

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MEETING OF 18 MAY 1976

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

(76 TO 103)

OFFICE COPY

QUESTIONS ASKED AT THE MEETING OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY HELD ON
18 May 1976.

No.76 of 1976

ORAL

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government make a statement on the industrial dispute involving the Revenue Department?

Answer:

The Financial and Development Secretary

Negotiations are continuing and the Government is not prepared to make any statement on the situation as it exists at the moment as this might interfere with or prejudice those negotiations.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.76 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Financial and Development Secretary aware that the situation has been quite bad over a long period of time now and that the results of the action taken and the attitude of the Government is detrimental to all Port users and to the public in general?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, the Government is of course aware of this situation but I think that the Hon the Leader of the Opposition, recalling his own days as a Minister and as a Minister for Labour, will agree with me that it would be wrong for me to say anything more than I have done at this present juncture when detailed negotiations are in fact, going on at this very minute or at least they were when I left for the House.

HON M XIBERRAS:

As the Minister for Labour, Mr Speaker, I might have been answering the question myself. Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware of the effect of the Government communique on this situation which was also a public communique which might have been judged to prejudice the situation also, of the 8th May in which, in quite categorical terms, the Government stated that this was a fair offer and urged the members of the Revenue Department to accept such an offer? Would the Hon Member not agree that this drawing of the line of the negotiations was at least as provocative as this question?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

No, Sir, I would not agree, nor would any member on this side of the House. The statement was made at a particular point in time, namely, the 7th May at which point the negotiations had been broken off. The negotiations have now been resumed and we are therefore dealing with a quite different set of circumstances. And I can only repeat, Sir, that while negotiations are going on, the Government is not prepared to make any further statement than the one I have already made.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Obviously, Mr Speaker, the Government prefers to make its statement public in the Gibraltar Chronicle and other papers than to answer the questions of Hon Members in this House. Would the Hon Member indicate to the House whether the negotiations that are going on are substantial negotiations? In other words, do they deal with all the grades involved?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

As far as I am concerned that question means does it cover the whole of the Revenue Service and the answer to that is, yes, it does.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Hon Member feel that there has been a breakdown today which has brought about a recrudescence of industrial action?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

I am afraid I don't understand that question, Mr Speaker. How can there be a break down when negotiations are, in fact, taking place this very minute?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it a fact, Mr Speaker, or is not the Hon Member aware, that there are reports of intensified industrial activity in the Port today?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the public has every right to be concerned at the outcome of the negotiations, but it is not in the public interest that those negotiations should be conducted in public and it is very much in the public interest, in my view, that those who are conducting the negotiations should be allowed to get on with the job and get on with the job without any Member of this House breathing down their necks.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member aware that even the scales of the offers made were published in the Gibraltar Chronicle and is that not inconsistent with the statement that he has just made. Mr Speaker, further, would the Hon Member not agree that for as long as this situation continues it is the men who are getting the odium of the public, generally, whereas it might very well be the attitude of the Government that is causing the industrial dispute.

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not prepared to answer that question nor am I prepared to make any comment on the allegations and inferences included in it.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member may not be prepared to do so but obviously it is my duty to the public to bring this to his notice particularly since, after some industrial action involving a uniformed branch of Gibraltar Government civil servants, there has been a serious situation created which it appears the Government is still not able to solve. Is the Government confident that a solution to this dispute is going to be found in the near future?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Since negotiations are going on the Government certainly hopes that a satisfactory solution acceptable by all concerned will be found.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, much as the Hon Financial and Development Secretary might regret having people breathing down his neck, would he not agree.....

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Sir, on a point of order, I did not say breathing down my neck.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, we will try that, Mr Speaker, perhaps he will like it then. Would he not agree, Mr Speaker, that since the House meets so infrequently the only opportunity that Members have of attempting to understand the root of the problem is on this occasion and that this is an opportunity for the Government to try and explain to the House what is the stumbling block to a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Would he not agree with that?

HON FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY:

Sir, as I have already said on several occasions, no, I do not agree with that. This is a matter for negotiation and negotiations are, with all respect to this House, not a matter for this House.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, would the Hon Financial and Development Secretary give the House a full explanation when the House has to foot the Bill?

MR SPEAKER:

The Financial and Development Secretary is accountable to the House for any money spent. Next question.

No. 77 of 1976

ORAL

The Hon L. Devincenzi

Will Government make available to the Opposition a detailed statement of all monies contributed by Government on the various sports to date since the 1st April 1974, including any underwriting arrangements?

Answer:

The Chief Minister

Yes, Sir, The Hon Member will shortly be provided with a detailed statement, as well as other Members of the Opposition.

No.78 of 1976

ORAL

The Hon Miss C Anes

Has Government now completed the repairs to communal television aerials at Laguna Estate and have the results been satisfactory?

Answer:

The Minister for Information and Postal Services

Satisfactory repairs have been carried out to the following Blocks at Laguna:

Kings House, Maidstone House,
Devon House and Blackwatch House.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.78 of 1976

HON MISS ANES:

Will Government state whether they have informed the agents under contract to them to carry out periodical surveys of all communal aerials in Government housing, say, six monthly intervals in order to avoid the unsatisfactory state of affairs that has been going on during the past years?

HON I ABECASIS:

I am not aware that those arrangements existed but I can assure the Hon Lady that no further complaints have been received.

HON MISS C ANES:

I would like the Government to ensure that the contractor carry out a survey every six months of all communal aerials in order to avoid repetition of the trouble which has been going on for years.

HON I ABECASIS:

We will certainly do that.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government state the dates on which allocations can be expected in relation to phases V and VI of the Varyl Begg Estate and to what extent can the alleged vandalism be seriously put forward as an excuse for the non-completion of these phases on their due dates?

Answer:

The Minister for Information and Postal Services

No, Sir, allocations of flats in Phases V and VI cannot be made until the various Blocks are formally handed over to Government. There has been delay due to difficulties in the supply of certain essential electrical items.

This is aggravated by the extensive vandalism occurring on the site generally and in the blocks now being completed.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 79 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I understand then that even at this stage one cannot say when phases V and VI are to be allocated. Am I right in saying that?

HON I ABECASIS:

Quite right, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does the Government claim responsibility for the statement that appeared on the alleged vandalism and its effect on the availability of these flats?

HON I ABECASIS:

I do not know to what specific statement the Hon Leader of the Opposition is referring.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am referring to a statement in the Chronicle of 6th May which the Hon Member who is answering the question no doubt has seen with the headline: "Vandalism delays Varyl Begg Work". A Government press release stated during the recent discussions held between the main contractors and the Public Works Dept etc". Now, is that a Government Press release? Is the Chronicle right in saying that?

HON I ABECASIS:

The statement referred to in that press release is a Government statement but not the statement in itself.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So the Government puts out a statement, am I right in saying, Mr Speaker, saying that vandalism delayed the Varyl Begg Work. Now, could the Hon Member especially in view of the further public statement made by the Varyl Begg Tenants Association, could the Hon Member say to what extent vandalism has been the cause of delay?

HON I ABECASIS:

To a great extent, Sir, but not only that, in my answer I said that there had also been some difficulty in the supply of certain electrical materials so there are two reasons for the delay, vandalism and the lack of supply of some materials.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that the major part of that statement refers to vandalism. The Hon Member might wish to hide behind the word "great", to a "great" extent but could the Hon Member be a little bit more specific and say why the Government found it necessary to publish a whole communique on vandalism.

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, the communique was both on vandalism and the lack of supply of items. Not exclusively on vandalism.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member estimate in terms of money or in terms of materials to what extent vandalism has been responsible?

HON I ABECASIS:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Leader of the Opposition has given me a knowledge that I wish I had. I have no idea.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Government not agree then that this is a let out for the contractor in fact, to state that vandalism was to a great extent the cause of the delay in allocation? What is it Government's purpose to allow the contractor to let out for non-completion of the contract?

HON I ABECASIS:

I don't think that could ever have been the intention, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Hon Member feel that the control of vandalism was the responsibility of the Government or of the contractor?

HON I ABECASIS:

Who can control vandalism, Sir?

MR SPEAKER:

you are being asked who is responsible for controlling vandalism.

HON I ABECASIS:

The site belongs to the contractor.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then we are talking about vandalism which occurred in those houses which are not yet handed over to the Government. Am I right in saying that?

HON I ABECASIS:

Yes, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

We must not anticipate another question on the same subject which will come up shortly.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is it not a fact that certain allocations - turning to the first part of the question - certain allocations in respect of phases 5 and 6 have already been made?

HON I ABECASIS:

Not that I am aware of, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member check. I know of at least one. Mr Speaker, is it not a fact too that a number of applicants on the list have been told themselves - I don't think Honourable Members of this House should be less well informed than the applicants - that the allocations of phase 5 is to take place in the immediate future?

HON I ABECASIS:

Not to my knowledge, Sir. The allocation will be made as soon as the blocks of flats are handed over to the Government. It cannot be done before that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And the Hon Member has no indication from the contractor at this late stage as to when phase 5 is going to be handed over?

HON I ABECASIS:

No, Sir.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Can the Hon Member say whether dampness has in any way contributed to this delay?

HON I ABECASIS:

I don't think that that appears in the question, Sir.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Not, it appears in the supplementary.

HON I ABECASIS:

I think there is a question specifically on that subject later on, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a question which is in order. You are being asked whether dampness is going to delay the handing over by the contractor to Government.

HON I ABECASIS:

We don't know whether there will be dampness in houses which have not been handed over yet, Sir.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer then is, no.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, would it be reasonable to assume that the allocation will take place before September?

HON I ABECASIS:

The allocation still is subject to the handing over of the blocks of flats by the contractor to the Government.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member in view of my colleague's question about dampness for which there is more than ample evidence, whether he knows anything at all himself - I know that it is not now his responsibility - about the condition of phases 5 and 6? I mean, has he done his homework on this? Does he know anything at all about it?

HON I ABECASIS:

All I know, Sir, is that they have not been handed over yet.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I know that and that is why I asked the question. But the Hon Member is surely here to illuminate both Honourable Members on this side of the House and the public, generally, who are concerned about this.

MR SPEAKER:

To the extent that he has knowledge.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, Mr Speaker, I am trying to find out the extent, or lack of extent, of his knowledge about the situation. Mr Speaker, is the Hon Member really telling the House that dampness is not a cause of the delay in the completion of phases 5 and 6?

MR SPEAKER:

The answer is a simple one. As far as he is concerned, he has no knowledge whatsoever that there is dampness in these flats.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, perhaps the Hon Member was not here in the House at the previous proceedings because I remember the Hon Mr Bossano asking two questions, I think on dampness and the Honourable Col Hoare;.....

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but not on this phase.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then I take it that there has been an improvement in construction and there is no dampness.

MR SPEAKER:

No, the Minister has said the flats have not yet been handed over to Government.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But who is the Minister responsible, Mr Speaker? Would the Hon Col Hoare care to throw some light on this?

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, when the houses are handed over by the contractor, the Government will inspect them and then they will be in a position to say whether there is any dampness or not.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, have the contractors given any indication at all on an informal basis or otherwise to the Government as to when they can expect this handing over ceremony to take place? Have they given any indication at all? This year, next year, 1980?

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, the question has been asked in five different ways already, but the answer is always the same. We do not know.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Government asked the contractors the reason for the delay?

MR SPEAKER:

Order. You are entitled to ask whether the contractors are in breach of their conditions of agreement as far as the time of handing over is concerned.

HON P J ISOLA:

Could we ask the Minister when was the contractual date for the handing over of phases 5 and 6 and if these have passed what does the Government propose to do about it?

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, I am told that there is no due date for handing over.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the Minister saying that there is no date under the contract for these phases to be completed? Could the contractors leave Gibraltar and come back in 10 years' time and carry on with the contract?

MR SPEAKER:

Order.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister illuminate us?

HON I ABECASIS:

I have answered the question already, Sir.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government state how many flats are due to be allocated in connection with phases V and VI of the Varyl Begg Estate:

- a. to persons medically categorised
- b. to civil servants as such
- c. to retired civil servants
- d. to transit centre families
- e. to persons on the Housing Priority List?

Answer:The Minister for Information and Postal Services

225 Flats are due to be allocated in connection with Phases 5 and 6 of the Varyl Begg Estate. These will be allocated in accordance with the percentages which were contained in the Statement I made to the House on the 10 July 1974 as follows:

15% Medical Category	34
8% Civil Servants	32 (balance)
6% Pensioners	25 (balance)
5% Transit Centres	33
Priority List	101

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.80 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member consider that in view of the fact that this is the last stage, with the exception of Block 18, of Varyl Begg Estate - and we shall find out what other plans the Government has soon - will the Hon Member consider that 101 flats out of 225 for the general priority list, is a fair allocation?

HON I ABECASIS:

That is what was agreed in July 1974, Sir. The House was informed and the House is aware of the percentages for the distribution of the allocation of the Varyl Begg Estate.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, has this percentage been kept up throughout the allocation?

HON I A BECASIS:

As far as I am aware, yes, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Honourable Member whether with these 33 allocated to transit centre families the Government will now have hopes of fulfilling its electoral commitments before the next elections and getting everybody out of the transit centre?

HON I ABECASIS:

No, Sir. After the allocation of 33 there will still be a few remaining in the Transit Centre much to our regret.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is the Hon Member aware whether the Minister for Housing, who is not with us today, experiencing pressure from applicants on the Housing Priority List because they know that a great percentage of the flats to be allocated are to be allocated to people other than those on the general priority list?

