



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10.03 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 2nd March 2016

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 10.03 a.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

Q211/2016

Question unallocated

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday, 2nd March 2016.

We continue with answers to Oral Questions. We commence with Question 211, which is unallocated.

EDUCATION AND JUSTICE & INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Q212/2016

**Legal aid and assistance—
Date when reform Bill expected**

5 **Clerk:** We then move on to Question 212. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, the Government stated in its manifesto that it expects the necessary work on legal aid and assistance to be concluded with appropriate changes to legislation before the end of 2016. Given that we are fast approaching March 2016 – in fact, we
10 are in 2016 – can the Minister for Justice provide an update as to when a Bill for the reform of legal aid and assistance will be brought before this House?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

15 **Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, following a process of consultation and agreement with the Bar Council, the legal aid system was reformed with new rates published and commenced on 25th September 2014.

We have embarked on a process of further consultation with the Bar Council on improvements to the legal assistance system. We expect the necessary work to be concluded
20 with appropriate changes to legislation made, as stated in our manifesto, before the end of 2016.

The Government therefore expects that a Bill will be brought to Parliament before the end of 2016 – in fact, in time for that Bill to be passed before the end of this year.

Q213/2016

**Health and safety in schools –
Reports received by Government**

25 **Clerk:** Question 213. The Hon. T N Hammond.

Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, can the Minister provide information about what health and safety assessments and audits have been conducted in schools during 2014 and 2015; and, if any, what reports have been received by Government regarding health and safety at schools?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, the Government's 2011 manifesto committed to conduct an extensive and in-depth health and safety audit of all schools. This was successfully completed during the course of 2012. The majority of works and recommendations arising from that audit were addressed during 2012 and 2013.

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Since then, health and safety reports continue to be prepared by schools and submitted to the Department of Education almost on a daily basis as part of the repairs and maintenance schedules. These reports cover a wide variety of issues such as dangerous flooring tiles, trip hazards, water ingress issues, electrical faults, broken or splintered furniture and fire safety issues. All reports relating to health and safety issues are prioritised and addressed as a matter of urgency.

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In addition, planned works relating to health and safety issues were carried out to 13 schools during 2014 and 2015.

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Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, in cases where works have taken place not actually in the school but adjacent to schools, as we have seen on many building sites, does the school itself also conduct health and safety assessments of the potential impact of such works on the school environment, or is that left entirely to the developer to provide those health and safety assessments?

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And in the case where, if it is left entirely to the developer, do the schools and the management of the schools, and indeed the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, have site of those health and safety assessments to ensure that they are fit for purpose?

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, there will be occasions when works near or adjacent to the schools may have an impact on the schools. The Government, the Department of Education, works closely with the Technical Services Department whenever those issues arise, so that the Technical Services Department are able to advise the Department and the particular school of any health and safety issues that might arise.

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As an example, hon. Members will recall the works to Charles Bruzon House adjacent to Bishop Fitzgerald, then Governor's Meadow House, Governor's Meadow School, where some health and safety issues were raised and concerns were raised by parents. Technical Services was involved and advised the Department of Education, and although it was felt at the time that there were no health and safety risks to the schools or the children themselves, measures were actually put in place by the Department of Education and the Government to allay those fears and those concerns. One in particular, or two in particular were not just the erection of some scaffolding and protective roof over part of the school premises, but it also included no works being done to the adjacent site during school hours. That was done as a result of concerns expressed by parents, even though the advice that the Department of Education received was that there were no health and safety issues and no health and safety risks. In order to allay those concerns we took those extraordinary steps.

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75 So, yes, by all means, whenever there are works near or adjacent to a school then advice is taken, in particular through the Technical Services Department, and appropriate action is taken whenever it is necessary, as we did with Governor's Meadow and Bishop's.

80 **Hon. T N Hammond:** Indeed, Mr Speaker, in that instance action was taken, albeit in a reactionary way rather than a pre-emptive way, and of course we all know that the ideal for health and safety is to pre-empt such incidents and the need to take action after an event has taken place.

85 We had a similar event at Bayside School with noise from an adjacent site affecting the education of students at that site, which is why I raise the question: is this looked at, the possibility of a site affecting a school, looked at ahead of the time rather than reacted to when an incident takes place? I am thinking in particular of the plans to build a new Bayside School whilst the school remains in action, as it were, and the clear need in that example to ensure that the risk to students and teachers working at the school, whether it be from debris, dust or noise, is kept to an absolute minimum.

90 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, there is a separate question on the Order Paper in relation to the planning of works for new schools, so I will deal with that last issue when I understand. The Hon. Ms Hassan Nahon has a question on that issue.

95 The hon. Member says that the example I gave was reactive and not preventive. Quite the contrary: the works that were actually carried out were preventive initially. I mentioned the scaffolding, I mentioned the covering to the part of the school playground at Governor's Meadow – no issues had been raised at the time. That was in conjunction with the start of the project of the building adjacent, and therefore these protective measures were taken to prevent any material from coming onto the schools.

100 What happened subsequently was not reactive to a health and safety issue. As I have already indicated, there was no health and safety issue. It was reactive to concerns which were raised by parents, which we believed needed to be allayed in this particular way – but not because we were advised there was a health and safety issue that we had to react to. There was no health and safety issue, because the professional advice – and Government has to act on professional advice – the professional advice was that no such issue arose, and therefore the measures we took were over and above those which were necessary from a preventive point of view and simply arose to allay those fears and those concerns which parents had. I went down myself when there was one incident simply arising out of the noise, and I saw the concern in the faces of the parents. I actually spoke to the parents myself, and then I and the Chief Minister went down the following week and addressed a whole group of parents in the assembly hall of Governor's Meadow to listen to their concerns and to explain to them what measures we were taking to allay those concerns. Not because they were health and safety risks, but because there were concerns which were raised and we felt it was appropriate to take those measures.

115 The hon. Member also talks about reactive measures in respect of Bayside. Again, there were no reactive measures taken in respect of Bayside. There was an incident in Bayside in relation to works – not an incident but circumstances in Bayside in relation to works – to Archbishop Amigo House, where, as a result of the noise being carried out to the works to Archbishop Amigo House, a couple of classes were disrupted and in particular a PE class and a geography class were disrupted. That incident was unfortunate and it was unfortunate for this reason: because the Government *had* already taken preventive measures to prevent those circumstances happening. The Government *had* given instructions to the contractor, to GJBS, not to carry out any works to Archbishop Amigo House during school hours. Those instructions had been given already. For some reason, as a result of possibly a misunderstanding or a lack of communication to the people on the ground, one or two people started drilling some holes as part of the works to Archbishop Amigo House, which should not have happened as a result of the measures that Government had already taken, and it was that drilling that led to those issues which arose in

125 Bayside with those classes being disrupted. Therefore, all that the Government needed to do as
a result of that was to reaffirm the instructions which had previously been given, and since then
no other incidents have occurred. So the Government had already pre-empted the fact that
works were being carried out on an adjacent site by a Government contractor, steps needed to
be taken to make sure that there was minimum or no disruption to the schools, instructions
130 were given. For some reason, something was missed at the bottom end and works were carried
out, and we took measures to redress by reasserting the instructions which had already been
given.

So, to the extent that it is in our control, then we will take measures which are appropriate in
order to prevent disruption to schools. Certainly from the Government's point of view, and my
135 point of view as Minister for Education, safeguarding the risks to the schools and making sure
that there are no risks, or minimum risk, and disruptions, as we will see in the later question, is
an important aspect of the plan of any works. It is important that children do attend schools and
teachers attend a work environment that is as risk free as humanly possible, and that is certainly
a lot of the effort that is taken by the Department of Education and the Government to make
140 sure that is indeed the case.

Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, which is why I asked originally, or certainly early in the
supplementaries, what role the schools themselves play in such health and safety assessments. I
am not sure the Minister answered that, but if he did I must have missed the answer.

145 Are the schools or the school management, the Teachers' Association and other stakeholders
actively involved in reviewing those health and safety assessments and judging whether they
may have an impact for the school; or is that entirely left for the Department and outside of the
school's hands?

150 **Hon. G H Licudi:** No, Mr Speaker, schools are involved, and I did mention that earlier when I
said there is contact between the schools, the Department of Education and Technical Services,
who advise on these issues. So there is active involvement.

In fact, before the issues that arose in relation to Bayside about the disruption of the class, I
had actually attended the school specifically on this point to see for myself the works that were
155 going on, because one was a private entity on one side of the school, the World Trade Centre,
and the other was the Government-contracted works on the Archbishop Amigo House, and
there were some concerns raised by the schools on health and safety issues related here
exclusively to noise rather than anything else; this was just a noise issue. I had attended myself
because the schools had raised this issue, and myself and the Director of Education we engaged
160 with the schools as to the issue and as to the measures that needed to take place in order to not
just allay those concerns but to reduce that disruption that was going on as a result of noise. And
we did two things as a result of the direct involvement of the schools. It was as a result of that
trip, that visit that I did to Bayside, that the instructions that I referred to earlier about no works
in Archbishop Amigo House during the course of the school hours ... that was taken as a result of
165 the issues raised by the schools with me personally and with the contractor of the World Trade
Centre. Although it is a private site, it is a private developer, we did engage through appropriate
professionals with the contractors themselves and asked them to put in all measures that could
possibly be put in place given that they were a working site. We could not ask them to not do
any works during school hours, but we asked them to take appropriate measures to keep
170 disruption to a minimum and to keep noise to a minimum. I am advised that appropriate
measures were taking place and, although there was still some noise during school hours, that
was in fact kept to a minimum.

So, yes, schools are engaged, schools are involved, schools do voice their issues, do engage
with myself, with the Director of Education, and in particular also with the Technical Services
175 Department, and we do try to take measures before they become an issue, as they did in two
schools.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just one question in relation to St Bernard's. Can the Minister confirm what health and safety reports have been received in relation to the new St Bernard's School?

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Mr Speaker: Sorry, I did not hear the last part. Did you say St Bernard's School?

Hon. E J Phillips: St Bernard's School, Mr Speaker.

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Hon. G H Licudi: I am not sure whether the question is ... In relation to any new schools, clearly the contractor will have an obligation to carry out health and safety assessments, and I am advised that everything that needed to be done by the contractor has been done.

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Once a school is handed over to the Government and starts functioning as a normal working school, then the process will be the same as for all other school. Reports do come into the Department of Education and reports have come in from St Bernard's. In particular, I know that there was some water ingress issues, so there were some issues which arose following the handover of the school to the Department of Education – things that I would describe as teething problems or things that the contractor simply has to put right. So, some of those issues arise, but as and when any issue arises they will be dealt with in the normal way through the reports that come in, the requisitions that come in constantly to the Department of Education, and which are ... As I indicated earlier, when any such requisition concerns a health and safety matter, then these are given priority and remedied straight away.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I rise because it is an important issue that we are discussing and that the Hon. the Minister for Education is answering questions on.

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Just returning to the incident at Governor's Meadow School, as I understand it, what had happened there was that an object actually fell on the school itself – that is the information that we have – and that then that caused the Government to effectively ... May I please ask the question? And then the Government changed the times in which the contractors were operating. I just want to ask the Hon. Minister ... It may be that I am wrong and that the Government just simply changed the hours in order to allay concerns, rather than because anything had actually dropped on the school itself. My question is therefore this: is the Government satisfied that the health and safety measures that had been taken prior to those concerns arising were reasonable and proper in the circumstances, and have any lessons been learnt if the Government takes the view that those were not reasonable or they could have been improved in the circumstances?

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, no such incident arose. No object fell on the school. An assessment was carried out when those issues were raised with us. In particular, Technical Services Department was involved and looked fully into what had actually happened and we are entirely satisfied that that did not happen. What in fact occurred was that a noise was heard. Hon. Members will recall that I mentioned earlier that a structure had been put in place in the entrance in one of the play areas of Governor's Meadow School, whereby there was a scaffolding covered with sheeting – I think it was corrugated iron sheeting. The conclusion from the investigation as a result of the noise that was heard – and the noise was assumed by some parents perhaps legitimately, or clearly legitimately assumed by some parents that it was as a result of something falling onto the roof of the school, or rather the protective roof in the school area itself and there was this large noise The conclusion of the investigations was that there were some boards, which were laid out on top of that roof for workmen to be able to have access to part of the site that they were working on, and one of the workmen actually dropped the board, the plank – one of these planks that people put on in order to walk – dropped it, maybe a couple of feet rather than just placing it, and that is what caused the noise. So it was

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the workmen themselves taking measures as part of the works that caused the noise and caused that element of panic.

230 So it was not that the Government reacted to a health and safety issue that arose. In fact, no such issue arose, because we are entirely, and we were at the time, entirely satisfied. And it was exclusively – and we explained this to the parents when the Chief Minister and I addressed the assembly the following week – it was exclusively to allay those legitimate concerns that existed that we took the measures that we did, not because we felt that any incident which put any children at risk had actually taken place, because we were entirely satisfied that no such incident had actually happened.

Q214/2016
Teachers -
Overtime payments

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 214. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Would the Minister for Education consider the prospect of introducing overtime pay to teachers who currently spend a lot of extra hours outside of their working hours doing unpaid work?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, this is not being considered. (*Interjection*)

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I ask because, as you might be aware, in the UK there is very low morale in the teacher industry. Teachers are feeling burnt out, stressed, overworked and underpaid, and I am well aware of the directed time, as per their terms and conditions, where teachers need to be present after school, in particular for planning and preparing courses, lessons, assessing, monitoring and recording, but there is a lot of work that goes into the schools, such as the running of afternoon clubs, sports clubs, drama productions and things that teachers need to be present at, which is not acknowledged. So I would like to know if there is any acknowledgement or recognition for the teachers and the fact that they have lives outside school, yet put so many hours into it.

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is quite extraordinary that the Opposition ask whether we are going to introduce overtime pay for teachers in Gibraltar as a result of low morale of teachers in the UK. Where is the suggestion that we have an analogous situation in Gibraltar? In fact, I visit schools regularly and I see very, very happy teachers. Of course there are always issues that teachers raise. We constantly engage with the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, we have signed a social partnership with them, and we have a very good relationship with teachers. But by and large, although there are certainly issues, the morale is good, the conditions are good. We have increased the number of teachers by 47 when we came in in 2011.

