



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 11.33 a.m. – 2.17 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 8th November 2016

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 11.33 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. A J Canepa GMH OBE *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

OATH OF OFFICE

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, 8th November 2016.
Oath of Office of Minister for Justice, the Hon. Neil Costa.

- 5 **Hon. N F Costa:** I, Neil Francis Costa, do swear that in the Office of Minister with responsibility for justice I will respect the rule of law, defending dependents of the judiciary and discharge my duty to ensure the provision of resources for the efficient and effective support of the courts for which I am responsible, so help me God.

Order of the Day

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Consultation on co-education

- 10 **Clerk:** Order of the Day: Private Members' motions.
The Hon. D A Feetham.

- 15 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, before I move on with my motion, may I congratulate the Hon. Member Neil Costa for his appointment as Minister for Justice and on just taking the Oath. I have to say that it is with great pleasure that I see him doing so. Who would have believed in 2005, when we were both doing cases together at Hassans, that I would be swearing that same Oath and that he would also be swearing that same Oath a few years afterwards. So, on behalf of the Opposition I congratulate the hon. Member on his appointment.

Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

That this House notes that there are no overriding advantages for single-sex schools on educational grounds; acknowledges that there is a compelling case for the view that co-education provides a more realistic way of educating and training young people to take their places naturally in the wider community of men and women; acknowledges that education and ways to improve it must always remain at the top of the political agenda in this community and debate on these issues is important; and calls on the Government to generate

that debate by undertaking a consultation exercise with teachers, the unions, parents, students and other stakeholders to determine the views of the community on this issue.

20 Mr Speaker, at the outset of this debate I would like to say that I recognise that there are studies that expound the benefits of both co-education and single-sex education, even if the balance, in my view, is in favour of the former. I am also prepared to accept, for the purposes of this debate, that the interpretation of the results of studies in the private or public sectors in the United Kingdom and other countries has been hotly debated, resulting in varying policy
25 recommendations based often on the same evidence.

But I believe that there is a compelling case for co-education. It is not surprising that over the last 20 years the number of single-sex schools in the independent sector in the United Kingdom – in other words, what we term ‘public’ schools; private schools would be commonly called public schools – have actually halved in the last 20 years. The time has come for us as a society
30 to debate the issues and the time has come for us to examine whether the decisions taken with the introduction of the comprehensive system in the 1970s to have single-sex comprehensive schools continues to be the best solution for secondary education in Gibraltar.

I hope that this debate on this motion starts that process, because there is no better investment than the investment in the education of our children, and anything that can be done or can potentially be done to improve that education is important and should be at the top of our collective agendas in this House.
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My motion, Mr Speaker, does not seek to impose a view on this House, or anyone else for this matter. What it seeks to do is to generate and start what is a very important debate. But it is my view that there are excellent educational reasons for choosing co-education in a modern
40 Gibraltar. They include the capacity to offer a wide range of subjects equally to boys and girls at comprehensive that is not only beneficial purely from the perspective of offering greater choice and the same choice to students of both sexes, but also helps to break down gender stereotypes when girls and boys see each other studying the same subjects, particularly subjects which have traditionally been associated with girls or boys in the past.

I also believe that education is much more than just the study of maths or history or any other particular subject. It is also about educating and training young people to take their natural place in the wider community of men and women. Male and female students can learn from each other’s perspective and approaches, learn to collaborate, each bringing their styles and opinions to bear in working together. This in itself is an important learning opportunity, in
50 my opinion: it is about preparing young people for the realities of life, and the realities of life include men and women working together. It is not natural to segregate men and women and it is not natural, in our view, to segregate girls and boys during their education. Indeed, we do not segregate girls and boys at junior or middle school, and we do not segregate ourselves from members of the opposite sex after we leave comprehensive school. The views of men and
55 women and their different perspectives on life enrich society, and I believe that diversity would enrich secondary classrooms and better prepare students to move in the real world.

In many respects, Mr Speaker, the segregation of girls and boys at comprehensive school was a response to a very peculiar set of circumstances that existed in the 1970s that do not exist today, or at the very least need to be re-examined today, and I will make that out by referring to the Collister report of July 1974, which is a report produced during the time that Mr Speaker was
60 a member of the then AACR Government. To understand the Collister report – and I think it is important for the House to understand it – one has to start by placing it into context. The Collister report was a report that was commissioned as a consequence of recommendations and a visit by Mr Collister, an education adviser, in June 1973. This is what the report says about Mr Collister’s visit to Gibraltar and what he had to say – and this is at page 2, for any of the
65 Members who have a copy of the report:

Although Mr Collister's main purpose in visiting Gibraltar was to consider the proposed procedure for the implementation of the decision to develop a single comprehensive school on two different sites, he came to the conclusion that it was necessary to reassess the validity of the principle of co-education in the light not only of educational desirability and practicability, but also of the state of public opinion.

70 So, in other words, Mr Speaker, at the time, in 1973, the decision had been taken in principle to have two comprehensive schools in Gibraltar, but they were going to be co-educational schools, and Mr Collister came to Gibraltar in order to advise on whether that was the appropriate model going forward.

I read from the report, page three at the top:

Mr Collister went on to observe that as yet co-education did not appear to be fully acceptable to society. He formed the opinion that although the majority of the members of the Gibraltar's Teachers' Association were in favour of co-education, there was still great and natural apprehension on the part of parents whose traditional background was that of single-sex education. He therefore recommended the postponement of the proposed introduction of co-education in 1974.

75 So, presumably on the basis of his view, in 1973-74 I think was the first comprehensive intake, there was a boys' comprehensive and a girls' comprehensive, but what he recommended was that the matter be re-examined by a working group.

I am reading from the top of page 1 for anybody who wants to follow:

The terms of reference for the working party, as published in the official notice on 12th January 1974, were as follows: 'To make recommendation to Government as to whether secondary education would in future be organised on co-educational lines on a junior high/senior high school basis or continue on the present system of two single-sex separate schools. Any recommendation for change would not take effect until the session of 1976-77 at the earliest.'

The options that the Collister working group were considering are set out at page 6 of the report, at point 2, 'School Options'. It basically said:

We outline the following four options, stating that the working party considered options 1 and 4 as being the most suitable for Gibraltar.

80 Option 1 was one girls' school and one boys' school; option 2, one girls' school, one boys' school, one sixth-form co-ed; option 3, one co-ed school in the north, another in the south; option 4, one co-ed school split on two sites. Basically, those were the options being considered.

85 The first thing that the Collister group did was conduct a very extensive consultation exercise with the public, which I advocate ought to be the approach in the first instance of the Government and which I am inviting the House to agree in the form of my motion. At page 9 of the Collister report one can see the type of consultation exercise that was undertaken and also the results which I am about to set out for the benefit of this House. On page 9 at the top, 'For Public Opinion', the report says:

In our endeavour to inform public opinion about the main issues involved, we published four fact sheets and two opinion or information sheets, a case for co-education and a case for single-sex education. These were published in local newspapers and GBC Radio and Television, and copies were distributed to parents through the schools. Discussions on the subject were held on television. We believe that it may be safely stated that the matter was well and truly placed before the public. The public was then invited to make written or oral representations to the working party.

Mr Speaker, outside in the lobby, told me about the consultation exercise that his Government had undertaken – well, these are the results of the consultation exercise:

Teachers' opinion. The rate of response from teachers was 65%. There were 212 replies. Of the teachers who responded, 67.5% were in favour of a change to co-education, 32.5% in favour of single-sex education.

So the teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of co-education.

Parents' opinion. The rate of response from parents was between 40% and 45%.

90 In other words, Mr Speaker, less than 50% of parents responded to the consultation exercise, but there were still 2,560 replies – quite a lot of replies. Of those parents who responded, 37.7% were in favour of co-education, 60.8% were in favour of single-sex education, and 1.5% were undecided. So parents, although it was less than 50% that responded, were overwhelmingly in favour of single-sex education.

Pupils' opinion. The rate of response was 80% of the secondary school enrolments.

95 That is very high.

There were 1,171 replies. Of those pupils who responded, 54.3% were in favour of co-education

– the majority –

24.2% were in favour of single-sex education, and 21.5% were undecided.

Ex-students' opinion. Only 86 questionnaires were completed. Of these, 75.6% were in favour of co-education, 18.6% were in favour of single-sex education, and 5.8% were undecided.

100 So, Mr Speaker, it is safe to say that in the consultation exercise that was undertaken in 1974 the majority of those that were consulted were in favour of co-education, and those that were against ... really, the only body that was against was parents, of which 40% to 45% responded to the survey but those were the only group who were against co-education, in favour of single-sex education.

Indeed that is reflected as well in a resolution. First, there was a resolution that was passed by the Gibraltar Teachers' Association on 20th May 1974, which read as follows:

Having made an up-to-date study of educational research and practice in European countries, this Association continues to be committed to co-education as the better matrix from which the community of Gibraltar can develop.

105 My understanding – I will be corrected, if I am wrong, by my hon. Friend to my right – is a resolution that continues in fact to have effect and continues to be the position of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association to this day.

Then there was a rival resolution, which was a resolution by the Gibraltar Parents' Association on 25th April 1974, and it read as follows:

That single-sex education at secondary school level be retained.

And then there is a rider to that resolution and it says as follows:

It was generally agreed by the Association that we be prudent to allow for changes in the future when deciding on the type of buildings to be erected.

110 Mr Speaker, the recommendation of the Collister report, as we all know, was that at the time we continued with the recently introduced comprehensive system on a single-sex basis with two separate schools, and the reasons were as follows. I pick it up at page 14, under the title 'Comprehensive Education' – and it says this - and this is really one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, why the Collister report recommended that we continue with single-sex
115 education – it reads as follows:

It has been represented to us, and we accept this, that the change to a comprehensive system in Gibraltar, while desired by the majority in all sectors of opinion, was introduced too quickly and without adequate planning and preparation. This has led to a number of problems in the practical working of the system, in the words of Mr Collister a 'highly sophisticated and complex organism' which those concerned are doing their best to overcome. Apart from this aspect, however, we consider that the system, which is a relatively young one even in Britain,

should be given a chance to develop over the next few years to the point at which genuine comprehensive education is fully available in Gibraltar.

And it continued:

We therefore consider that it would be wrong to impose upon the educational structure as it is at present a further radical change which, even if there were not a substantial body of opinion against it, would be bound to present further difficulties and problems in administration, organisation, training and assimilation.

In other words, this is an education system that had just been introduced, the comprehensive system; it needed bedding down. But of course that which was the main reason in 1974 is no reason at all in 2016.

120 The second reason was this. It talked about the options and then it said:

We have, however, found considerable opposition to option 4.

I remind this House that option 4 was two comprehensive schools on co-educational principles on two different sites in Gibraltar.

Option 4 – one educational school split on two sites. The first major objection was to the creation of one school for as many as 2,000 pupils with all the problems of administration and organisation as well as the difficulties in establishing personal relationships and some feeling of belonging which would arise. Equally cogent was the argument that the physical division was likely to perpetuate a notion of a privileged class of pupils who would move on to the upper school and indeed that such division might dissuade some pupils from staying at school after reaching the age of 15.

125 In other words, it was felt to be divisive to have two schools on co-educational grounds on different sites in Gibraltar – that one could develop a reputation for being better than the other and that it would just simply lead to elitism. Again, it is not a reason, in my respectful view, that can possibly apply today.

And then it says:

And then, third, staff. We have referred above to the need for the full orientation of teachers if a true comprehensive system is to be established. While it would no doubt be possible to take at least some steps to remedy the need for training, etc. before 1977-78 we believe again that it would be unwise to attempt to do so whilst the difficult process of adaptation to the comprehensive system remains incomplete.

The fourth reason was that a majority of parents were against it in Gibraltar. That was the fourth reason that was provided.

130 The reasons are summarised at page 21 at the very top, when the working group reported as follows:

Co-education should not be introduced in Gibraltar at least until (a) present problems are overcome and a truly comprehensive system is fully established; (b) public opinion is in favour; (c) adequate specific and long-term preparation of teaching staff is possible; and (d) two separate co-educational schools are no longer regarded as potentially divisive in social or academic terms.