HON I ABECASIS:

The Minister is aware that as far as Housing is concerned there is pressure from every quarter on anything.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the public been aware up till now that less than half the houses to be allocated in phases 5 and 6 are going to go to general applicants?

HON I ABECASIS:

The proceedings of this House is public knowledge, Sir.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member to revise his mathematics because from what I can see percentagewise 66% of the houses are due to go to persons on the housing priority list and it looks to me as if they are getting substantially 60% so it would seem to me that in categories a, b, c, and d, the people are getting rather more allocations than the percentages which the Honourable Member stated was Government policy in July, 1974. Has there been a change in the policy because the mathematics are wrong. According to my calculations persons on the housing priority list are getting much less than 60% substantially less. They should be getting 66%. I won't try to do that equation but certainly it would seem to me that it would require more than 130 houses. So where is the discrepancy and why?

HON I ABECASIS:

They are not discrepancies, Sir, they are adjustments. Some times you cannot give, say, 8% to the civil servants.....

MR SPEAKER:

What you are being asked is that if you add up the percentages of the four categories leaving out the priority list, that adds up to 34%. Now, if that adds up to 34% then it means that the priority list must be getting 66%. Whilst if you add up the houses the priority list is only getting 101 whereas the other categories are getting 134.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, the people on the housing priority list who presumably are the longest of all the list are getting something like 47 flats less than they should get. This is a very substantial number.

MR SPEAKER:

Does the percentage refer to the houses available or to the overall list?

HON I ABECASIS:

I tried to say that there was an adjustment because let us say that 8% of civil servants should get a house but the houses available are either too small or too big for those in the list, it is then left in abeyance until the next allocation in which they are allocated so therefore there are adjustments both ways, Sir.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker may I draw the Hon Member 's attention to very serious discrepancies. The medically categorised seem to be getting their share but if one looks at the transit centre they should be getting only 12 and they are getting 33. That is quite a substantial increase, Mr Speaker. If I may say so quite a substantial adjustment and obviously as I said before others seem to be getting quite substantial adjustments upwards all apparently, at the serious expense of the person from the Housing Priority List. Could the Minister explain why the transit centre families are to get 33 flats instead of about 12? I think a lot of people would like to know that sort of answer.

HON I ABECASIS:

Sir, the answer is that up to now only 2 or 3 people in the transit centre have come out through the 5%. They have come out through their own pointage.

HON J BOSSANO:

So what we are saying then, Sir, is that the policy of the Government is to give the occupants in the transit centres two bites of the cherry, one under the overall priority and if they get in through the overall priority then they pass on their 5% to the ones who don't get in. Is that the policy?

HON I ABECASIS:

No more than the other percentages, Sir. If a person in a medical category has very high pointage he gets the house through the pointage if not through the medical category and the same thing applies to pensioners and others.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, surely the Government is aware that this is the last major allocation. Is it fair if transit centre families, for example, have done well through the priority list in getting accommodation, that right on the last two phases they should get a big wallop of houses at the expense of others in the housing priority list, whose houses were taken precisely by these families who have higher points than them? Isn't that apart from giving them two bites of the cherry, also working an injustice on all those patient people who have been waiting for many years in the housing priority list and who have little prospects of the future after these allocations?

HON I ABECASIS:

Let me say that the people in the transit centres have been there for over 10 years now. And furthermore that we need the transit centre and furthermore Sir, that they have been penalised in not having come.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, at one particular time will the Government make available the total allocation in respect of these various categories mentioned in my question for the whole of the Varyl Begg Estate?

HON I ABECASIS:

Yes, Sir, that will give a clear 15%, a clear 8%, a clear 6%, and a clear 5%.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And will the Hon Member also say how many of the families allocated under the general allocation on grounds of general housing priority could have come under the various other categories?

HON I ABECASIS:

That will also be included in the statement to come, Sir.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state how many families will remain on the Housing Priority List after the final allocation of the Varyl Begg Estate is completed?

Answer:

The Minister for Information and Postal Services

It is estimated that about 1400 applicants will remain on the Waiting List after the final allocations of the Varyl Begg Estate, made up as follows:-

about 350 with over 200 points
650 with over 100 points
400 with under 100 points

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.81 OF 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I take it, this is having allocated the 101 houses of general priority?

HON I ABECASIS:

That is quite correct, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

We still have 1,400.

HON I ABECASIS:

1,400 as indicated in the answer.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, on the over 200, does the Hon Member have any idea how much over 200 the 350 will be? The Hon Member said 350 applicants over 200 points. Now, over 200 could also be over 300 and over 400.

HON I ABECASIS:

If the Hon Member wants a detailed list it will be provided.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Will Government introduce a family season ticket for admission to Montagu Sea Bathing Pavilion at a special rate for use in the current bathing season?

Answer:The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

The Hon Questioner will recall that when we visited the premises recently, I mentioned that I was giving thought to such a change. My investigation revealed that in Gibraltar there has never been Season Tickets for a family. It would be necessary to define the composition of a family and the implementing of any limitation laid down, together with the need for all members of the family to arrive at the same time, would present many practical difficulties to all parties.

In the circumstances I have not thought it necessary to recommend any change.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.82 of 1976

HON MISS C ANES:

Sir, I do recall having visited the Montagu Sea Bathing Pavilion with the Minister and having discussed this. I think the Government is aware that mothers with young children do make use of this establishment throughout the summer because it is more convenient for them to go there than to go to the beaches where they have to wait for transport and so on. I was thinking that it would be convenient to introduce a family season ticket for the summer period because it would be cheaper for a mother with young children than having to pay for individual tickets for all of them in this day and age when everything is so expensive. I do appreciate the difficulties and also that this has never been done before in Gibraltar. But I think it is time we looked into it and tried to implement it.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

May I say that I have dug into the archives of the old City Council and I found that in the 1930's there were three kinds of season tickets, ~~for~~ a full season, a monthly ticket and a weekly ticket. The prices then was "Admission and bathing for one person - £1." For a second ticket to a person of the same name and family and living in the same house - 15 shillings. For every additional person of the same name and family and living in the same house - 12s 6d." Now, translating that into modern money value terms, it would put a season ticket at a cost of about £10 or £15. I think with a little reflection people will realise that the facilities available today in that we have five beaches.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, we are not going to debate under question time any subject that is brought up. The question that you are being asked is whether you will reconsider your decision not to implement a season ticket. It is right that you should give a preliminary explanation but we mustn't make it into a statement otherwise we defeat the object in giving information.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. What I am trying to do is to give the sort of thinking which has made me after reconsideration again, rule against it. That in those days people had less bathing facilities. Nowadays they have more and therefore by introducing and forcing people to buy season tickets one would be penalising them both financially and by removing the number of places at which they can attend.

HON MISS C ANES:

Sir, I am not trying to force people to use the Montagu Bathing Pavilion at all. What I am trying to do is to help the ordinary housewife who goes there with her children right through the summer season. They have to pay for themselves and their children plus of course the extra money they pay to buy lollipops and ice creams and cocacola and all sorts of things that the children do ask for and I think that providing special family tickets for these people would be a great help to them financially.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I have every sympathy with the Hon Lady's intentions and these have been my intentions. However, on going into the matter very, very deeply I have come to the final conclusion that it would be to the detriment of families and therefore for this season I have not considered it necessary to recommend any change.

HON J BOSSANO:

But, Mr Speaker, surely the Hon Member must appreciate that he is not being asked to force families to use this facility. If he makes it available and families agree with his judgement they won't use it and there won't be any problem. Nobody will be forced to be prejudiced by this.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I will look at this again, Mr Speaker, but before I do anything I will advertise to find out how many people will be prepared to do this. It would not be worthwhile making special arrangements for two or three families. Let me say from personal observation from going around the beaches every weekend that most of the large families do not go to Montagu Bathing Pavilion during the weekends, they go to the beach.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister look at this as the provision of a sensible system. I would have thought this was a very simple operation. If the Government on a simple matter like this has to consider and go back to the archives of 1930, Mr Speaker, we will never get anything done. I suggest to the Minister that he consults the Hon Secretary on the Sandpits Lawn Tennis Club which has implemented a system of family membership. The father and the mother don't have to be there while the children play tennis. Mr Speaker, will he consider this as a facility which everybody gives to families all over the world at a reasonable rate. After all, I am quite sure that the Government must look at the Montagu Sea Bathing Pavilion as a facility it offers to the public not as a means of getting money out of the public. So will the Minister consider implementing the system that will give a facility to families in Gibraltar, and there are a great number of them who might wish to take advantage, but not go through the whole rignarole of advertising and spending more money on the exercise.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. You are making a speech.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I have already said I will reconsider this but I take umbrage at saying that because things happen at a tennis Club they should happen in a swimming pavilion, any more than what happens in his club should happen at any other club. I also take umbrage that it is all over the world. There is nowhere all over the world where they have season tickets.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, I would like an assurance from the Minister in view of the fact that we are almost in June and that the summer season seems to be with us already, we would like an assurance from the Minister that he will look at this matter urgently and make a public statement before the next meeting of the House otherwise summer will have gone by and the elections will be here and he won't be in office.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, when I consider this and make my decision I will certainly make it public whether it pleases the Opposition or not.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Will Government state why a number of large iron posts have been allowed for over a year to remain on the pavement opposite Calpe Hostel at Devil's Tower Road and can Government confirm that they are Government property?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

The six iron posts referred to are some of those used at the Fair which were stored in the Electrical Department compound at Devil's Tower Road. They were placed outside temporarily on the pavement on 3 March 1976 so that the area could be screeded, ie stone-slabbed. They were scheduled to be returned inside on completion of the works and this in fact was done on 13 May 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.83 OF 1976.

HON MISS C ANES:

I am sorry to have to contradict the Minister, Sir, but I have been passing by the site daily on my way to work and home to lunch and I have been seeing them. I knew, of course, that the moment the question was brought to the House the offending objects would be removed from the pavement. In fact, on the 13 th May when it appeared in the Gibraltar Chronicle I went by in the morning and they were still there but by 5 o'clock they had been removed except for the rubbish. That had been left on the pavement. The reason I put this question more than anything else is because this is the kind of negligence that goes on in Government Departments. Unless a question is asked in the House nothing is done.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, will the Hon Member say where his information comes from? My Hon Colleague is absolutely certain and I have had personal experience of this myself, that those posts have been there long before March.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. Everyone makes himself responsible for his statements in this House and that is it. Of course, if evidence is brought to the contrary you can do so.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Isn't there a possibility that the Hon Member has made a mistake about this as with other things?

MR SPEAKER:

You can ask him whether he has made a mistake but don't ask him where he got his information from.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, I am asking him if it is possible that he has made a mistake in view of the fact that he has two eye witnesses here who say that it has been there for much longer?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I get my information from the heads of my departments in whom I have implicit faith. Now, if the two Hon Members opposite make themselves responsible for their statement that they have been there over a year I will look into it. My information is, and I have, I repeat, implicit faith in the heads of my department.....

MR SPEAKER:

May I have assurance from the two Members that those posts have been lying there for a year?

HON MISS C ANES:

Mr Speaker, I pass that way every day so obviously I know that they have been lying there. I would like to ask the Minister whether it is customary for foremen in all departments to take note of the particular job that is required by their particular gang of men. Do they take note of the date when the job is commenced, when it is finished and do they have an inspection on the termination of the work?

MR SPEAKER:

No, that is out of order.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is it possible, Mr Speaker, there could have been two sets of iron posts? Could I ask the Minister under what circumstances Government permits the public highway to be obstructed by iron posts?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no.

HON MISS A ANES:

Sir, is it not true that these iron posts were removed from the area where they had been previously stored in order that that particular area could be allocated to somebody else? Why were they not taken to another place and why were they placed on the pavement and left there? Why did the foremen in charge not investigate the reason for having left the iron posts on the pavement? It is his duty to find out and see that the job is properly carried out,

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I have already said that the information that I have got was that it was removed from inside an electrical dept storeroom which still exists today and will continue to exist. It was taken out temporarily whilst they screeded the floor.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. We must bring this down to a reasonable level. The Minister has given an answer to a question. The Hon Members of the Opposition have brought to his attention certain information. The Minister has said that in the light of what has been said in this House he will make a further investigation. There is nothing else he can do so let us go to the next question.

The Hon P J Isola

Can Government now give a date for the completion of the work at Penney House?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

The completion date for the structural repairs contract is 9 November 1976. Consequential redecorating, plumbing and other similar works will then commence and it is anticipated that Penney House can be handed over to the Housing Section early in the new year, 1977.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.84 OF 1976

HON P J ISOLA:

Can the Minister state whether there is a contract date in this case, because he has told us early in 1977? We have previous experience of what that means?

MR SPEAKER:

The Minister has said in his answer that the completion date of the structural repairs contract is 9 November 1976.

HON P J ISOLA:

Yes, but, Mr Speaker, the date that I am asking for is the completion of the work. This work may be divided up between the Government, the contractor and everybody else. The Opposition is interested in knowing the completion of everything. He has told us early in 1977 and I am seeking a date, if there is one, under any contract with anybody.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

No, Sir, there is no firm date at this moment because you cannot enter into a contract - it could be decided to do it by direct labour - until such time as the construction work is done to see in fact, what has to be done.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, surely the Minister's departmental chiefs and advisers know the work that is involved in the present contract and surely must know what has to be done afterwards? Surely, they must be in a position to give more accurate information?

