for Employment state whether there is a Human Resources Department of the GDC, the number of GDC employees in that Department, and the grades of those employees?

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Mr Speaker: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): No, Mr Speaker, there is no such department.

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Hon. D A Feetham: So is the position that the hon. Gentleman *is* effectively the Human Resource Department of the GDC?

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Hon. J J Bossano: Well, given that there was no such department in the last 15 years, that would only be true if the Hon. Mr Caruana had been the Human Resources manager of the GDC previously, which I do not suppose he was.

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Hon. D A Feetham: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not the case, because there was a Human Resource Department of the GDC. It appeared on their letterheads and, in fact, Mrs Eleri Surrey was the person that effectively ran that Department. Whether Mrs Eleri Surrey was the only person within that Department, I cannot tell him, whether that is the case or not; but he knows, as well as I do, that in fact there was a department and that she effectively ran that Department.

Is that not the case?

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Hon. J J Bossano: There was one person employed, but there was no Department because there was nobody else there.

The person that he is talking about continues to be employed in the Human Resources Department –

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Hon. D A Feetham: Of the Government.

Hon. J J Bossano: – of the Government, because she chose to stay as a ring-fenced civil servant.

The Human Resources issues that require the use of that Department are accessed by the GDC from the Government, and the Government charges the GDC.

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Hon. D A Feetham: So can the hon. Gentleman confirm to this House that, effectively, he is the person who is fulfilling the role that would be otherwise fulfilled by a proper Human Resources Department; and that he is responsible, effectively, for making decisions of hiring and firing within the GDC?

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Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, how can I confirm that? I have just told him the very opposite!

I told him the GDC uses the Civil Service Human Resources Department when it needs to. What the hon. Member does not seem to understand is that the GDC does not employ anybody in any GDC activity. It supplies labour to Government departments.

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**Registered unemployed
Numbers as of 30th April 2012**

175 **Clerk:** Question 375, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Minister for Employment state how many people were registered unemployed on 30th April 2012 between (a) 0-3 months; (b) 3-6 months; (c) 6-12 months; (d) 12-24 months; and (e) above 24 months?

180 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, between zero and three months, 361; between three and six months, 132; between six and 12, 66; between 12 and 24 months, 46; and above two years, 35.

185 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, the figure above two years is actually higher than when I last asked the question.

190 Can the hon. Member just enlighten the House as to why that is the case? Also, could he perhaps provide an explanation as to what he intends to do, in order to obviously ensure that these people are in gainful employment? It appears to me that, if a person is unemployed for longer than two years, there must be some very substantial reason for that, and I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has actually made that analysis.

195 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, I have got the answer that I gave him to 143/2012. That answer says, above 24 months, 35 – which is the same figure as this one. So it is not true or correct, shall we say, that in fact the figure is now higher than it was.

200 You would expect that if the same number of people in long-term unemployment are there, then the time that they have been there will grow with every passing month. They will have been there one more month. So, obviously, if the people who are in the 12 to 24 months do not get employed this month, next month some of those will have gone past the 24 months. The fact that they are in the higher category simply means that the group before them contains the same people, but the question has come three months later.

205 The other element that I think the hon. Member should take note of is that what the figures do indicate is that where there is greater movement, as one would expect, is in the people who have been under six months out of work – that is to say, they have been sufficiently recently out of work to be able to get... I think that there is more resistance on the part of employers to take somebody on, if he has been a very long time out of work, presumably for the same reason that the supplementary question has been phrased: is there something wrong with the person? There can be numbers of things. One of the things that can be wrong is that it is an older employee. For example, in the construction industry, we find that, after the age of 55, it is much more difficult to place people. Even though they have the experience, where it involves labouring work, clearly they are not going to be as capable of maintaining what is a tough job physically, as somebody who is in his 20s or 30s.

210 Apart from those characteristics, we have not done any other analysis, other than to monitor the extent to which the age groups are affected. But the facility of being able to place somebody with an employer and effectively have him employed for a number of months and paid for by the Government, does not have an age limit. So, in fact, not many, but a few, of the people in the longer term employed... One particular case in the last two weeks is somebody who had been for five years out of work, and we were able to place him somewhere, by using the Employment Training Scheme as a way of getting the employer to accept him and give him a trial.

220 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I understand that. I appreciate it is not an easy job, and I understand it.