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With regard to the extra work that teachers do, that is certainly acknowledged – of course it is acknowledged – but it is part and parcel of what a teacher is expected to do. A teacher's work is not just, as I am sure the Hon. Mr Speaker will acknowledge, is not just going into a classroom at nine o'clock and coming out of that classroom at 9.45 or at 9.50. Of course it involves

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necessary preparation for that class and of course it involves necessary work in relation to marking subsequently. Again, Mr Reyes will have very, very clear experience.

275 As far as I am aware, neither with this Government nor in fact with the previous administration – and Mr Reyes was there for a long time – or the one before, when the GSLP was in office, has this been an issue and has any ... or even with the AACR, as far as we are aware ... that it has been an issue, that it has been on the cards, or that there has ever been a claim by the Gibraltar Teachers' Association for overtime to be paid to teachers. Clearly, we have discussions with them about terms and conditions, about pay scales, about spine points and all that, and all those issues are addressed.

280 The hon. Member mentions directed time, she being aware of directed time, and she will be aware therefore that in the UK, given that she draws that as an analogy, what directed time requires is that teachers, over and above their teaching time, dedicate 1,265 hours a year. That is 1,265 hours a year over and above their teaching time in order to carry out all the necessary preparation and all the necessary work. That is part of the pay and conditions of the UK teachers. It is what is contained in what is known as a Blue Book. We have not formally adopted ever, as far as I am aware, the Blue Book in Gibraltar, but certainly we derive some guidance from what the Blue Book says, which includes things like devoting reasonable additional hours as may be needed to enable the effective discharge of their professional duties, including planning, preparation, assessing, recording and reporting. But also provided in that document is the entitlement to enjoy a reasonable work-life balance. So that is what it is all about: having a reasonable work-life balance. But whoever comes into the teaching profession is under no illusion that they get reasonable pay, good conditions of employment, but planning for lessons and work arising out of those lessons is a necessary part of their terms and conditions of employment.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, thank you for the history lesson on previous administrations.

300 But I was under the impression that with the new foundations and New Dawn things would perhaps be looked at differently, but I suppose when it suits we go back to the way things were done and use them.

With regard to UK morale, it is also not, I do not think, strange to parallel the way we do things with the UK. After all, we do it with every other situation when it suits as well.

305 I suggest that if the Minister speaks to teachers he will perhaps learn that they are burnt out and that there is low morale, and that they feel that if they do not do things like running afternoon clubs, sports clubs and drama productions, which are not part of the 1,265 hours which I am well aware of, they often get side-tracked for promotion, which is also quite something that brings down their morale.

310 So, when he talks about part and parcel, technically speaking and according to terms and conditions, the extra-curricular points that I have brought up, like the afternoon clubs, sports clubs, drama productions and school discos, which again, if they do not partake in are not technically or legally considered as part and parcel of directed time ... and this is why I was asking if there was anything that this Government would do in order to give these teachers recognition and acknowledgement in order to, so to speak, keep them happy and well appreciated.

315 Thank you.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I want to rise because I want to acknowledge and congratulate the hon. Lady for being the first person on the opposite benches to realise where there might be a rich crop of votes for the next General Election. *(Laughter)* She has absolutely rightly identified an area which she could mine, and I salute her for it. And she is right in particular to speak for the Opposition of the high regard that this community must have for those in the teaching profession.

Mr Speaker, apart from, I think, two or perhaps three of you in this room who might have had the benefit of the Christian Brothers education, most of us owe our education and our status in life today to the dedicated teachers, most of them Gibraltarian, who have spent time nurturing each of us and everybody else in this community. The work that teachers do is as important as the work that anybody else in this community does. Somebody was telling me the other day that, of course, all of us do important jobs and it is very likely that teachers could do any of our jobs, but it is also very likely that we might not be able to do the job that a teacher does.

And so, Mr Speaker, the recognition that this side of the House has for the work that is done by the members of the teaching profession is unstinting. It is best evidenced by the way in which we transformed the manner in which certain members of the now teaching profession were, in our view, being exploited by being on the irreconcilable concept of permanent supply – and the hon. Lady needs to understand what that was, because I am sure she will agree with me that it was right to end it – where you had people who were in the classroom literally every day of the term for a year, for two years, and I told her this the other day in relation to another matter, and were yet not a part of the teaching profession. The Hon. Mr Licudi, when he was the Opposition Member for Education, took a real interest in this. We understood the numbers, we quizzed the Government at the time, and we were very keen to ensure that we transformed permanent supply into permanent and that supply should really just be that: supply.

If she is now advocating for people who are permanently employed by the Government to have even greater terms and conditions of employment by having overtime payments made, imagine the situation that we inherited, where we had people who were working full time and were not even recognised as being full-time employees with all the consequences that that had – in particular, their ability to take mortgages, their pension provision etc. I am sure that she will agree with me that that was exploitation, it was for morale absolutely devastating, and that the New Dawn meant that 47 were immediately taken on as permanent members of staff.

Now, she also needs to understand who she sits with in Parliament and what their arguments are. Their arguments, unfortunately, in some areas, are that we are spending too much. I am sure she might say that we could finance the cost of the overtime for teachers with the cost of the refurbishment of Convent Place, but they are really running out of money at Convent Place. They seek to apply that cost to so many things that they would have refurbished Convent Place a hundred times over with the things that they pretend to pay with that refurbishment.

The cost of paying overtime is something that is at large, we would have to look at what that cost is, but this is not a claim that is being made by the Gibraltar Teachers' Association. It is not an issue in the UK that is one of parity. The hon. Lady said we sometimes look to the UK and sometimes we do not. Well, in terms of salaries and terms and conditions we do look to the UK. The hon. Gentleman has told her about the Green or the Blue Book – (**Hon. G H Licudi:** The Blue Book.) the Blue Book – but the issue of parity is one that is alive and well in terms of grading etc. in some of the areas that we deal with, with teachers. So I think those are important considerations that she has to bear in mind when dealing with this point. If, for the past 60 years of successful and outstanding Gibraltarian education through the hand of Gibraltarian teachers, the payment of overtime has not been an issue which has caused or not caused morale to rise or to in any way be diminished, then I will not be persuaded today that that is an issue. The fact that morale may be low in the United Kingdom may be related to a huge number of matters, not least the austerity that the United Kingdom is going through as public finances are capped and the lack of pay rises, which is not an issue which is affecting our teaching profession. The hon. Lady may know that there had been no pay rises in the public sector in the United Kingdom until last year, where I think the pay rise has been 1%, whilst here they have been in the order of 2%, and now almost 3% for the time that we have been in Government, and in fact starting at the time that they were in Government. So teachers in Gibraltar will be earning approximately 10% more than an equal teacher in the United Kingdom with whom they might be on parity.

375 And of course there is in the United Kingdom a shortage of teachers, Mr Speaker, whilst in Gibraltar there is not a shortage of teachers. We have a waiting list for people to come on to be employed, which demonstrates that there is a desire to enter the profession.

All of that, Mr Speaker, I say with the fondest regard for the way that she has quite properly identified an area which she could make a lot of in electoral terms – sometimes a talent, Mr Speaker, that I confess I have not spotted in any of the other Members sitting across with her. *(Laughter and banging on desks)*

A Member: Hear, hear.

385 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, thank you very much to the Hon. Chief Minister for the information, which I will review and in due course perhaps come back to the Minister of Education with any further queries. But let me remind the Chief Minister that education is my area, so whether it gets me votes or not is immaterial. If I get issues brought to me I am here to bring them up, and that is why I am talking about teachers – because they fall under the remit of education. *(Banging on desks)*

390 When it comes to spending we have a policy in the GSD that it is all about priority, **(A Member:** Exactly. Hear, hear.) *(Banging on desks)* and education would be paramount for the future generations and for our community, so obviously that was all I was trying to bring up.

Thank you.

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Hon. Chief Minister: I am grateful, Mr Speaker, for that indication, and I am very pleased to see that the hon. Members clap each other when they remind the Parliament of what their shadow responsibilities are. *(Laughter)*

400 Mr Speaker, education could not be more of a priority for any party in the history of Gibraltar than for the GSLP, which I happily lead, and I will give her an example of why it is that I am proud to say that.

In 1988 the GSLP fought a General Election saying that they would change the practice that there had been until then that there were only a few discretionary scholarships and scholarships if you reached a particular number of points, so that anybody who secured a place at a place of further education in the United Kingdom would be able to go away and study. And, Mr Speaker, many of us sitting on this side of the House, and indeed many of those sitting on that side of the House might also be the product of that change. I am happy to say I think I achieved the points anyway, but those of us who might not have achieved the points would have been able to go, and this has been transformational for Gibraltar. Our opponents in that election – and I was not active in politics at the time; I was active in the Students Association with the hon. Member the Hon. Shadow Chancellor, Mr Speaker ... but it has transformed Gibraltar, Mr Speaker, although at that time, during that General Election, it was said that that policy would bankrupt Gibraltar.

410 Mr Speaker, the transformation in Gibraltar has been because there are Gibraltarian professionals now leading in the professions. The Gibraltar we have today is built on the backs of that education. That is why the New Dawn of 2011 also provided that we would extend that practice into secondary education. And of course, Mr Speaker, when you talk about educational priorities, I also stand here as the leader of the only party that has opened, in the last 30 years, opened two new schools. The last party to do that was the GSLP in 1988 with the two new St Joseph's Schools, the next party to do that was the GSLP Liberal Government with the two new St Bernard's Schools, and the only party with a General Election manifesto commitment to open many new schools, not a mega school at Rooke, was this party.

415 Mr Speaker, the transformation in Gibraltar has been because there are Gibraltarian professionals now leading in the professions. The Gibraltar we have today is built on the backs of that education. That is why the New Dawn of 2011 also provided that we would extend that practice into secondary education. And of course, Mr Speaker, when you talk about educational priorities, I also stand here as the leader of the only party that has opened, in the last 30 years, opened two new schools. The last party to do that was the GSLP in 1988 with the two new St Joseph's Schools, the next party to do that was the GSLP Liberal Government with the two new St Bernard's Schools, and the only party with a General Election manifesto commitment to open many new schools, not a mega school at Rooke, was this party.

420 So, almost 50 more teachers; in the first instance, compulsory grants for those who secured a place at further education and in the second instance, now, the second degree also mandatory if people are able to secure their place; and two more new schools and many more new schools to come. 'Education, education, education', as I said during the lifetime of the last Parliament – the hon. Lady was not here to hear me say it, so I am quite happy to repeat it for her – are the only

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terms, the only phrase that Tony Blair used in the time of the New Labour government with which every Gibraltarian, I am sure, would be able to associate.

430 **Mr Speaker:** May I draw the attention of hon. Members to the fact that we have spent more than half an hour on just two questions, and they might care, since we are talking about education, to take out a pencil and work out how much longer we are going to be here at this rate of or at this lack of progress.

435 Very important, education – a subject that I value enormously – but that does not mean that we have to have very lengthy answers in all cases from both Ministers. I think they are very, very lengthy and I would ask hon. Members to be more brief, unless they wish to be here for another week or so.

440 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, may I just seek a very quick answer from the Minister?

Mr Speaker: A very quick answer?

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes.

445 **Mr Speaker:** Absolutely.

Hon. E J Reyes: Yes, just confirmation as a result of ... and I fully understand the explanations he was giving. Can he please reconfirm to teaching professionals and so on, other than the pay and conditions that are set out in what is commonly known as the Blue Book and so on, and the directed time, do we still have in existence those arrangements that we ... the nomenclature that used to be called the 'separate contract', whereby some teachers may offer their services, for example, to offer adult evening education classes, and that being considered duties over and above what their daytime job may be in one of our other schools, and they used to enter into agreements called separate contracts and therefore attracted separate remuneration? Has there been no change? Just confirmation there has been no change and that still continues, as has been the practice now for many years.

455 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I am certainly not aware of any change. I have not directed any change in relation to that, and therefore I assume, although I have not checked, that the position continues to be as it was.

Q215/2016
Schools' IT equipment –
Availability of technicians

Clerk: Question 215. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

465 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Does Government currently have technicians in schools to man and maintain IT equipment and resources?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, yes, the Government does have technicians in schools to man and maintain IT equipment and resources.

470 Full details were given by me in answer to Question 319/2014.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, are these technicians permanent in school, and how does the system work?

475 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I have just explained that full details were given by me in answer to Question 319/2014. It is in fact a very lengthy answer. I am happy to read the whole answer again, if Mr Speaker wants me to.

Mr Speaker: I think the procedure in such a case, where the Minister is referring an hon. Member of the Opposition to a question that was answered during the previous Parliament, I think the procedure should be that that should give the Member of the Opposition an opportunity to read up on that question, and I will allow of course a further question at the next meeting of the House. I will not apply the six-month rule, because the hon. Member of the Opposition is being referred to something that they need to read up on.

485 I hope the Government understands that procedure.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I am happy with that approach, but just to answer directly the question whether there are technicians permanently based – although full details, as I said, were given in the relatively lengthy answer I gave in 2014 – just to confirm that there is one qualified ICT technician based permanently at Bayside and another based permanently at Westside, the College has its own ICT technician and there are four other technicians who are engaged as part of the Government’s IT and LD Department, who were engaged specifically for schools and provide support for first and middle schools as and when required.

495 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I was just trying to highlight, as I had been made aware that there were, in fact, as the hon. Gentleman says, only permanent IT technicians in Bayside and Westside, leaving middle schools and primary schools without permanent support. So this was something that I was wondering whether he would consider installing.

500 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, this is something that we did consider and, as I explained previously, when we came into office in 2011 there was, as I recall, only one permanent technician, who I believe was based in Bayside. Other than that, schools were at the mercy of the requirements of Government generally, and in particular of the Government’s IT Department. They were very stretched and support for IT in all schools was substantially lacking.