MR SPEAKER:

I think the Hon Member is confused. The Minister knows what the contractual works are, because he is going to be given possession by the 9th of November 1976. I think one must infer from that that until such time as he has been given possession he cannot know what remedial work the Government has to carry out.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, with respect, I am not misunderstanding the Minister's answer. The Minister's answer is related to a construction contract. My question is directed at knowing and getting an answer as to when Penney House will be completed. Now this may involve the present contract and additional work. And it is the additional work as well as the pending contract at which the question is directed. What I am asking the Minister now is that surely knowing as they do the actual existing contract, they must know in the department what else is to be done. He has described it in general terms. So can he give us a more definite date because we have experience as to what early in any particular year means. That can mean the whole of that year, it can be December and it would still be early in the year.

MR SPEAKER:

What you are asking then is whether the Minister can anticipate the length of time that Government will require to carry out the redecoration works once the building has been handed back to Government.

HON P J ISOLA:

Having regard to the fact that they are professionally equipped to be able to do so.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I have said that we cannot assess this until the contractual works are finished. I cannot tell, neither can the highest professional body tell whether one room will need one coat of paint or two coats of paint until after they have been finished the contract. Whether one pipe will have to be mended, replaced or renewed.

MR SPEAKER:

The answer then is that until such time as you have been handed over the building you cannot make an assessment.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

This was my answer to the initial question.

HON P J ISOLA:

That is a rather unsatisfactory answer because it would seem to me as a layman that it is not beyond conception that professional advisers of the department do not know how many coats of paint or other matters you require to complete a building. I would have thought they have ample experience.....

MR SPEAKER:

Mr Isola, we have got to come down to earth on these questions. You are asking for information and you have been given it. Whether it is in accordance with your wishes is another matter. You have been told that until such time as the contractors hand over the building they cannot assess the amount of redecoration that has to be done and the length of time that this is going to take.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, surely the implications of that is that the Government does not know in what sort of state it is going to get the building from the contractor. Surely the contractor is charging a price for handing over the building with certain requirements and those requirements must be known to the Government when they gave the tender out?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Contractual requirements, yes, but whether the final finishes on the wall will require one coat of paint, two coats of paint, three coats of paint. Whether you have got to put 3 bends round a pipe or four bends, that cannot be done until the work is actually finished.

HON J BOSSANO:

Then, Mr Speaker, is the Honourable Member saying that the work that is required on the building may be more as a result of the work of the contractors than it is before the contractors went in, is that what he is saying?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

What I am saying, Mr Speaker, is that when the contractors leave I don't know what work there will be left to be done.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the Government has had the building in its possession before handing it to the contractor and presumably - the Hon Member can correct me if I am wrong - they were able to judge what work needed doing to it before the contractors went in. Now, is the Hon Member saying that as a result of the contractor going in to do structural repairs more work may need to be done to the building than was needed originally?

MR SPEAKER:

No, we bring it down to the limits of the answer and the limits of the answer which stated that the completion date for the structural repairs contract was 9th November 1976. We are now talking about consequential redecorating, plumbing and other similar work, that is the only thing that we are talking about. And they cannot gauge how long that is going to take until they have had possession of the building.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can I then ask the Minister, Mr Speaker, that if they cannot gauge anything at all until the building has been handed over on the 9th November, 1976, on what does he base his statement or his assertion that the building will be completed in early 1977? On what facts?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

On the realistic basis of experience.

HON P J ISOLA:

If that is the case, Mr Speaker, will the Minister not agree that he is then professionally equipped and professionally advised to be able to give us a firmer date than early 1977?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

No, Sir.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Honourable and Gallant Member, in view of the fact that he has said in answer to a supplementary that the building will be going to the Housing Unit in early 1977, whether it is proposed to keep it exclusively for its previous tenants or to be given to the Housing Unit on the basis of general allocation?

MR SPEAKER:

It does not arise from the question as a supplementary but I will allow a very wide answer without more supplementaries.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, the answer to that is that it does not arise from the question and in any case.....

MR SPEAKER:

That is not the answer, that is my ruling.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I am sorry, Mr Speaker, yes, it is your ruling to which I bow. The answer is that the responsibility of allocation goes out of my hands completely and I don't know what that will be.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister agree that it would be quite normal and quite in order to give dates for completion and then if as a result of the contractors finishing and something not being in order then to reassess the date but not to leave it pending in mid-air. Surely, it is quite normal to do that?

MR SPEAKER:

We are going to re-open what we have gone through already if I allow that question. The Minister has tackled it in a different way and one has to accept his judgement on it. Next question.

The Hon P J Isola

Is Government satisfied with the final outcome of the reconstruction of Naval Hospital Road and what expenditure has been incurred?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

The Contract Sum for the new retaining wall, new footpath and road widening amounted to £43,737.62. Government is quite satisfied with the works. The final wearing surface to the road will be laid by PWD after the contract maintenance period has expired on 3 October 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.85 OF 1976

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, is Government aware of the few ominous cracks that have been appearing in the area?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, there are two, I believe.

HON P J ISOLA:

I am not aware of the number, Mr Speaker, and perhaps the Hon Member will tell us and explain them to us as well.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

The final wearing process is estimated to take 7 to 10 days to complete at a cost of around £2,000 for which provision has been made in this year's estimates so it should not come as any surprise. The final surface has not been laid earlier so that any settlement which is bound to occur on a job of this nature and size - and has in fact already occurred - can be rectified before the wearing carpet is laid.

HON P J ISOLA:

Are these matters the Minister speaks of as being bound to occur, are these based on experience or on knowledge?

MR SPEAKER:

No, no, Mr Isola. The Minister does not have to answer that.

HON P J ISOLA:

It is of some importance, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER:

You cannot make the Minister responsible for cracks that may appear in any road in Gibraltar and that is what you are doing.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, with respect to the Chair, this is a reconstruction at great public expense on which the Minister has expressed satisfaction and what I am merely asking now, while the maintenance period is still on and so forth, to see whether the Department is, in fact, watching the situation carefully.

MR SPEAKER:

Mr Isola, you have been told that the resurfacing of the road is not taking place until the 3 October 1976 i.e. on the expiration of the contract maintenance period.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, my question is not just directed at the road. I understand there is a wall too, is there not, and there are cracks there?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Not in the wall itself. To the ground immediately in front of the wall, yes; and this is expected in a job of this nature. Mr Speaker, this is why there is a maintenance period in the contract to cover items such as this.

MR SPEAKER:

May I ask, Mr Isola, what is your question?

HON P J ISOLA:

I am just enquiring, Mr Speaker, this is the purpose of the question. I am enquiring from the Minister whether that crack just in front of the wall on the road, in view of the fact that this wall goes further down would not just be the road but could be the wall. I am an ignorant man in these things.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, at the expense of having a crack at him, the answer is no, the wall is built on very solid foundations and it is not the wall.

HON P J ISOLA:

Isn't there a history of slippage on these foundations, of subsidence in that area? Can the Minister explain his statement that the wall is built in very solid foundations?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I am not going to go into the whole history of Naval Hospital Road but we are aware that there is subsidence *round* about No.4A and 4B but not where the road has been laid and not where the wall has been put.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, do we have an assurance that the wall will serve what I imagine was the original purpose and that is to prevent subsidence which, according to a Report which the Hon Member has made available to me, affected not only 4A and 4B but other areas including the vicinity of Penney House?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether the work which is being carried out on the retaining wall has provided the retention that the area needed.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I have answered that question time and time again. I have said the wall is built on solid foundation and there will be no slippage apart from a major earthquake or something like that. The wall itself is constructed on very sound foundations.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, my question was in respect of Penney House. The Hon Member will recall that I pushed into getting the people who surveyed the damage at Penney House to look into the question of subsidence and the possibility of the effect of subsidence on Penney House was established in a subsequent report by Ove Arup. My question is whether this wall that has been completed now, will give the necessary guarantee in respect of Penney House, I do not mean in respect of the road itself but ⁱⁿ respect of Penney House.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Leader of the Opposition is mistaken. That report stated categorically not once but twice that there is no question of subsidence around Penney House. The areas which are suspect are around 4A and 4B, Naval Hospital Road. And if the Hon Member looks at that Report again he will find it repeated at least twice.

HON M KIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I find that answer unsatisfactory and I shall pursue the matter because after all the money the Government has spent on Penney House one has to make absolutely certain that this wall is going to serve its original purpose.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

Can Government state the projected rate of increased consumption of potable water for the future and the basis on which Government is planning therefor?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

A recent study by Consultants on Gibraltar's Water and Power requirements up to the year 2000 predicts a consumption growth rate of 7% per annum between 1975 - 1980, thereafter increased consumption at a slower growth rate up to 1985 and from 1985 onwards the predicted increased consumption is at an even slower rate.

To cater for this a phased programme of additional desalination plant installation is being prepared and discussed with other interested parties. To meet anticipated increased demands and provide for adequate maintenance time for the present plants before the proposed additional plant is operative, a programme of regular importation of water will be implemented.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.86 OF 1976

HONP J ISOLA:

Can the Minister state whether there is any connection with the increased projected rate at 7% up to 1980 and subsequent decline with the projected building of houses, is that the connection? Why is there an increase of 7% until 1980 and then a gradual decline? Has new housing anything to do with that at all?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Not exactly, Mr Speaker. This is the prediction of experts who follow these trends not only in Gibraltar but worldwide and apply their worldwide knowledge to conditions in Gibraltar considering the limitations of space, our limitation of population.....

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to go into the details. The Hon Questioner has been given his answer.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, with respect, the fact that the experts have worldwide experience and so forth is very relevant as to the value of their report but on what precisely do they base the assumption that the increase will be 7% up to 1980 and then a falling off?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

A falling off in the growth rate not in consumption. There will still be increased consumption because of the improving standards of living but the growth rate curve will drop on a constant 7%.

HON P J ISOLA:

Is the growth rate curve the Minister is referring to the growth rate curve of consumption or of population?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Of consumption but taking into account population. I don't know how many people will be living in Gibraltar in the year 2000.

HON J BOSSANO:

But, Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member say whether these projections are based on a static population or on a growing population?

MR SPEAKER:

No, we are not going to go into that aspect.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the House in any position to judge at all the accuracy of the answer?

MR SPEAKER:

The Government has been asked whether they can state the projected rate of increased consumption of potable water for the future and the basis on which Government is planning therefor. You have been told there is a report you have been given the precise information and this may be the basis of a debate perhaps. But you have been given the information which is what question time is for.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if the House has been told that the Government is expecting a 7% growth in the consumption of water to me it seems a perfectly valid supplementary to ask whether that 7% is supposed to be on the basis of an increase in population or a static population.

MR SPEAKER:

Fair enough.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I have replied to that question already that obviously the report has taken into consideration not only the problematical rate of growth of the population but also the problematical rate of growth in the standard of living and the usage of water. They have taken all these factors into account - this is why you employ consultants - and they have gone right up to the year 2000.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, could we ask the Minister to circulate it to Hon Members of the House so that we can be enlightened.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

There are not enough copies available. At the moment it is being discussed with lots of other people and it would be quite wrong to disclose the contents of this document.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, if it is wrong to disclose the contents and Members of the House are not in a position to judge anything that is in that report because it is not going to be available to them, then will the Hon Member undertake to answer as many supplementaries as are required to obtain information that might be available in the report as he has read the report himself or make a detailed statement giving explanations of how these projections are made because I, for example, would like to know whether there is projected growth in the tourist industry included in the water consumption or not?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

This is one of the factors that will be taken into consideration.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government make a statement on the alleged vandalism in the Varyl Begg Estate and what persons, if any, are employed by the Government and/or the contractor for the protection of property in the area?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

1. It is understood that the vandalism occurs mostly at night time and it has not been possible to catch anyone red-handed as yet. The Contractors employ three watchmen. The Police have naturally overall responsibility. I would like to pay tribute to the restraining effect of the presence of the Tenants Association, who, I understand on a number of occasions have actively intervened and thereby dissuaded or prevented additional damages.

It is only by the cooperation of the public that this sort of unsocial behaviour can be stamped out.

2. Some types of common vandalism being encountered are:

- Kitchen cupboards removed
- Taps wrenched off bathrooms and kitchens
- Stop cocks of 1 complete block removed
- Yale locks and lavatory seats broken
- Electric switches, sockets and lamp holders stolen
- Old people's meeting room glass broken
- Mosaics prised off benches and walls
- Stone-throwing and breaking of windows
- Writing on newly decorated walls

In one of the large blocks the handrails have been deformed, all the stair and corridor balustrading have been wilfully bent out of shape.

That is the sort of vandalism one is getting there, Mr Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.87 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, it is a tremendous indictment of either the Government or the contractor that all these things have been allowed to happen and nobody has been caught. This side of the House shares entirely the feelings of the Minister on this matter but would the Hon Member not agree that they - the Government - who are responsible for this or they - the contractors - who were

responsible for this have rather more to show for their efforts than not catching a single person red-handed when all these things have been allowed to happen. This I am sure will be public money eventually and would the Minister not agree it is being a bit futile when he rattles off a list of all the things that have happened and says that nothing has been done about it. It is a ridiculous position, would the Minister not agree, for the Minister to stand up and rattle off a whole list of petty crime almost and then say that nobody has been caught.