225 I understand because, certainly when I was involved with the previous Minister for Employment in conducting an analysis in relation to long-term unemployed – and I have said this, I think, to the hon. Gentleman either in debate or on debates on television – a substantial proportion of those, for example, had criminal convictions which were preventing them from effectively accessing the job market in the same way as somebody without a criminal conviction, or there was certainly a handicap.

230 But does he not think that perhaps he ought to undertake that kind of analysis to, for example, find out or see whether you can come up with an analysis as to whether the rehabilitation of offenders legislation, which was only commenced – and I understand that – a couple of months ago, whether that is actually working – whether some of those people you were able to place because employers cannot refer to their criminal convictions and employees do not have an obligation to refer to them; or whether that piece of legislation needs further amendment?

235 I have always been of the view, although... When we introduced the legislation, we effectively adopted the UK model, I remember the hon. Gentleman saying, ‘There are all these exemptions – is this usual?’ he asked me during debate. I said, ‘We are adopting the UK model’. There are an awful lot of exemptions that may, in fact, not be appropriate for Gibraltar, whereby, for instance, somebody who might be employed in security or immigration, in theory those people have to disclose their criminal records, because they are caught by the Act, but it may strictly not be necessary.

240 Will the hon. Gentleman at least take on board what I am saying and conduct an analysis of these 35 individuals, to see whether, in fact, we are dealing with that kind of problem? I know that, after two months, it is again premature to look to determine with any certitude as to whether the rehabilitation of offenders legislation is, in fact, doing the job that it was designed to do, but certainly, I do think that that kind of analysis ought to be undertaken in relation to the 35, and perhaps even the 46.

245 And if I can ask you just another supplementary question, as well – and I apologise, I thought that it was slightly less than 35 last time round – but out of the 35 last time round, does he have a figure of how many of those 35 that were unemployed for more than two years, you have managed, or your department has actually managed, to find employment for with employers?

250 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I cannot give him a figure with certainty, but I think it is probably the case that about half a dozen have been removed from that group and half a dozen have joined it – it is not that it is the same 35 people.

255 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, can I deal with the other point that the hon. Member makes in relation to the rehabilitation of offenders provisions, which have been commenced, which were the first part of the Criminal Proceedings and Evidence Act, which we commenced?

260 The hon. Member may well have a point that that list is extensive and, in a place like Gibraltar, we should look, but that is a specific list which was put together for Gibraltar purposes. It might be a UK model, but the *actual list* is a list of Gibraltar entities, Gibraltar agencies and therefore some thought must have been given to including or not including relevant entities in the list. But the point is that there may be a need to look at and revise the need, having regard to employment policy in particular, and that is an exercise that we will be happy to do.

265 But let me say this: the fact that a company or an agency or an entity is included in that particular list, does not preclude that person from employment. The effect of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act is to set time limits at which a conviction becomes spent, and therefore cannot be taken into account at all. The fact that a conviction might not be spent does not preclude the person from obtaining employment. In other words, the fact that an entity is on a particular list is not a bar; it is certainly not a legal bar to entry into the employment market in that particular area. It simply means that a conviction is not spent.

I thought I would clarify this.

270 **Hon. D A Feetham:** No, I quite understand that. I drafted the list (*Laughter*), so I understand!

I understand, but what happened when *we* drafted the list, we effectively included within the list organisations or authorities that were equivalent to the ones that existed in the UK, so as near as possible UK equivalents.

275 Now, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman that he says the Government is going to be looking at that, because certainly we would have done so, after a passage of time, to see how the legislation bedded down. I also, of course, accept the point that he makes that the fact that you disclose a criminal conviction does not mean, in theory, that the employer cannot or should refuse to employ that person, because clearly you could have a criminal conviction that occurred 15 or 20 years ago and, in fact, may not even be relevant to the job that you are applying for.

280 The reality of the situation actually is – this came to my attention when we were recruiting in some areas – that the Human Resource Department of the Government, in relation to privately owned companies, often

take the decision, if you have got a criminal record, you are not suitable for the post. You do not even get to interview. That is actually happening.

285 Now, the hon. Gentleman, if he is under the misapprehension that the system is operating in a particular way, he ought to perhaps have a meeting, himself and Mr Bossano, with the Human Resource Department of the Government, to actually pan this out, because it actually does not work that way in practice.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, what I have said is not how it is working in practice, but that it is not a legal bar to entry into the employment market, as a result of that particular provision.

290 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I have said that.

Hon. G H Licudi: Given that we agree with that, if there is a practical issue which needs to be addressed, then certainly that is a matter that we will be happy to look at.

