



PRESS RELEASE

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Feetham is AGAIN Ready to Surrender to Margallo and say "Maybe, Jose"

The Opposition continue to undermine the interests of Gibraltar by the divisive statements that they continue to make about the intense work being conducted by the Government in order to promote the views of Gibraltar in relation to "Brexit".

The tone of the latest Opposition statement is almost couched in the language of surrender to Mr Margallo in the same week that the Spanish Foreign Minister is expected in the Campo area.

This is the second time Mr Feetham has been ready to surrender to Mr Magallo, the first having been at the time that Mr Feetham said he would be ready to move the artificial reef in BGTW.

It must be clear to everyone in Gibraltar, except to the Opposition, that the Government is leaving no stone unturned in the positive work that it is doing in relation to "Brexit". Indeed, just last week both the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo in Brussels and the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia in Scotland were busy defending the Gibraltar position.

It is disgraceful that the Opposition should belittle this work and it makes it hard to see why they want to form part of the Select Committee on Brexit which the Chief Minister has established.

The negative attitude of the Opposition is reflected in the press release that they rushed out on Friday in order to highlight a comment made by Mr Lannoo after the Chief Minister's speech in Brussels. Instead of rubbing their hands with glee and falling over themselves to highlight something negative, the Opposition would have served Gibraltar better by obtaining the full facts.

The facts are that Mr Lannoo arrived at the conference in Brussels with none other than Mr Margallo's son. They sat together during the session and Mr Margallo Jr left the conference a few minutes before Mr Lannoo made his comments. Mr Lannoo's comments were the only negative comments made in respect of Gibraltar's post-Brexit opportunities and while there is of course nothing wrong with Mr Margallo's son listening to the Chief Minister's address (indeed it has happened before) there is an obvious connection between this and the comments which followed that Mr Feetham has clearly missed. Mr Lannoo is involved with important Spanish commercial interests and his attitude should be no surprise and will not determine what the Government continues to work to try to achieve for Gibraltar.



In his overriding eagerness to embarrass the Chief Minister, the reality is that Mr Feetham has only embarrassed himself!

HMGOG is working very closely indeed with the British Government precisely so that we can have a real voice in negotiations and seek to persuade politicians and officials that our interests, which have been protected through EU membership, should continue to be protected as the UK responds to the June 23 referendum result.

The suggestion that Gibraltar should always cave in to whatever may be on offer will be music to the ears of Sr Margallo who is lobbying all of Europe and the UN in an attempt to cow Gibraltar into accepting a sovereignty deal.

Mr Feetham may have his own reasons for advocating submission to a hard Brexit but the nations of the UK have made very clear that their position is that they will press for the best outcome for their people.

Gibraltar is no different.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "The best outcome for Gibraltar will be achieved through negotiations, through being informed, through building alliances and putting our position clearly and honestly to the British Parliament and the British people. The duty of HMGOG is to ensure that no stone is left unturned in the protection of our sovereignty and our economy. We are working closely with every sector of our economy - the unions, commerce and the finance and gaming sectors. Their concerns and priorities will be put directly to the British government. It is hard, however, to see how we will be able to work with the GSD and Mr Feetham given the partisan way they are making their arguments to date.

"Your government will continue to work relentlessly as a team to defend all that is important to Gibraltar. The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia and I have met with the members of the British government and with the leaders of the devolved administrations and we will continue to do so. A move towards Brexit not only raises economic and political challenges but also constitutional and legal issues that will have to be addressed. We will work to turn those to Gibraltar's advantage where possible and it is sad that the GSD should consider the relentless meetings and lobbying we are doing are just 'photo opportunities. There is also considerable quiet diplomacy going on at the same time.

"We have every confidence that the British Government and the British people are firm and resolved on defending our sovereignty and our right to self-determination. It is on that premise that they expect us to put forward all the best and strongest arguments that will lead to our continued prosperity and development under the British flag in accordance with the democratic rights we have fought so hard to achieve. Had the GSD's simplistic and pessimistic attitude been followed at the time of the Lisbon Agreement, the Brussels Agreement and the joint-sovereignty drive we would have walked "hand in hand" into surrendering our birthright to Spain. What is clear is that never in our history, when faced with challenges of this magnitude, has an Opposition broken ranks so swiftly and early to scurry off towards surrender. The Opposition's pessimistic and uninspiring position amounts to telling Jose Manuel Garcia Margallo that their message is 'Maybe, Jose' to his threats as opposed to the Government's clear and emphatic "No way, Jose". That is not acceptable to my government or to the people of Gibraltar."