135 Mr Speaker, I believe that the time has come for this issue to be reopened. I believe that the time has come for a working group on the lines of the Collister working group to be set up today in order to look at this particular issue. And I believe that, above all, the time has come to have profound engagement with parents, with the union, with students and with all relevant stakeholders in order to see whether the public opinions that were expressed in 1974 and so informed the decision of the Collister group and working party at the time, are still public opinions that prevail today. I doubt it very much and I believe that public opinion in Gibraltar would be very much in favour of co-education.

140 I believe that the time has come to be progressive on this issue, the time has come to look forward on this issue and the time has come for us all to embrace a modern outlook to co-

education, and the starting point is the setting up of a working group and the starting point is engagement with the public in order to have a proper debate in relation to this issue.

Mr Speaker, I commend the motion to this House. (*Banging on desks*)

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Mr Speaker: I now propose the question in the terms of the motion moved by the Hon. Mr Feetham. Does any hon. Member wish to speak on the motion?

The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I have listened attentively to the hon. Member. Essentially what he has done is recite a 1970s report (*Laughter*) and come to the conclusion that he does not agree with the conclusion of the 1970s report! But he has here set out his case based on that report, only to say that the report reached the wrong conclusion and that a different conclusion would be reached today. And he has ended by saying, 'Time to reopen the issue, time for a working group to be set up.'

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I do not know how long ago he prepared his speech, but several weeks ago I gave notice by letter to Mr Speaker of a proposed amendment to the motion, which I will come to in a moment when I move the amendment – at the moment I am just replying to the hon. Member, but I am referring to the text of the amended motion which was provided to the hon. Member – which sets out, and I will go into further detail later, that a working group has already been set up. For the hon. Member to come with a prepared speech and say 'You should be doing what you are already doing', when he knows we are already doing it, 'because the report that I have read out almost in its entirety from the 1970s was wrong' simply is to ignore the reality of what is going on today in education in Gibraltar.

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But, Mr Speaker, I want to start my contribution to this debate by setting out the Government's position and setting it out as clearly as I can. This was certainly my own personal position when I was Minister for Education and it is the Government's position as a whole. It is quite simply and quite clearly that we have an open mind. The Government does not currently have a firm view on whether secondary education in Gibraltar should continue to be offered in single-sex schools or in a co-educational environment, so we have an open mind. And in fact I have had that open mind and I have had these discussions with professionals at the Department of Education since December 2011 when we were first elected into Government and I took over the Education portfolio. So this is not a debate that is new; this is a debate that has been going on for some time – and yes, we do have that open mind. But having said that, Mr Speaker, one thing is absolutely clear, even though we have an open mind: we must not change for the sake of change. There must be good reasons. There must be sound educational arguments and educational reasons for co-education for a change such as this, to introduce co-education, to be made.

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It is worth noting I recall a few weeks ago a contributor to the letters column in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* who wrote specifically on this subject, having heard the hon. Member saying that he was going to propose a motion on co-education, and referring in that letter to the good results that we get from both Bayside and Westside., he simply said, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' What we have, Mr Speaker, is a system that by and large works well. Of course the system can be improved, and we have made improvements to the system. We are constantly looking at ways in which to improve our children's education, and we have done so. We have removed inequalities which existed during all the time that the GSD was in office.

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Because the hon. Member in his contribution says there are excellent educational reasons for going co-ed, having premised his arguments by saying that he feels there is a compelling case for co-education, and he proclaims there are excellent educational reasons – and I sat patiently hoping to hear those excellent educational reasons. In fact, I thought we were going to get a list of those excellent educational reasons. We got one matter. One point was made, and that is all that was made, in respect of the excellent educational reasons for going co-educational – just

one in his entire contribution: greater choice of subjects. I have got it written down: greater choice of subjects.

195 And then he went on to talk of social reasons, like preparing young people for life in an environment where people are going to be mixing male and female and we should do that – but those are social reasons. But when he said ‘excellent co-educational reasons’ I really wanted to hear what they were, because it is important for the debate, not just because I wanted to have the benefit of hearing them.

200 Greater choice of subjects. The hon. Member will know that during his time in office there was less choice of subjects in our comprehensive schools. The hon. Member will know that they had a system in place whereby, for GCSEs, where students did not get the grades they wanted, there was one system for Westside and a different system for Bayside. Whereby Westside students were offered the opportunity of a repeat year. Of those who wanted to improve their grades at GCSE level, being able to stay on for that extra year at GCSE level and do repeats of
205 some of the subjects they wanted to improve in, plus a couple of additional subjects which were offered to be done in that particular year ... That existed for Westside and not for Bayside, and that existed during their time.

Now, I say what on earth has that got to do ...? That has to do with choice of subjects – of course it has to do with choice of subjects. It has to do with ability to opt for certain
210 improvement and have subject choice at schools. There was a choice to be made at Westside but no choice to be made at Bayside during their time. We corrected that and, as a matter of policy, I gave an instruction that that had to be corrected and a repeat-year facility had to be introduced in Bayside. We did it and it exists – it now co-exists in both schools. That choice of subjects, that opportunity is available in both schools because we did it, not because they did it.

215 But when the hon. Member talks of excellent educational reasons and choice of subjects, I have to ask myself – particularly on that example that I have given of some inequality that existed in Westside and Bayside – what on earth has that got to do with gender? What on earth has that got to do with whether the school is single sex or a mixed school? Or is it that somebody decided at some stage we are only going to do this for Westside because they are
220 girls? It has got nothing to do with the gender argument, it has got nothing to do with the mixed school argument, it has got nothing to do with the single school argument. All it has to do is that somebody at some point decided that in Westside they were going to introduce this facility – not because they were girls, but they were going to do it in Westside and not in Bayside.

225 The same could have happened if it had been co-educational. It would have happened in one school and not in the other and we introduced it in the other so that everybody across the board in Gibraltar – regardless of sex, regardless of gender, regardless of whether you were in a single school environment or a mixed school environment – had the same choice.

230 And we did the same again this year in particular having started working on it previously with A-level subjects, something which the hon. Members have been harping on about for some time and have been asking me for some time. And asking me in the knowledge that the inequality that existed in choice of subjects between Bayside and Westside existed during their time and they did precious little to correct it. It fell to us to put in a new system.

235 It fell to us to put in a new system, which I announced and which has now been fully implemented, whereby the whole list of options at secondary level which is available in Gibraltar is offered to everyone, regardless of whether you are a boy or a girl, regardless of whether you are in Bayside or Westside. And I explained the reasons why in some cases some subjects are offered in one school and not in the other.

240 And one of the reasons I explained was demand – numbers. If we had five students wanting to do a particular subject, a class of ten, does it make sense to have that subject replicated in two schools? Particularly where in a particular subject there may be issues with subject specialisation and availability of subject specialists whereby if they are used in both schools to teach that subject, they may not be released to teach other things or to do other things at different levels.

245 We introduced a system to create that greater choice across the board. But again, that has absolutely nothing to do with whether you are a boy or a girl or which school you attend to. It so happened that certain schools had certain demand and certain subject specialists and those subjects were offered in that particular school, whether it was Bayside or Westside. The same could have happened in a co-educational environment.

250 So this is quite simply a red herring – greater choice of subjects. Or does the hon. Member think that because you have got co-education in both schools, that necessarily has to mean that a subject on which there is little demand has to be offered in both schools the same, just because it is co-education and co-education fixes everything? Well, it does not. Quite simply, if there is co-education and you have got a subject in one particular school, whoever wants to do that subject goes to that school. It is not as if they have to travel from Penzance to the Isle of Wight to do that. They have to travel barely a kilometre more to go from one school to the other.

260 So whether you go to one school in Gibraltar or not is not really the issue and we have introduced a scheme whereby if you are a boy and you choose subjects which are offered in Westside, you go to Westside and that seems to be working well. So in effect we have introduced co-education not by policy or by design for the sake of co-education but through the element of subject choice which is the one sound, or the excellent the only excellent educational reason which the hon. Member is able to come up with in terms of the reason for his compelling case on co-education.

265 So, Mr Speaker, the bottom line is no change for the sake of change. We must be satisfied that there are, and the hon. Member is right on this, we must be satisfied as to the educational reasons that exist; that the educational arguments exist to make that change necessary or desirable. That must be, and that is, the Government's starting position.

270 Having said that, Mr Speaker, of course we acknowledge that there is a debate to be had. There is a debate going on not just in Gibraltar but elsewhere in relation to co-education. And because we acknowledge that there is a debate to be had is the reason why we have initiated the debate.

So the hon. Member, when he comes and says we bring this motion in order to initiate the debate, seems to ignore what we said in our last manifesto, precisely on this issue, whereby in the foreword on the section Education it says, and I quote:

Is co-education a good or bad idea for the Comprehensive schools ... ?'

275 We asked the question: is co-education a good or a bad idea? That is the start of the debate, a manifesto provision. And it goes on to say:

This must also be reviewed dispassionately and on a non-partisan basis by experts.

280 So we have initiated the debate and we do clearly acknowledge that it needs to be looked at by experts, there is obviously a consultation process to be carried out. But of course we also have to acknowledge that this is not a new debate. This is not something that is springing out of the air as if nothing has existed before. The hon. Member has referred to a 1970s report only to dismiss the conclusion, as I said.

285 It may be said that circumstances change, views change and what may have been looked at in the 1970s *may* not be entirely relevant today. But the hon. Member in referring to the report of 1974 said that in 1973 a decision had been made in principle to have two comprehensive schools which should be co-education, as I understood the hon. Member (*Interjection*) and he said that in fact what then happened was that we continued with single-sex education at comprehensive level.

In fact comprehensive schools on a single-sex basis had been introduced before that. It started in 1972. Mr Linares and myself were part of the first intake at Bayside, the very first

290 intake. (*Interjection*) September 1972 was the very first intake for the comprehensive schools and we were the first group in Bayside in that year.

But it was not anything new. Bayside took over a school which was already a secondary school: the Lourdes School was housed in that particular building and that as I recall, Mr Speaker will recall, was a boys' school. We also had the Grammar School which was a boys' school. We
295 also had St Jago's, which was a boys' school – all this pre-comprehensive system and then we had the Loreto system for the girls.

So it was not the comprehensive system that was brought in and it was decided that that should be the start of this division and the creation of single sex education in Gibraltar, that preceded that and what happened at the time was simply a continuation at a comprehensive
300 level, in a comprehensive environment, of single sex education at secondary level which already existed in Gibraltar.

And yes, it is true that a debate was had in the 1970s and yes, it is true that a debate has continued – not just now, it has continued throughout the years. The hon. Member, I do not know if he is aware, during the time of the GSD in office, a decision was actually made by the
305 GSD to go co-ed. I do not know if he is aware of that. The Government of which he was part – not sixth form as he is suggesting, a decision to go co-ed was made by the GSD administration.

And in the 1970s, the report that the hon. Member has referred to also talks of a working group. The GSD itself set up a committee to look at this but not to look at whether co-education should be introduced, but on the basis that a decision had been taken by the previous
310 administration to actually bring in co-education and the committee was simply set up to advise on implementation measures, how it was to be done.

And that happened in 1976, Mr Speaker. That committee produced an interim report. The interim report started by saying –

315 **A Member:** In 2006. You said 1976.

Hon. G H Licudi: Sorry, 2006. Did I say 1976? Not 1976; 2006. The GSD had not even been conceived at that time!

In 2006 there was an interim report headed, 'Co-education at Secondary Level'. Paragraph 1:

Following Government's commitment to introduce co-education at secondary level, a Steering Committee was set up to recommend to Government on the way of implementing such a move.

320 That was a decision that was taken at the time by the GSD administration – admittedly before the hon. Member was a member of the Government, but by 2007 he was a member of the Government. I am not sure why he was not pushing this agenda. He would have been pushing at an open door. A decision had already been made, a Steering Committee had already been set up and made recommendations to the Government. All that was needed was the Minister for
325 Education to be tasked with implementing that procedure. That would have happened at a time that the hon. Member was in office as a Minister of the Government.

Or did he not know what the rest of the Government was doing? Perhaps they did not have cabinet discussions as we do (*Laughter*) on a regular basis and no-one knew what the other was doing. That is certainly the impression that we get.

330 So this interim report actually lists advantages in keeping six single-sex schools at secondary level; and it lists disadvantages in keeping single-sex schools at secondary level. And even then, one of the items used, which for the reasons I espoused previously, I dispute as a reason as to whether to maintain single sex or go co-ed – one of the reasons is, the current system is inflexible in respect of subject choices offered to students. That is in the 2006 report.