MR SPEAKER:

I think your question is, what steps have been taken to prevent this vandalism. Is that what the Hon Member is asking?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, I am saying that the steps must be completely ineffectual when nobody has been caught.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Exactly, Mr Speaker. One thing I am grateful to the Hon Leader of the Opposition for is that he stands with me in condemning the public in doing this sort of thing.

HON M XIBERRAS:

If the Hon Member would give way. I stand with him in that respect but I certainly do not.....

MR SPEAKER:

Order. Let the Minister answer the question otherwise we will never finish.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I was going to say, Mr Speaker, that the responsibility for flats not handed over to us remains with the contractor. He employs three watchmen. Police have the overall responsibility and patrol the area. Now, if it was possible to catch every person who commits an offence there would be no crime at all in this world. People who go in for this sort of thing are as crafty, cunning and as unsocial as it is possible to be because it is their own property which they are damaging.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member state in view of the fact that he has said that the contractor is responsible, whether the cost of re-providing these items and fixing up the place, generally, would be passed on to the Government eventually?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, no.

HON MISS C ANES:

Mr Speaker, is it not a fact that when flats are finished they are not locked properly and left open for people to walk in and out? These seem to be the rumours circulating that the reason for these acts of vandalism is that the flats are not locked when they are finished, they are left open and people walk in and out and that some of the objects that have been stoken like kitchen units and cupboards can be found in the flats already allocated to other people and that neighbours themselves have been doing this kind of vandalism?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I wouldn't know, Mr Speaker, my thoughts are that this is a fact. But whether the flats are locked or not this is not the responsibility of the Government until they are handed over. Whether they are locked or not is no reason why people should go in and steal and cause damage.

HON MISS C ANES:

I entirely agree with the Minister. There is no reason for people to go into other flats and appropriate articles or break down floors or anything. Of course it is not right. But if the contractors are employing night watchman and caretakers surely someone must have seen somebody going into the flats and removing cupboards and kitchen units. They cannot possibly go there at 3 or 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, it must have been at a reasonable hour at night time obviously but not in the middle of the morning. I am therefore saying that somebody should be there and that the contractors themselves should be made responsible for the lack of supervision.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, they are responsible because we don't take over until the flats have been completed. Despite all that has been said this is not the main contributory factor to the delay in handing over. That is part of it because one cannot hand them over to the new tenants until they are finished. Government will not take them over at all.

HON M XIBERRAS:

In view of the fact that the Hon and Gallant Member has praised the Varyl Begg Tenants Association for their attempts to do away with this vandlaim how does he explain after the cordial phrases he has used in respect of then the communique of the Varyl Begg Tenants Association?

MR SPEAKER:

Which part of the communique?

HON M XIBERRAS:

The one particularly, Mr Speaker, were it says that they had been trying to get a meeting with the Chief Minister for a very long time.

MR SPEAKER:

On vandalism?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I don't think I am responsible for any statement issued by the Tenants Association whether I agree with it or not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Of course he is not responsible. What I am asking is how can he say that he is grateful to the Varyl Begg Tenants Association in their effort to do away with this vandalism if the Tenants Association are criticising the Government for their lack of responsibility in this matter?

MR SPEAKER:

No, the Minister does not have to answer that.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could the Hon Member confirm that in the answer to the original question he said that it was the Police who were responsible for protecting the houses that have already been handed over to Government and that he didn't know to what extent the estate was patrolled by policemen?

MR SPEAKER:

I think he said the police have, naturally, overall responsibility for law and order.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, presumably that applies both to the contractors and to the Government. But the question asks what persons, if any, are employed by Government or the contractors for the protection of the property of the area. Did the Hon Member say what persons are employed by the Government for the protection of the property?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I think, Mr Speaker, that the Police are employed by the Government, they are paid by the Government.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether anyone is specifically employed by the contractors to prevent this vandalism.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I have said three watchmen are employed by the contractor.

HON J BOSSANO:

And nobody by the Government. Is that the answer?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I said the Police.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is the Government then satisfied that with the police restructured as it is now, adequate protection against vandalism is being given? Has the Minister seen to what extent the Police is acting to protect property in this area?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I am not responsible for the Police or what they do and as I have said they are not specifically responsible for the Varyl Begg Estate. They have overall responsibility, I think, for the whole of Gibraltar.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree that in view of the fact that this vandalism is taking place not just in this area but in other areas which are of great concern to all of us, would the Hon and Gallant Member not agree that it would appear that the Police is so stretched by its many other responsibilities that it obviously cannot cope with this? Would he not agree that in these circumstances there appears to be a need for the Government to do something concrete about protecting its property?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to answer for the Police.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether due to the fact that these conditions exist you believe the Government should take special measures to prevent this sort of vandalism.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

No, Sir, if by that the Hon Questioner means whether we should provide nightwatchmen in addition to those employed by the contractors or those parts not yet handed over, the answer is, no.

HON J BOSSANO:

But, Mr Speaker, I am not making any suggestions to the Hon Member. What I am asking the Hon and Gallant Member is to say whether he agrees with me that there is evidence which shows that the Police are manifestly failing to prevent vandalism? Is he prepared to allow this sort of situation to continue or is he willing to consider alternative ways of preventing vandalism since the Police obviously are failing to prevent it?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, as I said before I am not responsible for the Police.

MR SPEAKER:

What you are being asked is whether due to the fact that prevailing facilities are not preventing vandalism and since the property belongs to Government, does Government consider that they should themselves take steps to prevent this vandalism. That is what you are being asked.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Those properties do not belong to the Government until they are handed over. I have said this over and over again.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, am I right in thinking that of the long list that the Honourable Member gave of taps being taken away and cupboards and so on, this referred in fact, in some instances to flats already handed over but unallocated. Am I right in thinking that?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

It could well be, Mr Speaker, but then that means that people have broken and entered the premises because those premises are locked and therefore this is a criminal offence.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, if in fact it appears that the Police is failing to prevent the Hon Member's taps and cupboards being carted away before he has a chance to allocate the houses, does he not consider that the situation is serious enough for Government to try and do something else to prevent it since the Police obviously will not produce results?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

What I would suggest, Mr Speaker, is that people living in those blocks should themselves do something about it.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is that the answer, then? Is the Hon Member then suggesting that a vigilante force should be set up in the Varyl Begg Estate, I will take that suggestion back to my neighbours.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I think that would be a very good idea.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, since in a previous answer to a question it was mentioned by Government that at least part of the reason for the delay is vandalism.....

MR SPEAKER:

I am not going to allow any question on allocation.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Not, it is not about allocation. Could I ask the Minister whether he doesn't consider that these delays is a good enough reason for the Minister to take effective action to remedy the position?

MR SPEAKER:

He said no. The question has been put in a hundred different ways and the answer is no. Next question.

The Hon M Xiberras

Can Government state when Block 18 in the Varyl Begg Estate is due to be completed?

Answer:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

It is programmed for completion towards the end of July 1976.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.88 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I am flabbergasted by the accuracy of thereply. The Minister is saying that a block that is due to be completed after Phases 5 and 6 does have a handing over date but Phases 5 and 6 do not have a handing over date.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

That is not what I said, Mr Speaker, I said that block 18 is programmed for completion towards the end of July, 1976.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Programmed. Is that the agreed date for the contractor to finish?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Yes, I think this is the contract date.

HON J BOSSANO:

Is it programmed, Mr Speaker, to be completed after Phases 5 and 6 or before? Is it that the previous phases have got an open date and this one has got a closed one, Mr Speaker. Is that the right situation?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

That is right, Mr Speaker, and I want to get something off my chest that I have been wanting to do for a long time. That when we came into office in 1972, the contract for Varyl Begg Estate was already all but signed, sealed and delivered and it provided no due date for the handing over of any one block.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Could the Minister look back and perhaps give the answer later on, if there wasn't in fact a programme for Varyl Begg of which he is talking so much. I am glad to say that at least we had a programme and he has none.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but that is not a question.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

The question is whether the Minister ^{would} kindly look back and he will find that there was a programme for Varyl Begg?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, in the contract there was a commencing date, 1st of December, 1972, a completion date, 30th December, 1975, but there was a clause there giving the consultant the right to extend the dates ~~and I would think~~ according to circumstances and reasonable effects. ~~the consultants had that~~ right. ~~But~~ nowhere in that contract was there a due date for any individual block.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I hope the Honourable Member makes clear to the House that the consultants are acting, in fact, on behalf of the Government of Gibraltar and what they considered reasonable would be the completion date.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, if one ever interferes with what the consultants do, then you are really in deep waters.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member also bear in mind that Block 18 is a relatively small construction whereas the Varyl Begg Estate has something like 663 houses.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. Next question.

The Hon M Xiberras

What steps if any is Government taking to ameliorate the extreme dampness that exists widely in the units at Varyl Begg Estate?

ANSWER:

The Minister for Public Works and Municipal Services

Government is unable to accept that extreme dampness exists widely in the units of Varyl Begg Estate, although there is dampness in a number of flats.

However, the project is still under the charge of the Consultants and Government will ensure that any dampness for which the tenants cannot be held responsible is seen to and rectified by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of the Contract still in force. In fact, Government has not accepted the hand-over of any of the roofs because latent faults have indicated that they are not watertight.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.89 of 1976

HON L DEVINCENZI:

The roofs of any of the blocks, Mr Speaker, or just phase 5 and 6?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, if the Hon Member had been listening he would have heard me say that Government has not accepted the hand-over of any of the roofs.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House, Mr Speaker, that this is a very important matter and should be thrashed out thoroughly if necessary. Would the Minister say whether there is any dispute - and this is related to this question, Mr Speaker - between Government and the contractors as regards who is responsible for fixing the roofs?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

As I mentioned before, the moment a client interferes with the work of a consultant - and let me say here that the consultants ^{are} not appointed by this side of the House but by the other side when they were in Government - then you are in very deep waters. Let me make this absolutely clear that whoever's fault it is whether it is the consultants or the contractors, the Government of Gibraltar will not pay and will not accept those roofs until they are watertight.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister agree that only in Phase 4 31 flats are still unallocated because of dampness. That might not be extreme dampness but that is in just one phase.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I will certainly look into this. I understood that there were 31 in the whole of the Estate which had not been allocated. I will have it checked up but it cannot be solely because of dampness.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, will the Minister say what positive action is Government taking to put matters right? Would the Minister not agree that some decision must be taken quickly so that something is done about the numerous flats with leaky roofs. Perhaps the Government should take the responsibility of doing the work and then they should thrash it out with the contractors as to who should pay.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, the moment the Government is notified of dampness in any occupied dwelling it first finds out who is responsible for making that thing good and lots of the items are still under contractor's guarantee. We have taken over the flats but not the roofs.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked whether in respect of flats which have already been taken over Government is doing anything to expedite the ameliorating of the dampness.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, yes, immediately they are reported the matter is investigated, and action is taken.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Could you repeat that I didn't hear. I am very sorry.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I have said, Mr Speaker, that as soon as Government gets a report that there is dampness in a certain house they investigate it and remedial action is taken either by the contractor or by the Department. But obviously, Mr Speaker, there are lots of items that you cannot rectify until the dampness itself dries out.

HON LDEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, may I inform the Minister - and I have got first hand information on this one - I have been living there since November and there is dampness all over the place and leaky roofs and no one has been there except to have a look at it.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I think it is a gross exaggeration to say that no one has been there. The Contractor's Clerk of Works and our own Clerk of Works are constantly going round. If the item is not brought to their attention then of course they cannot take action. They cannot walk into flats and inspect. If we did half the people would be out for tampering with what is already in there.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, in view of the many instances of dampness which for the moment the Government is relying on reports from tenants, would it not be a good idea for the Government to carry out a survey now to ensure that none are missed when it is too late?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, I don't know how one can survey individual buildings now. All flats are surveyed just before the maintenance guarantee period expires.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker I would like to ask the Hon and Gallant Member whether he agrees with me that he is contradicting himself in saying that in his original answer that he doesn't accept that the dampness exists widely in the Estate.

MR SPEAKER:

Extreme dampness.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, does the Minister then accept that the "widely" part of the question is valid? That there is dampness, widely in the Estate i.e. that a very large number of units are affected by dampness?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Mr Speaker, it depends on what he means by "widely"

MR SPEAKER:

I am not having any more questions on the aspect of the matter.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, I am very sorry because I think the House is entitled to have an answer to the questions and if you rule that I cannot then I don't see what we are doing here.

MR SPEAKER:

Order. You are not asking questions which are proper supplementaries to the original question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

My question is about this difficulty which apparently exists between the consultants and the contractors for the outcome of which Government will not make themselves responsible. Can the Minister say for how long this dispute has been going - because it seems it has to do with the roofs which might be the cause of the dampness in these houses - for how long has it been going on and has any work been done in respect of this despite the existence of the dispute.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I don't know when it started. Obviously there have been disputes as to whether it is bad workmanship or bad design. In fact the contractor brought out a team of specialists.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but has any work been undertaken as a result.

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

I think the state of play at the moment is that until the dispute is settled the answer is, no.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister as the client and responsible for the allocation of houses and responsible for not having those houses vacant for any period of time so that they will not become prone to vandalism, has the Minister done anything at all to work towards a settlement of this dispute so that work can proceed, the houses can be fixed up and then allocated?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

Only to the extent of saying quite ^{fairly} ~~fairly~~ in words of one syllable that whoever in the event is ^{responsible} responsible for it will be the ~~lot of the~~ Government of Gibraltar ~~to carry~~ the can. _{that comes} ^{not}

MR SPEAKER:

Now, have you taken any steps to accelerate the settlement of the claim?