505 I went to great pains to explain what the system was before and how we changed the system, but now we have more permanently engaged technicians based at schools themselves and four specific technicians who were engaged for the specific purpose of supporting schools. They are based at the Government’s IT Department. Why is that? Simply for practical purposes, because there is work to be done in Government offices beyond the school hours and when the schools are on holiday, and therefore we took the practical decision that those four technicians would be engaged to support the schools but would be based at the Government’s IT Department and do other jobs when the schools were not in operation, either after 3.30 or when the schools are in recess during summer holidays and so forth.

510 But we engaged four specific IT technicians for schools, based at the Government’s IT Department, but those are very specific, to support first and middle schools, and that support simply was not there when we came in in 2011.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I thank him for the information.

520 I understand there is a ticket system of sorts, and my question would be: what priority so schools take? It is 2016, and in five years IT would have taken a bigger priority in schools. You bring in systems, smart boards, computers, and I believe that perhaps there is more need to have permanently based technicians in schools. From what I understand, there are only

525 permanently based technicians in Bayside, Westside and the College, as he just said. So, what I
am asking is whether they would consider having permanently based technicians in all schools in
the advent of more IT being a priority in schools since 2011, when I accept that perhaps the IT
support would have been substandard then but things have moved on.

Hon. G H Licudi: Well, Mr Speaker, they certainly have moved on, and they have moved on in
530 leaps and bounds since December 2011. I am basically being drawn in to reading the three-page,
or two-and-a-half-page question to address all the issues that the hon. Lady is referring to.
Is it now GSD policy before we were being urged to pay overtime –?

Mr Speaker: Perhaps we can leave this question now, I think, and we revisit it at the next
535 meeting, (*Interjection*) after the hon. Lady has had an opportunity, because I do not think the
Minister should be constantly referring, to what was a very very long answer to a previous
question, should be constantly referring as a result of supplementaries.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I am happy with that, but there was a specific question, which is
540 whether we will now be employing a technician to be based permanently in each school.

We assessed the requirements of the school system. As I was about to ask, is it now GSD
policy that of the 17 schools there should be 17 technicians based in each school? Is that what
they are urging us to do? It has never been GSD policy. It certainly was not GSD policy when
schools were all but abandoned, particularly first and middle schools, from an IT point of view.
545 And I use that word advisedly, because that is what I have been advised was actually happening.
Schools were essentially abandoned up to December 2011 from an IT point of view.

Things have moved on very significantly and we now have permanent members of staff at
Bayside, Westside and its own technician at the College, and four other technicians that attend
to the needs of the first and middle schools. This is a matter that continuously needs to be
550 assessed, and should we believe and discover that the IT needs of the schools improve or
increase and we need to give consideration to greater support through the Government's IT
Department, that is certainly something that will happen. But what we have put in place is
actually a system which is a far cry from the system we found in 2011.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I am just asking whether Government would be
555 willing to put in more permanent technicians, because from what I understand, a lot of the IT
systems, they look great but a lot of the time they do not work and they are laid there, smart
boards and computers, not working. I get this from teachers. I am not lying. So, if the Minister
wants to adhere to these notes that I am giving him from what I am hearing, he can; otherwise,
560 he can leave it the way it is. As you well know, we are not in Government; we are not setting
policy. I am simply bringing issues to the table, and if he wants to take them on board he can.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, but it is all very well for the hon. Member to be a spokesperson
or a mouthpiece for somebody who comes with a particular problem – that is certainly part of
565 their job – but it is simply not true to say that systems in schools a lot of the time do not work.
And just because the hon. Member has heard maybe one report from somebody who might
have had one particular problem with one particular computer, that does not mean that systems
in schools a lot of the time do not work, which is what the hon. Lady has elevated the matter to.

We have to be responsible about statements made in Parliament and not make those kind of
570 statements which bear no resemblance, no resemblance, to the actual truth.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I would not be so facetious or waste parliamentary
time bringing one report from one person. I often speak to many people from many schools
before I bring an issue to Parliament. I just want that on the record.

575 Thank you.

Q216/2016
Children in full-time education –
Verification of residency

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 216. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

580 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Would the Minister for Education explain what procedures the Department of Education has in place to monitor the verity of the local residency of children in full-time education?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

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Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, a check on residency is part and parcel of the school enrolment process at the Department of Education. All applications for school enrolment in schools involve the submission of proof of residency by parents or guardians.

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The Department of Education follows a number of pathways to check on residency status, including the use of ID cards, utility bills, permits of residence where these have been issued, rental agreements or contracts, and information and assistance from other HM Government of Gibraltar Departments such as Civil Status and Registration Office.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, may I ask, in relation to this particular issue, whether any of the systems for cross checks that the hon. Gentleman has just outlined in his reply have actually changed from when they got elected in December 2011.

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The reason why I ask is this: because I remember sitting on the Government benches and the hon. Gentleman actually asking very similar questions to the one that the hon. Lady has asked, and suggesting that there are quite a number of people across the Frontier who are coming from Spain in order to take advantage of our free education system, which then has implications for university etc. It just strikes me that if the systems are exactly the same as they were in December 2011, then those problems that the hon. Gentleman claimed existed prior to that date no doubt exist post that date, which is, I suppose, the root to the question that is being asked by the hon. Lady.

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May I also add, in the context of that question that I have asked, that I have seen articles in the press supportive of the hon. Gentleman opposite – the *Panorama Newspaper* – where this appears to be something that is a problem, and I just wonder what checks have changed since the hon. Gentleman came into office, bearing in mind the questions that he asked when he was in opposition.

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I do not remember the specific issues that the hon. Member says that I raised. I am not saying that I did not raise them, I just have no recollection specifically of that.

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It is certainly true that a check on residency has always been required; that is not a new system that we introduced. And the ways of checking residency may not have changed, either through rental contracts or agreements or ID cards, utility bills, permits of residence and all that. The issue might simply be a matter of emphasis on how stringent those checks are or whether they may or may not have been. I do not know, and it frankly did not matter to me what they were before, but certainly I needed to make sure that the checks that are made currently, and have been made for the last four years since I have been Minister for Education, are sufficiently stringent for the Director of Education himself to be satisfied in respect of residency for all students going to Gibraltar schools.

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625 In most cases it is not an issue. In most cases, somebody who comes with an address in Varyl
Begg, who has been through the normal process, it just is not an issue. In other cases issues are
raised and documents need to be looked at a little bit more carefully. I know that in one case
recently we have had the Director of Education and Senior Education Adviser going to a
residence and knocking on the door to check whether the particular person who said he was
630 living at that residence was actually there. I do not know whether that happened before, but it
certainly has happened. *(Interjection)* Mr Reyes suggests that that has happened before. So it is
that extent of checking that is carried out, but the policy is very simple: if you are resident in
Gibraltar you are entitled to free education in Gibraltar, and if you are not then you are not. The
system is intended to make sure that that is exactly the policy that is applied.

635 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So just to be absolutely clear, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has no
recollection that he has given instructions to introduce any kind of different system since he
became Minister for Education on this particular issue?

640 **Hon. G H Licudi:** That is not what I have said. I have said I had no recollection about the
previous questions that I supposedly asked. I have not said that I have no recollection.

Of course I have a recollection of giving instructions. This is a matter that I have discussed on
a number of occasions with professionals at the Department of Education, with the Director in
particular. I have asked for advice on what the system is and how the system can be improved,
and I have given instructions that stringent checks need to be carried out wherever there is a
645 doubt, so that we make sure that those who are resident go to schools and those who are not
resident do not take up places that should go to local residents.

So yes, I have given instructions specifically that stringent checks should be carried out on
residence checks.

650 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, I understand that but that is not the question. My question
was: is there a different system in place, as a consequence of him becoming a Minister, to that
which existed prior to December 2011? Because, no doubt if I asked the Minister for Education
at the time that we were in Government he would say, 'I too met with the Director of Education,
I too met with the pertinent authorities and I too gave instructions that there should be
655 stringent checks.' But with these things it is not about a Minister giving instructions that there be
stringent checks; it is about systems, those are, what is in place that ensures that people do not
get through the net. That is why I am asking this question. I tried to give the hon. Gentleman the
benefit of the doubt, because in four years ... It may well be that in 2012 he may have had a
meeting and he may have said, 'Well, look, let's tweak the system in this way,' and he cannot
660 remember. That is why I phrased the question in the way that I phrased the question.

But just to be clear, again, he has no recollection – that is why I am putting it in this way – of
giving any instructions to change the system as from December 2011?

665 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member insists, but I have not said that I denied in my
earlier intervention that I had said that. Of course I have a recollection – and I say that again: of
course I have a recollection – of discussing it. In fact, only last week I had a conversation
specifically on this matter with the Director of Education before the – well last week or maybe a
couple of weeks ago, certainly before the question arose.

Is the system different? I do not know whether the system is different or not. I know that
670 there has always been a requirement to check on residency. How stringent that was applied
previously, that is a matter for the GSD and it is not a matter for me. What I know is that I gave
instructions and I have repeated those instructions and I have had several meetings with the
professionals in which the Government insists that stringent checks are applied in order to check
on residency for the purposes of enrolment to our schools.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Hon. T N Hammond: Sorry, Mr Speaker –

680 **Mr T N Hammond:** Yes.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, bearing in mind the Hon. the Minister has instructed the stringent application of the systems, is the Minister satisfied that there is not a single non-resident receiving an education in any of the public schools in Gibraltar?

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I am entirely satisfied that the policy that the Government has put in place is applied by the Department of Education and that the Director of Education is himself satisfied as to residency, otherwise he would take steps to remedy that.

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Is there the remote possibility of someone having slipped through the net? Well, I suppose that possibility always exists, and I cannot give any possible guarantees. But am I satisfied that the system is working properly and the Director of Education himself is satisfied? Well, yes, I am satisfied, because I have asked him and he has indicated that the system is in place and is working.

Q217/2016
Special educational needs –
Assessment process

695 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Clerk: Question 217. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: In connection with the 2011 manifesto promising the SEN system, assessing all children to see whether they require special needs regardless of whether the child requires special needs because they are above or below average, would the Minister for Education confirm whether it has been done and/or is still in place?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

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Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, I can confirm that all children are assessed upon entry and that, furthermore, this assessment process is ongoing to ensure appropriate provision and support is afforded.

Q218/2016
Construction and refurbishment of schools –
Anticipated levels of disruption

Clerk: Question 218. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Can Government give an indication as to the level of disruption that teachers and students can expect in the forthcoming construction and/or refurbishment of the various schools as outlined in their manifesto?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

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Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, Government is still at a planning stage in relation to works to schools and creation of entirely new schools as outlined in our manifesto. This will be the most significant investment in the fabric of our educational establishments in our history. Everyone in our community will no doubt welcome this investment in new schools. Already we have developed two new schools in one term and a University. We will go on and do even better now in this term. Teachers, parents and children will be delighted. Part of the planning process will clearly involve ensuring that any disruption is kept to a minimum.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, in terms of the Bayside refurbishment, can the Minister confirm that the –

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Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady has to be very careful, because only ten minutes ago that is precisely what was being debated.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, but the Hon. –

Mr Speaker: Bayside. The Hon. Mr Trevor Hammond raised the whole question of health and safety on the incidents that occurred at Bayside. You need to be careful that you...

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: I understand that the Hon. the Minister for Education said that he would be dealing with it when the question came up to me, so –

Hon. D A Feetham: That is the point.

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Mr Speaker: He did, I am very sorry and I apologise.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: – this is why I ask if in Bayside ... Are the students going to remain in Bayside during the refurbishment of Bayside? Because if they are, how can we minimise the noise? Because these children are going to be taking exams. It is a period where they do GCSEs and A-levels, and as much as I am sure the Minister would want to minimise noise, noise is inevitable and teachers are already complaining – not one teacher, many teachers in Bayside are already complaining – that they have to speak over and above their usual tone because of the World Trade Centre, for example.

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My concern is that these children are taking exams at different levels and whether it would disrupt them and the teachers trying to teach the syllabus.

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I have said that Government is at a planning stage and part of the planning will involve logistics: how it is going to be done and how is that disruption going to be kept to a minimum in areas where we already have schools. It is one thing to build a new school, like we did with St Bernard's in a different site to St Bernard's first and St Bernard's Middle – Sacred Heart, as it was – and then bring the two schools together. Where one is working in a site where there are already children, then planning is of a different nature and logistics has to be taken into account. We already have experience of having done a number of works in existing schools – we did the extension to Notre Dame, we have done an extension to St Martin's, we have done an extension and extra classrooms in St Joseph's – so we already have some experience of the planning that needs to go into these matters.

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But this is clearly the focus of what the Government is now doing: planning as to how it is going to be done, to make sure that we keep that disruption to a minimum. And I am certainly very well aware of the issues that the hon. Lady has raised. I have discussed this with the

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Headmaster at Bayside in particular. I know what the teachers are saying and all those views will certainly be taken into account and the works will have to be very, very carefully planned and very carefully logistically mapped out to make sure that we keep that disruption to a minimum.

770 **Hon Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, from what I understand, already during the election
campaign the GSLP party was saying that the planning stage had already been organised and
that they already knew how they were going to minimise disruption. And having said that, as
775 much as they would like to minimise disruption I do not see how workers can be silent during
the building of a property while students are in school. Personally, I would think that the only
way to ensure that students are not disrupted would be to actually move them. I cannot imagine
... as much as they try to find logistics that will minimise disruption, as long as they are in the
same building the disruption will be there. And from what I understand ... from what I
remember, Minister Linares said once that he did not want to do a refurbishment at the Victoria
780 Stadium in order not to disrupt students at Bayside. So in order to make a new Bayside, how can
you keep the students sitting in Bayside without disruption unless you actually move them?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, as I said during the General Election
campaign, the party had been responsible for creating the manifesto commitments and the
party which I represent has a plan which it is now sharing with the people who are responsible in
785 Government. *(Laughter)* Apparently, Mr Speaker, the fact that parties have a plan creates mirth
on the other side. Given the result of the election, I am not surprised, Mr Speaker, that they do
not plan in the party! That is what is now being consulted on and is being, of course, improved
on.

If it is of any consolation to the hon. Lady she is not more concerned than we are that
790 students should not be disrupted. We are as concerned that they should not be disrupted. It is
our responsibility that they should not be disrupted and we will ensure that the work is done in a
way that minimises disruption.