335 So in 2006, the GSD itself was acknowledging it had an inflexible system in terms of subject choice and they seemed to think that the answer was co-education. They did not introduce co-education and did not fix the issue of subject choice. We did, without introducing co-education.

The report ends by saying:

These interim proposals are presented for consideration by the Minister in order (a) to encourage further discussion in a different direction or (b) accept present recommendations and request detailed proposals.

340 But the premise of this report was, as I have said, following Government's commitment to introduce co-education at a secondary level.

345 So it was his Government that made this decision and decided – for what reasons I really do not know, Mr Speaker – that it would not go ahead and implement co-education even though there was an interim report which already set that out. It seems that is where that ended, at least at that time, until more modern times. It appears that a decision was taken not to proceed even though a commitment had apparently already been given, or at any rate no decision to proceed was taken but the matter did not go ahead.

So the hon. Member comes to this House today with a motion seeking to generate a debate and he sets out his own views in seeking to generate that debate, and that includes his own view that there is a compelling case.

350 Mr Speaker, one of the main problems with the hon. Member's motion – and it seems to me that it is intrinsically contradictory – is that it starts:

THIS HOUSE NOTES that there are no overriding advantages for single-sex schools on co-educational grounds.

355 So the hon. Member is asking this House to generate a debate, but to answer the question before the debate is happening: to note that there are no overriding advantages to single-sex schools, to come to that conclusion today, that is what the hon. Member is seeking this House to do and then to generate a debate. It seems like putting the cart before the horse.

Because then in the second paragraph he says:

Acknowledges that there is a compelling case for the view that co-education provides a more realistic way of educating and training young people ...

360 So he asks the House to acknowledge that there is a compelling case. So if we note that there is no advantage to single-sex education and we acknowledge that there is a compelling case for co-education, why would we not do it? That would be the end of the debate, one would have thought. This House having resolved that this is a good idea, this is good for Gibraltar, this is good for young people in terms of their education and their training, and if we resolve that, then we simply have to talk about implementation, not about generating a debate, which is what the hon. Member is then asking in the motion that we should do. So it seems to us that it is inconsistent for Parliament to be asked to take a particular view and then simply to call for a debate.

365 And so, Mr Speaker, because we do not believe that the hon. Member's motion sets out a proper, a valid or realistic position for this House to take, we are and I am proposing in particular, an amendment to the motion.

370 Mr Speaker, I would draw your attention to a letter of 13th October which I sent to Mr Speaker, asking or indicating that I would be moving an amendment to this particular motion by removing the words after 'THIS HOUSE' and replacing them with the text which appears attached to the letter.

In the text of the amended motion, if passed, would read like this:

THIS HOUSE

Acknowledges that Education and ways to improve it must always remain at the top of the political agenda in this community.

Notes that there are educational arguments both in favour and against co-education for Gibraltar's comprehensive schools.

Notes that the GSLP/Liberal manifesto for the 2015 elections posed the question whether co-education is a good idea or a bad idea for the comprehensive schools and provided a commitment to review this dispassionately and on a non-partisan basis by experts.

Acknowledges that in keeping with this commitment, the Government has already set up a working group made up of teachers, officials at the Department of Education, Union officials and parents to report to the Government by March 2017 on co-education for the comprehensive schools, with the following terms of reference:

(1) To advise HM Government of Gibraltar on the advantages and disadvantages of the current and mixed co-education models for the comprehensive schools in Gibraltar.

(2) To make recommendations on whether secondary education at the comprehensive schools in Gibraltar is best delivered using a mixed or single gender model.

(3) To make recommendations on possible implementation scenarios.

(4) To make recommendations on an appropriate consultation model to ensure that the views of the relevant stakeholders are taken into account.

And notes that the working group's report will form the basis of a consultation by the Government with all relevant stakeholders before a decision is taken on whether co-education is to be introduced in the comprehensive schools and, if so in what form.

375 So you see, Mr Speaker, we are not just generating the debate, we are acting on our commitment. We are acting on our view that there is a valid question to be posed and that there is an analysis to be made not just on a rhetorical or philosophical question of single sex versus mixed schools, but whether it is good or bad for Gibraltar.

380 Because the hon. Member in his contribution also highlighted the fact, he stated it as a fact that in the UK most comprehensive schools are mixed, co-educational. (*Interjection*) Well it is a fact that in the public sector in the UK there are quite a number of mixed co-educational schools and where you have got one school serving a particular borough and that borough necessarily has boys and girls, you have to have a school that caters for the children in that borough, rather than two different schools in the same sector or the same region. The position has traditionally been different in Gibraltar.

385 But certainly there are things that need to be looked at, firstly is it a good or is it a bad idea for Gibraltar? Does it work and how is it going to work best? So we have to have a working group with a realistic timescale and what I consider to be a rather short timescale, we have asked the working group to report by the end of March 2017 so that then any consultation process can be looked at.

390 The working group will need to advise the Government on the type of consultation that will be carried out and one of the terms of reference is also to look at implementation models – if indeed co-education is recommended. That is because there are a number of practical and infrastructural issues to be considered. We will have to look at – if and when co-education is introduced – at what level? Is it introduced at sixth-form level and that is it? Is it introduced at sixth-form level initially and then working down?

400 There are issues of catchment areas. There are issues of the fact, as I indicated, when we moved into Bayside, as a first comprehensive intake, it was already a boys' school. I do not know whether it was originally designed as a boys' school but certainly it looked like a boys' school because there were not facilities for boys and for girls. Toilet facilities, shower facilities, these are practical issues that have to be looked at. You cannot just decide overnight, 'Let's go co-ed', and click your fingers and it happens.

405 The other practical issue is that whatever model is used or recommended, if indeed co-education is recommended, is that there are examination cycles and there will be boys and girls who will have already started on that cycle, usually a two-year cycle. What you cannot do is disrupt that cycle. So do you start from the top down at sixth-form? Do you start from the bottom up at eighth form? But what you certainly cannot do is change Years 10 and 11 where they are already involved in a cycle of education geared for certain exams.

410 So there are clearly matters to be considered, a multitude of issues to be considered, practical and infrastructural issues, catchment area issues, as well as the education issues which are what have to be at the core of the decision in the first place.

Now it is true and the hon. Member has alluded to this, that there are some educators, some professionals in the field who do feel that there is a compelling case for co-education, and others feel precisely the opposite and both cite arguments and both cite advantages and disadvantages in favour of their case. The debate has really been quite polarised one way or the other.

415 The reason why the Government has this open mind is precisely because it is not an open and shut case, and that is evident from all the studies that have been carried out. I have had the very useful advantage of being provided with a thesis dated April 2016, from this precise year, by Christopher Cortes, who happens to be a nephew of our current Minister for Education.

420 Mr Cortes was a teacher at Bayside and Head of Music was given a sabbatical in order to do a Master of Science in Education in the United States. The basis of that Master of Science was a Master's project culminating in a thesis. The title of the thesis was 'The Perceived Impact of Single Gender Instruction in Catholic Schools and the Ecclesiastical province of Cincinnati'. So although the title relates to Catholic Schools, it is about the impact of single gender education.

425 And essentially what this was, was a Master's thesis on the single sex versus mixed school debate. What Mr Cortes has done is drawn a multitude of studies, both in the US and internationally, precisely on this issue. One of the reasons why this is particularly useful is that it reflects current thinking. It reflects modern studies that have been carried out internationally and which looks at ... it does not clearly look at the position in Gibraltar, but it informs the debate as to educational thinking on this current debate of single sex versus mixed schools environment.

430 One of the things Mr Cortes does in his thesis is to ask the questions: 'Do teachers perceive single sex classrooms to be effective? Do they believe that gender separation can have a positive or negative impact on students' development? What are their opinions about gender based instruction? Do they consider single sex pedagogy useful when they are instructing students?' Those are the basic questions that were asked as part of this study.

435 What he does and I am quoting from his report, is:

'provide an overview of multiple studies that have been designed to test whether single sex instruction has had an impact on student achievements, self-efficacy, behaviour or other important educational and social factors. The research contains an equal number of resources that support and reject single gender classes and schools'.

And just to give a flavour of the elements of the research that exists and which are quoted in this Master's thesis, Mr Cortes quotes a 2011 study, where they explicitly stated that research on the benefits of single gender pedagogy was inconclusive; a 2012 study where they stated that the differences found between single-sex and co-educational learning were insignificant – a fairly recent study, 2012.

440 Another 2011 study where they concluded the differences in academic achievement in single-sex schools had more to do with student selection and peer quality than gender.

445 A 2009 study, where they concluded that single-sex pedagogy was beneficial to foreign languages courses, especially for males. In 2008, where they stated that although research regarding single sex was largely inconclusive, there was conclusive evidence to say that it was beneficial for girls and minorities.

450 A 2006 study where it was stated that single sex pedagogy was highly recommended; a 2008 study where they stated that multiple studies had shown that single-sex education was extremely useful in raising the achievement levels of students.

455 If there is one thing clear about all these studies, it is that the research is essentially inconclusive. If you want to argue one particular way and find a piece of research by professional educators, by people in the field who have carried out proper analysis, you will be able to find something that supports your point of view. You will equally be able to support something that supports the other end of the spectrum and you will equally be able to support something that says everything is inconclusive.

So we have research that suggests that everything is inconclusive, to differences between single sex and co-educational models being insignificant, to single-sex education raising

achievement levels. Therefore what seems to me that this demonstrates is that there is no
460 compelling case one way or the other.

But the issue that really falls to be determined, the issue that we need to decide – yes, having
regard to all these international studies and what educators round the world have already done
and considered and are of the view – is this still a good idea for Gibraltar? Is this something that
is going to improve our present system? We have a system that delivers very good results,
465 excellent results.

We all came out in August congratulating our students, our teachers, the schools, the efforts,
the parents and the effort everybody makes in achieving the results that we achieve in Gibraltar.
We have a system that works. Should we change that? By all means we should change that if
there are good educational reasons for change.

470 So at the end of the day, Mr Speaker, we are talking of a debate which is quite simply a
perennial debate and it is charged. It is a debate that is charged with emotive arguments on
both sides. We have many head teachers and experts ultimately believing that there are more
important factors that influence the quality of education than in fact gender issues. There are
strong pros and cons for both single sex and for mixed schools. And the choice between co-
475 educational and single-sex schooling is certainly something that could have important
implications for young people in terms of their academic, their psychological and their social
development. That is something that we acknowledge.

And what we should not do is quite simply restrict the debate to simply academic
performance. That is something that we should not do. If we do that, it would appear to favour
480 girls in a single-sex environment. But that is not the end of the story because the reality is
certainly much more complex.

We have academic performance which is also linked not just to gender but the quality of the
school, the leadership in a particular school, the quality of the teaching and it is also inextricably
linked to the support that students receive at home. That is an important message that we also
485 have to drive through: children at all levels receiving good support at home.

There are in Gibraltar, and turning the argument to Gibraltar itself, a number of factors that
can be considered which are both pros, or advantages and disadvantages of single sex and co-
education. And when we look through a list of factors, it is difficult at this stage at least to come
to the conclusion that one is better than the other. It is possible to come to the conclusion that
490 neither is best, but we still have to find what the best model is for Gibraltar.

One of the factors to be considered at a Gibraltar level is that the Gibraltar College went co-
educational many years ago, and certainly there have been no detrimental effects on that. Now
we have, as I already explained, a sixth form that operates on the premise that it can work on a
mixed gender basis, because of the introduction of wider subject choice for everybody. So we
495 already have that.

And the issues as I have already alluded to, may well not be simply ‘do we do it?’ but ‘how do
we do it?’ There are infrastructural issues, practical issues, issues for example workshops which
are different in the two schools, kitchens are different in the two schools, toilet and showering
facilities which currently do not cater for both boys and girls.

500 Mr Speaker, we can go through a list of advantages and disadvantages and it does not lead us
to any particular conclusion. So what is necessary, and what we feel was the right way to
proceed, was to consider the issue for Gibraltar, to look at the system that exists in Gibraltar at
the moment; to put together a working group as we have done already, to report to the
Government by March 2017 on whether, as a matter of principle, we should proceed on a co-
505 educational basis or not and whether if we do so, or what if any changes should be made, either
at a school level, infrastructural level, Department of Education level, catchment areas level,
there is a plethora of issues to be considered.

