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of Gibraltar

Date: 18th July 2023

Chief Minister's Budget Reply 2023



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Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am continuing my reply on the Appropriation bill 2023/2024. It's clear that one of the things that we're doing is reflecting on what is in effect, the end of the lifetime of this Parliament. We are heading towards a dissolution. And so, of course, because this is a state of the nation debate and it's the last state of the nation debate that we're going to have in the lifetime of this Parliament, I'll have to make comments in respect of the widest of the issues that we've heard already ventilated in this debate by members on this side of the House and honourable members on that side of the House. I'm going to reply in particular in respect of the points that they've made relating to the public finances, I'm going to reply in particular to the points they've made in relation to the performance of the economy and I am going to try and do that this year, Mr. Speaker, in a slightly different way. Instead of going through the speeches of each honourable member one by one, I'm going to try and take the themes that I detected were running through the statements that were made by honourable members. And I'm going to go through those themes methodically, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, because I've looked at the numbers and I've done my research in respect of the things that they said. I have absolute confidence in saying that I'm going to demolish each one of the theories that they brought to the table, not with words, not with argument. I'm going to do it with numbers. I'm going to demonstrate, Mr. Speaker, empirically, that the things that they have said are unreliable when you look at the data. And then I'm going to address the other things that they've each said individually.

Now, before I go onto those themes, I want to say something about the Chamber generally. I want to say something about Parliament and political life. There are some people in this chamber across the floor from us, Mr. Speaker, who we started in politics with 33 years ago. So I want to start by thanking everyone for their friendship, for their personal regard. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we fight like cats in a bag to a very great extent in this place because it's what we're paid to do. I mean, the public expect us to defend our ideas, govern Gibraltar. They expect them to challenge us in the measure of what we do and to and to hold us to account, that's what we're about. We have an adversarial system of government and opposition, and nobody should read into that that there is any personal animosity between members in the House. In fact, in many instances there are great friendships across the floor of the House. There is great parliamentary companionship that we share and the honourable members reach across as I reach across to them when they know that we have issues in our lives, etc. So the fact that we fight hard to defend our arguments, that we are part of that adversarial system should not be seen to represent any pugilistic desire on the part of each of us to destroy each other as an individual we're trying to do is to get to the bottom of the argument. And today, when I do what I have to do to the arguments that they've put, I'm not going for them. I'm going for their argument. Mr. Speaker, much as I fully accept that they did not come for us when they were pushing their arguments. And I think it's important that at the end of a 4 year cycle, that is just something that we put on the table and as leader of the House, I'm proud to put that on the table in front of our community. Indeed, our friendship transcends this debate and the differences that we have, of course, scratch the surface of the commitment of everybody in this House to this place that we call Gibraltar. We put the spotlight on those



differences, we dance on the pinhead of our differences. But in great measure, in great measure, we are all here to defend Gibraltar.

Now, we have different views in that respect. And in some of those views, we believe on this side of the House there is an inherent danger for Gibraltar. And I want to go through those arguments now but on that basis, because our differences are about our ideas and ideas that we have to defend robustly. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, if I may say so, when we agree with each other, as I've said before on many occasions, when we are, when the House is working together in tandem across the floor, looking at the detail of legislation together - one just now has the little giveaway on Parliament.gi - the numbers for the way. The minute we start working together, people tend to stop watching and they unfortunately only watch when we are going at it hammer and tongs, gladiatorially defending our ideas. But it's never about denigrating each other. And I don't think anything I've done as Chief Minister in the past 12 years has been about denigrating anybody opposite, however tough I may have been on them. I may have talked about ability. I may have talked about aptitude. I've never called honourable members opposite unfit to govern. I'd never call them that. I was called that. Demonstration, Mr. Speaker, that you can be called whatever. It doesn't matter. The reality always trumps what you might be called. After 12 years, the people of Gibraltar, having made the judgement three times over that I should govern. Obviously, the fact that I was called unfit to govern meant nothing. But I've never been called ridiculous before. I've been called many things, but never ridiculous. And I just want to be clear, Mr. Speaker, that I don't think any of them are ridiculous. I might think some of their ideas are ridiculous. And I'll go through them and explain why, but I've never called any of them ridiculous and I've never called any of them dirty.