HON LT COL J L HOARE:

No, Sir. I am not prepared to interfere in any quarrel between the consultants and the contractors.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon P J Isola

Has Government been able to make new arrangements, following the assurances given by the Minister, for posting times for outward mail from Gibraltar over weekends?

Answer:

The Minister for Information and Postal Services

The Government is considering the possibility of introducing a despatch of outward airmail on Saturdays for a trial period of three months in addition to the Sunday despatch, but it has not yet been possible to make a final decision.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 90 FOF 1976

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Minister not agree that this was the basis of his answers at Budget time? Would the Minister not agree that he is taking a very long time to settle something which is very much in the interest of the public and something which is badly needed? When does he expect to make a decision on this matter?

HON I ABECASIS:

I can assure the Hon Gentleman opposite, Sir, that the Government means business. They have the desire to introduce this but the matter is being negotiated between the Government and the staff.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon L Devincenzi

Does Government not agree that the present formula for assessing parental contributions to Government scholarships will result in an unfair proportion of recent or expected wages increases being absorbed by the new deductions to be made?

Answer:

The Minister for Education

The formula for assessing parental contributions to Government Scholarships is contained in the Educational Awards Regulations 1974 dated the 28 June 1974 and amended on 6 November 1975 to give higher figures of relief. The principle of this formula is that the more the parent earns, the more he should contribute to his son's or daughter's higher education. I fail to see therefore how the Hon Member can refer to the parent's contribution as being an unfair proportion of an increased income.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.91 of 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Minister not agree that any sliding scale of this kind at a particular income level can have unfair effects? If the percentage reduction takes effect after, let us say £1,000 and it takes a £1,000 for a family to live on and the person concerned gets an increase which takes him to say £1,500, then the percentage which goes as a contribution to the scholarship may act unfairly in that income bracket. That is the sense of the question.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, Sir, I cannot see that it acts unfairly. This is based on exactly the same principle as the UK where it apparently works quite efficiently and I don't see that it is unfair at all. Unless the Hon Member feels that it is unfair that increased incomes should pay an increased amount towards the higher education of the child.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Has the Hon Member appreciated my argument that whereas it may be progressive to take a higher proportion of the parents' income in a particular income bracket, in a different income bracket it may act unfairly. Does the Hon Member appreciate the point?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the proportion is the same. I think it is £1,300 completely free, plus other allowances for children and the proportion is the same for the first £1,300. It then increases by an extra percentage so that the higher bracket is really the same as the principle in income tax where you get to a higher bracket.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I am talking about, Mr Speaker, is the actual standard and is it not a fact that with the existing banding, keeping to the analogy of taxation, at a particular wage level of let us say £1,300 the increase which people are getting from working in the Government, for instance, are being taken off in part, are being removed by the higher contribution they have to make to scholarships. I am not complaining against a progressive system of contribution.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

If the Hon Member is suggesting that the banding figures should be increased because wages are being increased, this was anticipated when we amended them on November, 1975. We got a lower figure before that and it was a higher banding since then.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member bear in mind that I have had at least 3 parents coming to me and saying that a lot of what they are going to get from Scamp is going to go into the Scholarship Fund as their increased contribution. I wonder whether the Honourable Member now that the wage movement has taken place, will reconsider the position. I know that he just done so but we are living in rapidly changing times and I ask him to reconsider this.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

This was done parallel to the changes in the relief of income tax which were more or less on the same idea but I am willing to look into it further.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Thank you.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member will this mean for example that the salaries and wages that are being settled now will produce retrospective payments to Government in respect of grants or not since the wages are being back-dated?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

No, there will be no retrospection on this.

The Hon L Devincenzi

Will Government comment on the feelings expressed by the outgoing Headmaster of the Boys Comprehensive School in his last letter to parents and what remedial measures does Government intend to take?

Answer:

The Minister for Education

It is to be regretted that the outgoing Headmaster should describe the Boys' Comprehensive School as a 'slum'. I think it is only fair to him to give the full quotation to put the remark in context. He went on to say "the only consolation is that through the persistent effort of the Director of Education, work is to be undertaken that will improve the external appearance of the school." Government is aware of the imperfections of the buildings and has recently conducted a detailed survey of all works required to bring them and the surrounds to a good standard for a school environment.

This survey is presently being evaluated by the Public Works Department for the presentation of costs to Government and at the same time tenders have been sought for a number of building works which include fencing and gates, structural alterations to provide an additional general science laboratory and a classroom and the redecoration of the interior of the school.

The opportunity will be taken when these works are in progress to replace the present boarded-up windows to be seen from the Bayside Road and the windows adjacent to the internal playground by a form of vandal-proof glass.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 92 OF 1976

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, the Minister is talking about the building but I think the outgoing headmaster was not talking about the building, there were also other aspects and I would like the Minister to give me an answer of the other aspects of the letter as distinct from just improvements to the building.

MR SPEAKER:

I am not sure what the Hon Member is asking. The question asks: "Will Government comment on the feelings expressed by the outgoing Headmaster of the Boys Comprehensive School in his last letter to parents and what remedial measures does Government intend to take. It was not referring to the Building?"

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Not just the building.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, the other part of the letter I believe referred to the staff position which is the subject matter of another question I did not answer it at this moment.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member as regards the building whether the condition of the building is unsatisfactory primarily because of deficiency in the state in which it was handed to Government by the contractors or because of vandalism or subsequent use?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think it is a threefold fault, Sir. First it is the initial design acceptance. I cannot understand, for example, how the persons who approved this design ever accepted it without having proper fencing and gates on the school. Secondly, there were deficiencies in the handing over which we are still trying to put on to the contractor and, thirdly, some of the deficiencies are due to vandalism.

The Hon L Devincenzi

Will Government make a statement on the present staffing situation at the Boys Comprehensive School and on the serious shortage which it is alleged will come about in the next academic year?

Answer:

The Minister for Education

The present staffing shortage at the Boys' Comprehensive School is due mainly to the number of resignations in the English Language department and relates indirectly to the lack of response to advertisements for teachers in this subject placed locally and in the United Kingdom last year. I think that it must be appreciated by all concerned with the education service that specialist teachers cannot be obtained quickly in Gibraltar when vacancies arise. We have no reserve of qualified teachers and recruitment from the UK takes a minimum period of two months— even when applicants willing to teach here and to face the daunting task of acquiring their accommodation can be found.

The Department is aware that taking all factors of resignations, transfers courses and new entrants to the profession into consideration, there will be a total of nine vacant posts at the Boys' Comprehensive School in September 1976. An advertisement is being placed in UK educational journals this week for direct recruitment of teachers to fill these vacancies on local terms.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.93 OF 1976

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member has mentioned the accommodation problem. Would he not consider it quite possible that particularly young unmarried school teachers who might be willing to come to Gibraltar might have no objection to living in a Government hostel?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

This is offered to them but we don't get very many takers and at the moment the Government hostel only caters for males, not for females.

HON LDEVINCENZI:

Would the Minister agree that perhaps ^{he} should start advertising these vacancies immediately one knows about them rather than leave it for later as the time factor is very important?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

As I said we advertised last year, 4 people applied, my Director went over and interviewed them, only one person took up the job and that person came out here, taught for a period of about 4 months, and left again because of the accommodation problem.

HON P J ISOLA:

Doesn't the Government accept any responsibility in this regard? Because it seems to me that the picture the Minister has disclosed is a very alarming one. The Government has, overall, very serious responsibility to those students who are undergoing examinations at 'O' level and 'A' level. Do students doing these subjects have available the appropriate teachers in English and other subjects?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

As I have said we have placed adverts to recruit teachers on local terms but these do not seem to have very good results.

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked now what is happening to the present candidates studying for 'O' and 'A' level examinations.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Well, at the moment they are being taught as best we can but there are shortages and they do suffer to some extent, yes.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, this is a very alarming situation. Has the Government not considered some sort of emergency programme in this respect on the basis of possible secondment from friendly educational authorities in the United Kingdom to make up the gap and the needs of 'O' level and 'A' level candidates who after all depend so much on the results of their examinations for their future career prospects. This requires, surely, emergency action not just advertising. Have any approaches been made to education authorities for secondment, even if you have to pay UK rates. After all, does the Government not consider the consideration of the children must override all other situations including a local situation.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I am very glad to hear the Hon and Learned Member suggesting that. The difficulties that we have been facing at the moment is that the GTA have set their face completely against recruitment of teachers on anything other than local terms.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, since obviously this is endemic to Gibraltar, the difficulty in finding teachers readily available, should the Minister not consider adjusting the staffing of the school so that there is always a reserve available to take up the vacancy. I know it is difficult because of the different subjects that they are teaching but couldn't the Minister put his thinking cap again and see if he can do something to prevent this happening? It is most important for the children who suddenly find themselves without a teacher.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I think, Sir, the Honourable Member is correct in his assessment that this is endemic to Gibraltar. Unfortunately, the restrictions of Gibraltar vis-a-vis cultural opportunities, promotion, etc, do make it such that teachers tend on many instances to leave Gibraltar and, as I say, it is difficult for us to obtain sufficient teachers for the task let alone have a reserve of teachers. We would be happy to have a reserve of teachers but they are just not available.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Isn't perhaps the Hon Member admitting that the only answer to our problem is integration in the educational system?

MR SPEAKER:

Order. That is not a question asking for information and that is all you are entitled to ask. You are asking for an expression of opinion.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, could not the Minister look into the question of whether perhaps the answer to the educational problem in Gibraltar is the integration of the educational system with some other educational body in England so that this sort of thing does not happen and we have a bigger resource of teachers available at short notice?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

The Hon Member may not have had the benefit of reading Brother Foley's letter, Brother Foley, where he is commenting on the difficulty of obtaining teachers in Gibraltar, states quite clearly that this occurs also in Britain despite the unemployment in the profession. So they are suffering likewise to us.

HON P J ISOLA:

Would the Minister consider applying to the Ministry of Overseas Development for technical assistance in respect of the provision of qualified teachers because surely in this situation the overriding interest must be that children are taught properly at 'O' level and 'A' level and the Minister must not allow any restrictions to stop that process. If the Minister is, in fact, advertising at local rates in the United Kingdom knowing full well that because he cannot provide, for example, accommodation, he is not going to get the teachers, surely, the Government must put on their thinking caps and think in terms of supplying accommodation exceptionally or temporarily or call it what the Government will, for teachers from overseas to ensure that these overriding interests are met and the Government can fulfil its obligations to the people of Gibraltar.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Sir, it may well come to that and I am very heartened to see that the Opposition will be the first people to support me against any possible threat of a strike of teachers from the GTA when I employ people on other terms more advantageous than local terms.

HON J BOSSANO:

Not me.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

Mr Speaker, since the Minister said earlier that the GTA were against recruiting teachers other than on local terms, has the Minister asked the GTA in categorical terms what they think is the solution to the present situation and if he has what has been the answer?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Not categorically but in one instance I did comment that we might be able to find some accommodation for teachers that we brought from the UK to fill these gaps and the answer of the GTA was that if there was any accommodation for teachers going it must be for the local teachers first.

HON L DEVINCENZI:

MR Speaker, I did not ask what was the Minister's suggestion. I asked the Minister whether the GTA had made suggestions to remedy the position.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

Yes, recruit teachers on local terms.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member confirm that the GTA would be quite willing to accept UK rates for UK recruited teachers and local teachers?

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, my Hon Friend Mr Peter Isola has suggested that 'O' and 'A' level classes are being affected by this shortage especially in the English department. Could the Minister confirm whether this is the case?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I have said so, yes.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does that mean, in fact, that there are GCE classes without a teacher of English?

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

I don't think they are without teachers in English but they are without specialist teachers that would be better for them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I have heard rumours of students taking classes in English even at GCE level.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

They are being covered to some extent but they are not being covered by the specialists in English.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, this is a very alarming situation for any school to be in and would the Hon Member put the onus of a solution on the GTA? Surely the Hon Member is conscious of his responsibility and what does he see as the way ahead out of this? Apparently the situation has existed for some time.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

When this was first brought to the knowledge of the GTA they insisted that only on local terms should we advertise.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but ^{what} you are being asked now is whether you have any solution to the problem.

HON M KFEATHERSTONE:

I am coming to that, Sir. We have tried their way and it has not been successful. We are giving another attempt to their way and if it is not successful I will have no other option but to ask ODA to recruit teachers for us on OSAS terms. This means on considerably higher salaries because of the supplement that they are granted and also that we will have to give them accommodation.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Would the Hon Member also bear in mind what my Hon and Gallant Friend on my right suggested and that is the continuity of service. I think that that is an important suggestion that service here should count in some respect when they return to the United Kingdom. I think this is also important.

HON M K FEATHERSTONE:

This can be looked into of course.

The Hon P J Isola

Why is the new cargo shed at the Airport not yet operational?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

The cargo shed is not yet operational due to the failure of the contractor to proceed regularly and diligently with the works.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.94 of 1976

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, was there a due date of termination of this contract? Of what use is it?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am afraid I will have to look into the file but I would like to say that liquidated and ascertained damages are already being paid at the rate of £50 a week from the 26th of January which must have been the date.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, will the Government consider in cases such as this taking powers in the contract or otherwise to take over the contract and complete, because it seems to us on this side of the House that liquidated damages are of little use to those people who have an urgent use for the building.