Of course, on some occasions private entities have construction going on next to a school.
The World Trade Centre is there. It was a project which was approved by the former GSD
795 administration to be next to a school and therefore was going to have to be built next to a
school and cause disruption. But I will give her this hint. We have demonstrated to them how it
is possible to do works next to a school in a way that a school is not disrupted, if we are the
party responsible both for the works and for the school, by the mechanism that the hon.
Gentleman has outlined to her was used in the area of Governor's Meadow, where workers
800 commenced at 3.30 in the afternoon after school was out and work which was carried on during
the school day was carried on in a way that has not caused any disruption, has gone on – if I may
put it this way, so that the hon. Lady understands it – inside the envelope of a building, and a lot
of work has been accelerated during school holidays etc.

That is the way that the Hon. Minister delivered excellent refurbishments and additional
805 facilities for St Martin's and also for Notre Dame School, things which we sometimes forget
when we are talking about the huge investment we have made in education. We sometimes
only talk about the two new schools we have created, but we have created new classrooms at St
Martin's and refurbished extensively at St Joseph's and Notre Dame – all of it, Mr Speaker,
without disruption to students.

810 So that is our priority as much as it is theirs, if not more so, Mr Speaker, because it is our
responsibility as well.

I will just end with this, Mr Speaker. I did my Oxford entrance exam with a pneumatic drill
outside the room. I think that is why I finished quicker and managed to pass.

815 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan:** Mr Speaker, I am very grateful for that answer. Perhaps there are
many students who are not as intelligent as our Chief Minister and are not of Oxbridge potential
and therefore they need to concentrate more and they need less noise around.

I am grateful for the almost-undertaking among all the marketing and PR of this Government's record on education (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) on how they are going to ensure that noise is minimised, and I will take it that students can count on no noise-related activity during school hours. Is that what the hon. Gentleman is saying?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, that is exactly what I am saying – that what we are going to do is to minimise any disruption to the *maximum* possible degree. Will there be no disruption? Well, Mr Speaker, I do not think it is about intelligence; I think it is about exam technique. If you are doing exams, I think it is about concentration if you are in the classroom. But will there be no disruption? Well, Mr Speaker, there will be the *least possible* disruption it is possible for there to be. We would like that to be zero, Mr Speaker. Will it be possible for it to be zero? Perhaps not, but we shall endeavour to make it zero because that is our responsibility. It is our responsibility to the students, it is our responsibility to the teachers and it is what we want to achieve. Will we be able to achieve it? Well, the engineering will guide us towards how we best achieve that, but I guarantee her that the work that we will do in July and August will cause zero disruption, and the work that we will do during the Christmas and Easter holidays will cause zero disruption, and that the work that we will do after 3.30 will cause zero disruption, and that therefore there will be less weeks in the year when there might be something going on during a lesson than there would be weeks in the year when there were things going on which will not cause disruption.

I assume that she supports that we should be making this investment – the public decided it should be our proposal that should be the one that continues and not theirs – and that she believes that we should be making the investment, and that she just agrees with us that we should be doing that in a way which is the least disruptive possible, which is what I am telling her is exactly the objective of the Government. It appears that we are ... despite the attempts to create a suggestion that she cares more, which is her PR style, actually the underlying reality is that we entirely agree that it must be done in the least disruptive way possible.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, all I was trying to ascertain was to ensure that we are all on the same page in terms of the least disruption, and I accept the hon. Gentleman's explanation.

May I suggest that, from my point of view, the least disruption clearly possible would be to actually move the students from Bayside, and may I remind the hon. Gentleman that during the GSD time in Government – for example, when the Hebrew School underwent a refurbishment – the students from the Hebrew School were moved to the College. So I am just wondering if there is a possibility for the Bayside students to be moved during this refurbishment, to completely ensure that they are completely not disrupted during their school time?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, the page is page 72 of the Strongest Foundations manifesto where the hon. Lady will see the magnificent plans that there are already for Bayside School. The logistics of the works – and Mr Speaker complains that we are going on for too long, but she is asking me to commit myself to the logistics of the works –

Mr Speaker: I did not complain. I just pointed out to hon. Members that, on the basis of this progress we may be ... I am prepared to be here next week, if necessary; that is my job and I do not complain. I just point it out so that hon. Members know where we stand.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We have told her repeatedly that we are going to minimise the disruption etc. The logistics of that will be a package that will be dealt with by the professionals, by the Minister, by the Department, and will include, if necessary, a relocation. But I would have thought that is one of the things we would seek to avoid, because of course that creates its own disruption of another type. But she can rest assured, Mr Speaker, that this Government is 100% committed to the

870 least possible disruption to any student for the implementation of what is the most magnificent transformation of the fabric of educational establishments in Gibraltar ever proposed to our nation by a party in a General Election, and now this Government's commitment for the next four years.

875 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Thank you, I look forward to that. And thank you for your own PR style on your spin on this.

Hon. Chief Minister: My pleasure.

880 Mr Speaker, she does not have to have the last word; she has to ask questions, *(Laughter)* and when she asks questions we get up to answer them.

Q219-220/2016
Supply teachers –
Numbers available; HR policy

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 219. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

885 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Can the Minister give details of the number of supply teachers currently available to cover sick and absent teachers?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

890 **Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 220.

Clerk: Question 220. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

895 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Can the Minister for Education explain what the Human Resources policy is in connection with sending supply teachers to cover absent or sick teachers, i.e. how soon after a school or college reports an absence does a supply teacher from outside the school or college come in to fill that absence?

900 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, there are 78 supply teachers currently providing cover for sick and absent teachers.

905 Supply teachers will usually cover for absent and sick teachers as soon as a suitable supply teacher is identified from the supply pool. There is no predetermined waiting period, but the deployment of a supply teacher will be prioritised in consultation with the headteacher according to the number of absences already affecting the school during the period, as well as any other significant circumstances such as the length and nature of the absence, the notice afforded to the Department, whether the absence occurs in a small or large school, whether it is
910 the primary or secondary sector, and so on.

I would add, Mr Speaker, that prior to December 2011 the general practice was that the school had to wait for three working days before supply was sent. That practice was done away

915 with by me following representations from schools to the effect that it made no sense for them to have to wait three days if a supply teacher was available to cover for the absent teachers.

I would also point out, Mr Speaker, that the increase of 47 full-time teachers in 2011 went a long way in addressing staffing issues at schools, and in many cases this makes it easier for schools to cover for absences internally, despite the criticism from some about the increases in public sector employees.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q221/2016
Westside and Bayside Schools –
Teaching assistants

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 221. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: How many teaching assistants are there in Westside and Bayside Schools respectively, and what are the criteria for them to be required to help in any given classroom?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, there are 15 special needs learning support assistants in Bayside and 12 in Westside.

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Pupils with special educational needs are discussed at the multi-disciplinary Special Needs Assessment Panel, as set out in the 1977 Children with Special Needs (Assessment Panel) Regulations. Recommendations on the level of support required per child, including support from learning support assistants, are then made to the Director of Education, who will then authorise the deployment and allocation of these resources. The Special Needs Co-ordinator within the schools will then assign these according to the needs of the children.

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Q222/2016
Teaching English as a Foreign Language –
Level of resourcing

Clerk: Question 222. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Would the Minister provide details of the level of resourcing for TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at primary, middle and secondary level?

945

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information

(Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, at secondary level there is a specialist teacher allocated to Bayside and Westside who works with pupils in small groups to support their learning and improve their English skills. Currently, 40 pupils are supported across both schools.

In the primary sector there are now established strategies developed after the Department of Education provided the Special Needs Co-ordinators with in-service training in 2012 on supporting and teaching children whose first language is not English.

Schools will use TEFL teaching using a wide range of methods, including in-class support, using special needs support assistants, teacher-led language support groups and, for children with additional needs, withdrawal from mainstream into smaller schools for more targeted teaching.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, may I ask the hon. Gentleman: with the increase in children of naturalised families and the many other international families that are residing in Gibraltar, perhaps the idea of a full immersion course at the beginning of the academic year ... would that be a consideration for Government in order to streamline the children? Also, it would cause less disruption to all the other mainstream pupils, who often get slowed down by teachers who have to explain things in a slower way to children who are not exactly up to speed.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, an increase in naturalised families, as I understand it, does not result in an increase in residents. These are people who have been in Gibraltar for many years and have at some point – after 10, 20, sometimes more years, 30 or 40 years of living in Gibraltar – have become naturalised. So these are people who have been in Gibraltar for many years. And in fact those are the least of the problems, because the children of those people who are naturalised are generally those who have come through the education system in Gibraltar and have English, if not as their first certainly as one of their main languages, and that generally does not present a problem.

We have allocated a specific resource to the secondary sector. In fact, we were the first to do so. It did not exist before December 2011 and we took the opportunity in 2012 when the 47 extra teachers, the extra complement of 47, was being engaged, and there was one applicant who was not just a qualified teacher but has specialist qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language and we specifically employed that teacher as part of the 47 to be a peripatetic teacher in the secondary sector to provide the support which, as I said, did not exist before.

At primary level I have given examples of how these children are supported and the Department of Education, in conjunction with a strategy that we started in 2012 which involves the engagement of that specialist teacher, provide an in-service training to what are generally called SENCOs – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators – of each school as to how to support children with language difficulties.

Ultimately, these are professional decisions. These are not policy decisions for the Government; we simply make resources available. We decide a policy. We have given the professionals at the schools and the Department of Education the necessary tools in terms of teaching resources. How they are best deployed for education in Gibraltar is really a matter for them.

I am advised that the measures that they have put in place are adequate and are the ones that are needed to support children with these difficulties. We clearly recognise that sometimes children come to Gibraltar with their families and English is not their first language and that creates an initial difficulty; but children are in fact very resilient and they adapt very quickly, and the younger they are the easier it becomes for them to adapt and they generally become an integral part of the class very quickly.

But clearly there is a need for support. That support is provided and the professionals of the Department, in my view, do excellent work in providing the necessary support to these children.

1000 **Hon. Ms. M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I appreciate the work that the Minister for Education has been doing regarding teaching English as a Foreign Language, but I repeat my suggestion from the various sources is that a full immersion course would be a good idea in order to bring children up to speed, and I leave it at that.

Thank you.

1005 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Again, the hon. Member wants to have the last word and make a statement, rather than asking a supplementary. She has made a suggestion, I have picked it up, I will pass it on to the professionals and let the professionals decide whether her suggestion is a good one or not.

1010 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** It really is not about making a statement or having the last word. (*Interjection*) No. I put to you a question and you do not ... The hon. Member does not actually answer me one way or another, so I have to repeat what the question was in order for him to understand that that was the question.

1015 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, not getting an answer is not the same as not getting the answer she wants.

1020 We provide answers. We are asked questions and we provide the answers that we consider as a Government are answers to those questions. Whether she accepts or believes that those answers are adequate or satisfactory is a matter for her, but that is not the same as not getting an answer.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: This is precisely the point, Mr Speaker. I was not getting an answer.

**Q223/2016
Hot school lunches –
Update**

1025 **Clerk:** Question 223. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Can the Minister provide an update with regard to their manifesto commitment on hot school lunches for all schools?

1030 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, the Government's 2015 manifesto commitment states as follows, and I quote:

A full process of consultation with parents, headteachers, teachers and their unions will take place so that we can start the provision of hot school meals to all children whose parents agree.

1035 Government is in the process of planning such a consultation exercise with all the necessary stakeholders.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: I am very sorry if this may be a last word and not exactly a question as he would like it to be, but I think it is. From what I remember, the Chief Minister, at the opening of the University, declared as a commitment a *fait accompli* of hot school lunches

1040 for the next mandate that they won. So I did not know that it was in a consultation stage. From
what I understand, it was a done deal.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, again the hon. Member fails to ... and she acknowledges, on top
of that, when she gets up, that she is not going to ask a question.

1045

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): She needs to be stopped.

Hon. G H Licudi: When she says she did not know that there was going to be a consultation
process, has she just found out from me telling her now that there is going to be a consultation
1050 process? It is black upon white in the manifesto. It is a manifesto commitment and it is that
manifesto – how many was it? – seven out of 10 Gibraltarians voted for. **(Several Members:**
Hear, Hear.) *(Banging on desks)* That is the manifesto that we are seeking to implement and that
is exactly the commitment that we are going to carry through during this term of office.

1055 **Mr Speaker:** I think I do have to remind hon. Members of the Opposition that they should ask
questions. It is not a very difficult process, after a bit of practice, to rephrase a statement as a
question. I commend that.

1060 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if I may ask the hon. Member, in terms of school lunches
would he confirm that it is the Government's intention that these lunches be provided free
across all schools, and has he undertaken a preliminary costing of this?

1065 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, as we have indicated, this is a matter that will be considered by
the Government as a result, or as part and parcel, of the consultation process which is going to
take place. That is the whole purpose of carrying out that consultation. And once we carry out
that consultation process and take policy decisions, we will announce them.

1070 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, may I commend to the hon. Gentleman, that if the
Government is considering, as it appears from the wording of the manifesto commitment, the
charging for hot lunches to parents who may wish their children to receive these lunches, that of
course they bear in mind that there are many, many people in Gibraltar who, because of their
means, cannot pay and could not pay for hot lunches for their children, and therefore the state
has a responsibility in relation to those children.

1075 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, in fact, let us be very, very clear about who stands for what.
There is absolutely no question of this Government pretending to charge a parent who is unable
to afford it for a school lunch. It should also be common ground, Mr Speaker, I believe, that if
people are able to afford it there might be no good reason to simply gift something to those
families, because we have to concentrate on those who *cannot* afford.

1080 The Government's guiding principle of this issue is that there should not be a child in school,
watching others eat, unable to eat because his parents cannot afford it. That is not the Gibraltar
that we will be presiding over; it is not a Gibraltar that we would tolerate, Mr Speaker. But I have
to tell Members here that today there are some instances where children are unequal at
lunchtime because some parents may be able to afford to send something to school and others
1085 are unable to send something to school. We read, in particular from the World Health
Organisation and from UNICEF, that even in Spain there are children who are now only getting
their hot meal a day in school because of the austerity that has been there. That is not where
Gibraltar is, Mr Speaker.