So, Mr Speaker as we're going into the election year, having heard how Mr. Clinton descended into calling me ridiculous and saying other things. What I want to do is call for temperance in debates, especially as we go into the election period. I know it's an issue that I will make common cause on with the Leader of the Opposition, who believes in temperance in debate and believes that we should be having a contest of ideas. And I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to an electoral period which is apparently fast becoming a two horse race where the both of the teams in the election, us in coalition with the Liberal Party, honourable members, who knows either on their own or in coalition with what's left of Together Gibraltar, I wonder how they're going to allocate seats in that respect, Mr. Speaker. But anyway, I'll have some fun with that in the future - how are they going to tell people of their long-serving executive who might want to be candidates that they can't come in because of a party that no longer has parliamentary representation is going to be a part of the team, well, he might square that circle - But as we go into that debate, which is, in my view, in reality going to be a two horse race, even if there are three parties contesting the election, we must lead by example and we must have temperance in debate and not call each other ridiculous, Mr Speaker.

Now, I know that as the political prize of winning an election that once again feels to them as I can sense to be slipping from their less than firm grasp, Mr. Speaker, desperation may kick in, and I detected what I thought was an element of desperation, of frustration in Mr. Clinton in his address. But that is no excuse to start calling each other ridiculous or to start saying that we are dirty. In particular, Mr. Speaker, given that the things that led Mr. Clinton to say that



we are ridiculous are things that I will demonstrate he got wrong. So if anything, Mr. Speaker, that description did not just fit of the person that he threw it at, it might, by some be deemed to be something that better describes not him, because I'm not going to say that he is ridiculous. I don't think he is. But it better describes his analysis and the positions that he's taking in relation to this debate.

And so, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by saying that I thought that honourable members, I mean, people will say that they weren't broken records and all the rest of it. I thought they played more repeats than BBC Two in their speeches. It was all about repeats. And you know, Mr Bossino is right, we do deserve better Opposition. Except of course it's much more important for us to do government so we can't go and do their job too. And we can't field two teams in this, a general election campaign, and we're not going to do opposition so that they can do government because if they do the job of government that they've done in opposition, goodness gracious, they'd be more bothered about chickens than they would be about the issues of the day, as I will, as I will demonstrate. But it's clear, Mr. Speaker, and even Mr. Bossino recognised that we do, we even do opposition better than them, let alone government. And so, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that there are no - to quote, and those in the eighties will remember the Scorpions, Mr. Speaker - there's no winds of change blowing in the town in relation to the government, but one can certainly feel the wind of change blowing in the opposition, even though that may not be what this election is ostensibly about, it's very clear that this election as I thought Mr. Xiberras, may he rest in peace, said so effectively in 2003. This election on the opposition side is about grooming horses. But not about changing the government.

So. Why do I say that? Well, just look at what's happened in the past decade. In the past 12 years. Look at the baseline from which the GSD judges success. Look at how that's moved. Look at how the GSLP/Liberal government has moved the baseline of expectation from what they were able to deliver. They now demand that we do things that they were against doing when they were in government. Of course we were elected to deliver change, but we delivered change in so many, many areas and will still deliver it in areas where we may not have yet been able to deliver it or may need to deliver it again. Gibraltar needs, of course us to continue our reforming zeal. But we've changed so many things, Mr. Speaker. It's a badge of honour for this government that we've even changed them. We've delivered so much change from government that we've even changed the GSD Opposition. We've changed them to believe in what we believe. Or at least they pretend to. There's now a GSD Opposition where two members say whilst Keith Azopardi is Leader of the Opposition, you know, equality for all - at least whilst Keith Azopardi is Leader of the Opposition. They now argue for what we argue, and against what they did. But of course, on some issues they remain hopelessly divided, like the issue of equality, that I'll come to. Some people on that side, Mr Speaker, are virulently anti LGBTQ+ equality. They're virulently anti-women's reproductive rights. And Mr. Speaker, if I may say so, with respect to members sitting opposite, I think those who hold those virulent views are the real spiritual leaders of that side. And the one thing that we haven't been able to change, Mr. Speaker, is how deeply hypocritical, politically hypocritical the GSD is when it comes to saying one thing and doing another, taking one position in opposition and doing the opposite in government. And of course, they know that that is true and they know that it's also