HON A W SERFATY:

The Hon Member is absolutely right. The Contractor has been written to on the 12th of May giving him 14 days and I quote from the actual letter - "if this default continues for the ensuing 14 days from the date of receipt of this notice, the employer may determine your employment as the contractor under this contract." So towards the end of the month if the job is not ready the Government will have to step in and either terminate the work or put it out to tender again.

HON P J ISOLA:

I am very glad to hear that. May I congratulate, Mr Speaker, the Government on its activity during the latter part of last week.

HON MISS C ANES:

Who is the contractor?

HON A W SERFATY:

N. Collier and Sons Ltd.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Government whether the contract was originally let to the lowest tender?

HON A W SERFATY:

The Government doesn't normally know what the tenders are but I presume it was the lowest tender.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state when the modernisation of Housing Programme was effectively started: how many units have been completed and how many families have been decanted?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

The first contract for modernisation was let on 14/4/75.

To date 10 flats have been completed and work is proceeding on 16 others. Tender documents are being prepared for 62 flats and approval from ODM is now awaited for a further 17 flats. So far 27 families have been decanted.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.95 OF 1976.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, so I take it that since work has been completed on 10 and has started on 16, 27 families have been decanted. So there is one more family - am I not right in saying - decanted than flats modernised or about to be modernised. Is that the position?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, in respect of the 26 flats that have been completed or where work is proceeding no decanting has been required in those houses. The decanting of the 27 are for new jobs being started soon.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Of the 62 the Minister was talking about?

HON A W SERFATY:

of the 62.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So 27 families have been decanted in respect of work which is about to be gin on these 62 flats?

HON A W SERFATY:

On these 62 and another one which is in the pipeline which is not included there.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in respect of the 10 that have been completed could the Hon Member give an indication of which other flats have already been completed. Is hereferring to the ones in Flat Bastion Road?

HON A W SERFATY:

Sir, the 10 do not include 59 Flat Bastion Road, which is I suppose what the Hon Member is referring to. Those are included in the figure of 16 on which work is proceeding.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, so in respect of the flats at Flat Bastion Road, when was the completion date for that? Am I right in saying it was something like September?

HON A W SERFATY:

I am afraid I haven't got the information on the completion date of that job. There is a date but I haven't got the information. But the contractors are already under penalty in that particular job too.

HON M XIBERRAS:

What I am trying to establish in fact, Mr Speaker, is at what rate or whether the Government's expectation as stated to this House are being kept to or not. Could the Hon Member say whether those 16 are the 16 in Flat Bastion Road?

HON A W SERFATY:

Flat Bastion Road only includes 7 flats of the 16.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Since we are at the early stage of the programme could the Hon Member tell us what flats are the 10, roughly, the 10 he has referred to as completed and which are the 16 which are being done?

HON A W SERFATY:

The 10 includes 1 in 38, Flat Bastion Road, 3 in Old Rosia School, 3 in conversion of a wash house, 1 in 51/3 Prince Edwards Road, 2 in 23, Flat Bastion Road. That makes 10. Now, of the 16, 7 at 59 Flat Bastion Road, 3 in conversion of Police Barracks and 6 at South Pavilion. That makes 16.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Minister agree now that the modernisation programme is under way for quite some time, from April 1975 to date, 10 flats have been converted and these include - am I right in saying - the conversion of washhouses which have been under consideration, I think, for the last 4 years I think I know the ones the Hon Member is referring to. I think it is Scud Hill, Coelho House, I believe is one...

MR SPEAKER:

What are you asking, Mr Xiberras?

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am trying to establish the rate of progress, Mr Speaker. I am saying that since the 4th April 1975 only 10 houses have been modernised and of those some were already in the pipeline, as it were, long before the Minister's scheme.

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but what is the question?

HON M XIBERRAS:

The question is, am I right in saying this?

HON A W SERFATY:

I suppose that the Hon Member is. The first job of modernisation was 59 Flat Bastion Road and it takes time because decanting is a big problem some of these schemes are still awaiting FCO approval and the tender documents and plans have had to be prepared. It is now that we are really going to begin the modernisation exercise.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, my question now is, does the Minister stand? I haven't checked it but I will check it - does he stand by the original predictions which he gave in respect of the whole of the modernisation programme in the light of the activity of the last year?

HON A W SERFATY:

What prediction is the Hon the Leader of the Opposition referring to?

HON M XIBERRAS:

The one you made,

HON A W SERFATY:

When? And what was the prediction?

HON M XIBERRAS:

I think the Minister was talking of something in the region of 300 flats at the time.

HON A W SERFATY:

I was not talking of 300 flats.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member whether the 10 units that have been completed have been allocated or have they been handed over to the Housing Department for allocation? And how long is it since they were completed?

HON A W SERFATY:

I cannot answer for the question of allocation of modernised houses. They must have been handed over. We don't keep modernised houses any more than we have to.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state when the Government flats due to be constructed at Rosia will be (a) commenced and (b) completed and will Government confirm that there are only 35 flats involved in the development?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

- (a) This project cannot be commenced until such time as project application approval is received from ODM.
- (b) The project is estimated to take about 2 years and 3 months to complete from the date approval is received.

There will be 38 units in the development.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 96 OF 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying that the Minister does not expect to begin construction of these flats before 12th July this year?

HON A. W. SERFATY:

Probably right, Sir.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in saying therefore that this meagre quantity of 38 flats as against 1400 families on the waiting list

MR SPEAKER:

We are not going to discuss the housing problem under this question. I am as liberal as I can but all you wanted to find out in this question is: "Will Government state when the Government flats due to be constructed at Rosia Bay will be (a) commenced and (b) completed".

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Hon Member then in view of the date he has given me, whether there is any other contribution which the Hon Member feels the Government can make before it goes out of office?

MR SPEAKER:

No. We are talking specifically about one housing development. You can ask what you like on that one.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, being facetious I would ask him then how does he intend to fit 1400 families into 38 flats?

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, could I ask the Honourable Member whether he agrees that 2 years and 3 months, I think he said, is an extraordinary long time to construct 38 flats?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, I wouldn't agree. I think 2 years and 3 months which is the figure given me by the Department of Public Works is reasonable enough for that kind of job under the present circumstances.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, will he give the House an explanation of what is special about this kind of job that requires that or is he saying that he thinks it is quite normal to build at the rate of, say, 15 flats a year? Is that the normal rate that the construction industry can produce.

HON A W SERFATY:

I remember saying, I think it was at Budget time, that the number of houses produced in Gibraltar for the last 10 years is 100 a year. That is all we have produced. If the Honourable Member will count the number of houses built at Glacis, the number of houses built at Varyl Begg, and divide by the number of years it has taken to have those houses produced, he will find that it works at 100 houses a year. How many years will it take for Varyl Begg to be completed?

MR SPEAKER:

You are being asked a simple question. Do you feel that 38 houses a year is the normal rate of building?

HON J BOSSANO:

No, Sir, it is 2 years and 3 months to build 38 flats. I have asked the Honourable Member (a) whether he agrees that this is a considerable long time just 38 flats - 2 years and 3 months - and the answer is no. I therefore asked him whether there are any special circumstances for the answer being no here or if he considers it quite normal for contractors to take 2 years and 3 months every time they build a block of flats with 38 flats in it?

HON A W SERFATY:

Yes, but certain jobs can be built simultaneously.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Honourable Member saying that the natural rate of completion in all the other housing projects we have had in Gibraltar has been that the first 38 flats in all these projects have been available 2 years and 3 months after the beginning of the project. Is that the normal thing?

HON A W SERFATY:

I don't think it took much more than 2 years and 3 months for the first 38 flats in Varyl Begg to become available.

The Hon M Xiberras

Will Government state the proposed dates for new Housing constructions for the general population of Gibraltar to which persons in the priority Housing List can look forward to?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

The reply to question 96/76 on Rosia Dale Housing provides part of the answer to this question. It had been Government's intention to commence a housing scheme at Gasworks site consisting of approximately 100 dwellings as part of the current development programme, 30 dwellings of which could have been completed by the end of 1978. However, preliminary report on soil investigations of the site has shown that this site cannot be developed economically and Government is currently investigating the possibility of an additional 30 dwellings on another site for completion by the end of 1978. The cost of 35 additional flats at Varyl Begg programmed for completion by July 1976, the 38 dwellings provided at Rosia Dale plus another 30 dwellings will exhaust the sum provided under the current development programme for new housing ending 1978. People in the priority housing list can also look forward to some of the modernised houses as it is estimated that about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the tenants of these old buildings are on the priority list.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.97 OF 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

The Minister referred to, apart from the 38 flats at Rosia, he mentioned another 30. Did he mention the site as well?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, I did not. But if the Honourable Member is interested it may be that 15 will go at Rosia Dale and 15 will be the beginning of Town Range housing estate.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I was looking for a reply or a suggestion about Town Range. Am I to take it that other than these 15 which it is hoped will at some stage be constructed at Town Range there is no other provision for the immediate future, or the middle future, at Town Range?

HON A W SERFATY:

The scheme at Town Range will comprise probably several hundred houses but there will not be financial provision for more than these 30, 15 of which may be on Rosia Dale or all 30 may go on Town Range. That is now being studied by the planners.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in understanding that apart from the fact that before this House is dissolved there will be no new construction other than block 18? In the next 2 years there will be hopefully, very hopefully, as I can determine from the Minister's answer, something like 68 flats of new construction. Since the Minister is nodding in the affirmative, could the Honourable Member explain how the Government has in pursuance of its stated objective, induced some continuity into the housing programme? I am thinking particularly of the statement made by the Chief Minister when he visited England for the first time in the course of the last 4 years.

HON A W SERFATY:

Well, there has been a departure as the Honourable Member knows in this Aid Programme. Quite apart from the fact that we are going to spend a lot of money in schools, including the Girls' Comprehensive school which may be over £3m by the time we are finished. Quite apart from that we have introduced into the aid programme repairs to properties - about £1,900,000 - and modernisation of houses, £1¹/₂m, in this aid programme. And of course what the next Government will do I cannot say but it is my personal opinion and I am sure this is shared by my colleagues, that modernisation is well worth it. To begin with if we are now thinking in terms of £19,000 per new flat and we can modernise a house for about a third of that, well, it is obvious that we must pursue the modernisation programme otherwise where is the money going to come from for new houses, if we have got other commitments? I know that housing must have a priority, we all share that view, but there are other commitments in this aid programme, the talus, reclamation at the Port all these factors have to be taken into account.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Am I not right in saying, Mr Speaker, that the Government in the statement about the development programme emphasised that priority could be given to both housing and education and is this sorry state of affairs what the Honourable Member calls giving priority to housing? Is the Minister prepared to answer that question?

HON A W SERFATY:

The emphasis of course was on modernisation of flats. We must do away with the slums of Gibraltar whether we like it or not.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Does the Minister persist, however, in stressing the modernisation of Gibraltar knowing what his record has been in the last year and knowing at the same time that only 68 flats are to be built at some future date.

HON A W SERFATY:

103, if I may interrupt you.

HON M XIBERRAS:

103 at some future date, and knowing at the same time that there are 1,400 families on the waiting list. Does the Minister persist in that view?

HON A W SERFATY:

I persist in the view that modernisation is a good thing for Gibraltar and we must pursue that policy apart from the construction of new houses, I agree, because I am not unaware of the fact that if we modernise an area of Gibraltar, a block of buildings, we shall need new houses to cope with the problem. If there are 100 families living in an area where houses are going to be modernised we shall not be able to put 100 families back into the area. We are fully aware of that problem.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, Mr Speaker, does this proposed building cater for that realisation which has suddenly dawned on the Minister?

HON A W SERFATY:

It has not suddenly dawned on me and the balance is not at all bad £1,450,000 on new housing and £1¼m on modernisation. The balance is right.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, that is surely up to the next Minister for Housing to decide. But would the Honourable Member tell me, honestly, what the next Minister for Housing is going to do in the next year

MR SPEAKER:

No, no. He is not answerable for the next Minister.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, I will answer the question for him. He will have to commit suicide, Mr Speaker.

HON A W SERFATY:

He will have to thank his predecessor who looked at the real problems of housing in Gibraltar.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Will the Minister not agree, however, that after the Varyl Begg Estate is completed there will be inevitably because of the performance of this Government there will be a tremendous build-up of unsolved cases in housing?

HON A W SERFATY:

If there are 1,400 people on the waiting list there is bound to be a build-up for years to come.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member not agree that the momentum that was picked up with the construction of Varyl Begg is going to be entirely lost?

HON A W SERFATY:

I will not agree with that because Varyl Begg has only provided about 100 flats a year. I will certainly not agree with that.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, in the last two years this Government has provided absolutely nothing except for Block 18.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Mr Speaker, wouldn't the Minister agree that if any plan for modernisation is going to be of any effective results to Gibraltar it has got to move faster than the pace that he has initiated?

HON A W SERFATY:

Mr Speaker, it will move faster but of course it has taken a long time to get the modernisation programme going and I have said here already on two occasions that the question of decanting is a big problem and I hope the people of Gibraltar are made aware of this.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

On the Rosia site the minister says that it is uneconomical to build there, apparently, after the soil was investigated. It is a pity that this was not done before. Could the Minister give us an idea of how uneconomical it is? Could we have an idea?

HON A W SERFATY:

It is not a question of uneconomical, it is a question of geological faults on the Gasworks site. We still haven't got the final report and we are hoping that the lower part of Gasworks site can be built upon. But on the top part we simply cannot build, it is not a question of economics, it is a question of engineering.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

I thought that the Minister said it was uneconomical.