But all that, Mr Speaker, is encapsulated in the amended motion which recognises that we
have already initiated that debate, which recognises that there are arguments both in favour
510 and against co-education, which recognises that we have already made inroads by setting up the

working group, which recognises that we have given terms of reference to that working group which are designed not to just come up with a question of if, but how. And also for the working group to advise on the consultation that is best to be carried out in Gibraltar.

515 Mr Speaker, for all those reasons, I commend the amended motion to this House. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: Does any hon. Member wish to speak on the amendment proposed by the Hon. Mr Gilbert Licudi? I think all hon. Members have a copy of the amendment.

520 The Hon. Roy Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, this debate, although as the Hon. Minister has described it as perennial, has taken a long time as far as I am aware to actually be discussed openly in this House. And he is right, there are arguments for and against and this is precisely why we should be having this debate. I personally welcome the creation of a working group. However, I must admit I seem to have missed the Government Press Release announcing the date of the creation of this working group and who the members of this working group are.

525 I note that in his motion he said it is made up of teachers, officials of the Department of Education, union officials and parents, but which union and which parents from which schools? (*Interjection*) Only one union?

530 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Yes, the Teachers' Association.

Hon. R M Clinton: Okay, well, you could have actually said so.

535 As I was saying, Mr Speaker, this working group is obviously such an important group because it will determine the educational future of our children and we do not even know who the members of this group are. (*Interjection*) Well, I am about to. I am about to ask the Minister if he would at least publish the names of the members of this working group. (**A Member:** Why?)

540 Well, because, Mr Speaker, otherwise this, unfortunately if the public is not told when this group was set up and who its members are, we can only conclude that this group is meeting in secret and is a secret committee. (*Laughter*) Well, you may laugh. You may laugh, but we do not know the members of this group who are determining a very important educational decision. We can only conclude it is a secret group set up by the Minister.

And I hear sighs from the opposite side of this House.

545 **Hon. G H Licudi:** You hear laughs.

Hon. R M Clinton: Well fine, laughs, sighs, groans, whichever. But, Mr Speaker, the actual original working group, the Collister working group which published their report in 1974, everybody knew who the members of this working group were. People could talk to them, people could write in to them, they invited consultation.

550 Your working group is going to make recommendations on very important matters to the Government and the public do not even know who they are. So, Mr Speaker, my first premise would be, I think it would be only a courtesy to the community for the Minister to actually issue a press release to the public stating that he has set up a working group on whatever date it was – I certainly hope it predates the date of my learned colleague's motion – to look into these matters and when these terms of reference were actually issued.

560 And, Mr Speaker, I note looking at his amendment to the motion, and this is where I will take a view, not from the point of view of the educationalists, not from the point of view of the unions or the parents, or the Government or the Opposition, but the students themselves. My learned colleague in his motion at least had the courtesy to include the word 'students'. The Minister's working group does not include them. So obviously the very people that we are going to affect the most are not even part of this working group. (*Interjections*) Perhaps the Minister

565 can correct me if I am wrong, in that there are no students represented in this working group, which is a very important working group considering the future of education in Gibraltar and they are the most affected parties and they certainly have a real interest.

Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I actually found an education handbook from the Gibraltar Teacher's Association from 1985-86, and to my surprise I found in there an address from the 1985 International Year of the Youth and there was an address by a sixth former, and I will quote and this is from 1985, so more than 30 years ago. I quote:

It is frustrating to see that we have not been given the opportunity to air our views on internal politics that will directly or indirectly affect our future. The apparently controversial topic of co-education we feel, should be resurrected and seriously discussed. The antiquated idea that dismissed co-education in favour of a segregated system are perfect examples of the older generation's views on youth in general. From an educational, social and economic point of view, there are numerous advantages to be found in the co-educational system as opposed to a segregated one. All that stands in the way of progress is a vote taken more than a decade ago by the adults at the time.

570 As we know that was 1974. And it goes on:

Come let us have a re-vote and let us ask the students to take that vote, for we will be and have been affected by such a vote. Remember it is we the youth who will take this world into the 21st century. Therefore let us be given more respect, understanding and attention, the negative ideas associated with youth be thrown out and be replaced with new sensible ones.'

Mr Speaker, to my surprise, I find I wrote that myself in 1985, in the year of the youth (*Laughter*) as a sixth former (*Banging on desks*) at the tender age of 18!

575 And so, Mr Speaker, this is not a view that I have just come to today. This is a view I held 30 years ago and it has taken 30 years – (*Interjection*) Well, thereabouts, plus or minus, at least a quarter of a century. It has taken at least a quarter of a century for it to come to this House and have a serious debate about it, and that I think should be welcomed. But I think that in terms of the student population, they should not be ignored, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) whether it be sixth-form head boys and girls, whether by the Gibraltar Students' Association or some other representative body. They should be allowed to have their say and have their input in it. And it is not to say they may even think it is a good idea. They may prefer it stays as it is. In fact I took a straw poll of my stepchildren and they both said 'No, we actually like it as it is.' So, it is a real open question.

580 But let us not close our minds by educational reports or what was said more than 30 years ago in 1974. Let us have a genuine open debate, an open and frank discussion with all the stakeholders, not just a few select individuals who we do not know the names of as yet and I would urge the Government to include in the definition of stakeholders, certainly the students. Even the Collister report, 1974 at least had the courtesy to survey existing pupils and past pupils.

590 And so, Mr Speaker, what I would say in his motion if he is so minded, although obviously I have not given notice of an amendment, if he might want to include students in his working group, or at least perhaps consider in future to include students in his working group, purely as a matter of courtesy, especially on what is a subject which may be with us for the next 30 years, who knows? I think it is only right, fair and proper that the students in this community be allowed to make a contribution and an input to this working group which the Government has set up of its own accord.

595 Mr Speaker, a lot has been made of a report that was issued in 1974 and I think it is right and proper that the general public understand fully why it is that we have the system we have today and it is right and proper that the conclusions of this report, the reasoning as to how we have the system we have today came to be, is put in the public domain again.

600 Because this is... I will be perfectly honest, I found this report – and Members opposite will laugh – I found this report on e-bay! This is not something you can just walk into a Gibraltar book

shop and say, 'Can I have a copy of the Collister Report?' No it is well out of print – I will obviously make it available to anybody who wants a copy.

I think it is well and proper that the general public are made aware of what the strength of public feeling was at the time, the rationale at the time, how we came to be where we are today and they have to be properly informed, as does the working group and I am sure the working group will have had a copy of this report for its own use. Also, I think that the working group, when it comes to consider the consultation models, would do well to look at what the Collister group did.

They did a very extensive consultation process, they even have in their report, examples of the leaflets as they did in the time before social media, leaflets written in fact in both English and Spanish as to the whole consultation process. It is in fact quite a valuable document from, if not a historic point of view, certainly a social point of view in terms of our development as a people.

And so, Mr Speaker, what I would urge the Government is do not ignore the students themselves. We can have a big debate about the academics of it, about the educational value, but let us not forget the students. Let them have a voice as well in this debate.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Dr John Cortes, the present Minister for Education.

Hon. Dr J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I would like first of all to thank the hon. and learned Gilbert Licudi for contributing his wealth of knowledge which he has acquired over the past five years as the outgoing Minister for Education. *(Banging on desks)* **(Several Members:** Hear, hear.)

What a contrast, Mr Speaker, in presentation and research between what we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition quoting a report almost half a century old as the only substance which he did not agree with anyway, and the hon. Mr Clinton, a report 30 years old, with the wealth of information that we have heard and the analytical way in which my hon. Friend has presented his moving of the amendment.

Mr Speaker, I can confirm as the incoming Minister for Education that the Government position and my own, is as stated by the Hon. Mr Licudi. His team now passes on to me and we will seamlessly continue the process that he has already started. In order to reassure the hon. Member opposite, I was given a briefing over two weeks ago when I changed responsibilities and took over Education, which included the names of the people who were members of this working group. I do not recall them all now, but it is not going to be secret in any way.

And as a former Chairman of the then extremely progressive Gibraltar Union of Students, I will obviously make sure that the students view– not just school students, but also people who have recently been students in the comprehensive schools – have their views heard, absolutely.

So, Mr Speaker, I look forward to the work of the working group, to working with them, to their conclusions and to the broader consultation so that we can reach a decision based on current advice and not advice half a century old. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker: Is there any other? The Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, they say history has a habit of repeating itself, a maxim that is very much at the forefront of my mind at this particular moment, because over 40 years ago, my father and many others around him, including yourself, Mr Speaker, took to this Chamber to discuss the contentious issue of co-education, as the comprehensive system started to peer over a distant horizon.

Many views were sought and powerful arguments made, both in favour and against, with co-education very much on the table. With hindsight, however, I think many of us feel that the decision to separate boys and girls in school as from the age of 12 was probably a mistake.

Today many decades later we are still feeling the effects of this error to the extent that to reverse it would require significant changes to both Bayside and Westside.

655 Perhaps the long awaited new building for Bayside, and ideally for Westside as well, will provide us with the opportunity to wipe away the past and guarantee a co-educational future for our students.

I am therefore pleased that this motion has been presented, asking the Government to conduct a detailed study into the possibility, and I was also pleased to note the Government's inception of a working group with this topic in mind. Although, Mr Speaker, I am sorry to hear 660 that the Minister for Education at the time of the last election promised GCSE and A-level students, shortly after a *Viewpoint* on the subject of co-education, to meet monthly – something which to date has not materialised and something I consider a wasted opportunity where the engagement of our youngsters who are the most affected are concerned.

And as important as it is to maintain links with students, teachers and parents on views about 665 co-education, the prospect of co-education must not be allowed to detract from matters which are even more important in the day-to-day management of schools and teaching of lessons. While less crowd pleasing and headline grabbing, these urgent issues are far more pressing within our educational system. They include buildings and maintenance of course but also resources and funding, teacher accountability, teacher morale and attendance, curriculum 670 provision, issues within human resources, parental support, staff training, extended service incentives and definitely a closer relationship between the Department of Education and a more proactive Social Services structure.

These issues more accurately represent the real challenges faced by teachers and students alike, and while I welcome the ideology behind this motion, I feel that a similar focus should be 675 given to these priorities. Otherwise a cosmetic change will only lead to another mistake, one which again may take generations to reverse.

Thank you.

680 **Mr Speaker:** Any other contribution to the debate?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): On the amendment, Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker: On the amendment. What is now before the House is the Hon. Gilbert Licudi's motion. Okay, any other contribution? If there is not, I will call upon the mover to reply.

685 Yes, the Hon. Steven Linares.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, as a former President of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, I feel compelled to go into this debate, because when I was the President of the GTA during the 690 time 1992-93, I remember bringing a motion to the floor of the GTA in order to say that co-education should be what we should have in our schools. That means, I was in favour of co-education.

Therefore, it was the floor that actually passed a motion and it was to do in reference to the 1975-76 report because they thought at the time – and we were talking about 1992-93 – they thought that report was a bit old and past and dated. Therefore the floor brought a motion 695 which was unanimously passed and therefore it was for the executive to negotiate with Government and pursue co-education.

What happened, Mr Speaker, was that I as the President started negotiations with the then Government about co-education and I went back to the Members, especially – then it was the boys' and girls' comprehensive, now Bayside and Westside – that the staff themselves were a bit 700 apprehensive about how co-education was going to affect their working conditions.

Therefore, I went back to each school and their staff and I said, 'Look, if you are not really convinced about trying to forward co-education, there is a motion which the executive has to

follow', and I wanted to follow, but it was the staff that were reluctant in me as the President to follow co-education.

705 One of the issues was, was it educationally sound to have co-education and therefore what we did on the committee at the time, we got a couple of us within the committee to research and find out whether there were sound educational motives why we should have co-education. Mr Speaker, as it has been said here, there are no educational advantages or disadvantages about having co-education so it is not that we should change just for the sake of changing. It is important that whatever we do – and I have declared that I am still an advocate of co-education
710 – it is no good just to change our system if it is working, just because I believe in co-education. It has to have an educational and the most important educational arguments and therefore it is not conclusive.

I welcome that we are going to have yet another committee which is going to look at it. I am sure that the conclusions will be along the lines of what we have been saying, that there is no conclusive educational reasons why we should have co-education, but for me, it is an issue that I have been trying to follow for years and years. And yet having children, and having in my case two girls that have gone through the education system and gone to Westside and now a boy who is obviously going to go to Bayside, I am convinced that as a parent what I want is that they
720 have a sound education. Whether they are united as girls and boys, for me is irrelevant.