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**Job vacancies
Numbers filled by registered unemployed since December 2011**

300 **Clerk:** Question 376, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: I think I have asked 376; it is 377.

305 **Mr Speaker:** No, it was 375.

Hon. D A Feetham: Yes, I beg your pardon.

310 Can the Minister for Employment state how many job vacancies have been filled since 11th December 2011 and how many of those vacancies have been filled by people who were registered as unemployed between (a) 0-3 months; (b) 3-6 months; (c) 6-12 months; (d) 12-24 months; and (e) above 24 months?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

315 **Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, the numbers employed between zero and three months were 2,442; from three to six months, 85; from six to 12 months, 30; from 12 to 24 months, six; and over 24 months, two.

**Employment Training Company Limited
Grants scheme for graduate trainees**

320 **Clerk:** Question 377, the Hon. D A Feetham.

325 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Can the Minister for Employment please provide details of the scheme announced to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) on the payment of £16,000 a year to graduates who wanted to change careers?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

330 **Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, there was no such scheme announced at the ICAEW meeting.

335 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, has he announced at any other meeting a scheme of this nature – or on any other occasion?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker.

340 What happened at that meeting was that I explained to them how the existing ETCL and grad schemes work. Therefore, if people are graduates, they are on 50% above the minimum wage and if people are not graduates but have O- and A-levels, they are in the other scheme and that the accountancy firms would be able to access those schemes, if they wanted to use those schemes to recruit trainees – but it is not that there is a special scheme for accountants.

Hon. D A Feetham: Yes, it is the reporting of it that has been inaccurate.

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Applying for jobs with Government Eligibility

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Clerk: Question 378, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Minister for Employment say whether it is true that some people who have gone to the ETB to enquire about applying for jobs with a Government agency have been told that they were not eligible to apply because they were already working and had to be unemployed to be eligible?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): No, Mr Speaker.

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Hon. D A Feetham: So the hon. Gentleman is saying that when somebody actually makes that allegation, and I have read it because somebody – I am not a member of Facebook myself, but somebody who is – printed out a thread in relation to this, where they said, where two people said that they had approached the ETB for a job that had been advertised in a Government agency, and had been told, ‘No, you have got to be unemployed in order to apply’.

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So the Hon. Minister is saying that when those people say that, they are not telling the truth – is that the position?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, either they are not telling the truth or they are deliberately lying for reasons best known to themselves or, in fact, they do not know what they are talking about. It can only be one of those three, because it is not possible for anybody to go to the ETB and say, ‘I want to apply for a job that has been advertised in the Government agency.’ If the job is advertised in the Government agency, apply to the agency! It is as simple as that.

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Now, somebody may have gone and said, ‘I want to join the Employment Training Programme of the Government’, in ETCL, which is a Government company. Well, we do not encourage people to resign from a job in the private sector, so that we can then train them and send them back into the private sector, but unless that is the agency which they are talking about, the answer would have been there is no requirement to be unemployed in order to apply for a Government job.

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Hon. D A Feetham: But is there not another potential scenario: that these two people are not lying; that they have been to the hon. Gentleman’s department and at the hon. Gentleman’s department, someone there has provided this particular answer? That is a possibility, is it not? They do not necessarily have to lie or not know what they are talking about.

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Hon. J J Bossano: Well, I will tell you why it is not possible: because, frankly, all the people that are working in that Department have been working in that Department for a considerable number of years and I would expect them to know better than to say something which *manifestly* cannot be true.

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I mean if somebody goes to the counter and says, ‘I want to apply for a job in a Government agency, which is advertised, *x y z*’, the answer he would get: ‘Apply to *x y z* – we do not take applications for Government agencies here, either from the employed or the unemployed.’

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So to suggest to somebody, ‘If you were unemployed, we would accept your application, but because you

395 are not unemployed, we are not doing it', would show that the person that was answering that, if that were true, has not got a clue how the system works – which is how it has been working for the last 15 years and they have been there for that long. Somebody who has been in the job in the Employment Service for a few weeks might not know how these things work; but the people that are there, dealing with the counter all know – well, they have been doing it longer than I have! Why should they get it so wrong?

Hon. D A Feetham: No, I will tell them that the hon. Gentleman said that they were lying –

400 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, Mr Speaker, I did not say that.

Hon. D A Feetham: That is what you said in Parliament!

Hon. J J Bossano: No, no, Mr Speaker.

405 **Hon. D A Feetham:** That is what you said!