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true, Mr. Speaker, that no opposition has ever gone from holding anything other than the eight Opposition seats to holding Government. We can have the discussion about what happened in 1984 at seven in the morning, but no opposition has ever gone from holding less than seven seats to holding government. That's the political reality in which we are operating, Mr. Speaker.

So what is obvious, what is transparent, what the public know and what the public can sense is that they need to settle their civil war before they bring the battle to us. That's the reality. That's the reality. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, just listening them, every one of their speeches has been a flop, a real flop, a real flop. I mean, Mr. Clinton's address when I go through it, I mean, apart from the fact that it's delivered with a little less vehemence than one might expect, given the seriousness of the issues that he says are bubbling under, you don't feel any passion for that seriousness that he's talking about. These were not the speeches of the Minister for Public Finance of a government in waiting. Where were the plans for what they were going to do? I mean, the only plan they seem to have is to have a public accounts committee and to wait for the value for money audit of the Principal Auditor, something I'll come to later. Mr. Phillips' address, Mr. Speaker, although it was peppered with loud references to rhubarb, I mean, there was absolutely nothing in it. I'll come to it in a minute, Mr. Speaker, but it felt like we were seeing the delivery of a script for *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* during the course of a budget debate. Mr. Feetham's address. I mean, I'll go through it in detail, but I'm still trying to work out whether it was Gaston's valedictory - I'll explain why I'm calling him Gaston in a moment, or whether it was the first scene of the *Empire Strikes Back*. We're still divided. We're still divided. Probably the latter. I mean, I am, Mr. Speaker. I'm the one person he can't fool in this place. We have a quasi symbiotic relationship. We know each other as if we had given birth to each other, politically, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Bossino's address, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, strong on fire, short on gas. And you know what happens when you're long on fire and short of gas no? You're soon to be extinguished, because you run out of gas, Mr. Speaker, when you're burning that hot. Burning really hot, but with nothing in the tank.

So, former leaders of the opposition and obviously a future leader of the opposition, nothing else in my view. So flops all round, Mr. Speaker. Flops all round. And of course, the Leader of the Opposition today, also soon to be a flop, Mr. Speaker, a former leader of the opposition. But not because he's going to move to this side, in my view. I don't get a sense, Mr. Speaker, that there's a feeling in the streets that Keith Azopardi is going to be the Chief Minister of Gibraltar before the year is out. I mean, I don't think I'm so disconnected and people around me will tell me, the man is just with his charisma taking over the town. You will see him talking to everyone. He walks down the street, greeting people from a distance. He is, you know Fabian, your time's up. You know. Perhaps they're telling him. Mr. Speaker, no one's telling me, but look, the judgement will be in the ballot boxes. The judgement will be in the ballot boxes. Let's see. Let's see whether people decide to put a gentleman who finds it difficult to raise his eyes to greet people in the street in charge of Gibraltar's negotiating team to build relationships across the table with negotiating counterparts and establish relationships with the British political class to ensure the protection of Gibraltar, especially when they go through the things that he said about those things in the past. Let's see. Let's see. Because the public will make the decision and the electorate is always wise. And if they choose him, they



choose him. But. The winds of change that the Scorpions sang about don't feel to me to be the winds of change that the rock scorpions are singing about. I don't get that tune. I don't get tune. I don't even hear the Final Countdown, Mr Speaker, which is my favourite tune of the eighties.