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, I could not have said that.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

If the Minister would care to look at the hansard later he would see he said it was uneconomical.

MR SPEAKER:

No, he hasn't got to look at hansard. I can vouch that he did say uneconomical. The Minister replied: "However, preliminary reports on soil investigations of the site has shown that this site cannot be developed economically."

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Which is the same thing as saying it is uneconomical.

HON A W SERFATY:

Mr Speaker, I apologise. Of course there is nothing impossible in engineering. There is nothing impossible.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

So it is uneconomical?

HON A W SERFATY:

Of course it is.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

So since it is uneconomical, has the Minister an idea of how much it would cost to build there? He said just now that nothing is impossible. How much money would it cost?

HON A W SERFATY:

No, Sir, because we haven't yet got the final report on the geology.

HON MAJOR R J PELIZA:

Will the Minister give an undertaking that this site will not go to private development and will remain for Government development?

HON A W SERFATY:

I cannot give that undertaking at present.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I would like to know when, bearing in mind that the Chief Minister and a delegation went to the United Kingdom some time in 1973, when the Minister who often tells us about his architectural expertise, when the Minister realised or was informed that this site would be uneconomical to develop because of the reasons stated? I would like to know whether this particular site formed part of the original submission for housing?

HON A W SERFATY:

It doesn't really mater. If we have £2m or £3m to build on reasonable sites whether we build them in Town Range or in Rosia Dale or somewhere else.

MR SPEAKER:

You are now being asked when did you get to know that economically it was not viable.

HON A W SERFATY:

We do not even now have the final report from the geologists.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member then state whether there was any site which he had in mind and he submitted - I imagine that the development programme had reached that stage when the submissions were made originally - was there any other site in the original submission which he had not been able to pursue?

HON A W SERFATY:

The original submission did not include sites, it was all a question of money.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So the Hon Member comes now, some two years later, and he tells us that this particular site out of the exiguous amount of housing that was going to go up, he tells us now that a good proportion cannot be built because the site chosen was not suitable. Is that a fact?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not on the Gasworks, on other sites, Mr Speaker.

HON M XIBERRAS:

But, Mr Speaker, the Government was not proposing to build that many houses

MR SPEAKER:

No, we are not going to discuss the government policy. We are talking about the proposed dates for new houseing construction.

HON M XIBERRAS:

May I put it this way, Mr Speaker. When did the Hon Member realise or when was he informed that that particular site which obviously he must have had in mind at some stage, was not suitable for development?

MR SPEAKER:

He has told you that even ~~know~~ he is not sure as the report is not complete.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Well, I agree, Mr Speaker, but when was it intimated to him? Because it must have happened at some stage.

HON A W SERFATY:

A few months ago, I could not say exactly, but a few months ago.

HON M XIBERRAS:

So up to a few months ago, Mr Speaker, the Hon Member opposite thought that he could build some 100 flats at Rosia Dale? Am I right in saying that?

HON A W SERFATY:

Not 100 because if the money available is only for 103 flats and we are building 35 at Varyl Begg and 38 at Rosia Dale that only leaves money for about 30.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I correct that statement, Mr Speaker, 30 flats. So up to a few months ago the Hon Member thought he could build 30 flats there but now it is uneconomical to do so?

HON A W SERFATY:

Correct.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, can I also ask him whether it would be uneconomical for private development?

HON A W SERFATY:

That is a matter for the private developers to decide.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is it the Government's intention to put this site out to private developers in preference to Government housing?

HON A W SERFATY:

Government has not yet considered that matter.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Does Government intend to repair or reconstruct the fence surrounding the sand compound at Western Arm?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

Government has no responsibility at present to repair the fence surrounding the sand compound at Western Arm. Under the present contract such responsibility rests with the Contractors who supply the sand. The question of reconstructing by Government therefore does not arise.

The Port Department's Officials have on a number of occasions drawn the attention of the Sand Contractors to the state of disrepair of the fence and have requested the firm to make good the deficiencies.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO No.98 OF 1976

HON MISS C ANES:

Will the Minister say when was the last time that the providers of the sand were informed that the fence was in a poor state?

HON A W SERFATY:

I couldn't say exactly but they have been told by the Port Office about this problem and in fact I know that the contractors tried to start ~~the building~~ of a brick wall to take the place of the wooden planks and it proved very expensive so they are now, at our instigation, considering installing concrete planks at my suggestion, and this may be the answer.

The Hon P J Isola

Is Government aware of the potential danger to young children of the condition of the railings on the footpath over the Viaduct Bridge in the Port Area and will it take immediate steps to remedy this situation?

Answer:

The Minister for Tourism, Trade and Economic Development

Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Defence who are responsible for the maintenance of the Viaduct are also aware of the potential danger and have arranged for its early repair. I am happy to say that the work has been done and may be we have to thank the Honourable Member.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.99 OF 1976

HON P J ISOLA:

I must say, Mr Speaker, the Government has been very busy in the last part of last week.

HON A W SERFATY:

The M.O.D., not the Government.

HON P J ISOLA:

I was talking in general terms in other things as well.

The Hon M Xiberras

What consultations if any took place between the Government and the Ministry of Defence with regard to the recent heavy increases in fees and charges at the Royal Naval Hospital for the civilian population?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

Government was not consulted on the matter though later I was given to understand that these fees are of universal application to all Services Hospitals. However, the matter is being pursued by the Royal Naval Hospital authorities with the Ministry of Defence.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO. 100 OF 1976

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, would the Hon Member volunteer any more information about the nature of the consultations?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I cannot speak on behalf of the Royal Naval authorities but I believe that they themselves were not consulted at all either here or in Britain. It was a Treasury decision which they are now taking up.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not talking about the nature of the increase, Mr Speaker, I am talking about the nature of the consultations.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I can't speak about the nature of the consultation because they didn't have anything to do with me.

HON M XIBERRAS:

There were no consultations, I take it, before the measures were introduced but there have been consultations since.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Not with me. What happened was that at the time that I met certain officials of the Royal Naval Hospital I discussed the matter with him and he told me that the matter was being taken up with the M.O.D. in London because they themselves had never been consulted and therefore I didn't think that it was my function to carry on pursuing the matter myself because the matter was being taken up by them.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, then I take it that that was the extent of the consultation? There has been no other information given to the Hon Member?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

The other information given to me last night by someone who is now in Gibraltar is that the consultation is being pursued with the M.O.D. That is the latest I know.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Is he talking about last Friday, Mr Speaker?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Last Friday? No, the latest information I have given to you is the latest I had last night.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am not talking, Mr Speaker, about the latest information. I am talking about any communications which have been made to the Minister by the Naval authorities. I understand that there has been such a communication or intimation about the application of the charges.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No one informed me about the application of the charges. Three or four days later I happened to meet the Director of the Naval Hospital, and I asked him about these charges and he told me that he had not been consulted himself and after that I have learned that not even the Director of Naval Medical Services was consulted either and since then I have been able to verify that the matter has been taken up already with the M.O.D., that is, the Treasury boys in M.O.D.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, am I right in taking it that the increased charges are of general application?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Yes, I was told in categorical terms. Of course I must be fair and qualify the words "universal application" because again last night I found out - and I stand to be corrected - that there are only two naval hospitals left in what remains of the Commonwealth, one in Gibraltar and one in Malta.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I don't mean general application in respect of all Royal Naval Hospitals, I mean that the increased charges will be payable by everybody in Gibraltar.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Oh, no, this is not so, but I was going to answer that in a subsequent question that is down for answer.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Taking into account the many complaints received from the public in general as to the lack of proper control owners exercise over dogs, will Government make a policy statement on this matter?

Answer

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

Sir, before quoting the answer before me which is the one that has been circularised, I don't mind telling the Hon Lady that this is one of the biggest problems I have ever had on top of my desk. And now I will go to the answer.

By lack of proper control I presume the Hon Lady is referring to what is commonly known as stray dogs or dogs not on a lead, fouling, or found in the public highway without wearing a muzzle. The problem of dealing with stray dogs is one of enforcement which falls on four authorities; the Police, the Revenue Inspectors and the RSPCA. The Public Health Department is the fourth responsible authority and there is provision in the Estimates to engage two dogs and cats impounders but so far we have only been able to recruit one as this is a job that no one seems to like taking on.

Rule 6 of the Animals and Birds Rules, which deals with fouling, muzzling and the use of leads is a rule of general application which is enforceable by the police and also imposes a moral duty on the general public to report such offences to the Police.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.101 OF 1976

HON MISS C ANES:

Mr Speaker, what does the Government intend doing to control owners allowing their dogs to foul the streets? I know it is very difficult but one sees them being led, it is not just stray dogs who are a nuisance. The animals obviously don't know any better, but owners themselves lead their dogs and take them with a lead and allow them to foul the pavement. Another point is that the contract of Government owned housing does not allow dogs to be kept in the premises. My point is that there are many families who are already overcrowded and on top of that they have persons who are ill living there and on top of that they keep alsation dogs and other dogs in this overcrowded condition. Is the Government looking into this matter and enforcing the condition of the tenancy agreement which does not allow dogs to be kept in the premises? I know it is an unpopular question.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

It is not a question of popularity. If you were to ask me a straight question as to how I see the dog problem should be resolved in Gibraltar I would say, despite the fact that I am a dog lover and a dog owner, that there should not be any dogs in this small place. On the other hand what you are asking me about housing is a matter for the Minister for Housing who is trying to do his best with a difficult problem. But as far as my Department is concerned about stray dogs I was shocked myself to learn that we are enforcing our part of the deal quite effectively. We have destroyed 446 dogs in the last three years. We have impounded 517 and about 50 owners were prosecuted because it is an offence to have a dog without a muzzle if it is not on a lead. Since we took on the new dog impounder he has been very efficient and in the last two weeks he has impounded 27 dogs and I think there have been five prosecutions. But I can assure the Hon Lady that it is much more difficult than perhaps solving the Spanish problems.

HON MISS C ANES:

Does the Government intend looking into the question of increasing licence fees in order to make it more difficult for people to have dogs just for the sake of having them even though they don't really like the animal?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Surely, the Hon Lady is not asking the Government to put up charges when we are having a general election in a few months time. Perhaps we will look at it after that when we are re-elected.

HON MISS C ANES:

I realise that it would be a very unpopular move in election year. I am also concerned from the health aspect more than anything else. It will get from bad to worse in the hot weather and there is a health problem affecting the whole of Gibraltar. What about the people who either don't like them or don't want to have them because their accommodation doesn't allow it. What is the position going to be?

HON ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

If I could make one intervention on the question of putting up the licence fee. The cost of the licence is, I think, minimal in comparison with the amount it costs to feed a dog nowadays. A person is not going to have a dog just for the sake of having a dog in view of the cost of feeding it. Putting up the licence fee might bring a little more money but it will never, never stop anybody having a dog in view of what they have to pay already in order to feed the dog.

HON P J ISOLA:

Can I ask the Hon and Learned Attorney-General whether the police have instructions to apprehend stray dogs which are not complying with the law ie fouling or without a licence? If not I would suggest that one of the new Police mini buses be used for the collection of such dogs.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Will Government state to what degree the civilian population makes use of the services of the Royal Naval Hospital?

Answer:

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

I regret I have no figures for civilian patients attending the Royal Naval Hospital but I assume the numbers are insignificant.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.102 of 1976

HON MISS C ANES:

I find that it has become quite popular in recent years for civilians to use the Nval Hospital instead of the Government hospital. Is it possible for the Minister to get more details?

MR SPEAKER:

I would like to make a point here. I allowed the question because the information could have been available and the Minister might have been able to say that there was a reciprocal agreement. Once the Minister has said that he has no information and that it is not his responsibility, there is very little that one can ask him on this matter. He is not responsible for the Naval Hospital and it is not something that comes under his ministerial responsibility.

HON MISS C ANES:

I am aware, Mr Speaker, that of course the Minister for Medical Services is not responsible for the Naval Hospital. Could I ask him then if he could undertake to find out more about the situation.

HON A. P. MONTEGRIFFO:

I did ask and I was told the number was 25 to 30. They did not give me a categorical figure that is why I answered the question by saying that I assumed the numbers were insignificant because that is the number they gave me, 25 to 30 a year. I am talking of course about private patients because there is another question later on covering the majority of the population.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, I was interested in your ruling just now. I think the question is phrased in such a way as to include all civilian patients attending the Royal Naval Hospital and I believe that perhaps the majority of those patients are in fact sent from St Bernard's or some Government scheme.

MR SPEAKER:

That will be covered by the next question.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I know but I think this question is framed sufficiently broadly to include that.

MR SPEAKER:

If the Hon Leader of the Opposition will bear with me. If it had not been within the rules I would not have allowed the question. I have said the question was allowed in my ignorance as to whether there was any existing agreement. Once the answer was given then supplementaries were out.

HON M XIBERRAS:

This is exactly what I am about, Mr Speaker, that the Minister in his reply seems to say that there is no such semi-formal or formal relationship between the Royal Naval Hospital and himself and therefore he does not have the information.

MR SPEAKER:

You can seek the necessary information on that one if you want to.