1090 What the Government will do in terms of paying for meals or not paying for meals is part of
the consultation process. My own view, Mr Speaker, is that today parents spend money on food.
Parents would much rather it be provided and not have to prepare and provide it themselves

and they would happily pay a reasonable amount of money for that. But if there are people who cannot pay, then of course the Government will ensure that those people do not have to pay. Gibraltar *Socialist Labour Party*: it means something to those of us who sit on this side of the House.

1095

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I am very grateful to the Chief Minister. Of course, if I had not asked the question that information would not have come out, and the reason why I asked that particular question was to allay the concerns of anybody listening to these exchanges that that is the position of the Government. It was not meant in any way, shape or form in order to criticise the Government. There are things on which both political parties – indeed, I suppose any political party that were in this House and that were elected by the people of Gibraltar, who have a *huge* amount of common sense and would never elect to this place a political party that effectively charges people who cannot afford to pay for hot meals for their children.

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I also welcome the statement by the Chief Minister that everything is in the mix, so to speak, and that those who can perhaps afford to pay for hot lunches for their children ... that perhaps the Government considers charging not an excessive fee but a reasonable fee in relation to those hot lunches, and I think that that is right and proper and that is the way that ... or considerations that ought to be taken in any future Gibraltar and moving away from a situation where one is entitled to everything and anything. Those who cannot ought to be sustained; those who can ought to pay their own way in situations like this.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I do not detect a question and I thought it was Question Time, but it has never been the position of the Government that those who cannot should pay; it only appeared to be the position of Mr Clinton a moment ago.

1115

Mr Speaker: Next question.

**Q224/2016
Prison Service –
Waitlisting for positions**

Clerk: Question 224. The Hon. D A Feetham.

1120

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, can the Minister – or can the Government, I should say – please state whether the period of time for those currently waitlisted for positions within the Prison Service will be extended beyond March of this year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education and Justice.

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Minister for Education and Justice & International Exchange of Information (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, the decision whether to extend the waiting list will be taken nearer the date.

1130

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the answer. Without wishing to criticise the Hon. Minister, because it is not my intention – it is obviously not going to be very helpful to people who are concerned about this particular situation. I have had a number of them who have come to my office to express their concern at the situation that they are waitlisted at the end of March, and then they will come off the waitlist and the whole process starts again.

1135

1140 May I commend to the Minister that the Minister considers extending the waitlisting period beyond March, because I think that ... and again I do not want to be controversial, I want this to be as neutral as possible, because I really do believe that in the circumstances the waitlisting period ought to be extended. But over the last few months there is no doubt that the Government has put a freeze, so to speak, on spending, and that perhaps the position might be reviewed in the new financial year, and in the circumstances an extension of the time for people who are waitlisted would be very welcome, and indeed would be fair in the circumstances.

1145 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the Government has not put a freeze on spending. The Government has stopped *unnecessary* spending, and that is exactly what the Chief Minister has described on a number of occasions whenever this issue of spending has been raised.

With regard to the waiting list, this is a matter on which I will be advised on, on HR grounds.

1150 I am told that the usual waiting lists, whenever something like this happens, is six months. This waiting list has already been extended: it is now one year. The waiting list was created following interviews on 3rd and 4th March 2015. And circumstances do change during the year. There may be people on the waiting list who have moved on. In this particular case, with regard to the prison, the placing of people off the waiting list suggests that they are considered in some way suitable. They are vetted. Because of the time that has passed, that vetting process would have to start all over again. And there may be new people, who may not have applied last year, who may be interested in applying.

1155 That is why it is unusual for waiting lists to be extended beyond the year, and that is why I said a decision will be taken nearer the date. It is possible that it might, but it would be unusual for the waiting list to be extended after it has been in place for a year. Generally what happens is new applicants are given an opportunity of applying. I am not saying that that is what is going to happen on this occasion, but a decision will be taken nearer the time when the waiting list is about to expire.

1165 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I am very grateful. I will phrase it in terms of a question: will the hon. Member perhaps undertake that somebody from his office might either send me an e-mail or drop me a line in order to tell me what decision has been taken in relation to this, so that I do not have to ask the question again in this place and I can then go back to these people who have asked me and communicate the decision that the Government has taken? Because, as I understand it, there is no formal communication to those who are waitlisted, saying 'the waitlisting period has now expired and you are no longer on the waiting list'. That is the not the procedure, as I understand it, that happens in these types of cases. What I would like to do is, rather than come to this House and ask the question again in April, just simply get the information directly from the Minister's office. If that were possible, it would be very helpful to me.

1175 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I have no difficulty in advising the hon. Member once a decision is taken on this matter.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & THE GSB

Q225-226/2016

Supported Employment Company –
Numbers employed; assessment process

Clerk: Question 225. The Hon. L F Llamas.

1180 **Hon. L F Llamas:** How many people have been employed in sheltered employment since December 2011, providing details of sex, age and condition/conditions?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

1185 **Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question with Question 226.

Clerk: Question 226. The Hon. L F Llamas.

1190 **Hon. L F Llamas:** What is the process to assess people onto the sheltered employment scheme, providing details of the people who have been involved during the process?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

1195 **Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, if by 'sheltered employment' the hon. Member is referring to persons employed with the Supported Employment Company known as SEC, the position as of December 2011 was that there was no scheme to provide either supported or indeed sheltered employment.

1200 Persons with difficulties in obtaining employment were being placed in the £300 to £400 a month so-called Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) and had been in that position for many years – I think, in fact, the one that is still there and was longest there had come in in 1988 – due to the difficulty in transferring them to existing vacancies in the labour market.

Their position, the so-called vocational cadets, was not strictly speaking that of an employee, since they were not covered by the provisions applicable to employees or liable to the employed person's Social Insurance.

1205 In February 2012, in accordance with the party's manifesto commitment of 2011, all vocational cadets were offered employment in the Employment Training Company, with contracts of up to 11 months and covered by Social Insurance. They were paid the national minimum wage, according to their hours of employment.

1210 A few months later – I think it was in June or July – a number of employees were identified by the persons running the discontinued VTS scheme as persons not likely to be able to find regular employment in the labour market. Those concerned were then transferred to a company specifically created to assist them, SEC, and given indefinite contracts. At the time that this happened I informed Parliament and this development was welcomed by the Leader of the Opposition.

1215 Since February 2012, others have been employed in the company as a result of having been identified as having little or no opportunity of employment without support either with the assistance of the employment service or the training companies. Some of those employed have nonetheless found regular employment since with other employers.

1220 The demographics of the employees of SEC at the moment are that there are 48 males and 23 females with ages ranging between 18 and 62.

Hon. L F Llamas: When it comes to new people coming onto the Supported Employment Company, what is the process and criteria that is applied and who makes the decisions as to whether that person will be included into the scheme, or the company, or not?

1225 **Hon. J J Bossano:** The process is a process, I think, that to some extent existed before, in the sense that the people who were a very long time in the VTS before ... was because it was not possible to find them alternatives within the normal labour market that they could take up. So therefore, in effect, the process is that an attempt is made to fit them in vacancies when they

1230 register as unemployed, through the support of both the Employment Service on the one hand
the Training Companies on the other.

In effect, what happened in the first few months of the Government after 2011 was that
everybody who was in VTS was put into ETCL, the training company, and what we were then
reduced to and transferred, which I think was something like 47 or 48 ... were the ones the
1235 people who had been dealing with them through the monitoring system that existed in Bleak
House, as well as through the Employment Service, had identified that many previous attempts
had been made to fit them into a regular job in the labour market and that the prospects of
achieving this appeared to be virtually non-existent. That is why the new company was created
and they were given the security of employment of having an indefinite contract, which is what
1240 is happening now.

The new people who come in, in effect, go through that previous attempt, either by putting
them as trainees or by direct employment with employers and where vacancies are open from
the public and the private, and where the practical results identify that that is going to be very
difficult to achieve, then in effect they are put into those companies where it does not
1245 necessarily mean that the possibility of re-employing them in another job is lost, because in fact
some six of the people we had previously have actually left SEC and gone into a normal job.

So, by putting them there, what we are not doing is saying, 'Well, look, we'll forget about
trying to get them a real job, as it were, in the real economy.' We will still keep on trying after
that, but the chances of success can be perhaps identified in the sense that we have managed
1250 with six and we have got 71.

So the answer is the selection process is part of what takes place, in effect, not because
people are sent to us as having a problem, but because everybody who comes and registers as
unemployed after leaving school is assessed when they are given the interviews, when their CVs
are prepared, as to what kind of work we could find for them, and that has to be exhausted
1255 before they are put into the SEC company.

Hon. L F Llamas: Without wanting to criticise the scheme, because I think it is a very good
scheme, what I am trying to get to is, who are the persons or person involved in controlling the
scheme and taking decisions as to who will actually be admitted into the Supported Employment
1260 Company in the end?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, in effect, the people who are really in control are the people who
assess the individual and who are dealing with them from the day that they register as
unemployed. If somebody does not come looking for work, then it does not come in at all. If
1265 somebody comes and registers as unemployed, the first stage of that process is the employment
officers employed in the Employment Service. Those first contacts are then followed up by the
people who interview and prepare the CVs for them to be sent to potential employers as normal
trainees with the support of ETCL.

So, in effect, what we did initially in 2012 is what we continue to do now. The first stage is the
1270 ETCL, which is open to everybody, irrespective of whether they have got learning difficulties or
they have not, and it is only at a later stage that we find ... But our first objective is that they
should find a normal job in the normal economy and be part of a normal workforce. Only if that
proves to be extremely difficult are they put in SEC. When they are put in SEC the process does
not then stop. We still continue to do the same thing. In effect, it is on the recommendations
1275 and the judgement of the people with the experience that the management offers a contract to
the individual.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

1280 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, may I seek a little clarification? I may have misheard the
Minister.

When he was referring to the Vocational Training Scheme that existed before, he made a reference to Social Insurance. Can he clarify what exactly he said: that there was or was not any payment?

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Mr Speaker: [*Inaudible*]

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Hon. J J Bossano: The reference that I made was, Mr Speaker, that the individuals in 2011 who were in the VTS did not pay Social Insurance and were not paying Social Insurance, were not covered by the Employment Act and were not treated as employees. They had an income which was tax free but was not a wage, and that was one of the things that we changed by creating a company that gave them a contract of employment. The trainees did not have contracts of employment with anybody in the scheme.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, can I respectfully beg the Minister to go and check on those details, because I know that during the days when I worked at the Department of Education and had responsibility within a certain sector of Vocational Training Scheme right up to 2007 there was payment of Social Insurance, the idea being at the time that those youngsters would already start to accumulate the rights for their eventual employment.

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I cannot vouch 100% for what happened post 2007-11, but perhaps the Minister can investigate because there may be credits due to those individuals, which, if they have paid for them, by all means they should enjoy and reap those benefits.

1305

Hon. J J Bossano: There is an issue for covering that gap but the gap exists, and I think the gap exists because in fact the hon. Member is right – when it started, the scheme was that they were treated as employees, but that was subsequently changed by negotiation with the union and it was then treated as a tax-free allowance and therefore it was not pay. And, of course, if your Social Insurance contribution is a percentage of your pay and you are not paying because it is not considered to be a wage, then the allowance would have been illegal if it had been a wage because it was below the minimum wage. The way that was dealt with by the administration before 2011 – but I can find out for him the exact date when it happened – was that the amount was made tax free and therefore ceased to be a wage, and therefore ceased to trigger off the percentage of liability of employee insurance contribution. There is something there that ... In fact, we gave a commitment to take the necessary action to allow that gap in the record of those affected to be put right, and I am not very sure actually whether it has actually happened or not. But I am grateful to the hon. Member for reminding me, because if it has not happened I will make sure it does.

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Q227/2016
Apprenticeship Training Programme –
Diversification

Mr Speaker: Next question.

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Clerk: Question 227. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, does the Minister for Economic Development agree that we need to diversify our Apprenticeship Training Programme to look beyond traditional skills training whilst also maintaining a rigorous programme of training which ensures that our people are the first choice for employment in skilled work?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):
1330 No, Mr Speaker, I do not agree with the hon. Member.

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for that response, and from that response he clearly does not believe that our people should be the first choice for skilled work; in my view they should be.

1335 I would like to ask this question, because if you look at the statistics – and I know that the hon. Gentleman is fond of looking at employment statistics – and particularly the one that was given by the hon. Gentleman, Mr Costa, last week, of 255 people currently on the unemployment register, what I would say about that is that insofar as occupations concerned in the abstracted statistics, the hon. Member will ... I am asking a question and I will get to it, if you bear with me.

1340

A Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. E J Phillips: I am not too sure, Mr Speaker, whether I am ... I was directing my question –

1345 **Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member may carry on but remember that he is supposed to ask questions and they should be, strictly speaking, supplementary questions.

Hon. E J Phillips: – which they are, related to –

1350 **Mr Speaker:** The cardinal rule is that they should be short, sharp and to the point. I would commend that to hon. Members. I am prepared to be liberal because we are only in the second meeting of the House, but that should be the objective to which they should be aiming.

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

1355 In relation to the abstract of statistics, it shows that there are quite significant increases in occupations in the skill trades and process plant and machine operatives, and in fact I think it demonstrates also that in the construction industry we have seen a 41% increase and a year-on-year- on increase in terms of construction workers.

1360 Doesn't the hon. Gentleman agree that what we should be doing is identifying, quite rightly, those skills that we need in the economy and certainly find our people those jobs and train those people so that they can get those jobs, rather than looking towards other nations for resourcing the construction industry?

1365 I think it is always right, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree with me, that we should be looking at training our own people to have those relevant skills so that they can fill those positions. After all, that was the purpose of the skills audit that the hon. Gentleman conducted in February 2012.

1370 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, first of all, we have got a policy, and it is a policy that has been explained before. The policy is not a magic formula; it is simply a question of supply and demand – there is a demand for labour and there is a supply of labour – and the provision of training is provision of training the pool of supply so that it is competent to equip it to feed the demand that exists from employers.

