

Mr Smyth 17/02/02
for file please SA 12/02

have had applications from that area; perhaps it is too early to say. I said that there have been about 60 applications; the actual number may be over 70. I am confident that we will reach the target of 250 applications, although the programme has been running for only a few weeks. A range of technological solutions can counter the problem of remoteness that the Member mentioned, and I assure him that applications from the Ballymoney area will be given full consideration.

Mr Byrne: Telecommunications infrastructure is now as crucial as any physical infrastructure. I welcome the e-solutions centre at IRTU, which will greatly benefit small and medium-sized enterprises. Can the Minister tell us how the regional organisers will operate? Where will they be based, and will their budget be adequate to engage effectively with small and medium-sized enterprises? Given that public service agencies and Government Departments could make greater use of that type of technology, does the Minister believe that decentralisation of Civil Service jobs could be facilitated in regional towns?

Sir Reg Empey: The Member never misses an opportunity to raise that issue. I did not expect it to be raised in this round of questions, so he did very well to squeeze it in. My Colleague Seán Farren is dealing with the matter of decentralisation of Civil Service jobs, and he has the report on it. The availability of appropriate telecommunications, which are crucial for the operation of any Government Department, is a significant issue. Undoubtedly, it will be easier to facilitate decentralisation where such facilities exist.

I said that there would be five special advisers. They will be able to work from the LEDU client list, and will have those connections. The LEDU client executives will be able to direct the special advisers to their customers so that they can update them. That does not mean that only LEDU clients can avail of the service. Anyone who contacts the e-solutions centre to seek advice or help can be facilitated through regional LEDU offices. However, I suspect that the LEDU client list will be the main source of clients. Those companies must be stimulated to avail of the appropriate technology, or at least to test it. It may not be suitable for everybody. However, we would like to see whether companies improve their business after using the technology for a year, or whether they gain or learn something from it and feel that it adds genuine value to their activities. There are no guarantees, but there will be results in many cases. Those results will be measured and tested, and that is how we intend to proceed.

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Mr Speaker: I have received notice from the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure that he wishes to make a statement on the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr McGimpsey): I feel proud and honoured to be the Executive Minister with responsibility for co-ordinating Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee celebrations in Northern Ireland.

The year 2002 is a historic one for the entire United Kingdom and Commonwealth. However, it is tinged with sadness following the death of Her Royal Highness, The Princess Margaret. The Assembly will know that it was in respect of the wishes of the palace that I did not make any public statements on that event last week. Members know that others did not show the same respect. That was regrettable and, indeed, shameful, because the disrespect came from those who loudly and at every opportunity profess their fidelity to Her Majesty. Although I kept a silence that was motivated entirely by my determination to comply with the wishes of the palace and Whitehall Departments, I had to listen to my actions being described, from the DUP Benches, as "obnoxious, revolting and scurrilous". — [*Official Report, Vol 14, No 6, p257*].

Disgraceful scenes took place in the Chamber last week. However, the Assembly can get over that. It can and must raise the Golden Jubilee from the output of petty minds in the House to a higher level. The Assembly must demonstrate that it can rise above that and show that it can work together for the people of Northern Ireland in a mature and civilised manner. Let us show Her Majesty what we are capable of.

It is typical of Her Majesty that she will not allow personal circumstances to disrupt her duties as Queen and head of state. She is currently fulfilling several Commonwealth engagements around the globe. That is hardly surprising, as her life has been dedicated to her nation and the Commonwealth. That devotion and unselfishness are traits that have made her such a remarkable person. She has earned the admiration, respect and affection afforded her throughout the world. She has done that for the past 50 years — only the fifth monarch to do so in the past 1,000 years. Her Golden Jubilee is a milestone in our history and is worthy of appropriate recognition.

Not everyone in Northern Ireland will share those sentiments. However, the fact that we sit in the Assembly shows that the Province is entering a new era. Together we have broken new ground across society. People realise that we must work together for the sake of our children and for future generations. Now, more than ever, there is greater appreciation that the histories of all the people of these islands are inextricably linked. The monarchy is part of our shared heritage. I am not so

naive as to expect that all sections of society will share in the celebrations. However, I believe that all people will recognise that the jubilee is a significant event in our history.