Hon. J J Bossano: *No*, I have not said that!

410 **Mr Speaker:** No, there were three alternatives. (*Interjections*)

Hon. J J Bossano: If the hon. Member wants to quote me, then he should say, 'Either they are lying or they do not know what they are talking about or they have misunderstood what they were told.' (*Interjection*) Now, if he picked in the lying, maybe he knows the people well enough to know which one fits better.

415 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, he can rest assured that I will give him the two alternatives that he first gave, plus the third one that I postulated to him – that was not his own initiative. But aren't all vacancies advertised via the ETB, anyway – or not?

420 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No. There is a requirement to notify the Employment Service of a vacancy, and that requirement, in fact, carries a penalty, which the Department has frequently, since 9th December, imposed on Government departments which, in the last 15 years, were frequent abusers of the system and recruited people without opening the vacancies. That can no longer happen.

425 Therefore, whenever a Government agency advertises a vacancy, they do two things: they put an advert in the press and they place the information with the ETB. People will look and see that the vacancy is there and they can apply for it, or they see it in the press and they can apply for it. Normally, the vacancies require people to address the application to the employment entity, not to the ETB. The ETB does not accept applications from people.

430 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I quite understand that, but is it not the position that, when the vacancy is opened with the ETB, it is common that people will actually go to the ETB asking, 'Well, what are the vacancies that exist?' Is that not common?

435 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr. Speaker, the vacancies... There are boards on which there are 600 vacancies put up. It is a system that I am having reviewed because there is a constant stream of complaints from people that the vacancies do not get removed when they get filled because the employers do not get round to telling us, and people get sent from pillar to post – and that happens with both the public and the private – but at the moment the boards are still there, like they used to be, and at any one time there will be between 600 and 800 jobs on those boards.

440 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, but your position is – and you have said it outside this House and inside this House – that, before, we had a system that did not work, now we have a system that works because vacancies have to be advertised, they have to be opened with the ETB and you do not have the situation where those vacancies are filled before they get to the ETB.

445 *Ergo* you have a situation where people can go to the ETB and find out what vacancies there are at the ETB. If that is the position, don't you think it is reasonable for somebody, if there is a vacancy in a

Government company or a Government agency, for that person to actually first make an enquiry from the ETB – hence, the answer that they got when they went to the ETB?

450 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, Mr Speaker, I do not believe that that is true. The *ergo* is not the *ergo* that the hon. Member wants it to be.

The *ergo* is that, before, 80% of the jobs were filled first and notified afterwards, and now 20% are filled and notified afterwards. We have reversed those ratios, and that is what I have said on many previous occasions, or at least since it has started reversing, which was in about March or April this year.

455 The vacancies that are there. The people say, ‘I am interested in applying for this vacancy,’ and they get the address of the place that they have to apply to, public or private. Whether they are working or not working, there is nothing to stop anybody saying, ‘I am interested in applying for the job.’ In fact, the reality of it is that something like 70% of the jobs that are filled every month are filled by people who are not registered unemployed – 70%.

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Future Job Strategy Eligibility of unemployed

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Clerk: Question 379, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr. Speaker, when will the Future Job Strategy be open to the unemployed?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, it has been open since 1st February 2012.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, does the hon. Gentleman not agree that cannot possibly be the case in the light of the answers to questions given at the time when I asked about this and he said that the Future Job Strategy would first start with those who were in training, would only become open to the unemployed in the summer, and in the summer it would become open to the unemployed effectively by invitation. In other words, if that person comes to the ETB and says, ‘I have an employer who is willing to take me on as a trainee’ or, alternatively, your department matches that person with a willing employer, what is it? Is it the answer that he has given today, or the answer that he gave to me in February?

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Hon. J J Bossano: The answer is that, since 1st February, the people who have got job guarantees are, in the main, the people who have joined after 1st February and not from the VTS. I have already told him in several meetings, Mr Speaker, that the ones we are having most difficulty in placing, for the very obvious reason that the employer was not involved in selecting the individual, are the people who were there already, whom we do not want to put back on the unemployment list and we are still carrying them, hopefully finding them a slot.

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But, in fact, in February, in March and in April, in those 24 new employers that I have mentioned, the five original ones in February were five employers who took people from the existing VTS pool, and the 24 that have taken on trainees subsequently are all people who were not in the original pool and they have taken them from the unemployment list.

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Hon. D A Feetham: What is the unemployment figure, can you remind the House, at the present moment?