1375 The question says do I agree that there is a need. Well, no, I do not agree that there is a need, because there is an ongoing exercise to establish *if* there is a need, where the need is and how much it is, and it is a constant process. As vacancies are opened that we cannot fill from local sources we identify where the need lies, but the need does not arise simply because the hon. Member chooses to put me a question and I can say, 'Yes, I agree with what you have said.' I do

not agree with what you have said, because in fact the apprenticeship training scheme is not the only thing we do.

1380 When we identified that there was a need in white collar workers for people with book-keeping skills because of the vacancies that were opening, when we sent the candidates the feedback that came back to us was that the candidates were being rejected because in their CVs or in the GCEs or in their qualifications there was not the level of numeracy in terms of skills that the employer was looking for. So if people are saying 'I want an accounts clerk' or 'I want a wages clerk' or 'I want that kind of clerk' and not just an office worker, we identify the need. 1385 When we identify the need we then provide the training to meet the need, so we introduced a course for book keeping, employer based with day release at the college, with the people paid and employed by the Employment Training Company. It was not an apprentice training scheme because it does not come under what we understand as apprenticeship. But in fact the result was that most of the people who were placed with offices in the private sector, paid for by the 1390 training company and sent on day release, at the end of the period – it was an experimental thing that we did about 18 months ago and it was quite successful at the end of the six-months period – most of the people were offered employment, even though in that case we had not made that a requirement because we were testing the market.

1395 We have got, for example, a situation where we trained a lot of bus drivers, because we were relying heavily on imported labour for bus drivers simply because the people concerned here in Gibraltar did not have the necessary skills. It was a not a skill that required a lot of investment either in time or money, but we took people who were unemployed and we paid them to be trained as bus drivers and we paid for them to take the exams and obtain from the Public 1400 Service Commission a public service vehicle licence, and most of them have finished up either working in the Bus Company or working in the tourist industry as coach drivers.

So those are areas where we identified the need and we moved away from the traditional skills. We have got a constant process of looking at things that we have not done before. For example, one of the things that did not exist before 2011 and we introduced in 2013 was motor 1405 car mechanics. We have had one intake in already and another one is there in the process of training at the moment.

So the answer is ... Do we need to diversify? We do not need to diversify, because we are already diversifying and because we diversify as a scientific process. We look at what is available in terms of the potential of the labour force, which is a constantly changing figure. Both the 1410 composition of the vacancies on the one hand and the composition of the registered unemployed changes on a daily basis. People register as unemployed, people come off the register, vacancies are opened, vacancies are closed. Monitoring that process is what gives us an opportunity to say, 'Well, look, there is a niche that we have now found where we can be doing something that we have not done before,' and that is part of the existing process.

1415 So my original answer is that I do not agree with him that there is a need that we are not already addressing.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, what I was trying to get at – and I am grateful for the response – is that I asked about diversification of skills. I think the hon. Gentleman has referred to a 1420 reactive policy of the Government, which is constantly monitoring the labour market so that they can identify skills, such as the bus example that the hon. Gentleman has given.

My question is directed as to whether the Government has a policy towards looking at the skills that we will require in the future. Looking at IT, for example, software development, gaming, filling those jobs, the future jobs in our economy that we should be looking to target 1425 and target particular individuals who will be able to fill those skills gaps in the future. I know a number of companies that have IT specialists that are crying out to employ local people in this area but they simply cannot do so. That was the purpose behind the question to the hon. Member, so that he could set out what the Government's position is in respect of building a long-term future for people to enter those particular industries.

1430 **Mr Speaker:** I hope the answer to that question will be briefer than the previous one; again otherwise, we are not making any progress. It is up to hon. Members to be here as long as they wish.

1435 **Hon. J J Bossano:** But, Mr Speaker, the shortest answer is to just agree with everything that the Opposition says we should agree with. That is not the answer they are going to get. But if I tell them that I do not agree, I think they deserve to be given an explanation why I do not agree. *(Interjection)* It is not that I do not agree because he is suggesting it; it is because he is suggesting that I agree to something on what I consider to be a false premise of what is actually happening.

1440 It is not a question of being reactive. If the hon. Member says there are people crying out for trainees to be doing something in some area, then that is reactive if what I am doing is reactive, because it is the same thing. What I cannot do is say, 'Well, look, I am now going to ...' For example, part of the reason why the training is under the Ministry for Economic Development and not elsewhere is precisely to do with what he has just said. It is precisely, and has been the case since we took office ... part of the strategy is that when new investors come to Gibraltar who require skills that do not exist in the economy, when we negotiate with those investors to open up business we introduce, as part of that negotiation, a provision that if they need to bring people from outside, and particularly if they need to bring them with work permits, there should be an opportunity for introducing trainees paid by us alongside the people so that there can be a transfer of skills from those who are coming in to those we have got here.

1445 The reality of it is that the limits that we have got in doing this is also what determines the necessity of doing it. The limits are the limits of the size of our workforce. The size of our workforce is less than 50% of the total jobs in the economy. So it is not that the people who are unemployed are unemployed because there are not sufficient jobs in Gibraltar; they are unemployed because the jobs are asking for skills that they do not have, or asking for experience that they do not have, and this is why if you want those jobs to be filled by local residents – which is some of the issues covered in the next questions, where I will deal with what the hon. Members says about the unsatisfied demand – that you can only do by talking to the people who claim to be interested and willing to take on trainees. When that happens, then we will supply what is needed – but I am dealing with that in the other questions, Mr Speaker.

1460

Q228-230/2016
Apprenticeships and qualifications –
Securing employment for trainees

Clerk: Question 228, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1465 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Minister for Economic Development confirm that of the 233 craft apprenticeships who obtained qualifications in wet trades, carpentry, painting and plumbing, have all completed placements and are now in full-time employment?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

1470

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): I will answer with Question 229 and 230, Mr Speaker.

Clerk: Question 229, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1475

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Minister for Economic Development confirm what measures the Government is taking to secure greater employability in the construction industry by the resident skilled labour force?

1480 **Clerk:** Question 230, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Can the Minister for Economic Development confirm whether there is an intention to diversify apprenticeship training from solely providing trainees the opportunity of obtaining City & Guilds qualifications?

1485

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): No, Mr Speaker, I cannot confirm the points made in each of the three questions.

1490

The qualifications are at different levels, as the hon. Member knows, so it is not the case that all apprentices have completed their training with placements provided, although the majority have.

1495

The position to which that question refers is that of the 209 trainees who between them obtained 233 awards at Levels 1, 2 and 3. Those who have completed Levels 2 and 3 are in employment, unless some of the apprentices at Level 2 already entitled to craft pay have expressed a wish to continue to Level 3, which is therefore optional.

1500

At present we have apprentices in the Centre but employer based, continuing their studies at Levels 2 and 3, since at this level there is a requirement for a portfolio of evidence of work done on building sites.

1505

One hundred and forty-five are now in full time employment. The balance of 64 consists of those who left with some Level 1 units or a full Level 1. Of those, 49 are in placements to continue with their training to Level 2, and 15 are unemployed having decided not to continue or because of termination due to unsatisfactory attendance.

1510

The Government has taken measures to increase employability in the construction industry of resident workers by implementing the requirement in the Government construction contracts announced by the GSD administration in 2010 which had been put in practice previously but in a limited version.

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We have gone in fact further than was the case by ensuring that all construction contracts are reflected in a way that they have to give priority to people from the unemployed workforce that are resident in Gibraltar, which is what the condition is in order to be considered an approved Government contractor.

1520

Existing apprentice training is not limited to City & Guilds qualifications. There are the EAL qualifications and the CITB qualifications and therefore it is not a question of considering whether we should move away from City & Guilds because we are doing things that are not City & Guilds.

1525

The City & Guilds was originally introduced in 2012 because a number of employers in the construction industry said they preferred that qualification and therefore if it increased the possibility of people getting jobs if we gave them the qualification that the employer preferred we moved in that direction.

1530

As I was reminded I think by the Hon. Mr Reyes at the time, the content of the qualifications was the same. The difference is in the awarding body and we are prepared to consider any awarding body that is available (a) if that makes it more likely that people will be successful or (b) if that makes it more attractive to employers.

1535

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q231-241/2016

**Public debt; reserves; Gibraltar Savings Bank –
Figures for 2016**

Clerk: Question 231, the Hon. R M Clinton:

1530 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please provide the total Gross Debt, Cash Reserves and Net Debt figures for public debts for each of the following dates: 1st January 2016 and 1st February 2016?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

1535

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question with Questions 232 to 241.

Clerk: Question 232, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1540

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise the total liquid reserves figure as at 1st February 2016 and its constituents, namely Consolidated Fund, Improvement & Development Fund, Government-owned companies, deposits, contingencies and other funds?

1545

Clerk: Question 233, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise how total liquid reserves at 1st February 2016 are invested or held, giving details of all bank/savings bank accounts and cash held?

1550

Clerk: Question 234, the Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise the amounts of total deposits of the Gibraltar Savings Bank and further broken down by Debentures, On Call Investments Accounts, Ordinary Deposits and Bonds for each of the following dates: 1st January 2016 and 1st February 2016?

1555

Clerk: Question 235, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise the balance on the General Sinking Fund on 1st February 2016 and provide details of individual movements in the fund since inception, being 22nd November 2012, to date?

Clerk: Question 236, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1565

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please confirm that he gave instructions to the Financial Secretary to incorporate GSBA Ltd and cause the Savings Bank Special Fund to purchase £11 million of GSBA ordinary shares, with the sole intention of purchasing the property being 206-209 Main Street and 2-4 Bomb House Lane from Credit Finance Company Limited?

1570

Clerk: Question 237, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1575 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise who agreed the purchase price of 206-209 Main Street and 2-4 Bomb House Lane by GSBA Ltd from Credit Finance Company Ltd and was an independent valuation report obtained prior to the purchase?

Clerk: Question 238, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1580 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please advise who the auditors of GSBA Ltd are and have any audits been completed?

Clerk: Question 239, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1585 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please list the assets owned by GSBA Ltd, specifically identifying by address any leasehold or freehold property?

Clerk: Question 240, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1590 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please list any leases granted by GSBA Ltd, identifying to whom and on what financial terms?

Clerk: Question 241, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1595 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please explain why Credit Finance Company Ltd purchased 206-209 Main Street and 2-4 Bomb House Lane from a Government company, namely GCP Investments Ltd, for £4.5 million, being £1.5 million more than the original cost of £3 million, and who made the decision and who decided the valuation of the property?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

1605 **Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, as the hon. Questioner has already been informed in the last meeting of Parliament, the information is provided a month in arrears, as is the established practice in respect of statistical information.

I am therefore giving him this statistical information where the questions request the data as at 1st January but not where the information requested in the question is in respect of 1st February.

The information requested for 1st January is: Gross Debt, £447.7 million; Cash, £31.97 million; Net Debt, £415.73 million.

1615 The total deposits in the GSB on 1st January 2016 stood at £928,587,625. This broke down as follows: Debentures, £743,324,499; On Call Deposits, £42,482,117; Ordinary Deposits, £84,245,824; Bonds, £58,535,185.

No, Mr Speaker, I cannot confirm what instructions may have been given to the Financial Secretary or indeed whether any such instructions were given to him or any other civil servant. That is not Government policy.

1620 The official authorised to agree the purchase price for the investments in real assets by the GSB is the person who agreed it.

The auditors of the company have not yet been appointed and as yet no audit has been completed.

I am not prepared, Mr Speaker, to provide any further detail of how GSBA goes about its business in investing in real assets or in any other aspect of the running of the business.

1625 The properties in question were purchased because the company thought they were worth purchasing and the increase in value was a result of the investment made in refurbishing the property.

The decisions were made by the people authorised to make them, following an independent valuation by M J (Gibraltar) Ltd.

1630

Hon. R M Clinton: Well, Mr Speaker, bear with me because obviously there were a lot of questions asked and I just need to make sure that all the questions have been answered.

1635 Mr Speaker, if I may ask the hon. Gentleman to explain, if I understood him correctly, he said the Gross Debt effectively at the 1st January 2016 is £447.7 million. Could he explain ... I do not think, Mr Speaker, he has given any answers in respect of my Question 235 on the Sinking Fund. Could he explain how it is that in answer to Written Question 17 of the last parliamentary session, there was a movement of £15 million on the Sinking Fund at 1st December and yet I do not see a reduction in Gross Debt.

If I could start with that question.

1640

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, I do not know why he expects to see a reduction in Gross Debt because there is money in the Sinking Fund.

1645 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if I can, by way of explanation, the answer I was given as the balance in the Sinking Fund was £22,000. My understanding, and I am happy to be corrected by the hon. Member, is that the money in the Sinking Fund can only be applied in reduction of debt.

1650 **Hon. J J Bossano:** The money that was applied in the reduction of the debt in the Sinking Fund was money that was applied before this figure was arrived at, not after it. That is to say when he got the answer, the money that had been applied in the reduction of debt had been applied prior to the date on which he got the answer.

1655 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the hon. Member then perhaps enlighten me as to what the balance on the Sinking Fund is as at 1st January?

1660 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, he did not ask for the figure of the Sinking Fund for 1st January. He asked for the figure in Question 235 on 1st February, and I have told him that I will give him the figures in arrears and I told him that the last time. So I have told him this time that I am not giving him the answers for 1st February because it is not a month in arrears and I am not giving him the answers for the 1st January, because he did not ask the question.

1665 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Well, Mr Speaker, perhaps the hon. Member could give me the movements on the Sinking Fund to the date he is prepared to give me?

1665

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, that answer is quite simple: I really should not have to give it to him because it does not arise as far as I am concerned from the question that he asked about 1st February, but since there has been no movement, I do not mind telling him.

1670 **Mr Speaker:** Any other questions?

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, Mr Speaker, you will have to bear with me because as you will appreciate, there is quite a lot of information to absorb here.

1675 Mr Speaker, would the hon. Member agree with me, or perhaps clarify for me, that any money on the Sinking Fund can only be applied in the reduction of debt?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, strictly speaking, no. It can be applied in *servicing* the debt, which can be a reduction of debt or the paying of interest.