The celebrations that my Department will help to fund will not be about defeating foes. They will not be about domination of one section of society by the other. They will not be about judging others' values and beliefs. They will not seek to achieve any ends other than that that they purport to commemorate — 50 years of hard, unstinting duty fulfilled by Her Majesty The Queen on behalf of all UK citizens. Different cultures can live and work side by side as full partners. Other countries have proved that that can be done; Northern Ireland can prove it too. I firmly believe that the promotion of one tradition does not mean the diminution of the other. The Golden Jubilee year provides a platform for the communities in Northern Ireland to come together in celebration. It provides a non-threatening opportunity to look to the future as well as a chance to look back at the events and changes of the past 50 years. I wish to see the Golden Jubilee celebrated in style throughout the Province.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has publicised the occasion widely. Although it is still early days, I am pleased with the response so far. More than 450 events have already been planned. Those will be published in a special booklet, titled the 'Golden Jubilee Diary of Events', which will give an overview of the celebrations taking place across Northern Ireland.

A small sample of those events includes a festival of evensong in Armagh, conducted by the Archbishop of Armagh, Lord Eames. A special garden in Newtownards designed for curriculum-based activities will also cater for a diverse range of community groups, such as people with special needs, the elderly and pre-school children. The Indian community will also contribute to the festivities by performing dance routines and music in its own colourful and unique way.

Many events can be expensive to run. Therefore, financial assistance is being made available from both National Lottery sources and my Department. The Awards for All scheme, run by lottery distributors, invites applications from organisations and groups that are planning events to celebrate the Golden Jubilee.

My Department has also initiated a small grants scheme for groups unable to accept lottery funding. A budget of £200,000 has been set aside for that. More than 260 applications are being considered, which demonstrates the high level of community interest and shows further evidence of the high esteem in which the Queen is held in Northern Ireland. In the light of that enthusiastic take-up in the Province, I am investigating the possibility of securing moneys to enable another

funding round. Meanwhile, the Awards for All scheme remains open.

Among the planned events that my Department supports is a tour of Belfast for 70 senior citizens, which will provide an opportunity for the less mobile and those on limited incomes to take a nostalgic look at the changes that have taken place in our capital city in the past 50 years. A one-day event will be held in County Down, featuring a historic exhibition that will include a display of wedding dresses that are more than 50 years old, farming practices, the community, local bands and the royal family.

A book of memories is being compiled that will include personal recollections and photographs for publication and posterity by senior citizens in a day care centre in County Antrim. The Ulster Museum will display 10 of the finest drawings by Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci, which are on loan from the royal library in Windsor Castle.

Members will agree that all those projects fit neatly into the themes that Her Majesty has suggested are appropriate to commemorate the occasion, especially the theme of celebrating the community. In addition, several local schoolchildren have already participated in a nationwide poetry competition. The winners will visit the palace in the summer. District councils are also playing their part. Many are organising events and assisting financially.

The idea of giving every schoolchild a commemorative memento has been floated. I am considering that idea. However, its cost would be substantial, and inevitably there would be waste. No matter how accurately the likely take-up of the offer was determined, some schools would decline to participate. Medals may be an option, but they are only one option.

I do not see why our planning should be constrained by what has happened previously; we can allow ourselves to be more flexible. I am keeping in mind Her Majesty's wish that there should be no undue expenditure from public funds on the programme of celebrations.

Among the options that I am investigating are ways in which children might become involved in celebrations that could also benefit their educational or personal development, and at the same time be fun and memorable. In other words, we can approach the subject creatively and imaginatively.

It would be inappropriate for me to go into detail now. However, initiatives that I am considering include small bursaries for schools or the production of CD ROMs, which all schoolchildren might enjoy and from which they would benefit. I shall continue to investigate options, and I shall keep the House informed.

Northern Ireland is progressing on many fronts, at a time when the monarchy is also undergoing a transitional

period regarding its public perception. Therefore, it a time of change both for the people of the Province and for the monarchy. I do not fear that. Times of change are a challenge and a test, and the monarchy is facing this time of change with resolve, confidence and courage.

11.30 am

By so doing it sets an example for every person in the Province. The Golden Jubilee celebrations give us a wonderful opportunity to celebrate an illustrious past and an exciting future. We can all play a part in that, and I am proud to play mine.

The Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure (Mr O'Neill): The Minister's statement gave a considerable amount of detail on the plans for the Golden Jubilee, and I thank him for that. Coming from a Nationalist tradition, and from one of the oldest families in Europe with its share of princely and kingly involvement, I recognise that the jubilee is a significant event for many British people, especially those from the Unionist tradition in Northern Ireland. This is an opportunity for Nationalists to show their commitment to the Good Friday Agreement by ensuring that all those who wish to celebrate the jubilee are not only free to do so but are encouraged and supported. In that context, has the Minister any plans to liaise with district councils so that every opportunity exists for a cohesive approach?