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Hon. J J Bossano: The unemployment is in the region of 1,200.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Does he not accept that he has an obligation, which was the promise that he made at the last General Election, of allowing all those unemployed people onto the Future Job Strategy, enabling them to earn the minimum wage?

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member first of all accused me, during the Election, of bringing about the ruin of Gibraltar by saying I was promising to do what I was not promising to do, and now he is urging me to do something which he described then as the ruin of Gibraltar – that is to take 1,000 people, pay them £1,000 a month, even though I have got no work to give them.

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The people who are being taken in the Scheme are being taken in the Scheme because what we do is we match the unemployed with the vacancies. We call up the employers, we send them people we have pre-selected in the department, and then the employer says, ‘I want to keep so-and-so and so-and-so,’ and then we take that person into the company and we pay them the £1,000. That system ensures that all the concerns the hon. Member had about ruining Gibraltar are no longer true. Therefore, since he wants to be able to attack me, he will attack me if I do it for ruining Gibraltar, and if I do not do it, for letting down the people who are unemployed.

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I can promise him there will be less people unemployed than there were on 8th December, come next 8th December. There will be more Gibraltarians working on 8th December than there were last year, and that that progress will continue throughout the next four years. (*Applause*) That may not be enough for him, but it is a lot more than the previous administration, of which he is so proud that he defends their entire 15 years, including the eight years before that he used to attack –

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Hon. D A Feetham: The short [*inaudible*].

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Hon. J J Bossano: They did not do it. As simple as that.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, every single time that the hon. Gentleman feels uncomfortable with the questions he is asked, he refers to my political past. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman (*Interjection*) that he is going to feel *far* more uncomfortable with my questions during the course of the next four years. Let me tell him that.

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Why did the hon. Gentleman not speak to the people of Gibraltar with the candour that he has spoken with in the House today, which is, ‘Look, I’m sorry, I cannot employ 1,200 people, because it’s the ruin of Gibraltar.’ Why didn’t you do that?

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Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I have not said I cannot employ 1,000 people because it is the ruin of Gibraltar. I am saying that he claimed in the Election... The hon. Member seems to think that he is entitled to make allegations of things that I am supposed to have said, that I have not said, and attack me for those things which he has invented, but I am not entitled, on this side – and I was not entitled when I was on *that* side – to say to anybody on the other side of the House anything about anything they have said in the past.

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If the hon. Member chooses, in his latest reincarnation, to be critical of everything that the GSLP did, even when he was in the GSLP, and to praise everything that the GSD did, even when he was attacking it. (*Laughter*) I am entitled to remind the people of Gibraltar of that, and that is all I am doing. It is not that I am worried or affected by his presence here to the extent that I have to react by reminding people of his past – the people of Gibraltar know his past as well as I do – but he chooses to say that I said something before, and I am as entitled to remind him of the things that *he* said when he had different views. Or is he the only one who has got the prerogative to do that?

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The answer is he said that to do what he is egging me to do now would be the ruin of Gibraltar, and therefore... It was never going to be the ruin of Gibraltar, because I never said that is what we would do. I said that people would get a job in a Government company, and they have got it. There are 500, or 400, or 350 people in there at one time. The people will only be put in there not so that we can send a pay cheque to their house while they are unemployed, because that would simply mean that we would increase the unemployment benefit to £1,000 a month and make it limitless in time, and that was never anything that we committed ourselves to doing. What we committed ourselves to was addressing the employment problems that we inherited, which they claimed did not exist. It was only in the Election campaign for the first time that, in order to attack what the Scheme would cost, they themselves revealed that they were well aware that there were 1,100 out of work, because the hon. Member was the one who put in the *Chronicle* ‘it will cost £11 million’, and if you are going to pay £1,000 a month, then that is what £11 million represents – 1,100. It was as a result of that knowledge being made public that we realised that the 400 figure was only the tip of the iceberg.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Yes. The reason why I referred to the £11 million – and it is true it was my figure; I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises that it was an accurate figure, at the very least –

560 **Hon. J J Bossano:** It was a bit more, actually.

Hon. D A Feetham: – was because, in the hon. Gentleman's manifesto, he committed himself to employing 450 people who were on existing training schemes, those on sheltered employment, plus those on the unemployment list, which was 421. That is where the figure of 1,100 came from.