I think what we need to look at is what the professionals are saying and in the case when I was then President in 1992-93 was that it was going to affect the challenges that boys and girls together were going to have and basically that then the girls were doing much better than the boys.

725 So are we going to risk those things? Anyway, all I wanted to say was that I look forward to the working committee to look into co-education because like I say, I am an advocate of co-education but I will not have it blindly. I will not go blindly for co-education if it is going to affect our society. Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

730 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Lawrence Llamas.

Hon. L F Llamas: Mr Speaker, I believe that co-education is one of the components in modernising our children's secondary educational system. Additionally, we should be also taking the opportunity, whilst reforming our school buildings, to reform our educational system radically at the same time.
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If we look at the Finnish style of education, one of the leading educational countries in the world, they actually emphasise on respect of each child's individuality and the chance for each child to develop as a unique person. They also prioritise the need to grow socially and grow their interactive skills, to be aware of people's needs and to care about others. It is a very positive and relaxed approach to education when compared to the more rigid system we have here in Gibraltar. Instead of a controlled, competitive and stressful standardised method of testing, they enjoy a highly professionalised teacher-led encouragement and method of assessment.
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I feel we place too much pressure on our young children and at a very young age, due to the approach that we currently have. The system does not place a need to study at university level. University entry is a far more rigid system and the opportunities in the economy arise through vocational and academic training achieved prior to a university entry age.
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I believe that whilst we are looking at the possibility of introducing co-education in Gibraltar, we must also research whether single-sex schools are leading to gender oppression and to the creation of negative stereotypes. This is extremely important. The implications therefore, surpass the academic achievement to the impacts on the way boys and girls navigate their surroundings and establish social and sexual identities.
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Cross-party support on co-education should be agreed on sooner rather than later. Referring to a recent interview given by Mr Peter Watts at the opening of Prior Park School in Gibraltar, I took note on one particular point he made which is the main advantage of having a co-

755 educational system: the fact that all children continue to learn how to respect each other in an environment working together, and the same position will be carried on in their later life in the real world, when we all have to work together.

Co-education is simply one of the cogs in the educational system, and I would urge this House to shelve political agendas and to look towards a brighter future for our children. If we adopt, for example, a Finnish model which seems to work very well, looking at the results that they actually publish, infused with our glorious climate we have here, Mr Speaker, the sky is our limit.

Thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Joe Bossano.

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Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I am standing up to say that I support the amendment and I certainly reject the arguments that have been put on the other side for not voting in favour. No indication has been given whether they intend to vote in favour or against the amendment because I think they have stood up and spoken to the original motion, rather than to the amendment.

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I certainly think that to suggest, as I think the last speaker has done, that we run the risk of gender oppression if we go to single-sex schools, given that we have all been in single-sex schools, presumably we are all now suffering from gender oppression! (*Laughter*) Well, I can say I do not engage in gender oppression, but I can only speak for myself. I do not know what is happening on the other side. I will ask after the House, whether my colleagues have been contaminated by gender oppression through their experience of single-sex schools. I did not have the advantage, of course, of going to a comprehensive. In my time the system was that of the grammar school system and there were of course single-sex schools.

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Change of course is one thing and progress is another. Therefore the easiest way to try and discredit an opposing view is to say that you are not being progressive. Well, the present government in the United Kingdom apparently thinks that going back to grammar schools is progressive because that is the policy they have just announced: that the emphasis of the government in the United Kingdom will be to go back to grammar schools on the grounds that it is educationally better.

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I think the essence of the education system is to provide education. In the process, clearly if you can demonstrate that by having co-educational schools, the education does not suffer and society gains, then there will be an argument and that is what the motion that is being amended originally asked us to accept without any evidence.

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That is to say nothing in the report of 1974 and nothing in the quote from 1985 from the Hon. Mr Clinton, who was quoting himself – (*Laughter*) I do not know whether that means that he was so visionary that he was already progressing at the age of 18, or so stuck in the mud that he has not progressed since the age of 18! (*Laughter*) But I will not pass judgement. I will not pass judgement on the hon. Member, but they are the only two possible conclusions.

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I have to say that the idea that we can take our place naturally in the wider community of men and women only if we go through co-education, again is something that is a compelling case that the hon. Member is obviously a believer in. I do not know if all the colleagues that he has on his side share it, or if the former Member of the opposite sex that is now as an Independent occupying the seat that I long occupied in that corner, shares that view.

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But it suggests that in the absence of co-education, which we have never had, we are incapable of taking our place naturally in the wider community of men and women. This is a very sick society if this is right, (*Laughter*) a very sick society. And certainly, if that is the view of the Leader of the Opposition, then it worries me that having been in Government, he did nothing about it and allowed the sickness to be perpetuated and having belonged to a party that was there for 15 years, they allowed generation after generation of school leavers to go into the wider community of men and women to take their place unnaturally, when it was possible to make them take it naturally.

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And for all those reasons of failure to convince me and absence of logic, I have to say I support the amendment. (*Banging on desks*)

810 **Mr Speaker:** If there is no other contribution, I will call on the Hon. Gilbert Licudi to reply. Sorry, the Hon. Edwin Reyes, before.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker, sir.

815 I think I ought to start with, as an educator, an overriding factor that I have always tried to implement in any educational matters and that is, what is in the best interests of the people? If politicians from either side of this House put that first and foremost and leave aside all these partisan views, then inevitably we will end up getting and providing our children with the best possible options for them for the future. That, Mr Speaker, is something that I must stress and repeat if necessary.

820 There are arguments for and against co-education. It has been said already by the Members. You can use figures, twist them round whichever way you like and so on for what is best. But, figures that are always based on just simple, pure academic results does that in itself, provide the best education for our children?

825 What is it that we want to give our children? Do we want to produce a set of youngsters that get three or four As or A*s at A-levels and then throw them out, like into the deep end of a swimming pool and say, 'Now off you go to further studies' or do we want to make sure that these students are prepared in the best way possible for their adult life, which in today's lifespan they are going to have at least another 60 years to go forward?

830 So everything is not just as simple as getting As and A*s, nice as they are, proud as we all are and so on. I have always ... I think, my fellow predecessor too— I have also held the post of President of Gibraltar Teachers' Association – we always had this little joke going around during coffee breaks and so on: if the academic results in a particular year were quite good or outstanding, it is because Gibraltar has very clever children, especially parents would say, 'Look how clever my son is or my daughter is'; however if the results dropped it was, 'Oh well, the teachers are not as good as the ones we used to have.' So we can play about and find excuses and reasons for whatever.

840 But a good valid point that I think we also have to bear in mind is, what is it that we are providing for our children? Are we just simply providing for them A-level certificates with As and A*s or are we providing them with the best possible preparation for their future adult life?

845 One of the things for which I have always declared my favouritism towards co-education is that in Gibraltar's history, slowly co-education was introduced first into what is now called middle schools. Once upon a time before they were called middle schools, they were actually called junior schools and they were single sex at one stage and for various reasons – and, Mr Speaker, I cannot obviously preach or try to give you any lessons, you were very much a very, very senior educationalist in the early 1970s, before you took the bold decision to have to resign your post to be able to become a Member of this Parliament or the House of Assembly as it was at the time.

850 But for reasons that we can spend hours and hours discussing, a decision was taken not to introduce co-education. There are some other reasons that people say, and not necessarily written in a report. But up to 1974 until the introduction of the then called Education Ordinance, now the Education Act. Prior to 1974 there was a very different setup in education: there was a board which was chaired by the Bishop and which non-Roman Catholic teachers had problems in getting teaching jobs in what were state schools and past Gibraltar Teacher's Association Presidents had to end up teaching in the Hebrew School because although they were Christian, they were not Roman Catholic.

855 But that is another chapter of the history which perhaps a future nephew of the present Minister for Education might want to do his Master's thesis on, will be very interested. I have known Christopher Cortes for some time, I value the thoroughness in which he carries out

860 things, so perhaps at one stage if your nephew consents, I could also have a look at the result of what he has written out in his thesis.

But not to deviate further, Mr Speaker, yes, it is valid to say in a letter through *The Chronicle* and so on, if we have a system that works, 'if it ain't broke, why fix it?' Does it work? Let us go back to that question: does it work? What yardstick are we using to say it works? Does it work why, because we have got x number of pupils with As and A*s? Or does it work because we have all spoken in favour and I do not think it crosses anyone's mind: we want to keep apparently to a comprehensive system.

870 A comprehensive system in its full sense, which is equal with everyone, must include in my opinion that equality of males and females especially in delivery of subjects. I am glad to hear the Minister reminding this House that it was them who managed to bring back and get rid of the problem that my predecessor in the Teachers' Association and myself had always been against: this inequality of opportunities for the girls being able to stay within the familiar surroundings of their school to repeat their A-levels and so on. But politics being politics, it must be said that it was actually the GSLP who introduced that inequality and took away the opportunity for Bayside students to remain in Bayside to repeat the sixth form. So they did 'fix what was broke' and at the end of the day what happened? It was the students who got the best deal possible. And that is what I want to keep on repeating we must all bear in mind in working towards the future.

880 Look, there is a price to everything. By having the students and the boys staying back in Bayside to repeat those GCSEs and so on, the price to pay is that there seems to be lack of rooms now to be able to have a sixth form common room. But the decision had to be taken: do we have a sixth form common room or do we have classroom opportunity for the children to learn? Therefore what is in the best interest of the pupil? The best interest of the pupil is that they are able to get adequate results that would allow them to go on into higher education and so on.

885 So something has to give way to something. What is best? Therefore, Mr Speaker, I want as well to repeat that in the amended motion in the paragraph that says, 'acknowledges that in keeping with its commitment the Government has already set up a working group made up of teachers, officials from the Department of Education, union officials and parents', I must repeat there that there is no mention of the word 'students'. So I think Dr Cortes as the current Minister already indicated that he will certainly pull his weight in that respect, and make sure that students are represented. But it is not reflected in this motion. (*Interjection*)

What I am saying, Dr Cortes, you alluded that you wanted to make sure that students were represented in the working group.

895 **Hon. Dr J E Cortes:** If the hon. Member will give way just for clarification.

My comment was that I do not need to pull my weight! It is just going to happen anyway. It is not that I am going to force anybody to involve students; it is something that is a logical thing to do.

900 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Okay, I am glad to hear that. Therefore an amendment has to be made to the wording here. (*Interjection*) Just so that for the record, Mr Speaker, I like things to be put down properly. The omission of the word 'students' could give the impression tomorrow or for future generations to say, 'Look, they were not even thinking about students because the word is not included here.'

905 So, Mr Speaker, whatever happens, can I wind up by repeating to all Members, please bear in mind and always think what is in the best interest of the pupil and how can it be best delivered and how can we ensure that not only are things working well but they can work even better to make Gibraltar an even better educationally sound state.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

910

A Member: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Neil Costa.

915 **Hon. N F Costa:** Mr Speaker, just very quickly on a couple of matters that have been raised. In
the first place, speaking on the amendments by the Hon. Mr Licudi on the motion, the question
before the House is simply whether or not co-education should be introduced in Gibraltar. That
is what we are debating. And as the Hon. Mr Licudi has said, the evidence and the empirical
920 studies are in effect half and half as to whether it would be of benefit and whether it would
actually be to the detriment of one of the sexes.

The Hon. Mr Reyes asks the question whether we should consider fundamentally the reasons
why we educate our children. To be honest, Mr Speaker, if we were to ask that question
philosophically then I would suggest that we teach more Plato and Socrates and we read more
David Herbert Lawrence's *Women in Love* and that we teach children how to meditate, but that
925 is not the question before the House.

The question before the House is, is co-education more beneficial – yes or no? And on the
reasons that have been put forward by my learned and hon. Friend Mr Licudi, the answer is that
has to be the subject of empirical and knowledge-based study and no one here has the answer
to that question without being able to undergo that important consultation process.

930 And I have to just finish by saying that the Hon. Mr Clinton said that the only logical
conclusion on a debate on education that he could draw from the absence of a press notification
setting up the names of the persons on this committee *has to be* that we are keeping it secret. I
can think of 20,000 reasons why the Government did not announce by way of Press Release, the
names of the committee.

