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**Government's position on Picardo's attempts to defend himself**

Mr Picardo's statement last week in relation to the multiple professional matters in which he has been caught up completely misses the point and is little more than a smoke screen to divert attention from important and relevant issues.

Mr Picardo may believe that counter attack is the best form of political defence, but that does not address the very real and relevant issues that exist, and the very real events that have occurred, and his role in them, none of which have been invented by the Government.

People are entitled to know about and judge for themselves the political relevance of Mr Picardo's professional behaviour and judgement, since these are relevant to political judgement and dependability. Mr Picardo cannot escape that by pretending that they are the invention of his political opponents or judges or trade unions or past clients or the international press.

In the first place it needs to be recalled that what Mr Picardo chooses to call a vicious, deceitful and scurrilous attack was brought upon himself by his attempt to leave GBC Viewpoint viewers with the wholly false impression that the sort of multiple unsavoury professional situations in which he finds himself caught up are similar or comparable, or of the same relevance, as the Necora Case that he mentioned in relation to the Chief Minister. Mr Picardo has now had to come clean on this.

Secondly, contrary to Mr Picardo's protestations, the Government has made no "allegations", nor any "twisted analysis of the facts". The Government's statement is a statement of facts and events which have occurred and a statement of the findings and comments of a senior UK High Court Judge in a Court Judgement which is available for everyone to read. The fact that Mr Picardo understandably finds public discussion of them politically awkward and embarrassing arises from the nature of the facts and his behaviour. They are of his and not of the Government's making. The Government does not share Mr Picardo's apparent view that all this is politically irrelevant.

Mr Picardo misses the point. The political relevance is not whether Mr Picardo has assisted the authorities with their enquiries or the pension trustees with their attempts to recover their lost money. Mr Picardo says that lawyers “unfortunately innocently get caught up in unsavoury matters”. Very few lawyers may have been once, and the vast and overwhelming majority of lawyers have never been caught up in any such thing.

So, the politically relevant point is whether the frequency and scale with which Mr Picardo has “unfortunately and innocently” (to quote him) got caught up in unsavoury matters has a bearing on his sense of care, caution and judgement which is relevant to the judgement and dependability that he would bring to the office of Gibraltar’s Chief Minister, if he were ever elected to it.

Mr Picardo currently faces three matters before the Bar Disciplinary Committee: complaints by Mr Michael Feetham and by the union Unite, and a referral by the Chief Justice to the Disciplinary Committee of the UK judge’s findings and comments about Mr Picardo and his role in the Noble case.

In the Noble Case Mr Picardo’s client is to stand trial in the UK for fraud and Mr Picardo will be required to give evidence in that trial. He will presumably also have to give evidence in the envisaged civil claim by the trustees of the pension funds arising from his professional involvement in the matter in which tens of millions of pounds of pension moneys were lost.

In the Blueprime case Mr Picardo fronted in the international press for his alleged clients, a group of supposed Mexican investors who supposedly wanted to buy Spain’s third largest bank, and who turned out not to exist. Mr Picardo appears to have taken no effective steps to get to know his clients or to ensure that they were genuine or existed. The matter is now a criminal investigation in Spain in connection with which Mr Picardo would also have to give evidence in a Spanish criminal court with unpredictable implications for Gibraltar. Spanish press headlines ran “La Oposicion gibraltarena, al frente de la operacion”.

Mr Picardo does not satisfactorily address these politically relevant issues by naively suggesting that it is all down to a bad and unfair UK high court judge, politically motivated professional complaints by the union Unite (with which he is now having such friendly meetings), pot shots being taken against him because he is a public figure and a “deceitful and scurrilous” Government. Still, he has not yet found anyone to blame or any explanation for his actions in the very serious and damaging Blueprime Case in Spain. Nor would Mr Picardo be satisfactorily addressing the legitimate concerns about his own behaviour or judgement by holding the Chief Minister to account during the next few weeks (as he says he will now do) for the Chief Minister’s political judgements, which it is Mr Picardo’s job to have been doing during the last 8 years.