565 In other words, I was taking my cue from the promises that *he* made to the people of Gibraltar, which was to employ 1,100 people in a Government-owned company; hence, my arguments that you were on the road to ruining Gibraltar. But, look, what is it? Is it ruining Gibraltar to employ all these 1,100 people, or is it not ruining Gibraltar employing 1,100 people? Does he plan to allow these people onto the Future Job Strategy Scheme, or is he going to continue to break promises to the unemployed of Gibraltar because *he* is the socialist Minister for Employment?

570 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I am glad at least we agree on the last bit of that: (*Laughter*) I *am* the socialist Minister for Employment.

575 Mr Speaker, in the statistics he has forgotten one tiny element: as well as all those components that he mentioned, there were 60 on the waiting list at Bleak House which did not appear in any other category and presumably were treated as non-existent. That is, they were not unemployed because they were waiting to be put on the VTS, which gave them no security, no future, £400 a month.

580 However many failings he may want to find in what is there now, I can tell him that the people who are in and the people who are looking forward to being in do not agree with him and think we have done more in the last five months to improve their prospects of getting a job than was done for them before, and that the judgement of that only time will tell.

I am happy that he should bring the matter up every month and give me an opportunity to update the people of Gibraltar on the progress that we are making, and I can promise him that every month the figure will show an improvement. That may not be enough for him, because presumably he would prefer that it was not so.

585 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Just one final question: does he sleep well at night for breaking his promises to the unemployed of Gibraltar?

590 **Several Members:** Shame!

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I have never slept better since the day that he left the GSLP! (*Laughter and applause*)

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**Future Job Strategy
Trainees temping in GDC**

600 **Clerk:** Question 380, the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Can the Minister for Employment state how many trainees under the Future Job Strategy are temporarily filling vacant jobs within the GDC?

605 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano): There are none.

610 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, I can see that with the hon. Gentleman I have got to be as precise as possible, otherwise he will not answer my question, despite the fact that he understands perfectly well where I am coming from and what the question is.

What about in relation to filling vacant jobs within Government agencies or Government companies?

Hon. J J Bossano: None, Mr Speaker.

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Hon. D A Feetham: And within the public service generally?

Hon. J J Bossano: None, Mr Speaker.

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All the people who are in Government areas... I have explained to him many times, but the hon. Member either does not want to understand the answers that he is being given, or maybe he is being misguided by things that other people tell him.

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I have told him that we have got 226 VTS. VTS inherited 226. Of those, 83 are still left in the private sector. The remainder, whom we are paying, we have distributed in public entities, not because there are vacancies – the vacancies are not there. If and when a vacancy happens, the vacancy is opened and everybody, including the people who are ex-VTS or anything else, are entitled to apply, just like people who are working are entitled to apply, but it is *not* the case that they are filling any vacancies. They are all supernumerary, the posts that are there.

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In the case of the GDC, for example, the lowest entry grade is Grade 1, AA. We have got young people in the Employment Service and elsewhere under the GDC, but the vacancies are now currently being advertised and filled. They are not debarred from applying, but they are not guaranteed that they are going to get it.

Hon. D A Feetham: So can the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is not Government policy, nor that the Government will, in future, allow trainees to temporarily fill vacant jobs within all the organisations – I do not want to repeat them – that I have mentioned in my question earlier?

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Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I do not think I have to give any guarantees about anything that is going to happen in the future. I can tell him the policy is not that and that, in any event, the hon. Member does not understand that any jobs above the entry grade can only be filled from the existing permanent staff. It does not go out of the Service. We do not import people in higher jobs in the system.

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Therefore, the only grades that can be filled are Grade 1 jobs. The Grade 1 jobs that exist are currently being advertised. Notwithstanding the fact that there have been people, for example, in the Employment Service, there are no Grade 1 vacancies, so all the guys who are there cannot be filling Grade 1 vacancies because none exist – all the Grade 1s are full, and that is true of everywhere else.

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The only place where there is an automatic job guarantee at the end of the training is in the Health and Social Care, in the courses, some of which were already in place and, as far as I am concerned, I imagine that it was always the intention that if you are sending somebody to the School of Nursing it is in order to employ them at the end of the training, although we found that some of the people who were being paid as VTS, the £400, to be nursing assistants, were at the end of the training sent home and a new lot taken in. Therefore we found, in the Health Service, that in 2011, in effect, VTS on £400 were being used as filling vacancies in the wards, but when they finished their training they were replaced by a fresh lot. That has been brought to an end, and therefore all the people who are training in those areas are being offered a job, for the very simple reason there is no other health authority for them to go to.