935 It may have decided not to do so because persons of the committee decided that they did
not want to do so at that stage, because the Hon. Minister had not yet got to that basis. It is
almost as if to suggest by a scientist that if a spider whose legs have been broken off, the only
logical conclusion is, rather than the legs having been broken off, that the spider is deaf. It is a
totally illogical conclusion and it is certainly not the only conclusion, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on*
940 *desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Gilbert Licudi. (*Interjection and laughter*)

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I am particularly grateful to the hon. and learned Neil Costa for
945 that contribution. (*Laughter*) (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) There has in fact been, Mr Speaker, very
little said across the floor of this House which merits or needs a response. There has been very
little said in substance in relation to the amended motion itself, which is what we are actually
debating now. Is there anything in the amended motion that they disagree with? Is there
anything that they agree with? It seems that we are none the wiser.

950 The only issue in relation to the amended motion that has been raised has been by Mr
Clinton and I would have hoped that, if he was going to talk about the amended motion and this
being a debate with a working group, looking at it in consultation and a possibility of
recommendations being made to Government, it would have been a little bit more positive.

955 But he started talking about the composition, no press release, secret meetings, as my
learned friend has alluded to. Talk, Mr Speaker, about trying to find issues where there are
none; trying to create polemic where this absolutely none! The amended motion talks of a
working group having been set up. There is no question of secrecy. We have said that there is a
working group that will report to Government and it talks about professionals of the
Department of Education, union officials and parents.

960 As the Hon. Dr Cortes has said, I have certainly been given a list of the people in the working
group, I do not have it with me but it is no secret to say that the Chairman of the working group
is the current Senior Education Advisor, Mr Darren Grech. He will be Chairing the working group.

Included in the working group as one would expect, are the head teachers of the comprehensive schools, their schools are the ones that are most affected by this, so they will be part of the working group. Included in the working group will be the representative of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, whose President is currently Mr Stuart Borastero, and there are also parents from parents' associations included in the working group.

The suggestion is that students have been somehow through some Machiavellian plot excluded. They certainly have not been excluded. The fact that they do not form part of the working group itself does not mean that they are excluded at all. It does not mean at all that their views are not relevant. It does not mean that their views are not important. Of course their views are relevant and their views are important.

We mentioned relevant stakeholders in the amended motion in terms of consultation and of course very relevant stakeholders will be the students themselves. But for the working group, one of the terms of reference, if there is going to be a recommendation and a consultation process, is to make recommendations as to how that is to be conducted and who is to be included – students.

Do we include everybody in the secondary sector? Do we include those in the primary sector that are going to go into the secondary sector and have their views? *(Interjection)* Those are matters that have to be considered by the working group and what we have not done is create any cut-off point to say, 'These students are to be included and these are not.' That is a matter for the working group and I know, and it will not be necessary, as Dr Cortes has mentioned, for a Minister to say, 'You have to do this and you have to consult students and you have to get the views of students.' Of course that is going to happen. That is intrinsic in this approach.

Mr Clinton also says, Government should not close its mind to this. I opened my contribution by saying Government's position is that we have an open mind. *(Laughter)* Precisely the opposite of what the hon. Member has alluded to.

Ms Marlene Hassan Nahon suggested that single sex comprehensive was probably a mistake, a view that can be taken. It is probably pushing it and pulling it a bit too far as Mr Llamas has put it, which the Hon. Mr Bossano has already dealt with in terms that it has created gender stereotypes and it is gender oppressive.

As has been said, in fact most of us – **(A Member: All.)** well, most of us here are the product of the single sex comprehensive system which the hon. Lady suggests was probably a mistake. I look around and it seems that we have not turned out that badly after all – although that is a matter of opinion, *(Laughter)* I am sure! And I certainly, having gone through single sex comprehensive education, did not feel at the time that I was missing out on anything, on educational grounds. *(Laughter)*

Was it a mistake? It happened. We are all essentially products of that system by and large we have people in Gibraltar, generations that have been educated on that particular basis and Mr Reyes, and I welcome the contribution by Mr Reyes as an educator, as a professional in the field and as former President of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association. He does say that this is not just about academic results; students need to be prepared for adult life. That is precisely what we do in our schools: prepare children for adult life and not just give them an academic education.

But the question is whether they are better prepared or less prepared or is the implication that they would be better prepared for adult life in a mixed sex environment? That is something that the working group will need to look at and the hon. Member has indicated that what needs to be looked at is what the best solution for Gibraltar is. There is nothing in what I have heard from the hon. Members opposite in terms of any evidence, any suggestion as to which is best. Therefore having heard the debate across the both sides of the House, I am more convinced than ever that the terms of the motion that the hon. Member put are mistaken, that the right motion for this Parliament to pass is the terms of the amended motion which I have moved.

Therefore I have great pleasure in, once again, commending that amended motion to the House. *(Banging on desks)*

1015 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I call for the House to divide on its vote. (*Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham*) I call for the House to divide on its vote.

Mr Speaker: We are now going to put the amendment in the terms moved by the Hon. Gilbert Licudi to the vote. And you want a division, very well.

A division was called for and voting resulted as follows:

FOR

Hon. P J Balban
Hon. J J Bossano
Hon. Dr J E Cortes
Hon. N F Costa
Hon. Dr J J Garcia
Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon
Hon. A J Isola
Hon. G H Licudi
Hon. S E Linares
Hon. F R Picardo
Hon. Miss S J Sacramento.

AGAINST

Hon. R M Clinton
Hon. D A Feetham
Hon. L F Llamas
Hon. E J Phillips
Hon. E J Reyes

ABSENT

Hon. T N Hammond

1020 **Mr Speaker:** There is one Member absent, 11 votes in favour of the amendment, 5 votes against. The amendment is carried.

We now have the motion before the House as amended and the convention that I have seen in this House applied over the years by Speakers has been that where a motion and the amendment overlap in the manner in which these do, you either speak on one or you speak on the other.

1025 Therefore I will allow the Members who have not spoken at all this morning, namely the Hon. Elliott Phillips, the Hon. Samantha Sacramento, the Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia, the Hon. the Chief Minister, the Hon. Mr Paul Balban and the Hon. Albert Isola, they can all speak on the motion as amended.

1030 I will not allow any of the others because I do not think that they will ... well, they are going to be repeating themselves. And then, when all that is over and done with, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has a right to reply and he is the final speaker on the debate.

The Hon. the Chief Minister.

1035 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I confess that on this side of the House we have been rendered perplexed by the failure of hon. Members to support the amendment put by the Hon. Mr Licudi. It is an amendment which talks of the creation of the working group and that should, in our view, have been exactly what hon. Members must have wanted to see as a conclusion of this debate: the fact that the group has been established and how it is going to be dealing with these issues.

1040 Mr Speaker, therefore one is left with the feeling that we are dealing with a motion brought not because there was an underlying purpose that hon. Members opposite would want to see the Government move to, but that there was simply a desire to get up and say something, say anything that dealt with the issue of education.

1045 Mr Speaker, I am going to speak in respect of this motion both in relation to the work that the working group is doing, but I am going to start giving the House my personal views, because I think it is important that the House has heard the views of all Members and it should hear the personal views of Members.

1050 Mr Speaker, the reason this matter is with a working group of educators and professionals, is because this is not a matter for politicians to make their minds up on. This is not a matter where the Leader of the Opposition should bring a motion to the House to promote co-education

happening in one moment and not say, as the hon. the former Minister for Education, Mr Licudi has said, this must be dealt with by the educators.

1055 My personal opinion, Mr Speaker, is that a report that is 42 years old has absolutely no relevance today. I think it is absolutely irrelevant to go back to the decision-making process in 1974 to take a political position today.

1060 Mr Speaker, my personal opinion, not to interfere with the working group is very simply, that we do not live life in single-sex silos; that we live life in co-habitation with people of opposite sexes and of same sexes with different sexual orientations. I believe, Mr Speaker, that our children build strong relationships across the sexual divide in first and secondary schools and that we rip them apart when we send them to single sex comprehensives. I believe that those relationships do not recover from the at least initial four years of separation.

1065 But, Mr Speaker, I believe that as a past pupil, I believe that as a parent and I believe that of course as a politician – but I am no-one to decide whether that is the system that produces better academic results and potentially better rounded individuals or not. Because what I definitely know is that I do not know what the right answer is. I can tell you what I think and I can tell you what I feel, but I cannot tell you as an educator what the right answer is.

1070 Mr Speaker, that is why this is not an issue for cross-party agreement, as the Hon. Mr Llamas has said, one way or the other. What we should have had is cross party agreement to support a motion to establish a working group of professionals, supporting the fact that the Minister for Education had already done that when he was responsible for Education, when Mr Licudi was there.

1075 Mr Speaker, hearing Mr Reyes speak then one is left with the impression that we agree that this is an issue for professionals, but yet he has not supported the motion amending the motion put by his leader which reached conclusions – the same conclusions that we might personally reach, but which reached conclusions politically about things that none of us, except for him and Mr Linares, are professionals at. And that I think, Mr Speaker, is the thing we have to be very, very careful to fall into the trap of not doing.

1080 But I think this motion has been an excellent opportunity, Mr Speaker, for Mr Licudi to demonstrate the work that the Government has already done on this subject and why this must not be an issue for this House. In the time that he has been Minister for Education, Gilbert Licudi has done many things, Mr Speaker, most of which are well known to the general public. I mean he has not just built schools, the physical aspect of education and a university, also the physical aspect of education, a prize that was elusive to most in fact elusive to all other former Ministers for Education and which he delivered.

1085 But the curriculum has also changed in consultation with teachers, so that we now have the teaching of local history in our schools, something that goes to producing not just more rounded members of our community; to producing more rounded Gibraltarians who also understand our context.

1090 Now, Mr Speaker, we have to see where that working group takes us in relation to co-education. But to say that the working group should include the pupils is really, Mr Speaker, to stretch the concept of consultation in the context of decision-making at a professional level, to breaking point, as the Hon. Mr Clinton has done. Of course pupils and students must be involved in the process of consulting once the working group has reported, which is what the motion talks about.

1095 But to say that they should form part of the working group is something that only Members on this side of the House could say legitimately, because we talked about the possibility of people being able to vote at the age of 16 and they pooh-poohed it. So how is it that the hon. Member can get up and say they must form part of the working group in this context but they must not make decisions as to who governs?

1100 Mr Speaker, look the working group of course will have to take cognisance of the views of pupils and students. The consultation that the Government does as a result of the working group's report will of course be something which will be consulted on with students and with

1105 pupils. But, Mr Speaker, the working group is meeting during working hours. It is doing a job. If we had proposed that the working group should include pupils, hon. Gentlemen would be saying that we were trying to get the advice on the cheap and that we were pulling them away from their work.

1110 It really, Mr Speaker, makes little sense other than, perhaps, an attempt to ingratiate oneself with a particular demographic. If that is what it is, Mr Speaker, I think it is fairly cack-handed, especially to say, 'Don't ignore the students, this is about the students.' Well, Mr Speaker, for the reasons that Mr Licudi has given, of course it is and of course it will and Mr Cortes has now confirmed that it will, as it must.

1115 But who did their decision-making body consult in 2006 when they made the decision to go co-education? Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell me who was in the secret group that made the decision in 2006 to go to co-education? (*Laughter*) Or which students or pupils were consulted in 2006? Because if it was about the students and they should not have been ignored, they appear to have been blithely put aside in 2006 (*Interjection*) and ditto, they were not on the committee.

1120 A committee of which by the way, Mr Speaker, there was no press release (*Laughter*) as I understand it, (*Interjection*) because I must say to the hon. Gentlemen, I have found out about it today! I have found out today that there was a committee established by them in secret, because there was no press release that did not consult or include any pupils.

1125 So, Mr Speaker, it is really quite something. It is really quite something to see. (*Interjection*) This is not a pendulum swinging; this is a pendulum *spinning* (*Laughter*) on the other side, Mr Speaker. This is just, Mr Speaker, another example of the politics of what sounds right to them. And we must be very careful in Gibraltar, Mr Speaker, not to move to the politics which parts of the rest of the world are moving to, of doing the things that sound right, whether they are right or not.

1130 We must not move to post-truth politics in Gibraltar. We must stick to the politics of the facts and of the work of experts like the experts in the working group established. That is not to say, Mr Speaker, that the group established in 2006 got it wrong or got it right. It is to say that by their measure, the measure that they have applied today, this must be a secret group that failed to consult or to include the pupils and the students.