Mr McGimpsey: All district councils will play a role. Many have set aside budgets for small grant schemes, and programmes of events have been planned. The role of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is to liaise continually with all interested parties. District councils, with local representation, clearly have an important role to play, and that will supplement perfectly the lottery's Awards For All scheme, which I have mentioned, and my Department's scheme for non-lottery funding. Wider celebration themes are emerging regionally, nationally and internationally. Major events have been planned by almost 50 countries, and a prime way to feed information to district councils has been to set up a local government forum to brief their Golden Jubilee officers.

Mr Speaker: May I remind Members that we have a substantial number of questions, and the limit of time for questions on the statement is one hour. I remind everyone to be as concise as possible.

Dr Adamson: As an Ulster Loyalist, an Irish Loyalist and a British Unionist, I commend the Minister's statement to the House. On 4 May 1977, in the year of her Silver Jubilee, the Queen said of Nationalist aspirations:

"I number kings and queens of England and of Scotland and Princes of Wales among my ancestors, so I can readily understand these aspirations. But I cannot forget that I was crowned Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Perhaps this Jubilee is a time to remind ourselves of the benefits which union has conferred on the inhabitants of all parts of the United Kingdom at home and in our international dealings."

As the Minister said, the year 2002 still sees the monarchy held in high esteem throughout the world. Imbued with the established wisdom of an ancient civilisation —

Mr Speaker: Order. I have to ask the Member to ask a question. The reshuffle of Ministers will take place later on today, and then we will see who can make statements. However, at this point this Minister has made a statement, and I ask the Member to ask a question on it.

Dr Adamson: I will indeed, Mr Speaker. The substance of my question is contained in the statement.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to ask a question.

Dr Adamson: OK. That is a shame. Yes. You have interrupted the flow, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: If it is too difficult for the Member to find the question, he can hardly find fault with my wondering where it is. This is an opportunity for questions not speeches, and I made that clear before I called any Members.

Dr Adamson: Mr Speaker, to make sense of a question, there must be an introit. I will keep going.

Mr Speaker: The introits do not always make sense of the question.

Dr Adamson: Mr Speaker, I can assure you that this does. Does the Minister see the Golden Jubilee as a unique opportunity to emphasise the Ulster and Irish origins of the British monarchy?

Mr McGimpsey: There are many themes coming through that reflect our heritage. We have a rich and varied heritage and culture, of which the monarchy forms a pivotal part. As I said, it is only the fifth time in 1,000 years that a monarch has reached a Golden Jubilee, which is a major historic event and something to be celebrated on that level alone.

There are connections to the monarchy that run through these islands. It is important to point out that every opinion poll taken in the UK shows that the monarchy and the Queen have the overwhelming support of the general public, and that speaks volumes.

Mr Morrow: The Minister's statement will come as a big disappointment to the House. Given his comments last week, we were expecting much more. However, at least today he is speaking and not huffing as he was last week, and we welcome that.

The Minister's statement and the lack of commitment by his Department tell their own stories. In his statement he says that events are costly to organise. Given the amount of money that he is placing at the disposal of those who want to organise events, you would almost think that they were cheap. He has set aside a budget of £200,000. To date, there have been 260 applications, so that works out at an average of £769 per event, which would just

about pay for the liability insurance. It will come as a disappointment to those who wish to go forward —

Mr Speaker: I must ask the Member to come to the question.

Mr Morrow: Will the Minister assure the House that, in the event of the Department of Education's not carrying out the wishes of the House to give every schoolchild a suitable souvenir to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee, his Department will step in and make such provision?

Mr McGimpsey: I must correct Mr Morrow. He said that I was huffing last week. I thought that I made it clear to Mr Morrow that I was following the wishes of the palace. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport issued a statement with the agreement of the palace to the effect that there would be no announcements or pronouncements on the Golden Jubilee, and that is why I kept quiet. So it was not a question, Mr Morrow, of huffing; it was a question of obeying the wishes of the palace.

Mr Morrow: The Minister should address the Chair.

Mr McGimpsey: The Member can point at me if he wants. However, it is a matter that merits a degree of respect, manners and decency. This is the Queen's Golden Jubilee, and it is inappropriate for anyone to use it to score cheap, party political points.

Mr Morrow spoke of how disappointed he is. This is not primarily about money. The proposed celebrations will not cost large amounts of money. The Queen's express wish is that there should be no undue expenditure from public funds on the programme of celebrations.

Mr Morrow, you should be careful. Please do not point — it is rude to point.

Mr Speaker: Order. Members should speak through the Chair. It would be wise, particularly in situations such as this, for Members to avoid addressing one another directly.

