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Opposition walk-out was over the top

The Leader of the Opposition's decision to walk out of Parliament instead of discussing the issues that he disagreed with is both disproportionate and immature. The Opposition are paid for by the taxpayer to try to change the minds of the Government and hold the Government to account. They cannot fulfil their obligation to the taxpayer from the street.

Moreover, the Opposition seem to have conveniently forgotten that when they were in Government they refused to supply information in Parliament on countless occasions. This did not result in the then Opposition performing theatrical publicity stunts of this kind.

The Chief Minister and Leader of the House, Hon Fabian Picardo MP said:

"The Opposition has failed in its duty to the people of Gibraltar. Mr Feetham has made a big song and dance of walking out of Parliament alleging he was "shocked" that we would not provide a breakdown of the sums lent by Credit Finance Company Ltd. In fact, Mr Feetham said he was expecting that to be our answer – so his shock is clearly only a pretence he affected to try to add drama to his stunt.

Mr Feetham seems surprisingly more concerned about the £300m the Savings Bank has invested in Credit Finance, which is owned and backed by the Government, and does not seem to care about the half a billion (£500m) invested in other, third party entities. It is clear that he is not interested in information, just in headline grabbing stunts. Indeed, Mr Feetham's position has been to try to scare savers and depositors in respect of the security of their deposits. That clearly hasn't worked as deposits have increased since he started his campaign of scaremongering!

More than that, Mr Feetham choose to stay out of Parliament even when we moved on with the agenda to consider important Bills on medical, financial services and environmental issues. I did expect the Opposition to return for that as they said they would, but they did not do so. I assume Mr Feetham just felt downright embarrassed to come back so quickly as that would just have highlighted the immaturity of his actions.

If we had walked out of Parliament every time Peter Caruana said he would not provide us with more details on a question we would have spent more time out of Parliament than in it. We registered our views and got on with it in the interest of our community.

In fact, Mr Feetham in his fit of pique did not even bother to ask us why we would not agree to provide the information he requested – which is clearly commercially sensitive, as any loan book would be of any licenced lending company. Instead he wanted to just dramatically walk out, marching his reluctant troops behind him.

The fact of the matter is that Mr Feetham has made a mockery of Parliament by his farcical performance today. The people of Gibraltar expect their elected representatives to conduct themselves in a serious and level-headed manner. Mr Feetham and the Opposition have clearly gone over the top.”