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You cannot treat the School of Nursing as training nurses and putting them on the market. The only guy in the market who is buying is the Health Authority. But if we are training somebody to do clerical work, then there are a thousand clerical jobs in the economy of Gibraltar and therefore the training that he gets with us, or with a private sector firm, for as long as we are... With this mix that we have inherited – people without guaranteed jobs and we have got people with guaranteed jobs – we are trying to give priority, as far as we can, in trying to persuade employers to access, first and foremost, the people who were there before February. Unfortunately, we are not being as successful for the reasons that I have explained. Those people were selected by Bleak House.

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The employers now have an input before the selection takes place. Because they have that input, they are more keen to select for themselves than to be told who they have to take on. Apart from that, the only exception to the system is in the case of training for nursing assistants or care assistants or registered nurses. That is the only area where, automatically, the trainees will get a job at the end.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Yes, and can he also confirm that no vacancies will be held back because there are

trainees in supernumerary posts that may be doing, between them, the work that may have been required by the vacancy? Could you also tell this House that the Government is not going to go down that road?

670 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, we inherited 90 vacant posts in the Civil Service, which we are now in the process of filling. I do not know whether the previous Government was holding them up for us to fill them or holding them up for some other reason, but held up they were. It is not the intention to perpetuate the policy of the previous administration in holding jobs up.

675 In areas like the Care Agency or the Health Service where, in fact, the manning levels are determined by the number of beds that are occupied, we will continue with the previously announced policy of employing short-term contracts in order to match the contract termination dates with the completion of the training programmes.

680 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, and two more questions: can he also confirm to this House that there is no intention to dumb down the entry requirements into the public service, be it in the Civil Service or within agencies or Government-owned companies; and has he had any meetings with Mr Tampin – GGCA’s union leader – in relation to the issue of cadets and Civil Service posts?

685 **Hon. J J Bossano:** The last time I met Mr Tampin was at Forty Steps on my way here, but we did not talk about any of those. I think I have not had a meeting, before that, for a very long time with him – I think probably around Christmas – but then I do not deal with industrial relations, as I have told the hon. Member many times. So, when we meet, we talk about the weather, we talk about this, we talk about that, but not about any of the issues that the hon. Member has referred to.

As regards ‘tamping’ down or ‘tamping’ up... Was it ‘tamping’ or ‘dumping’?

690 **Mr Speaker:** Dumbing down, he said.

Hon. J J Bossano: Dumping?

695 **Mr Speaker:** Dumbing.

Hon. J J Bossano: I do not understand the terminology.

700 Certainly, my view is the fact that somebody may have, for example, a GCSE in mathematics, does not necessarily make him a better information officer in the coach park and, therefore, the relevance of some of these things is questionable, as far as I am concerned, in being an indicator of how good a civil servant or public servant the person is going to be. In my view, in fact, the more opportunities that we give for everybody to apply, the better – the more choice the employer has and the more chances the individual has to progress.

705 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, I know precisely what your views are in relation to this and, if the Chief Minister allowed you to get your way, precisely what your intentions would be. But I have asked you about Government policy: you are here to explain Government policy.

I am repeating the question –

710 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, Mr Speaker, I... If he –

Hon. D A Feetham: Is there a point of order?

715 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order, the Member is entitled to ask me about the things for which I am responsible. If he says that the Chief Minister will allow me or not allow me to do something which I may or may not like, then in fact what he is saying is that is not my responsibility but the Chief Minister’s responsibility, and therefore he should address the question to him.

I do not set the entry requirements for the Civil Service or anything else, so either he asks me for my *opinion* or he asks the person responsible for the policy.

720 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, just in response to the rather nervous point of order that the hon.

Gentleman has made, the Chief Minister of Gibraltar could very well overrule any Minister in relation to *any* area within his ministerial responsibility, because the Chief Minister of Gibraltar has the authority to do that, so there is no inconsistency between the question that I have asked him and the answer.

725 Is the position this: that the hon. Gentleman himself, his own preference is effectively yes for a dumbing-down of the entrance requirements into the public service? Is that what he is saying?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, I am not saying that, Mr Speaker, because I refuse to allow the hon. Member to put words in my mouth. I will not express myself in the terminology that he uses.

730 What I have said to him is that I myself question the necessity for somebody... For example, if you want an information officer to produce leaflets for tourists, you might decide that you want everybody to have a university degree to do that, but it is questionable whether that is a necessity or whether necessarily the person with the degree would do a better job than one who has not. That is a matter of judgement and a view that I have expressed.