1680 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I note the hon. Gentleman has indicated that ... well, let us go back to the Savings Bank. Mr Speaker, would the hon. Gentleman like to comment on the reduction on the balance on On Call and Investment Accounts since April of £122 million down to £42 million as at December?

1685 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well no, I do not see why I should comment on whether people put money in or take money out, or the Government puts money in or takes money out. To the extent that the money in the Savings Bank is money that is the liquid reserves of the Government, then he does not need me to tell him that if the liquid reserves are lower, there is less money in the investment account; if they are higher, there is more money in the investment account.

1690 But I am not going to accept the principle that I should comment or be asked to comment in Parliament on why movements happen in and out of any of the elements of the accounts of the Savings Bank.

1695 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. Member. He has in fact just reminded me that one of my questions was in fact in relation to the composition of liquid reserves, which I do not believe I have had an answer for.

A Member: Question?

1700 **Hon. D A Feetham:** He has not answered the question ...

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has reminded me that I did ask a question about total liquid reserves as constituents and how that money is held. I do not believe I have had an answer.

1705 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, whilst he is at it, Question 232 has not been answered as well, as far as I can see. I have been listening to these answers and it has not been answered.

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, can I repeat my original answer.
1710 As the hon. Questioner has been informed at the last meeting of Parliament, the information will be provided a month in arrears, as is the established practice.

I am therefore giving him the statistical information where the question requests the data on 1st January and not where the information requested in the question is in respect of February.

1715 Having told him that, he then stands up and he says I have not been given the answer to 1st February. I *know* you have not been given the answer to 1st February; (*Laughter*) I told you I was not going to give it to you!

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, so be it.

1720 May I then move on to another question? That is: the hon. Member will be aware that the investment in GSBA Ltd was £11 million and he may refuse point blank to answer this question. The property where the Treasury building is, where the Savings Bank is located, cost £4.6 million. I note that GSBA Ltd had another injection of capital, £6 million. Is he willing to explain where that £6 million has gone, if not on the purchase of the Treasury building?

1725 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, I can explain to him that it has not gone anywhere. I know that the election is over and I know that during the election, he made a big issue of the fact that there was all this money put in the Savings Bank for safe keeping and I had put on a balaclava and taken it all away and run down Main Street with it to reinvest it. I know that. But he does not

1730 have to carry on with that fiction anymore, because he has already achieved being elected and sitting over there, Mr Speaker.

The answer is I am not willing to go beyond the information that I have provided on the basis of answering his questions, in the sense that I am not prepared to give the hon. Member details of how the investments in the companies are made by the people who are employed to make them.

1735 So it may be that it has been invested in some other real assets or it may be that it is in cash.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, perhaps the hon. Member would enlighten me as to his thinking as to when he considers it appropriate to disclose what the company has invested in and when it is not.

1740 Because in the last meeting of Parliament he volunteered that he had bought the Treasury building. I have gone to Land Registry and done a search, rolled my sleeves up and found that certainly the property only cost £4.6 million. So if on the one hand, he is willing to tell me that much information, why will he not provide me with the information as to the balance?

1745 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, first of all, Mr Speaker, the only information I am required to provide in respect of my responsibility for the Savings Bank is that the law requires me to produce the accounts of the Savings Bank once a year, and not once a month. I do not know of many financial institutions who every month produces a breakdown of all the money that goes in, all the money that goes out and all the money that is invested and how it is invested.

1750 What I am not prepared to do is to have a situation where the institution for which we are responsible is subjected to a level of scrutiny by the Member opposite that nobody else is required to be subjected to anywhere else that is in this business.

1755 This is a very safe investment. They tried to make it sound unsafe during our election campaign. They have failed and I informed them previously that in fact I did not want them to stop doing it, because the more they attack the savings in the bank, the more money that came in because they gave it publicity and I do not waste money on advertising. I think they were doing a very good job for me and I am grateful for that.

1760 The reality of it is, Mr Speaker, is that the public has got complete confidence in the Savings Bank and if there are things that are in the public domain and then a Member spends pounds on searches and finds it, well fine, he is entitled to what is in the public domain. But if he finds that a property has been bought, that does not mean that now because he has found a property has been bought, I have to tell him why it has been bought at that price, who bought it at that price, who took the decision to buy it, who gave the instructions to buy it, what time of day it was given.

1765 Well look, this is not on. I am not going to have a situation, Mr Speaker, where the hon. Member's view is that every time he gets a question answered, it is for him then to dissect that question into a number of elements which can be done *ad infinitum*. That is to say that if you think this can keep us here for an extra day, I can tell him with the process of dissection and then subsequent questions, we will be here for a month, not for a day.

1770 And the answer is, the information that is available is information that I am willing to make available to him, and if tomorrow he finds that we have invested in another property, well fine, he is entitled to find it. That does not mean that I therefore have to tell him who was the one that took the decision, how was it valued, when was it valued, who gave the instructions and who implemented it.

1775

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I go back to my original question, which is: how does the hon. Member opposite reconcile in his mind giving me the information in the last session and now not willing to provide me with any further information?

1780 And just for the record, I am not in the business of attacking the Savings Bank. What I am doing is my job – my part-time job, as the Chief Minister is fond of reminding me – of holding the Government to account, nothing more and nothing less.

1785 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member's concept of holding a Member to account is not the concept that was shared by the party to which the hon. Member belongs in the last 15 years. Therefore he is entitled to get treated as I used to be treated, but he is lucky that he is not going to be treated like I used to be treated, because I am a nicer guy than the guy who treated me the way I am describing.

1790 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, it would appear evident that I am not going to get an answer today, tomorrow or any time soon. As regards the property transactions, I believe the public are entitled to an answer but again, I am not going to get a response, so I think we can move on to the next question.

1795 **Hon. D A Feetham:** May I? Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, before I start, may I welcome the hon. Member back to the House. I understand that on Friday he was not feeling very well and I am glad that he is feeling as fit as a fiddle and back to his old tricks yet again in the way that he answers questions! Which I do enjoy, even though I am afraid that they are the epitome of the lack of openness and the lack of transparency that we have been severely critical of the Government over the last three to four years.

1800 Can I just ask him to go back to Question 241? It may be that I have got it the wrong way, but it is my understanding that the value of the Main Street / Bomb House Lane property forms part of the so-called reserve that the hon. Gentleman keeps on quoting, and kept on quoting before and during the General Election, that the Savings Bank had. Part of their political case was that there was this reserve in the Gibraltar Savings Bank amounting to £20 million but part of that was the value of this particular building. Is that correct or not?

1805 **Hon. J J Bossano:** The way he has put it is not correct. Of course he may know it or he may not.

1810 The fact that you choose to employ some of your reserves in purchasing the building rather than renting the building, because you can actually make more money by purchasing and saving the rent that you can get by investing in something else, does not mean that it can be described in the way that the hon. Member has described it. The way that I have described it is the accurate way.

1815 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, Mr Speaker, let us not play musical chairs here. He knows the question perfectly well that I am asking, and I think I know what the answer is but I want him to confirm it.

1820 Essentially, what the hon. Gentleman is saying is, there is £20 million of reserves in the Gibraltar Savings Bank. These are the much-vaunted reserves they were talking about during the General Election. It is not all in cash because part of that cash, for the reasons that he has just described, has been invested in this particular property. So part of it may be cash but part of it is in bricks and mortar, because he has chosen for economical reasons – in other words not to pay rent but to invest in property – to invest in that property. Is that correct?

1825 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, Mr Speaker, it could be correct if in fact only the money that is the reserves of the bank was there. But as the hon. Member knows, the assets of the Savings Bank, of which he normally gets a breakdown when he asks the right question with the right date, does not match the deposits other than in total. So there is nothing that says the money in the property is not from the debentures or is not from the bonds, it is from the reserves.

1830

From the perspective of the bank, given that in theory the Savings Bank would be required to repay everybody at a certain point in time, if no new money came in, if that theoretical position was reached and if all the money that is deposited with the bank had to be repaid, the accumulated profits of the Savings Bank, which would previously have been withdrawn and spent, would include the building.

1835 That is to say we would not be selling the building in order to pay a depositor but there would be nothing to stop us doing it if we chose to, let us be clear. That is to say, we could if there was a situation where we did not want to have part of the accumulated profits of the bank in that building, we could undo the transaction, and I can assure the hon. Member there would be no difficulty in getting somebody to invest in a property which houses the Gibraltar Savings Bank where the tenant is very secure, and a very long lease and the rental can be negotiated.

1840 So if what he is trying to say is that the money is impossible to convert into liquid funds, the answer is no.

1845 **Hon. D A Feetham:** No, the hon. Gentleman is unfortunately trying to pre-empt the political point that I want to make in relation to this. Let me tell you what the political point is – it is not that.

The political point is that if you have £20 million of reserves, which is the position that the hon. Gentleman has consistently on a number of occasions outlined in relation to the Gibraltar Savings Bank, and part of it is this particular building and this particular building has been bought for a consideration, which as the hon. Gentleman says is £4.5 million and it has been now valued at more, then surely it is a matter of public interest. It is a matter that the Opposition are entitled to know. How on earth does a building that is bought for a particular price, £4.5 million, is now valued at a higher amount – bearing in mind that part of what the Government is telling the people of Gibraltar is that the Gibraltar Savings Bank has £20 million in reserves, which actually includes this particular building?

1850 And therefore, does he not recognise that it is a matter of public interest and that it is a matter that the Government ought to be more transparent about, bearing in mind the great store that the Government has placed in relation to these reserves of £20 million, which includes this particular building?

Hon. J J Bossano: No, Mr Speaker, he is wrong.

First of all, it is not valued at more than £4.5 million, okay?

Secondly, I have already answered that question by telling him that the investment in the building is not identified as the investment of part of the £20 million, that there is no correlation between the position of the building and the position of the reserves.

The only correlation there could be is that if we have got in the Savings Bank £928 million – okay, if we have got at the moment £928 million – and tomorrow the maturity date was the maturity date of the £908 million, but not the £20 million which is the bank's money, then in that hypothetical but impossible situation, because all the money that is on deposit is not on 24-hour notice – it is on call going into the future – but if that were the situation, that the £928 million included £20 million belonging to the bank and £908 belonging to depositors and all the depositors had their money back in 24 hours, we would be left with £20 million.

1870 In that £20 million there would be included the £4.5 million building, logically. Because we are not going to say to a depositor who says, 'I want my £4 million back', 'Take the building with you'.

1875 Even if that were a possible conjecture, which it is not, for the reasons that I have explained, it does not mean that the Government's reserves – or the Savings Bank's reserves, rather, which belong to the Government – cannot be converted into liquid assets.

1880 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I understand that.

Hon. J J Bossano: You understand that. Well, I do not understand then what the issue is with the hon. Member saying is it part of the £20 million.

1885 Well no, it is not part of the £20 million. It is part of the £928 million, because we have not said the money that we have invested in the property is the money from the £20 million reserve. We have not said that. But it would be that situation if we repaid the £908 million tomorrow, which is not going to happen because people are putting money in, not taking it out.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I am afraid that as usual, in relation to the way that the Government manages and chooses to manage its public finances, in particular the way that it runs the Gibraltar Savings Bank, the position is as clear as mud. That is the reality of the situation.

1890 May I just simply refer the hon. Gentleman to the title deeds. Well, this is a search that we have conducted in relation to this particular property, and the consideration paid for this particular property appears to have been £4.6 million – just under £4.7 million – so I did not get the figure wrong when I outlined it to the hon. Gentleman.

Hon. J J Bossano: Mr Speaker, I am sorry, he said it had been increased above the £4.6 million.

1900 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, yes.

But can I go back now to Questions 232 and 233 and again, I am afraid my criticisms of the Government are phrased in the question.

1905 Does he not agree that it is highly susceptible to criticism, an answer that he provides to this House, which is ‘Ah, you have only asked the question for the beginning of February 2016,’ in relation to for example the total liquid reserves and the question at 232, ‘and we do not have the figure for the 1st February 2016 because the system we are working under, we would have the figure in a month’s time but we are not going to have it today’?

1910 But what is the problem providing the answer to the question in terms of, which is usual, what the position was at 1st January 2016? Surely the hon. Gentleman does not expect us to come back in April, ask the question for 1st January 2016, when it has always been usual, Mr Speaker, for the Hon. Ministers of whatever party and political persuasion to say, ‘Well look, we do not have the figures for 1st February 2016 because we work in arrears or whatever, but I am going to give you the latest figures that we have, which is 1st January 2016.’

1915 And I ask the hon. Gentleman to explain the quite extraordinary response that he has provided, which is ‘You have only asked for 1st February, I do not have it, I am not going to provide it and I am not going to provide 1st January because you have not asked that.’

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, the explanation is quite simple. I made the mistake of assuming they are rational, thinking beings on the other side of the House, and I apologise for that mistake.

1920 I assume that if somebody says to me in Question 234, ‘can I have the information for 1st January and 1st February?’ and then he asks me in the next question, ‘can I have the information for February only?’, it is because he is not interested in the 1st January and he is not asking for it, because the hon. Member *chose* to put in one question January and February, and in the others February only.

1930 The hon. Member may think from the opposite side of the benches that it is legitimate criticism that I do not answer the questions that are not asked. Well look, that is a vast improvement on the situation that I have for 15 years, when I did not get answers to the questions that I *did* ask. So he cannot complain that he does not get an answer because he did not ask it. If they wanted 1st January, all they had to do was to do with the other questions what they did with 234 – simple as that.

1935 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, first of all I do not accept the characterisation of the way that we used to answer questions; but secondly, it is not an answer, Mr Speaker, having spent 16 years criticising the GSD that now we are not going to provide you the answers because you did not provide me with the answers when they were critical of the then ... presumably they were critical of the then Chief Minister for failing to provide those answers. It just does not stack up, quite frankly.

1940 But does he not recognise that there is a distinction in the way that my learned Friend – my hon. Friend; not learned Friend – my hon. Friend, Mr Clinton has asked the questions in relation to 231 and also ... well, certainly 231? The distinction is this: for Gross Debt, Cash Reserves and Net Debt we ask the question every single month. The idea is to obtain the position every single month – that is why he has asked the question like this.