Mr McGimpsey: The award scheme to which I refer is a non-lottery fund, which was set up by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. There is no closing date for applications to the Awards for All scheme. Several organisations object to taking lottery funding, so the Department set up a non-lottery fund, the fund to which I referred. As I said, given the uptake, I can make a case for increasing that fund.

The Department has been working on the matter for some time. In July 2001, it established a Northern Ireland Golden Jubilee advisory group. It also set up and publicised the special funding scheme, established the local government forum to brief district council Golden Jubilee officers, and briefed Lord Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants. General information leaflets were published, some 20,000 of which were distributed throughout the district council

areas. The Department has also worked with other devolved Administrations and Buckingham Palace to arrange, for example, the Golden Jubilee poetry competition. A great deal has been done, and I am sorry that Mr Morrow is disappointed.

Some 260 events are planned under the non-lottery award scheme alone. There are many other applications, and I can argue for more funding. The Awards for All scheme is also available. Northern Ireland has planned some 450 events, roughly a quarter of all the events planned in the United Kingdom. That indicates that Northern Ireland is doing well. More people want to celebrate here, and we are organising more events than any other part of the United Kingdom. The arrangements should not be a matter for disappointment.

The Department is still considering providing a memento of the occasion, and I am happy to provide further details.

Rev Dr Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. How can the Minister tell the House that he was silent last week? He was not silent; he was speaking on a motion that was not even before the House.

Mr Speaker: The question of the Minister's silence arose in an accusation by someone else, which the Minister repeated. I do not normally take points of order during ministerial statements. Some points of order arose — not that which the Member has just raised, but that to which I referred. Members should keep to the normal order of business, and questions should be concise so that as many Members as possible can speak.

A Member: What about the answers?

Mr Speaker: I refer to everyone who speaks, whether they are asking or answering questions. It would be helpful if Members could be as concise as possible.

Mr J Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. As an Irish Republican, I share the view of British Republicans that the monarchy is a costly anachronism that should be abolished.

Does the Minister agree — *[Interruption]*.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr J Kelly: Does the Minister agree that the Act of Settlement of 1701 is the bedrock of the Union, the Church of England, Parliament and the independence of the judiciary because, by ensuring that no Catholic ever ascended to the British throne, and by preventing a future monarch from marrying a Catholic or bringing up the children in the Catholic faith, it remains the last great repository of anti-Catholic prejudice in the British Constitution? Will he further agree that the language of the Act of Settlement, which refers to papists and persons marrying papists, is offensive and a positive encouragement to lingering discrimination? Will he lend his weight — *[Interruption]*.

11.45 am

Mr Speaker: Order. There has been some misunderstanding. Questions on a statement should relate to the statement and not to issues surrounding the statement. I cannot allow the Minister to reply to the question that the Member has just asked because it does not relate to the statement — fascinating though that question may be, and one to which many Members would be delighted to respond. If the Member has a specific question on the statement about the jubilee celebrations, I will happily give him a chance to ask it, but I will not allow questions on other matters.

Mr J Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. The Minister's statement makes it difficult for Nationalists even to contemplate celebrating the jubilee. Will the Minister lend his support to the abolition of that bigoted Act?

Mr Speaker: It is perfectly understandable that the Member may wish to explain why he does not want to participate in the matter. However, that question does not relate to the statement.

Mrs E Bell: I welcome the enthusiastic statement on the Golden Jubilee celebrations. I hope that it will be a wonderful opportunity for all of us to celebrate it appropriately and that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure will facilitate those celebrations as much as possible.

To the Minister's knowledge, has there been cross-community take-up of the Awards for All scheme, and has the invitation to participate in the awards been extended to the whole Province? Will the celebrations that are being organised complement those of the district councils, and are there any plans for councillors and Assembly Members, working together, to join the celebrations so that it appears that the Province's public representatives are celebrating?

Mr McGimpsey: We have had discussions with every council. Most have taken forward ideas, and many have produced budget lines. I am not familiar with all the details of the cross-community element. However, one of the events that I attended — the launch of the poetry competition — had a strong cross-community element.

There has been a widespread take-up of events throughout the Province, and every area and district council will be represented. It is a matter for each district council to determine how it liaises and works with Assembly Members.

Mr B Hutchinson: I welcome the Minister's statement. Has he been involved in discussions with the clerk of the course at Down Royal to organise an event? After all, horse racing is known as the sport of kings, and everyone knows of the Queen's commitment to horse racing since she was a young girl. If there is a block on having an event because of the fixtures, perhaps we could arrange for such an event to take place on a Sunday.