735 I am not responsible for 'dumping' or 'undumping' or upping or lowering anything to do with entry requirements, and therefore, since it is not something that comes under my ministerial responsibility, the hon. Member is not entitled to ask me and I have got no obligation to answer him.

740 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Can he not tell me whether it is Government policy whether the views that he has expressed today to me, very candidly – and I thank him for the candour that he has shown in the answer to the question that I have asked – can he not at least say whether those views represent Government policy, or not?

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I am not here to give him a statement of Government policy in an area over which I am not responsible.

745 I have equally clear views on education, the need for so many lawyers, the medical services, and I can spend a lot of time, if he wants, sharing my views – because, clearly, since he has not had an opportunity to hear it for so many years since he left us, it may be an opportunity to update him – but he knows that my views are fairly steady over the passage of time, so I do not think he should be surprised by anything that I tell him now. But that does not mean that he can try and seek that to convert it into a rift on policy – heaven forbid – between me and anybody else, and the fact that he thinks that the Chief Minister can, at the blink of an eyelid, overrule everybody, does not surprise me at all. He may well have experienced that in practice. *(Laughter)*.

750 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, the signs of a rift between him and the Chief Minister, me says. *(Laughter)*.

755 But look, every time I hit a raw nerve and every time I make the hon. Gentleman nervous with a question, he brings up my political past. I know that the hon. Gentleman is nervous with my questions. In fact, it *gratifies* me that the hon. Gentleman refers to my political past, because I know that my questions are having the desired effect and it is making the hon. Gentleman nervous.

760 But is not the position this: that the hon. Gentleman *does* intend to dumb down entrance requirements to the public service generally, because he has all these people unemployed and all these people on training schemes that he promised, at the last Election, to employ them at the minimum wage? Isn't that the case?

765 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, Mr Speaker, but I am glad that he has now revealed his own twisted thinking on the matter, which has led him to all these questions. Before, I was being candid in giving him my views because I thought this was a genuine exchange and he wanted to know how I felt about something or other. Now it turns out that it had nothing to do with that. What he has now invented, and will no doubt propagate, is that what we are trying to do is to allow everybody, without qualifications, into the public service, as if the public service could absorb another thousand people. That shows –

770 **Hon. D A Feetham:** That's what you promised at the last Election.

775 **Hon. J J Bossano:** That is what *you* say I promised at the last Election, Mr Speaker, and which you said would ruin Gibraltar. So now, first of all, he says I was going to ruin Gibraltar by putting a thousand people in. Then, he attacks me because he says now I am not going to do it anymore and therefore I am going back! And now he goes back to accusing me that I am going to do it and I am now taking the entry qualifications away so that I can put a thousand people in and ruin Gibraltar!

780 Look, Gibraltar is not going to be ruined by anything we do in employment, or in the debt over which you used to be so concerned, or in the management of the public finances. I can tell the hon. Member that if he thinks that my answers are making me nervous and that is why I am reminding him of the contradictions in the statements that he makes and the way that he used to express himself before, then if that is the measure of his powers of analysis he must be as wrong about 99% of the stuff he says as he is wrong about that, because on that point he is completely wrong.

785 He does not make me nervous. I just remind him of things because he chooses to say things that compare the present with the past, and every time he does that I will take advantage of the opportunity that he gives me to also compare his present and his past position. We all have to live with the things we have said before, including him.

Hon. D A Feetham: Indeed we do.

790 Just one final supplementary: does he not accept that all the things that I have said to him about what he promised in the Future Job Strategy – that he *did* say it, that he has not done it and he simply will not concede the point – that is the reality, isn't it?

795 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, I will not concede the point, which is that he chooses to invent what I have said and then expects me to admit it, and he expects me to admit it on the premise, presumably, that if he asks me the same thing enough times he will wear me down and I will eventually say yes. Well, the answer is no, I do not accept *anything* he says. I do not accept...

If he wants me to predict it, I can tell him I will not accept anything he says in the next three and a half years. (*Laughter*)

800 **Clerk:** That concludes answers to Oral Questions.

Questions for Written Answer

805 **Clerk:** Answers to Written Questions, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr. J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the answers to Written Questions 78-94/2012.

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Procedural

815 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move that this House do now adjourn *sine die*.

820 **Mr Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn *sine die*.
I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn *sine die*.
Those in favour. (**Members:** Aye.) Those against. Passed.
This House will now adjourn *sine die*.

The House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.