1945 In relation to Question 232 and 233 which are *new* questions, he wants an up-to-date position. Now the only up-to-date position that the Government has at the moment is 1st January and I would just ask him to be helpful – I know that goes against his nature! As much affection as I have for him, it has to be said he likes to call a spade a spade and I too like to call a spade a spade, and he is not particularly helpful.

1950 But rather than get us to come back next time round and ask the question for 1st January, if he could at the very least be helpful, if he has the information and provide it, which I would expect him to have the information.

1955 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I think the hon. Member knows the answer to that, but I will tell him if he does not.

No, I am not prepared to do it, and given that he has said that the reason why the question was different was because they wanted the most recent date, I would not expect that they would ask for January the next time round because then it would not be the most recent date.

1960 Secondly, it is not the case that I criticised the Government when they failed to give me the answers. I accepted that they were the Government and they were entitled to give the answers in the way they thought fit, which has always been the case. I have been longer on the Opposition than I have been in Government, so I have been longer at the receiving end than the delivery end of this.

1965 But the hon. Member must understand that it is not that I am saying to him, 'Because you answered in this way, I am going to do the same to you.' What I am saying to him is, 'If you answered in this way when you were the Government, you must have thought it was right for you to do so.' And what you cannot do is say, 'It is right for me to do it when I am in Government but it is wrong for somebody else to do it when they replace me as Government.'

1970 So it is not a question of wanting to pay them back for the way they behaved, misbehaved when they were in Government. It is a question simply that I am doing it the way they did it because I assume that is the way they are comfortable and happy with, because I cannot imagine they were doing it to spite me at the time, just like as I am not doing it to spite them now, Mr Speaker.

1975 And as an afterthought, I must say that maybe the omission of the date was after all because the hon. Member is not learned.

1980 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, just one final question. I have to say I do enjoy the exchanges with the hon. Gentleman. As I have said before, he is value for money, even though he is the epitome of the lack of transparency and the lack of openness on the Government benches! But then again!

1985 Now, Mr Speaker, in some of these questions, the question seeks to understand who it is that has given instructions, who it is that has agreed the purchase in relation to the Bomb House Lane property and the hon. Gentleman said, 'officials'. That was the answer. Can I assume from that, that he means the directors of Credit Finance Company Ltd; and if he does not, what other officials were involved in the decision making process?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, if he wants to assume that the officials are directors or not that is a matter for him. I do not want to tell him what he should assume or not.

1990 But if I had wanted to use the word 'directors', I would have said 'directors'. So the fact that I have not used it, he can assume it is because it is not the directors – if that is what he wants to assume.

1995 But at the end of the day, I am not here to try and assist him with his assumptions. The point is that the people who are employed in the Civil Service do jobs which are required of them to do, in order to give effect to Government policies. It is not the established practice, as I think the Chief Minister has already alluded to in his answer to a previous question – it is not the established practice of *any* Government, never mind the last 15 years, in the last 44 years – to be asked who gave an instruction to a civil servant or who was the civil servant who carried it out.

2000 We are responsible politically for the policies and we employ people to carry out the acts which give effect to those policies.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member has spiked my curiosity.

2005 In terms of Credit Finance Ltd, in the last House I asked the question if there were any open employment contracts with ETB and the answer was no. From that, am I correct in assuming that Credit Finance has no employees of its own and that the only mind and management body available to Credit Finance are in fact its directors?

2010 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, Credit Finance has no employees of its own and all the work that needs to be done is done by people within the service. Therefore, the answer to the hon. Member's question is that he will be happy to know that I am keeping a very tight control of the purse strings, so that we are getting very good value for money by not employing specific people to do specific tasks. Everybody in the outfit multi-tasks.

2015 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Could the hon. Member explain or perhaps elaborate on what he means by 'in the outfit'?

Hon. J J Bossano: We are the outfit, Mr Speaker, and we employ four and a half thousand people – and we were elected to be the outfit very recently with a majority of three to one.

2020 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if I understand the hon. Member correctly, first of all Credit Finance has no employees of its own, the directors of Credit Finance do not necessarily make the decisions, and the decisions are made by the Government or officials appointed by the Government.

2025 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member can rehearse his reinterpretation of the answers that I give, so that he can then have plenty of material for his Facebook and he is entitled to do that.

But the answer that I have given him is the answer that I have given him and not the interpretation that he puts.

2030 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q242/2016

**Improvement and Development Fund –
Income from sale of Government property**

Clerk: Question 242, the Hon. R M Clinton.

2035 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please provide a breakdown by property item of the anticipated income in 2015-16 in the Improvement and Development Fund as per the 2015-16 estimates on the sale of Government properties and other premia?

2040 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, the estimates are provided to Parliament at budget time in respect of the revenue from property sales by the Treasury and the finance department by making a judgement of the likely level of property sales in the year ahead.

2045 This is done taking into account the state of the property market, the stock of available properties and land, any tender awards or negotiations with prospective investors, etc. The estimates therefore are not predictions as to what property is going to be sold at what point in time and at what price.

2050 The exception is where a property is already being put out to tender. The successful tenderer is already known and the transaction has not yet happened but is imminent.

Hon. L F Llamas: Can I just ask have there been any negotiations or actual sale of the Gibraltar Air Terminal?

2055 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Is that arising out of the original question?

Mr Speaker: I am not sure, will you explain how it is that it arises from the original question.

2060 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Well basically, we have certain information and we believe that perhaps the sale or predicted sale of the air terminal is included in this –

Mr Speaker: Was there anything in the estimates for 2015-16?

2065 **Hon. L F Llamas:** No, it is –

Mr Speaker: Then I do not see how it can arise.

Hon. L F Llamas: It is a catch-all item in the estimates.

2070 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, you asked is there anything in the estimates for 2015: this is precisely the question I was asking, for which the hon. Member basically has not given a breakdown, so we do not know if the airport was in the estimates.

2075 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, if what the hon. Member is saying: is the sale and the profit of the terminal included in the estimate of the I&D, then the answer that I have given him shows that it is not.

Q243/2016

**Consolidated Fund; Improvement and Development Fund –
Income and expenditure**

Clerk: Question 243, the Hon. R M Clinton.

2080 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance please provide the cumulative – I think I can guess the answer – position to 1st February 2016 (*Laughter*) for income and expenditure for the financial year 2015-16 for each of the Consolidated Fund and the Improvement and Development Fund?

2085 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunication.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Well, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member knows already that I would not answer this question because it is for 1st February.

2090 But I do not want to mislead him and I have to tell him that I would not have answered it even if he had put 1st January. (*Laughter*)

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the hon. Member's frankness. Perhaps he could enlighten me and say well are there any off-limit questions in terms of finances that he is not willing to provide an answer to, or perhaps he could enlighten me as to which ones he is.

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, Mr Speaker, I do not need to enlighten him because if there are answers that I think can be answered he gets the answer and the ones that I think cannot be answered, he does not get it.

2100 But let me give him an explanation why the question would not have been possible to answer, even if it had been 1st January – and frankly, I am surprised that he should not have arrived at that conclusion himself.

2105 Mr Speaker, the hon. Member wants to be given the cumulative changes in the income and the expenditure of the Consolidated Fund and the Improvement and Development Fund for the whole of the financial year to date. These cumulative total changes involve the whole of the public sector and the whole of the capital works of the Government.

2110 Cumulative means providing the receipts of every single entity in Government. The cumulative totals for the financial year start to change from midnight on 31st January as payments are received and invoices are paid, which produces either a negative charge or a revenue flow into the Consolidated Fund and into the Improvement and Development Fund.

2115 These cumulative changes are done retrospectively in each case for the plus and the minus items when they are inputted into the Treasury accounting system. In effect, what the hon. Member wants is to be given the detail of each item that the whole of the Treasury department is engaged in, as are all the controlling officers and all the receivers of revenue.

2120 Quite apart from the fact that the volume would have to be collected manually and presented for answer in oral delivery, the compilation of the answer would take months. If we stopped everybody working in the relevant departments, just preparing the answer to this question, in effect from the moment we started producing the answer would mean the Government would not be in a position to receive revenue or pay invoices because everybody would be engaged in this exercise.

It may be that he did not realise the implications of what 'cumulative' means, but to me cumulative up to a point means identifying each change, each plus and each minus.

2125 The GSD in 15 years in Government was only willing to provide tentative figures at the mid-point of the financial year – that is for the 30th September – limited to the summary of heads of expenditure, not every item, and provided three months in arrears. That is, by January, if there

happened to be a meeting then and with a caveat that the results were not to be taken as indicative of the likely result of the financial year as a whole.

2130 The system in place that only enabled that to be produced is the system that still exists. It is a system, Mr Speaker, that I do not think has changed in the 44 years that I have been here. That is to say, it is a system that was there when I arrived in 1972 and it is a system that in order to be able to produce up-to-date information quickly for the Government, let alone for the Parliament, needs a major, major change and I think a move from a lot of manual handling of paperwork to more of an electronic system.

2135 It is something we have not been able to do in the last four years. It is something that I hope within this term we will do something about, but it does mean that the getting together of any answer ... and certainly, I imagine it is not an easy thing to do, because the previous administration had the same system and they did not do anything to make it a faster and more accurate system in 15 years and certainly we, in the eight years we were in Government previously, we did not do anything either because there were too many other things to do.

2140 So the answer is it is not possible to produce this.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the hon. Member's explanation and the information given, to which I sympathise with.

2145 Just one question, possibly for my own curiosity: to what extent is the information the Government itself receives from Treasury up to date? Are they one month behind, two months behind? What are the latest numbers that the Government could get itself on a cumulative basis?

2150 **Hon. J J Bossano:** In some instances, more than one or two months behind. I mean the money that comes in gets recorded faster than the money that has to go out, because sometimes you get invoices that have arrived late and then there is the time it takes to check the accuracy of those invoices, that they have been certified as correct by the right person.

2155 If the wrong box has been ticked, there is a long line of paperwork which then has to be gone back down to get back to the point where the tick was put in the wrong box. Therefore, even the one month figure that I am prepared to give will not be accurate, there will be further revisions.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for that again and perhaps if for future reference, would he be prepared to give a mid-term statement, as he mentioned, the 30th September in future if we request it?

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Hon. J J Bossano: Yes, Mr Speaker, I am prepared to give what was being produced before.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q244/2016
Low-cost housing projects –
Profit from sales

Clerk: Question 244, the Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Public Finance advise how much money are Government companies due to receive on the completion of sale of the low-cost housing projects and what profit is the Government anticipating to make in total?

2170 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development and Telecommunications.

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications & the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano): Mr Speaker, there is no profit anticipated as the affordable homes are sold at cost. The amount of money will not be known until the sales are completed.

2175 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman says that the affordable homes will be sold at cost, that was also my understanding. But can he answer this: when he says 'cost', of course these are sold at 50%. So is it 50% of cost and therefore is the position that the Government is effectively subsidising ... ? We do not know how much because some of these flats may be 50%, others may be 60%, even though the majority are 50%, as the Hon. the Chief
2180 Minister has said on a number of occasions.

But am I right in saying that effectively the Government is subsidising, by a percentage, the construction of these flats?

Hon. J J Bossano: Well, there is a subsidy in two aspects, or there is a subsidy in the sense that the land is free, obviously. And there is a subsidy in the sense that the Government invests in 50% of the house and does not charge rent for that 50%. That is the whole concept of the 50/50 home ownership which transformed home ownership in Gibraltar in the 1980s, or in 1989 whenever it was we did this. But calling it a subsidy, well fine, it is a subsidy less than the subsidy involved in renting.
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2190 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes. Perhaps... Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. Perhaps I have not actually made my question sufficiently clear, and I apologise to the hon. Member. Of course, there is going to be a subsidy.

What I am getting at is whether there is effectively a cost to the Government, beyond the cost of the land – forget about the land for the time being – in terms of the construction cost and the proceeds that the Government gets back from the purchase of the 50% or the 60% or the 70%, what it gets back from the tenant, whether there is a cost in monetary terms to the Government beyond what it is recovering in respect of the sale of the properties, forgetting about the cost of the land.
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2200 I know if you have taken into account the cost of the land, then the mathematics work out that, yes ... but I am talking about actual costs, money in the pocket, that it is costing the Government beyond what it is receiving in terms of receipts.

Hon. J J Bossano: Well I am not certain, Mr Speaker, whether he is referring to the fact that if 50% of the house ... for example, if the house has cost £120,000 and somebody buys 50%, then the money of £120,000 is paid by the Government to the contractor and the Government is only going to get £60,000 back.
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2210 So if that is the cost that the hon. Member is referring to, then the answer is to the extent that people do not buy that other 50%, that is something that will be there for as long as the house is there. It is not something that is written off. There is in fact an asset there which is Government-owned.

Hon. D A Feetham: No, no. Mr Speaker, I understand that. I am just in my own mind trying to work out something that I have been considering in the past and we have been discussing here as well, which is in monetary terms, does it cost the Government ... ? Does the Government recover its monetary investment?
2215

Because the hon. Gentleman says the cost of the flat may be £120,000. That assumes of course that it is costing the developer £120,000.

2220 The developer in this particular case is GJBS, the Government-owned company. Now if it is costing the developer £120,000 to actually build the flat, that does not necessarily follow. The flat may have cost less to build, but it is being sold at £120,000.

What I am getting at is, whether the Government is actually recovering 100% of what it is costing, the Government at the end of it is paying, to build these flats?

2225 **Hon. J J Bossano:** My understanding is that the price has been fixed on the basis of the tenders that were submitted for the building of the estates.

What I cannot be 100% sure of, for example, is if there are public areas or areas ... whether they are fully incorporated in the price per unit. I am not 100% certain of that. I can find that out and let the hon. Member know.

2230 But as far as I am concerned, the political decision and the policy decision of selling at cost is that if it costs to build £x, we do not sell it for £x plus a percentage.

2235 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if I may ask the hon. Member whether he has the number with him, what that £x is for all the low-cost housing projects – what the total cost of all the housing projects is to the Government?

Hon. J J Bossano: I do not have that information with me, but I will find it and let him have it, Mr Speaker.

2240 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: The House will now recess to 3.00 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed at 1.05 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 3.00 p.m.