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Ocean Village deal was the result of the incompetence of the GSD Government

It is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition Peter Caruana has still not come to terms with the fact that he lost the general election. It is also clear that he has failed to realize that one of the main reasons that contributed to his election defeat was precisely his intolerant and dictatorial approach to most issues and an inability to respect the fact that different people are entitled to different views.

In the same way, a different Government is perfectly entitled to a different policy in relation to the agreement with Ocean Village or indeed in relation to any other matter. Mr Caruana, not content with having dictated from Government what the then Opposition and everyone else had to do, now also wants to dictate from the Opposition benches what the new Government should and should not be doing as well. The GSLP/Liberal Government does not need Mr Caruana's permission to implement our commitments.

During the general election campaign, the GSLP/Liberals called on the then GSD Government to publish the details of the agreement with Ocean Village. They did not publish the details. Given that the content is now in the public domain, Gibraltar knows why the GSD administration did not publish it. It is the policy of the new Government that people are entitled to information of this kind. Mr Caruana may very well think that this should all have been kept secret from the public, that is his right, but what he cannot do with any degree of credibility is to criticize the new Government for the increased level of transparency that we have shown on this and on other issues. Given the failure of the GSD administration to publish the agreement, it is only logical that GSLP/Liberals should be consistent in Government with what we said in Opposition and publish it ourselves.

Moreover, the Opposition has completely misrepresented the policy of the new Government in relation to the composite agreement with Ocean Village. The new Government has not criticized the developer for having secured the best deal to suit his own commercial interests, we have been critical of the previous GSD Government for the political incompetence that led them to find themselves in the position where they had to sign such a deal in the first place.

It will be recalled that the strip of water next to the runway was already in public ownership. It was the GSD Government that proceeded to sell the water to Ocean Village just before the 2007 general election. The strip of water had been valued at about £300,000 in 2006. They then went into the 2007 election with a pledge to provide berths for small boats. In order to fulfill their pledge, they proceeded to negotiate the return of the waters that they had sold in the first place by making all kinds of concessions to the developer elsewhere in exchange. This was signed a matter of days before the 2011 election was called.

This deal was purely and simply motivated by electoral considerations with scant concern for the loss in revenue to the taxpayer. This loss in revenue, far from being plucked out of the air, has been calculated at about £ 4 million by the professionals who advise the Government on these matters. Indeed, the loss is probably even more because there were some aspects of the agreement that were not given a value when the calculation was done.

Therefore Mr Caruana cannot hide from the facts. The deal was done for electoral purposes and the deal has cost the taxpayer about £ 4 million in lost revenue. He may try to cloud the issue with the usual tactics of personal attacks, playing on words and making over the top comments. This does not work any more because people are tired of this destructive approach to politics which should be a thing of the past.

The GSLP/Liberal Government will continue to scrutinize the way in which public money was spent by the GSD administration and the way in which certain contracts were allocated and will make further statements on these matters as and when we deem necessary whether Mr Caruana likes it or not.