1135 Because, Mr Speaker, what might sound ripe on the lips of a Leader of the Opposition looking and casting around for relevance in this community, may not be what is ripe for implementation in our schools and in the best interest of our pupils. But as usual, Mr Speaker, I thought I would give the hon. Gentleman opposite, the mover of the motion, the benefit of the doubt, because believe it or not, I always do, Mr Speaker.

1140 And so I went back to their election pamphlet of 2015. Now, Mr Speaker, I know that the hon. Gentleman obviously in preparing his motion had not read our manifesto because he would have come across the parts which the Hon. Mr Licudi read to him which demonstrated that what we were doing was already what they were prompting us to do. But I am – this week in particular for reasons that are being debated outside this House – constantly surprised by his failure to remember what was in their pamphlet at the election.

1145 You see, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has said in his motion that he calls on the Government to generate a debate by undertaking a consultation exercise with teachers. To generate a debate by undertaking a consultation exercise with teachers. (*Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham*) Oh, I am quite happy to read the whole thing – teachers, unions, parents and other stakeholders, with everybody. Consult and generate a debate with everybody.

1150 This morning, Mr Speaker, I re-read the whole of the 2015 GSD election pamphlet because it is such a quick read, Mr Speaker, (*Laughter*) there is no point in even asking the electronic gadgets one has today to search through, when you can read the whole thing, just to give them the benefit of not missing one reference. And what the hon. Gentleman has done in his motion, is entirely contradict the position that was in their manifesto last year, a year ago. This is one of the quickest political *volte-face* in history!

1160 Their manifesto, Mr Speaker, on page 16 features a photograph of Mr Hammond, who is not here today – no doubt for good reason, I make no criticism of that – with a graphic of Rooke on the next page and the word ‘Co-education’, that is it. There is a jumble of words at the bottom that no doubt some media guru advised them was a good way of presenting things, under a text from Mr Hammond and it says the word, ‘Co-education’.

On page 17, the word ‘Co-education’ appears again. And it appears in the context of a statement which was one of their flagship policies at the election: ‘we will move from the two single-sex schools to one co-educational facility, state of the art, at Rooke’.

1165 What consultation, Mr Speaker? Their policy was a *fait accompli* on one of the most important issues in the election which was the movement of the use of land to go from two schools to one in co-education. No consultation with students, with pupils, with teachers, with unions, with anyone, with parents – no-one! The policy was co-education. That was what people were asked to vote for, Mr Speaker, and to put everyone in the same school.

1170 Well, look, Mr Speaker, he may know now, given what I have said, that as a past pupil, as a parent and as a politician, my instinct is that I believe in co-education. It appears that we might agree on that subject. But to simply impose in the context of the debate of something as important as what we are talking about here, which they speak of in highfaluting terms when they come to this House in this motion, in the context of an election pamphlet, that that would be the policy, I mean it is really quite something, Mr Speaker. They were not for a consultation; 1175 they were for co-education full stop. Now, one year later, they have come round to the concept of consultation on this careful subject.

Now look, Mr Speaker, Christopher Cortes is a person with whom I have had the opportunity of working in a number of different fields. I have the deepest respect for him. I have the deepest respect for him: he is a man who is an educator, he is a musician, he is one of Gibraltar’s 1180 cultured and developed minds. He has done an in-depth study on the subject and he is an educator. The people who were on their committee, the people who will be on our committee, are the people who are experts at this. And you can find reports one way or another, Mr Speaker, and it maybe that in the end there will have to be a decision made based on that advice. But to go from that careful process of detailed analysis and consultation to simply say 1185 ‘everyone at Rooke, co-education’, that was absolute nonsense, Mr Speaker.

So I will tell the hon. Gentleman that I have been pleased again to see another complete and utter U-turn from him, where he is once again at last been made to face the right way. I do not know whether it is by logic, I do not know whether it is by people who have approached him who have put him on the right track, I do not know what it is but at least he is now talking about 1190 consultation. He is talking about consultation in all the wrong contexts because I think the Hon. the Father of the House has demonstrated that the wording of the motion which the hon. Member brought, was verging on the ridiculous, Mr Speaker.

It is really quite something when a Leader of the Opposition, who should be the guide, the guiding hand to the other more junior members of the Opposition, can allow himself to put a 1195 motion in the terms that we have had before the House. It is really quite something, about people taking their natural order in the wider community of men and women, as if that were not the case, for reasons Mr Bossano has already set out.

So, Mr Speaker, the only way to lead on something as sensitive and as important as the wholesale reform of our system of education is to do so in consultation with the right experts. 1200 That is the way to lead and that is the way to be truly progressive, Mr Speaker.

This is not an issue for politicians and an issue for speeches attempting to ingratiate oneself one way or another. It is an issue for careful consideration and for that, Mr Speaker, I commend the work that has been done in the Department of Education in this respect in the right way.

1205 So, Mr Speaker, what we have seen in the context of the debate we have had already and hon. Members’ speeches this morning, in the context of the amendment put by the Hon. Mr Licudi, is first that their position in 2015 was one of imposition of co-education without consultation; and second, that their position today, although on the terms of a motion which

1210 should not enjoy any support, was to move to consultation which is where we were in our manifesto of 2015 which is where we have demonstrated that we are already in the Department of Education and which is what we are moving to ensure our society has the benefit of in the context of making an important decision like this.

1215 So, Mr Speaker, the amended motion, which is the motion now before the House, deserves the support of the whole House if we are going to have a cross-party approach to preparing work to advise how we should progress on this matter. Because anybody who does not support this motion – and I know they have not supported the amendment, but now they have to support or not support the motion as it is before the House – will not be supporting the creation of the working group with terms of reference which are frankly not just unobjectionable but they are absolutely the right terms of reference for a decision to be made which is in the interest of our community.

1220 So, Mr Speaker, given all of that, I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the motion as amended so that our community can be informed by the work of this group that has been established by the Department of Education and by the former Minister and which will be taken forward as ably by the new Minister, John Cortes. (*Banging on desks*)

I commend the motion to the House.

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Mr Speaker: Is there any other Member wishing to speak, before I call upon the Leader of the Opposition to exercise his right to reply?

The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1230 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition is not going to be supporting the amended motion, as indeed it did not support the amendments to the motion. We are not supporting the amended motion because the motion is inherently contradictory in itself, Mr Speaker, quite apart from some of the reasons that have already been put forward by my friend, Mr Clinton.

1235 Not only is the motion inherently contradictory but it also – quite surprising bearing in mind what the Hon. the Chief Minister has said about our position being contradictory – contradicts, Mr Speaker, statements that the Chief Minister himself made to public television on 15th December last year, just after the general election, which is the very reason why I drafted my motion in the way that I drafted my motion, as I will outline in a moment.

1240 But, Mr Speaker, the speeches from the hon. Gentlemen, particularly the Chief Minister but now surprisingly I have to say, Minister Licudi, are unnecessarily aggressive, Mr Speaker – unnecessarily acerbic, Mr Speaker, and arrogant, Mr Speaker, *to the core*. It oozes the question, ‘How dare you question Government policy? How dare you want to bring a motion to debate something as important as co-education?’

1245 And all, it has to be said, Mr Speaker, on a motion calling on the Government to generate debate by undertaking a consultation exercise with teachers, unions, parents, students and other stakeholders, to determine the views of the community on this issue. And, Mr Speaker, from the hon. Gentleman’s contribution, the Hon. Minister Licudi, it really does not fill me with confidence that he is approaching this issue with an open mind.

1250 Indeed, Mr Phillips to my left, who is *un llanito buena gente* just turns round and says to me, ‘But is he really approaching this with an open mind?’ (*Interjection and laughter*) Because the whole tenor, Mr Speaker, of the contribution by the hon. Gentleman was, ‘Yes we want to consult, yes we want to do this, yes we want to do that’, but really the undercurrent is that they are not in favour of it, Mr Speaker. That is the reality of it and that is what comes across from listening to the speeches of the hon. Gentlemen opposite and it is surprising, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it is surprising.

The Hon. the Chief Minister says, ‘Well why have you drafted the motion as you have drafted it, starting from the premise, that yes we believe in co-education but then calling for a consultation exercise?’ And he also said, ‘Well look, in your manifesto you were in favour of co-

1260 education; now what you are saying is, let us consult on it.’ But there is a very good reason for
that, Mr Speaker: as he reminds us incessantly, we lost the election; they won the election, Mr
Speaker. **(Several Members: Hear, hear!)** *(Banging on desks)* And, Mr Speaker, on
15th December 2015, in a *City Pulse* programme on *GBC* –and in fact it was reported on *GBC* the
day afterwards – ‘CM advocates co-education, but says consultation necessary’. *(Interjection)*
1265 ‘The Chief Minister has said he personally favours the concept of co-education in schools, but
believes a process of consultation ...’

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentlemen opposite are conducting themselves in exactly the same
way, as I have said they conducted themselves during the course of their own speeches:
arrogant, acerbic, angry. *(Laughter)* Mr Speaker, I am on my feet, I ought to be allowed to
1270 continue with my speech without hon. Gentlemen constantly heckling and all but trying to
interrupt. *(Interjection)*

Mr Speaker: May I ask hon. Members to observe the best principles of parliamentary practice
and not those which one sees on a Saturday evening on *la tertulia de La Sexta*. *(Laughter)*

1275 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, and of course, in that programme, he did not say that he was setting up a
working group *(Interjection)* what he said was that he personally believes in the concept of co-
education which is what I say in my motion, Mr Speaker, but that there ought to be a
1280 consultation exercise.

Well, Mr Speaker, that is not what this motion actually does, Mr Speaker, because the
consultation exercise – and I will come to it in a moment – comes at the very end of the process,
after there is a report from the working group. There is nothing about the working group in what
he said to *GBC* and the reason why I have drafted my motion in the way that I have drafted it, is
1285 believing that I can come to this House with a constructive motion and try and find some
common ground between the Opposition and the Government.

But it is too much to hope, Mr Speaker, because even a motion that is brought to this House
in good faith, that is designed to find some common ground between the Opposition and the
Government meets with the kind of aggression and acerbicness that we have met today in the
1290 speeches of the hon. Gentlemen and in particular, Minister Licudi and the Chief Minister. But
there is logic to this, because it follows my motion, because it follows the statements that the
Chief Minister himself made to *GBC* on 15th December last year, just days after the general
election.

Mr Licudi and indeed with a lot of humour, the Father of the House, have examined the
1295 reasons as set out or part of my motion, the grounds for supporting my motion in paragraphs 1
and 2. Mr Speaker, paragraphs 1 and 2, in particular paragraph 2 of my motion is the central
argument in favour of co-education. The hon. Gentleman describes it as a social reason. But
indeed it is also an educational reason and when you look at all the reports and all the studies
and all the arguments from the people who have advocated co-education, what they say is this:
1300 education is much more than just simply the teaching of particular subjects. It is about preparing
people to take their place in the wider world and the wider world includes both men and women
and therefore you are not preparing young people properly by segregating them. And a better
way to prepare young people for that wider world is by actually having that co-education and
young people working together.

1305 And, Mr Speaker, in the report, in the Collister Working Party Report, which sets out the case
for co-education and the case for single-sex education, which is the last time that there was a
major public consultation exercise and a major report based on the work of a group across the
board involving educationalists, involving parents and involving unions, this is what they had to
say and this is the point about my paragraph on the wider world of men and women.

1310 Education is, and I quote:

'not merely instruction at school in reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography. Education is the whole process starting at birth by which a child becomes a mature individual and an adult member of society. Education starts and is always centred in the family, apart from academic instruction, the school's main contribution to a child is showing him/her how to live in a larger society than the family, how to meet, assess, work with and just get on with people of different types and backgrounds. Half the people our children are going to meet in his/her life outside school are of the opposite sex. Why therefore do we not accept the responsibility implied in the word "education" of helping our children to get on with members of the opposite sex?'

1315 That is the point, Mr Speaker. That is the point and of course, I would hope that nobody in this House – look, I cannot vouch for everybody, but I would hope that nobody in this House – has a dysfunction by reason of being segregated at secondary school from members of the opposite sex! But it misses the point, Mr Speaker. The Hon. the Father of the House, ingenious as he is with his arguments, entertaining as he is with his arguments, misses the point. It is about what better prepares a child to meet the challenges outside school. If the challenges outside school are challenges of people working in a mixed environment, why not replicate that and that also is part of education within the secondary education system?