Mr McGimpsey: I have not been in direct contact with anyone at Down Royal. I am aware that horse racing is regarded as the sport of kings, and it is well known that Her Majesty and the royal family have a deep personal interest in that sport and have followed it all their lives. With regard to a celebratory horse race at Down Royal, I do not know how things stand. That is not a matter for me.

Rev Robert Coulter: I commend the Minister and his Department on the statement. Can the Minister describe the Department's award scheme and explain why there was such an early closing date for it?

Mr McGimpsey: Rev Robert Coulter refers to our in-Department non-lottery scheme. The Awards for All scheme is still open — it has not closed — and will continue. We launched our non-lottery scheme with some £200,000 for grants ranging from £500 to £5,000. It is a small grants scheme and in keeping with the themes agreed with the palace — themes such as the Commonwealth, looking forward as well as back, community service and a giving thanks celebration.

We have had a large number of applications, and we need to be able to assess them in detail. Since the budget does not cover all the applications, I can make a case for further funding. As I have said, this is not about money. People want to celebrate, and whether they get a grant or not, they will go and celebrate. Some of the schemes are for street parties organised by primary schools. This is about small events, people coming together and celebrating and a sense of community. It is also about other themes such as giving thanks. The grants scheme in itself will not be the index of how many awards or events come though. Ultimately there will be far more events than awards, because that type of enthusiasm is in the Province.

Rev Dr William McCrea: If the Minister were to be judged on the criteria he has set, degree of creativity and imagination, this programme would not even get a pass mark, never mind a credit or distinction. His programme is a failure. The Minister must take up the decision of the Assembly and give the children the right to a proper memento of Her Majesty's illustrious 50-year reign.

When the Minister is not busying himself playing hokey-cokey with IRA/Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness on the front of the 'News Letter' in preparation for evensong in Armagh, perhaps he could practise the new words of an old song:

"We are busy doing nothing,
Working the whole day through,
Trying to find lots of things not to do.
We are busy going nowhere;
Isn't it such a crime,
I'd like to be a Unionist,
But I really don't have time."

Surely this sums up the Minister and the programme before us. I note the cries from his Sinn Féin supporters — that is no surprise. *[Interruption]*.

Mr Speaker: Invitations from other Members for the Member to convey his question in a song is not appropriate, even though this particular Member could do it extremely well.

Rev Dr William McCrea: Thank you for that vote of confidence, Mr Speaker. It is a general vote of confidence from the public of Northern Ireland.

Coming back to the memento, I ask the Minister to take the matter raised in the Assembly seriously. Some may consider it a waste, but if the work is done now and the schools and children contacted — those who want to be — this would be the proper way to mark the illustrious reign of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Mr McGimpsey: Dr McCrea says he is disappointed with the programme, yet he does not know what the programme is. I gave only some examples. It is unfortunate that the 260 people who are organising events should be treated to that sort of criticism from Dr McCrea — that they all have to try harder. *[Interruption]*.

Rev Dr William McCrea: It is criticism of a “do nothing” Minister.

Mr McGimpsey: Mr Speaker, I had hoped that this debate would not descend to this level. Of course, I should have realised that Rev William McCrea was in the Chamber. When I made reference to setting the tone, I was indeed referring to some things that have been said to me by Dr McCrea.

The themes we are discussing exhort that the Golden Jubilee be relevant, appropriate, leave a legacy, keep within reasonable cost. Those are the themes set down by Her Majesty — they have been agreed for some time — and they are to be realised through celebration, giving thanks, service, community, looking forward as well as back and the Commonwealth.

We have looked at the prospect of celebrating the jubilee through the schools, and if Dr McCrea had simply asked whether I agreed that all children had the right to a permanent souvenir of the jubilee, then, of course, the answer would have been “Yes”. It is vital, however, that the souvenir should be in keeping with the spirit of the jubilee celebrations and the Queen’s wishes. We have considered medals, and I have samples of mementos that seem to be dear to the hearts of some. No decision has yet been made. However, the cost ranges from £350,000 to £1.25 million, and I am afraid that the cheapest one looks like something you would want to take the paper off to eat the chocolate.

I wanted the children in our schools to receive something of value, something that they would appreciate. For example, one of the ideas was a small bursary per school so that each could celebrate the jubilee in its own creative and imaginative way. I have investigated that idea, and I can find the budget channel for that.

Another idea was the production of a CD-ROM that would provide educational interest to children. We do not simply want a memento. This is not about sentiment. It is about looking forward and giving something of value to our children. The CD-ROM, for example, can provide a permanent educational resource for all schools, including information of specific relevance to the Golden Jubilee, perhaps looking back at Northern Ireland 50 or 25 years ago as well as looking forward, which is a key theme.

