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Opposition has jumped the gun on fishing issue

The Leader of the Opposition has jumped the gun in his latest comments about fishing in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

It is clear that Mr Feetham has invented a non-issue perhaps for no other reason than to have something to talk about. This is a debate that he is trying to have by press release because he walked out of Parliament on the day it should have happened.

The thrust of his criticism of the Government is his assumption, which later becomes an assertion, that Spanish fishermen may be able to fish in Gibraltar waters without applying for a licence. Once he has offered this criticism, Mr Feetham then goes on to say that in any case this "is not a die in the ditch issue" for him and if the Government wanted to proceed in this way the Opposition would in any case support the Government.

While this support is very welcome, in the hypothetical case that this is what the Government were planning to do, it is beyond belief that the Opposition should jump to conclusions in this way with a seemingly contradictory analysis of the situation.

The plain fact is that the Government has already indicated that it will publish the fishing regulations as soon as it is ready to do so. The mechanics for all kinds of fishing in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters will be included in the legislation. There has been, and continues to be, wide consultation with interested parties. The Leader of the Opposition cannot pretend to drive the programme of the Government from the Opposition benches. It is advisable that he waits until the legislation has been published before offering any more shallow commentaries to the electorate.