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The story by GSLP supporter David Eade in today's Panorama, that Chief Minister Peter Caruana may in 2001 have led Peter Hain to believe that the Chief Minister would support joint sovereignty talks but later pulled out is absolute rubbish and a complete fabrication.

The record demonstrates the very opposite. When Mr Picardo made the same accusation in 2004 following a reported chat between him and Hain, the Foreign Office issued a public statement saying it was not true.

Immediately after his meeting with Hain in October 2001, indeed in the very same week, the Chief Minister wrote to the Foreign Office making it crystal clear that joint sovereignty was unacceptable to both the Government and people of Gibraltar. In that letter the Chief Minister said " I would wish to make it perfectly clear that a solution based on joint sovereignty is not acceptable to the Gibraltar Government nor do I think that it has any prospect of being acceptable to the people of Gibraltar in referendum."

Mr Straw, Mr Hain and the Labour Party (which Mr Picardo and Mr Bossano so actively support) nevertheless went ahead with their bilateral negotiations leading to their infamous joint sovereignty agreement.

The Chief Minister Peter Caruana took the fight against joint sovereignty directly to the Labour Government in the UK , including the Referendum in Gibraltar, until the deal was defeated.

There has never been a more bitter public political confrontation between a Gibraltar Government and a UK Government. At no time during that prolonged confrontation did Mr. Hain suggest what Panorama is now saying. Nor did Mr. Hain say anything of the kind in his televised and now famous evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee at which Mr. Caruana also gave evidence. It is simply not true.

Peter Caruana said: " This story by Panorama and GSLP story writer and supporter David Eade is total nonsense. It is as untrue as the timing is suspicious. I condemn Mr Picardo and his satellites for once again trying to deceive the electorate on the eve of the Elections. "