An educational outreach resource was another idea. For example, Museums and Art Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI) will hold some exhibitions, and I have mentioned one or two — for example, the Queen’s loan of the Leonardo da Vinci drawings. We could organise it in the same way as the ‘Kings and Conflict’ exhibition, through educational outreach and perhaps through education packs.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Can I dissent from my Colleague’s call for Mr McCrea to burst into song? Nonetheless, the Minister will be aware that my Colleagues and I are not avid supporters of the British royal family. Indeed, Mr McGimpsey did acknowledge that many people in the North, perhaps 50% of the population, do not share his sentiments with respect to unstinting duty and that kind of thing. In other words, Irish nationally-minded citizens will not share in the celebrations. Seamus Heaney said

“No glass of ours was ever raised

To toast the Queen.”

Can the Minister assure us that he will consistently draw the line where there is an attempt to impose this subject on those who have no interest? I also seek a commitment from the Minister that he will use his considerable influence in his liaison with Belfast City Council to adopt a more even-handed approach with regard to funding celebrations for St Patrick’s Day as well as the jubilee celebrations.

Mr McGimpsey: Of course, the point of all of this is that it is entirely voluntary. I do not agree with Mr McElduff’s figure of 50%. It is much higher than that. Indeed, in the kingdom as a whole it is an overwhelming majority, and there is a clear, strong will, which is evidenced by the number of applications we have received and the number of events that are being planned. They will be published in our ‘Golden Jubilee Diary of Events’ and the Member can also see that the response is high and strong.

The Member spoke to criticise the words “enforcing” and “imposing”; nothing is being enforced or imposed. This is an opportunity for everyone to celebrate. Even if one’s outlook prevents one from celebrating, it is an important historic event. It is the fifth time in 1,000 years that there has been a Golden Jubilee. It is something for us all to celebrate in our own way. That is the point of the award schemes. It is certainly not something that Republicans

or Nationalists feel they should oppose. We can all enjoy it, because it looks to the future not just the past.

12.00

St Patrick's Day is a different matter. As Members will be aware, Belfast City Council required that the organisers of the Belfast St Patrick's Day adhered to the criteria laid down by Down District Council. They refused, and that was why the application failed. Had they agreed to the criteria, such difficulties would not have arisen and there would not have been the failed court cases.

Mr Beggs: I welcome the wide-ranging and inclusive nature of the Golden Jubilee proposals outlined by the Minister, which respect the Queen's wishes. I regret that some people have attempted to politicise the event. I particularly welcome the suggestion of a CD-ROM, which, using new technology, would enable children to celebrate the event and to learn through the occasion. Will the Minister agree to consider a commemorative scroll celebrating the Golden Jubilee, which could be centrally designed and efficiently distributed by CD-ROM? It may then be possible for every child who so wished to receive a personalised scroll so that he or she could celebrate the Golden Jubilee and retain a memento of the occasion.

Mr McGimpsey: A scroll is something that we are also considering. Several ideas have been floated — for example, a jubilee medal, a scroll, a CD-ROM, schools' bursaries and so forth. Some people have even suggested mugs, pencil cases or pens. There does not seem to be a big difference between the costs of each item. I have set up a jubilee advisory group, which has been in operation since July 2001. I shall take that group's advice, but Mr Beggs's idea is certainly under discussion.

Mr Gibson: Is the Minister aware that his truculence of last week has gained my party seven members? They felt insulted by his behaviour. They found it to be almost an act of disloyalty to the Queen. Just as parents received a memento at the time of the coronation, they make the legitimate demand that their grandchildren receive a memento of the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's accession. The Minister says that this is not about values or beliefs; then he wisely used the word "celebration". Is the Minister not aware that this celebrates the brilliant concept of a constitutional democracy and recognises unstinting work over 50 years? Is it not befitting that this Government gives every child a memento for the future?

Mr McGimpsey: First, I want to reiterate what I said in my statement. Mr Gibson spoke of "truculence" and claims that his local branch has now increased by seven members — that is probably a threefold increase.

From those benches — *[Interruption]*.

As I said in my statement — and I reiterate it for the benefit of Mr Gibson — I kept a silence, motivated entirely by my determination to comply with the wishes

of Whitehall Departments and the palace. Mr Gibson stated that I said that this was not about values or beliefs. I did not say that.