And he's you know, it's not as if the honourable gentleman is a stranger to being a flop. I mean, he flopped in 2003 when he asked Peter Caruana to step aside and let him take over. He flopped in 2007 when he left the PDP to its first general election defeat. He flopped in 2011 when he led the PDP to its second general election defeat. He flopped in 2019 when he led the GSD to its third consecutive general election defeat. I mean, he's used to flopping. I just want somebody who is not much of a flop in charge of the affairs of Gibraltar, because I don't want Gibraltar to flop. It was the worst result in 25 years. I mean, I suppose that's why, that's why since 1992 the worst result no? 1992? Yeah, so in 25 years. 19 plus 8, 27. It was the worst general election result in 25 years, in a quarter of a decade. I'm sorry to tell him. I'm sorry if it's crystallised in his brain now that I've done the math for him. But I think that's why Mr Feetham has such affection for him. I don't think has anything to do with keeping Bossino at bay. I think it has more to do with the fact that the GSD had their worst election defeat under Mr. Feetham in 2015 until Mr Azopardi came and spared blushes in 2019, menos mal, menos mal. But Mr. Speaker, the GSD know that they are not a government in waiting. They know it, Mr. Speaker, their party knows it and the public knows it. That's the reality. They are, Mr. Speaker, all opposition and no leadership. All opposition and no vision. All opposition and no plan for our people's future.

Let's look at the themes that they've tried to develop during the course of this week, in particular, Mr. Feetham and Mr. Clinton. They talked first and principally about their big idea by addressing the issue of Brexit and saying that of course the issue of continuity is not an issue because they're going to include us in their negotiating team. Oh, what a whizz. What a great idea. Fantastic, Mr. Speaker. They want a safe and secure agreement just like us. They'll only back a treaty that safe and secure. But we've missed all the opportunities that there were to do such a treaty. So they need to lead the team, include the people in it who missed all the opportunities, and then we'll be fine. Let's look at some of the things that they've said, Mr. Speaker, now and in the past, and then let's determine what the missed opportunities they say are. And let's determine what their positions on the issues which will make us safe and secure going forward, are and have been. And I want to be very clear. The things I am going to talk about are the things they have said. In other words, I'm going to take the battle to them using the things that they have said and they have committed to writing.

Look, let's be clear. Success has many fathers and defeat is an orphan. There is no treaty. Whose responsibility in Gibraltar is it that there's no treaty? It's mine. Of course, with my Deputy Chief Minister working together politically, it's ours. Of course, with the government, it's ours. Of course, with the negotiating team, it's ours. But I make the calls with the Deputy Chief Minister and with the government. It's my responsibility. The failure to have a treaty today in Gibraltar, on the Gibraltar side, is my failure. Yeah? I don't mind standing up for that failure because it's a failure that I will defend in the absence of a safe and secure proposal that I was willing to bring back to the people of Gibraltar. Because on the fundamentals, we will never shift, ever. Ever. So I don't mind them saying that I have failed to do a treaty because I



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know if I had brought the treaties that potentially might have been on the table to the people of Gibraltar, they would not be acceptable. And as I have said around the negotiating table, I'm not prepared to agree this, not because I cannot sell it, not because the people of Gibraltar do not want it. I'm not prepared to do this because I've been in politics for 30 years, to say no when you came to ask for it. That's my position at the negotiating table. Not that it might not be sellable, but that we will not do it because our position hasn't changed for 30 years. In some instances our position hasn't changed for 50 years, and our position will not change on the fundamentals, not because we cannot sell it, but because we will not do it. Because we will not go through the needle. We will not go through the eye of the needle of any session on sovereignty. None. Titular or otherwise. And I think there are people on that side of the table who agree with us. I think there are people on that side of the table who agree with us. Not even a titular session on sovereignty. And not even what might be described as a fig leaf to help the other side to do the deal? No. No, no. A socialist Chief Minister quoting Margaret Thatcher. No, no, no. Because on the fundamentals, we stand firm. Even titular issues of sovereignty are a step too far. And let whoever needs to hear that, hear that wherever they may be. They've heard it round the negotiating table. They'll hear it here. They'll hear it wherever they have to hear it. There is no private position that we take which is different to our public position. All our positions are the same.