1320 And, Mr Speaker, a lot has been made about my quoting the Collister report, but the reality is, and indeed it was I think the Chief Minister that said that the report was not relevant today. Well, that is precisely the point! The reasons for the report in 1974 for rejecting co-education are not relevant today. That is the whole point of my going through the report. Society moves on, society develops and the reasons for rejecting co-education in the 1970s are no longer reasons that are prevalent or apposite today. That is the point.

1325 But, Mr Speaker, I come to the wording of the motion itself and I will deal with the contributions from hon. Members as I go through it.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Costa said there are 20,000 reasons not to announce the names of those on the working group.

1330 **Hon. N F Costa:** I was being generous.

Hon. D A Feetham: 30,000, 40,000. But, Mr Speaker, again that misses the point. For a Government that likes to issue press releases, Mr Speaker, like confetti at a wedding, as I have said before in this House, for the Government to suddenly forget not to come out with a press release saying, 'We have set up this working group to report on this question of co-education', Mr Speaker, that is very strange indeed – very strange indeed!

1335 And the first time that the working group, this fantastic thing that Mr Licudi, according to the Chief Minister ... absolutely fantastic! What a wonderful Minister of Education we have had, and this is proof of it. A wonderful, wonderful Minister of Education, this is proof of it: that he has set up this working group to report on this question of co-education. And the first time we find out about it, Mr Speaker, is when I file my motion on co-education and he files – and I am very grateful that he filed it with plenty of time – an amendment to the motion. Well, Mr Speaker, one would forgive any opposition, not only this Opposition, for being rather sceptical about the Government's intentions or the Government's good work in setting up this working group that nobody knew anything about until Mr Licudi filed amendments to the motion.

1340 It is particularly surprising, Mr Speaker, given that the Hon. the Chief Minister, in his programme *The City Pulse* on 15th December 2015, did not say, Mr Speaker, that he was setting up a working group. What he said was that he himself was in favour of co-education – always the populist, our Chief Minister, I have to say; he probably thinks that is a popular line – but he does not want to step on the toes of anybody else. He then says 'but let us consult'.

1350 Well, Mr Speaker, he did not say that he shortly expected to set up a working group. And, Mr Speaker, the points made –

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, would the hon. Gentleman give way?

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Hon. D A Feetham: No, I am not going to give way. (*Interjections*)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

1360 **Hon. D A Feetham:** The points made – Mr Speaker, I am not giving way because the courtesy
is never extended to me (*Interjections*) – yes, Mr Speaker, today that I have a right to respond,
they are going to sit down, they are going to heckle, they are going to laugh, but above all, Mr
Speaker, they are going to have to listen to me (*Laughter*) because I do not get the chance, Mr
1365 Speaker, to have the final word! But today, Mr Speaker, they are going to have to listen and I
note that the Hon. the Chief Minister has, as soon as I have said this, exited the Chamber
obviously he does not want to listen to what I have to say, or he is going to listen to it from the
Antechamber.

Well, Mr Speaker, the point made by my hon. friend Mr Clinton, about students, is a point
that is well made, Mr Speaker. This is a motion that is brought before this House, that says that a
1370 working group has been set up composed of union officials, officials from the Department of
Education, parents and it is going to report by March 2017 and it does not include the very same
people that we are all talking about, the very same people whose futures we are today
discussing.

Mr Speaker, that is an omission (*Interjection by Hon. G H Licudi*) of huge magnitude, Mr
1375 Speaker. And Mr Cortes said, but their views are going to be heard. Well look, Mr Speaker, their
views are going to be heard, that is neither here nor there, Mr Speaker! What we want is for
students to be included within any working group (*Interjection by Hon. G H Licudi*) so that their
views can properly be taken into account as and when the decisions are taken, Mr Speaker, and
not as an afterthought. (*Interjection by Hon. G H Licudi*) No, Mr Speaker, I am not giving way. No,
1380 I am not giving way. Sit down and listen. (*Interjections*) Sit down and listen, Mr Speaker.
(*Interjections*)

Mr Speaker, and then he said it is the logical thing to do. Well look, I am sorry but that is not
the logical thing to do. The logical thing to do is to include those whose futures you are
1385 discussing within the working group who are making the decisions or the recommendations
about that group's future, Mr Speaker.

Now we come to the huge contradiction between the statements made by the Chief Minister
to *City Pulse* programme on 15th December of last year and this motion and indeed the inherent
nonsense of the motion itself, Mr Speaker. Because this is a motion that basically says that by
1390 March 2017, this working group is going to advise Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar on the
advantages and disadvantages of the current and mixed co-educational models for
comprehensive schools. So on 17th March, we will have a report. We will have a report on the
advantages and disadvantages.

And then it says, secondly, to make recommendations on whether secondary education at
comprehensive schools in Gibraltar is best delivered by co-ed or single. And then it says to make
1395 recommendations on possible implementations of a scenario.

And then lastly, Mr Speaker, and most remarkably, I have to say – and that is the reason I
could not support it, because I was reading this last night and I thought about ringing the hon.
Gentleman and saying to the hon. Gentleman, 'Look, can we at least try and amend this?' But of
course, it is not a question of amending it because the mechanics are already in motion, they
1400 have already done this. Then (4), to make recommendations on the appropriate consultation
model to ensure that the views of the relevant stakeholders are taken into account.

The views of the relevant stakeholders, Mr Speaker, are taken into account *after* there is a
recommendation by the working group on what is the model, Mr Speaker. That is placing the
cart before the horse, Mr Speaker. (*Interjection*) Because the consultation exercise ought to take
1405 place *before* the working group reports to the Government, Mr Speaker. (*Interjections*) That is
the reality and this is ill conceived, Mr Speaker.

1410 And it also contradicts what the Chief Minister himself said on 15th December, which is that there would be a consultation exercise. That is what I would have thought and that is what we would have supported, Mr Speaker, *(Interjection by Hon. G H Licudi)* No, Mr Speaker, *(Interjection by Hon. G H Licudi)* No, Mr Speaker.

1415 **Mr Speaker:** May I draw the attention of the Hon. Minister Licudi to Rule 45, interruptions. Please read it carefully because three times you have attempted to invoke the rule to elucidate some matter raised. You have not succeeded. I think that that is an indication that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, who has the floor, does not wish to give the floor to you and therefore you should allow him to get on with his speech.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker –

1420 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker has referred to the Rules.

Mr Speaker: Yes, I am asking you to read the Rules.

1425 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker -

Mr Speaker: Here you are, here is a copy of the rules.

Hon. G H Licudi: No, no, I am grateful for that and I am well aware of the Rules.

1430 **Mr Speaker:** Well then let the Leader of the Opposition get on with his speech. *(Interjection)*

Hon. G H Licudi: I have simply asked on a Point of Order in relation to the Rules –

1435 **Mr Speaker:** Please sit down. Please sit down.
Now, the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, Mr Speaker –

1440 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, if the Hon. Minister wants to make a Point of Order - *(Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham)*

Mr Speaker: No, no, he has not –

1445 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect -

Mr Speaker: He has not been making a Point of Order.

1450 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I accept that, Mr Speaker, I accept that. But the Hon. Minister was about to say, 'I would like to make a Point of Order then' and you have just told him to sit down. And, Mr Speaker, with the very greatest of respect, it is important that we have debates like this and it is important as you rightly point out that we have them in keeping with the Rules. If somebody is not giving way, well look it is a matter for them whether they give way or not.

1455 But if there is a point that the Hon. Minister wants to make, which is a Point of Order and you would then rule whether it is a Point of Order or not, he must be entitled to put it to you and then you would decide whether it is or not.

Mr Speaker: Right, but he has only come up with the notion of the Point of Order, when on three occasions he has asked for the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition to give way, which he has not. He has not given way.

1460 Right now after I have drawn his attention to the Rules on interruptions, he comes up with a Point of Order. I am prepared to listen to him if it is on a Point of Order, okay? But what I think is a pity, is that we have had, since 11.30 we have been debating a motion positively, constructively and that it degenerates right at the end. I think that is a matter for regret and I have to tell the hon. Members that it is a matter of regret.

1465 Now, the Hon. Mr Licudi, on a Point of Order. (*Interjection*)

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is certainly not our intention to degenerate the debate. In fact it has been as you have indicated, a positive and constructive debate with views shared on both sides.

1470 The point is quite simply that I am obviously aware of the Rules in relation to interruptions. It seemed to me that getting up to ask the hon. Member to give way, to correct a misapprehension which the hon. Member clearly has on the points that he is making in respect of our amended motion, and in particular and of particular relevance, is the fact that it is the reason, the very reason why he says the Opposition or the GSD is voting against and he has a fundamental misapprehension as to all that. That is the only reason that I asked to give way.

Mr Speaker: But the Rule says that another Member in due course, 'provided that the Member speaking is willing to give way and resumes his seat'. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has not done so on three occasions –

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Hon. G H Licudi: And I sat down.

Mr Speaker: So if you are going to continue to interrupt on the basis of asking him to give way, we are not going to get anywhere.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

I have to say that I get flogged, politically speaking, mercilessly from Members opposite, mercilessly. And I sit down and I take it on the chin and I listen. I do not interrupt, I do not heckle and I just listen. On the odd occasion that I have asked for the hon. Gentlemen to give way because there has been a misrepresentation about my position, people have not given way to me.

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Now, I believe – (*Interjection*) Well no, Mr Speaker, therefore I have taken the view that on this occasion I am not giving way, Mr Speaker.

The hon. Gentleman, I have read the motion as set out, that he has drafted. He has set out firstly that there is going to advice to the Government; secondly to make recommendations on what model, whether it should be co-education or single sex; and to make recommendations on implementation. And then it says to make recommendations on appropriate consultation models to ensure that views of relevant stakeholders are taken into account, Mr Speaker.

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And certainly on our side, we believe that the working group ought to be composed as widely as possible, that we know who the people in that working group are, as indeed we knew who the people within the Collister working group were, which included the headmistress of the girls' comprehensive, the headmaster of the boys' comprehensive, the Director of Education – Mr Pitaluga was Director of Education then, later on he became Chief Secretary, the unions were there, there was a statistician and there were people across the board.

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We think that this working group is composed too narrowly and that the first thing that the working group has to do, before it reports in March of next year, is to conduct a consultation exercise in order to then inform it about what the views are of the community on co-education. Because surely the views of the community on the question of co-education is going to be

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1510 *important*; it is never *paramount*. I accept that if you have a preponderance of educators that
tell the Government of the day that co-education is the way forward and we then have the
wherewithal in terms of obviously the bricks and mortar of schooling etc. that will allow us to
1515 deliver on co-education, then that I believe is an overriding reason in favour of co-education that
should trump the views of certain sectors in society, which is not what happened in 1974,
because the views in fact of parents in 1974 were given a greater weight than indeed the views
of other sectors of the community. But indeed, there were other very specific reasons in 1973-
1974 why co-education was rejected then.

But, Mr Speaker, consultation has to be at the heart of this particular process, it has to come
before there is a report by the working, absolutely the Hon. the Minister says to me 'No, no, it
has not', and that is precisely the difference. It has to come *before* the working group reports
1520 and, Mr Speaker, we cannot support the amended motion for all those reasons.

I thank Members of the House for listening to what I have to say, even though they did their
best to interrupt me at every single opportunity. (*Interjection*)

1525 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I call for the House to divide on the vote on the motion.

Mr Speaker: I now put the question in the terms of the motion proposed originally by the
Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and we will take a division.

A division was called for and voting resulted as follows:

FOR

Hon. P J Balban
Hon. J J Bossano
Hon. Dr J E Cortes
Hon. N F Costa
Hon. Dr J J Garcia
Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon
Hon. A J Isola
Hon. G H Licudi
Hon. S E Linares
Hon. F R Picardo
Hon. Miss S J Sacramento.

AGAINST

Hon. R M Clinton
Hon. D A Feetham
Hon. L F Llamas
Hon. E J Phillips
Hon. E J Reyes

ABSENT

Hon. T N Hammond

1530 **Mr Speaker:** There is one Member absent, there are 11 votes in favour of the motion as
amended and there are 5 against. The motion as amended is carried by majority. (*Banging on
desks*)

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now recess until 5 p.m. this
1535 afternoon.

Mr Speaker: The House will recess until 5 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed at 2.17 p.m.