Mr Gibson again asked the question — and I thank him because this is finally getting to the question. It is the question that I have already asked myself publicly twice this morning, and answered myself. I asked: "Do I believe and agree that all schoolchildren have the right to a permanent souvenir of the jubilee?" The answer is yes. I have said that twice already, and I am now saying it for the third time. Mr Gibson clearly missed the answer on the first two occasions, as he missed what I said previously when he described it as "truculence".

I had hoped for a degree of decorum in this discussion — *[Interruption]*.

Mr Speaker: Order.

Mr McGimpsey: — bearing in mind the important subject that we are talking about — the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. That is an important event historically, and an important event on several other levels, not least in relation to values and beliefs.

Mr Kennedy: I welcome the fact that the Minister has confirmed that it is his view that all schoolchildren should receive a permanent souvenir to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. I also welcome the other practical suggestions that he has made — and is considering — for schools and schoolchildren.

Given the high rate of response in applications to the grant scheme from those people who are not happy to accept lottery funding, will the Minister provide an additional tranche of funding to reward the efforts of those who are attempting to organise events throughout Northern Ireland?

Mr McGimpsey: The Awards for All scheme is still open. It has not been curtailed, and there is no closing date. The Member is referring primarily to the non-lottery scheme that I, through the Department, set up for those people, organisations and groups who have a moral objection to applying for, and receiving, money from the lottery because of the gambling component. A criteria for the non-lottery fund will be that groups that have a reservation about using lottery money will receive priority. We are still assessing and working our way through the applications.

The scheme is heavily oversubscribed. However, I believe that I can make an argument for further support and resources. It would be wrong for me to make promises, because I am not in a position to do so. I repeat again, however, that I believe that I can make a strong argument for obtaining further resources to supplement the non-lottery fund.

Mr Poots: I regret the tone of today's discussion. However, it is the Minister who has set the tone, and it

was the Minister who set the tone last week with the comments that he made.

This proposal was in the pipeline for a long time, and it was put before the House prior to the death of Princess Margaret. Had the Minister genuinely wished to have the motion withdrawn, he could have spoken to the proposer and advised him of the situation. Instead, he chose to make a political point out of it.

Is it not the case that in his contribution today the Minister is using bombast and attacking the Democratic Unionist Party to cover up the fact that he is doing nothing? He said that he is aware that the idea of giving every schoolchild a commemorative memento is being floated. It is not an idea that it is being floated, it is a resolution that has been passed by the House. He is choosing to ignore that resolution. What is the Minister doing to move that resolution forward? What consultations has he had with other Departments? Has he looked to the private sector to help to supplement the funding that is required to carry out the will of the House?

Mr McGimpsey: I do not want to go over old ground as far as setting the tone is concerned. However, I could repeat what I have just said to Mr Gibson. It is tiresome of Mr Poots to repeat the same shibboleth, which I reject entirely, and with which any reasonable person would not agree. He said that I attacked the DUP. I neither attacked the DUP nor criticised the DUP. We shall take the matter forward in a spirit of goodwill. Mr Poots also accused me of doing nothing. I have listed what we have done since July 2001.

Mr Poots: Nothing has been done about a memento.

Mr McGimpsey: I have explained the situation concerning a memento. I believe that every schoolchild has the right to receive a souvenir. I have told the Member that we are considering that. I have even managed to bring in some examples to show him how seriously we are taking the matter and how we are addressing it. We have received samples and quotations.

The memento could take the form of a CD-ROM or a bursary for every school. The latter would provide a legacy to allow each school to determine, in its own creative and imaginative way, how it can provide children with a souvenir to make the event memorable. It has also been proposed that linkages be created through the Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (MAGNI) to provide educational packages. That mechanism was used previously for the 'Kings in Conflict' exhibition, at which educational packs were provided for schoolchildren.

There is a range of ideas. However, the important thing is that we leave a legacy. That is one of Her Majesty's requirements. That legacy must be of value and should follow the themes of the Golden Jubilee. It should be relevant, appropriate, leave a legacy and be kept within a reasonable cost. It should follow the themes of celebration,

giving thanks, service, community, looking forward as well as looking back, and the Commonwealth. The ongoing discussions must determine whether that type of memento or souvenir fulfils those aforementioned requirements, or whether it should take another form. I have already mentioned some of the ideas that we are considering through our own jubilee advisory group, which was established last year and which is advising the Department and me on the matter.

Mrs I Robinson: The Minister would agree with me that it would be unfair to deprive the vast majority of schoolchildren in Northern Ireland of a memento, when they would welcome one. I say "vast majority", because the gauge is that some children might not accept it.