HON MXIBERRAS:

Is this in fact the case-

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am sorry if I misunderstood the question because of the following one on which I am amplifying. I thought they were asking here only in respect of civilian patients sent to private rooms but I can say the numbers that we send over for a second opinion is about 20 to 25.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Are we to understand that 20 to 25 are Government sponsored and some 20 to 25 besides that, according to the Minister's information. So some 50. In the Minister's experience are these serious cases?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, as the Hon Member will appreciate they are basically people who would like a second opinion and if we can accommodate them we do locally. As the Hon Member is aware we have four visiting consultants who see about 200 or 250 patients in a year plus the 40 we send to the UK. So the more seriously ill are referred to our visiting consultants or else sent to the UK.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Of the number for which he is responsible, what type of case, what specialisation, tend to go most to the Royal Naval Hospital?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am afraid I couldn't say. It depends on the type of specialist that you have at any given stage. When a particular Doctor who was doing gastro-enterology was available we used to make use of his services and he used to come over to our hospital to learn other branches of medicine, ^{he} that couldn't gain experience in at the Naval Hospital. I suppose that now eye cases are the ones that mostly go to the Royal Naval Hospital but I stand to be corrected.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Thank you, Mr Speaker, that is my impression as well. Now, would the Minister say that eye cases seem to be the predominant ones to attend the Royal Naval Hospital and that this also applies in respect of private patients?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am afraid I cannot answer that. I don't know.

MR SPEAKER:

Next question.

The Hon Miss C Anes

Does Government not consider that the increased fees and charges of the Royal Naval Hospital has effectively deprived a majority of the civilian population of the chance of obtaining a second opinion in Gibraltar?

Answer

The Minister for Medical and Health Services

To talk about the majority of the civilian population being deprived of attending the Royal Naval Hospital because of the new fees is, with respect to the Hon Lady, an overstatement.

MR SPEAKER:

The Hon Lady has not said that. The Hon Lady has said that it has deprived the majority of the civilian population of the chance of obtaining a second opinion.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Very well then. To talk about the majority of the civilian population being deprived of attending the Royal Naval Hospital for a second opinion is, with respect to the Hon Lady, an overstatement. I thought that was implied in my answer. Even the old fees did not make the facilities provided by the Royal Naval Hospital financially accessible to most people.

I should like to make it clear that when the Medical and Health Department needs to refer a patient for a second opinion to the Royal Naval Hospital - or vice-versa- this is done on a reciprocal basis.

SUPPLEMENTARY TO NO.103 OF 1976

HON MISS C ANES:

Mr Speaker, the Minister mentioned that the fees in existence before the new increases did not make it viable for the majority of civilians to use the Royal Naval Hospital but up to a month ago it used to cost £15 per day for a patient to be in the hospital and operations and anaesthetics were never charged for or anything else. And now they have been increased to £75 a day which is an exorbitant sum. Now, obviously, if it was not viable then it cannot be now but I am also concerned about certain civilians who have been receiving medical attention at the Royal Naval Hospital for some years now. What is going to happen to them with these new fees? Are they going to be stopped from obtaining medical attention there or is Government going to look into the possibility of trying to allow these people to continue receiving medical treatment at the Royal Naval Hospital perhaps at the old fees.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I want to make this quite clear and I don't want to be too controversial. It is not my responsibility as a civilian Minister of Medical Services to be concerned with what and where private patients go and how much they are going to pay. Of course I will say that whether it is medicine or anything else people should pay a reasonable and not an unreasonable fee. My concern is with social medicine i.e., obtaining the best possible service for the majority of the community whether they can afford to pay or not. That is the responsibility of the Minister. And that is at the moment safeguarded by the mere fact that anybody who comes through the Department and whom we think a second opinion or anything else is required from the Naval Hospital, they are looked at at no charge at all. They are not affected so the vast majority of the people of Gibraltar 99.9% who do go to St Bernard's Hospital, if they were to need any services from the Naval Hospital they will get it through us without paying a penny. The other civilians the Hon Lady referred to - correct me if I am wrong - are the people employed within the Services. They carry on I assume, getting exactly the same service they were entitled under their conditions of employment. We are only talking about private patients.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, is not the Minister himself confusing the situation. It not the Minister in effect saying that provided the Medical and Health Department is St Bernard's hospital considers that a second opinion is necessary that is readily available. But would he not agree that any ordinary individual in Gibraltar who is not satisfied with an opinion in St Bernard's will have to pay the new exorbitant charges - and I use the word exorbitant as I believe they are - whether he is in the Health Scheme or not if the Medical and Health Department decides that a second opinion is not necessary. Does he not therefore agree that, in fact, a majority of the civilian population are effectively deprived thereby of obtaining a second opinion in Gibraltar?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

First of all the majority cannot by necessity be affected because the majority are attending St Bernard's Hospital. Secondly, no one can go to the Naval Hospital even a private patient unless he is referred by another Doctor who feels he wants a second opinion.

MR SPEAKER:

What the Hon Member is trying to put across is that it is not enough to belong to the Government Medical Scheme, the patient must be recommended by one of the medical officers in St Bernard's Hospital before the second opinion can be obtained.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

This is precisely what happens and that is precisely what happens even if you want to go as a private patient. It must be on the recommendation of a private doctor.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Honourable Member saying that it is as easy to get recommended by the doctors in St Bernard's Hospital as it is by a private doctor that you go to and request that he recommends you for a second opinion in the Naval Hospital? Is he saying that it is a mere formality on the part of the St Bernard's Hospital which it certainly is in the case of private doctors.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Of course, Sir, private doctors are a different kettle of fish. Private practice is like a non-nationalised industry as against a nationalised industry. I wouldn't like to say any more on that but I am totally convinced that the Consultants of the St Bernard's Hospital when they need a second opinion they do not hesitate to obtain that second opinion.

HON P J ISOLA:

But how far is the patient involved in this process, Mr Speaker? I notice the Minister is extremely careful to say "when the consultants at St Bernard's Hospital consider there is a need for a second opinion". What say has the patient got in achieving a second opinion if the patient wants it?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I am afraid that under the National Health he has got none, under private practice of course money is involved all the time and to me as the Minister for Medical Services and believing in a social concept of medicine described by a local doctor as political medicine - and I make no apologies for that - I feel that the deciding factor all the time should be the Consultant because then for better or for worse everybody would be equal and not have the deciding factor being money and not the consultant.

HON P J ISOLA:

Does the Minister really believe what he is saying, Mr Speaker, that the deciding factor is, in fact, the same for everybody at St Bernard's Hospital? Is he putting that forward seriously?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Is the Hon Member making an imputation and is he prepared to uphold it and give evidence that there is discrimination with certain patients?

I completely refute that allegation and I think it is most improper and I am shocked and surprised that he has said that. I still feel that whatever one may think of doctors - and they are troublesome enough whether they are in the national health service or outside - I still feel that when a doctor needs a second opinion or even when he is in doubt he will seek that opinion.

HON P J ISOLA:

Mr Speaker, if there is any insinuation it was made by the Minister replying to my question by asking me a question. He is there to answer the questions. It must be perfectly obvious to the Minister the number of cases that have come to this House in the last year where the obstinacy of the Consultant concerned has resulted in other action having to be made and of course it didn't need substantiating what I have said.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware that by trying to close other doors to people he is, if anything, doing a disservice to nationalised medicine, because people feel that they are being forced into something which I am sure he will agree is something that people should want.....

MR SPEAKER:

No, I must ask you to correct that question. The question is whether Government considers that the increased fees and charges of the Royal Naval Hospital has effectively deprived the majority of the civilian population of the chance of obtaining a second opinion in Gibraltar. That is not the Minister's action.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, Mr Speaker, he appears to be ignorant of the repercussions and I am asking him whether he does not agree that the situation at present is that a person who goes to the hospital and is refused the opportunity of getting a second opinion because the Consultant thinks it is not necessary can no longer afford to go to a private doctor and be referred to a second opinion because the increase in fees have put this avenue out of his reach unless he has got very substantial means. Does he not consider that this is in fact closing doors to people that were previously open and, in fact, attempting to drive them into using the Health Service.

MR SPEAKER:

What I objected to was that you said that the Minister was closing doors and he has not closed any doors.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

In the first place if you have got nationalised medicine which we haven't got at the moment - perhaps some day we shall - the deciding factor would be the consultants, that is obvious. If we haven't got nationalised medicine as it happens today and the availability of money gets you whatever you like, then I accept that people should not be overcharged. I am certainly not closing any door or depriving anybody of going wherever they want and as I said before the matter is being pursued.

HON J BOSSANO

Yes, but Mr Speaker would the Hon Member not agree that there is something more to it here in Gibraltar than simply nationalised medicine or private medicine? Because certainly for myself I favour nationalised medicine as the Hon Member knows, but we are also talking about in a place as small as Gibraltar would he not agree they were talking about individuals and the fact that a patient may not want to have to depend entirely on the views of one individual and would like the opportunity of having a second opinion because of the fact that the scope is so limited in Gibraltar. Will he not agree that this is an important element; that it really has nothing to do with nationalised medicine?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

I have not disagreed on that. I am certainly not closing any doors neither am I suggesting that the fees should remain as they are.

HON J BOSSANO:

Then, Mr Speaker, it would appear that the Minister does agree then that the increase in fees has done away with an opportunity which existed for many people before which no longer exists because of the cost.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Not for many people, I am talking of 25 or 30. It all depends what you mean by many but they are insignificant compared with the number of the population that have this service available free. I accept that they have been affected, obviously.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, is it not a fact that the effect of this is that some 30 people who up to now had felt strongly enough about seeking a second opinion in the Royal Naval Hospital will now be subject to the decision of the Government employed doctor as to whether they go to the Royal Naval Hospital?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

They will, but of those 25 or 30 people I am talking about that used to go to the Naval Hospital they were not all seeking a second opinion. There were also maternity cases who were not seeking a private opinion. It was a choice of whether they went as private patients to St Bernard's Hospital or to the Royal Naval Hospital.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I am very glad the Hon Member has a bit more information. He said something about eye cases being predominant. I think he is also right about maternity cases. Some people go to Royal Naval Hospital for maternity cases. Mr Speaker, can I ask the Minister whether he has a guarantee that the fees are not going to be raised in respect of those patients referred to the Royal Naval Hospital by the Government Service.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Sir, that guarantee I will give him again. I asked for it last night. The only thing I would warn the House and I say this in fairness because I don't like keeping things back from anybody, that we do not know what repercussions this may have and it is then that I would become worried, what repercussions the result of all these discussions will have not on the naval medical authorities who are being very cooperative at the local level taking into account precisely the size of Gibraltar and the fact that the frontier is closed, but at the other end. And if from the other end there was going to be any move to deprive us of this channel, then I will need no prompting from any Member of the House - I am sure my colleagues will agree with me - to take the matter up to the very highest level in Gibraltar and London if necessary.

HON M XIBERRAS:

The Hon Member is fond of using this argument and I think it is justified in this case. We are simply trying to determine

MR SPEAKER:

Yes, but let us not have a debate on the matter. There will be a debate later on in the proceedings.

HON M XIBERRAS:

I only want to clear this point up. Would the Minister please take account of this that we are trying to determine exactly how the people for whom he is responsible are going to be affected and nothing which is told to the Minister, the Minister must realise

MR SPEAKER:

Please ask the question. You are entitled to ask any question you like to ask for information.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Yes, Mr Speaker. I am also entitled I think to ask a question here.

MR SPEAKER:

That is what I am asking you to do.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister not realise that our concern and does he not share our concern, that the guarantees of which I speak in respect of the civilian population medical serviceswise for which he is responsible demands that the statements and the guarantees which he has got should be communicated to Hon Members on this side of the House and to the public, generally, and it should not be a matter simply for the Minister in a chat with anybody here in authority in the Royal Naval Hospital

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Sir, I don't really know, with respect, what he is talking about. I am not trying to be disrespectful to the Hon Leader of the Opposition. This has been going on for as far as I can remember. It has been an established practice and what I wanted to know and I think I communicated that to him even before coming to the House, that the guarantee had been given to me at local level and now by someone who has come from abroad that this is not going to be touched. What they warned me about is that they don't know what the Treasury side of the MOD may do as a result of this when they come to learn that all this is happening and maybe they are not aware.

HON M XIBERRAS:

Mr Speaker, does the Minister not appreciate that for Hon Members on this side of the House for this subject as well as for any other, it is necessary for the Minister to make his statements in public so that members of the public will know what the situation is. This is the point and he should not plead catastrophe every time a matter of this kind is brought up.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Mr Speaker, I am not claiming catastrophe but sometimes as was the case during the war, talking out of tune at an inopportune moment can cause more problems in the public interest than keeping quiet.

HON M XIBERRAS:

And the converse is also true. These increased fees at the Royal Naval Hospital - I am talking about a second opinion - will the Minister give the House a guarantee that this would not have any repercussion on the level of fees in St Bernard's Hospital?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Absolutely. I said so and that is the guarantee I have had up to last night at about 11.50 pm.

HON M XIBERRAS:

No, no. The level of fees in St Bernard's.

MR SPEAKER:

That the fees that St Bernard's Hospital will charge for its services will not be affected by the increased fees at the Royal Naval Hospital.

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

Certainly we are not contemplating at the moment charging any fees but if we were contemplating either reducing or increasing them at any stage it wouldn't be in any way connected with what they are doing at the Naval Hospital.

HON J BOSSANO:

I think the Hon Member perhaps may not have understood. Does he know whether there is any connection between the level of fees charged by the Royal Naval Hospital and the need to protect the fees charged for private patients by Consultants in the so-called nationalised medicine?

HON A P MONTEGRIFFO:

No, Sir, it does not arise because as a result of Morgan - if it is ever implemented - most of the doctors are opting out of private practice.