The Minister mentioned certain events, which included the construction of a special garden in Newtownards designed for curriculum-based activities that will also cater for people with special needs, the elderly and pre-school children. I welcome that permanent feature in the constituency, which I represent in the House and in another place. Can the Minister provide me with more details of the location, and how the land was made available for that purpose?

Mr McGimpsey: I agree entirely that it would be wrong to deprive schoolchildren of a memento because of the objections of others. As I have already indicated, schoolchildren have a right to a permanent souvenir.

Several schemes have been proposed for Newtownards. Mrs Robinson represents Newtownards in the House and in another place. I live in Newtownards and have done so all my life. I am happy to share the information that I have on Newtownards with Mrs Robinson.

12.15 pm

Mr Paisley Jnr: Most Members on this side of the House are astounded by the Minister's revisionism, given his comments in the Chamber last week. He did not keep his counsel as he claims to have done in his statement. Last week he made a comment that unfortunately cast a sad tone on what should have been a happier topic. The comments on page 1 of his statement further cheapened and party-politicised the matter. Only those who freed Mountbatten's killers could, in the same breath, profess that their loyalty is better than that of others.

In the depths of his statement, the Minister refers to "creativity and imagination". Does he agree that the opportunity for a more tangible and permanent tribute should be seized with both hands? Does he agree that a permanent motor sport racetrack or, as the Assembly agreed last week, a permanent memento that could be put in the hands of all the children of Northern Ireland, would be a more fitting tribute to Her Majesty and her gracious service to this nation than the one-off, short-term, one-day events that are planned?

Mr McGimpsey: I am unsure whether the applicants for funding for what Mr Paisley Jnr describes as "one-off, short-term events" would agree that those events are worthless. As for revisionism, Mr Paisley Jnr is a master of revisionism. He suggested that there be a permanent souvenir, but, as I repeated several times this morning, one of Her Majesty's stipulations is that there be no undue public expenditure for the programme.

A racetrack, which was suggested, would cost many millions of pounds. To build a racetrack would create strong reservations in the palace, because that would contradict the stipulation that there be no undue expenditure. The Department is considering the need for a racetrack through another device, the strategy for motor sport racing, which will be published later this year. That will determine the needs of the sport and whether the sport needs a purpose-built racetrack or the refurbishment of existing racetracks.

I have stated my position about the provision of a permanent souvenir. That should happen in accordance with the stipulations laid down by the palace and Whitehall Departments, and I will adhere to those stipulations. I need comment no further.

Mr S Wilson: I hope that we can rely more on the Minister's comments today than on his statement. On page 1 he states that he kept a dignified silence last week. However, Hansard reports half a column of speech by the Minister, part of which is a political attack on a motion that was tabled in a dignified way by my Colleague Maurice Morrow. The Minister's words were not memorable, but I thought that at least he would remember that he spoke, even if no one else did. He has been all round the House today on the subject of a personal memento for schoolchildren. The House, by a majority, passed the motion that there should be a personal memento. The Minister has spoken about the costs of a memento. He spoke about providing CD-ROMs and other types of personal mementoes for schools.

Will the Minister accept the will of the House that each child who wishes it should have a permanent and lasting memento? Is he so in hock to the Minister of Education, whom he seems quite happy to swing with and play hokey-cokey with, that he will not do anything to offend him, and hence will try to avoid the question of a personal memento? As far as the total cost is concerned, a figure of £200,000 has been given, but other events are mentioned that have not been costed. What is the total cost and total budget in the Minister's Department for jubilee events?

Mr McGimpsey: Sammy Wilson, not for the first time, is one of the Members who did not get beyond page 1 of my statement. He said that my words last week were not memorable; clearly they were, because he remembered them.

With regard to the memento, I have covered this issue over and over again. The question was not forthcoming so I had to ask it myself, once, twice, three times, and I will do it again: "Does the Minister agree that all schoolchildren should have the right to a permanent souvenir of the Jubilee?" The answer is yes. What type of memento or permanent souvenir should that be? We are working on that, and I will bring forward ideas to the House in due course. We have set up a jubilee advisory group, and it is important that the views of people who are working voluntarily to support the jubilee should be listened to.

I have indicated, ad nauseam, what the budget line is for non-lottery funding, and lottery funding is a matter for the lottery distributors. The scheme is called Awards for All, and there is no fixed closing date, so groups can continue to apply. I repeat for those who missed it — and I am repeating it for the third, fourth or fifth time — that I can make a strong case for further resources for non-lottery funding. That will allow people who have a moral objection to the lottery, because of its connections with gambling, to come forward and not be disadvantaged.