Mr. Speaker, I even extend that, of course, to a potential status deal. In other words, a deal that goes beyond just an arrangement between the United Kingdom and the European Union on Gibraltar's future access on immigration and goods matters to the European Union, a status deal. A status deal a la modern Andorra, for example. We won't do a modern Andorra deal, which is to cede half the titular sovereignty of Gibraltar to a Spanish sovereign. We won't do that deal. I think there are people on that side who would not do that deal. I think there are people on that side who agree with us that Andorra, even modern Andorra is joint sovereignty. I think there are people on that side. Obviously the issue for me is that for me, this is the dividing issue on Gibraltar politics. If you believe that you should be on this side, you shouldn't be on that side. In fact, you should be with us whichever side we're on, because we defend the same position when we were opposition as when we're in government. So let's be very clear. We on this side, on the GSLP/Liberal side, will never recommend an Andorra style solution to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum. We consider even the modern Andorra solution to be joint sovereignty. Even a Spanish titular sovereign would be unacceptable to us. I'm surprised I even have to say this. It should not even ever be proposed to us. Not only would we not recommend it in a referendum, we won't say privately that we might accept a modern Andorra solution. And we are saying publicly nobody should come and privately propose it to us.

So why am I saying those things? Well, because they said they want a safe and secure treaty, which doesn't go anywhere near a concession on sovereignty. And they said that we've missed opportunities. Let's look at exactly what they said about those missed opportunities. And then let's look at what they've said about the key issues and let's bring those two things together. Mr. Azopardi in his address in response to me, Mr. Speaker said this - "before I turn to the financial analysis in detail, as this is a state of the nation debate, I want to say something about the long standing Brexit negotiations and the state of play on them. Our policy is and continues to be that we would like to see a safe and beneficial agreement concluded with the EU, which



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establishes a new relationship with the European Union" So far, so good ... "We do think that there have been failures along the way and missed opportunities to secure lasting rights for residents of Gibraltar, which could already have settled aspects of what we all want." - That's what he says to us, right? Of the people he wants to include in his negotiating team. Indeed, at different times, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Azopardi has even said that we should have had our deal with the TCA. But then he went on to say, "the Chief Minister knows he can rely on us to make common cause with him against Spain if necessary for the defence of Gibraltar's interests. We would hope likewise that we would count on him on the fundamentals if there is a subsequent change of government in Gibraltar."

Remember, of course, Mr. Speaker, as I've referred the House to before in my previous budget addresses Mr. Azopardi, it was the was the Gibraltarian who said in an article in the Gibraltar Chronicle that one of the ways that we should be looking at dealing with the future relationship with the European Union was that the President of the European Union should have responsibility for Gibraltar's external relations. I've quoted extensively from that article, it's in the Hansard. I mean, imagine that, Mr. Speaker. I mean, talk about judgement, talk about judgement. The Honourable Mr Azopardi was talking about giving the control of our external relations to Jean Claude Juncker, who was then the President of the European Commission. Jean-Claude I've had one too many Junckers in charge of Gibraltar's external relations. The European Commission are the entity that gave Spain that veto that we talk about, and we're talking about giving them responsibility for our external relations. Look, I think the results of the Brexit referendum in Gibraltar was 96%, but I don't think it will be 96% today, given the way that people have thought that the European Commission has behaved in some respects, not in the negotiation, but in some respects with us during the period of the mandate, etc. - I don't think that the faith that Gibraltar had in the European Union is there today - let alone agree with the Honourable Mr. Azopardi, that we should keep control of our external relations to the President of the European Commission.

Then the next thing he said that we'd done wrong, the missed opportunity that we had missed this time was that we had allowed frontier workers to have freedom of movement before we had secured anything for us. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not true. As I've shown before, the withdrawal agreement preserves the agreement the rights of everyone who is exercising European rights. Some frontier workers retain rights under the withdrawal agreement because it's a consequence of us not having had a hard Brexit at the time, but many of them no longer do. I mean, the churn of Frontier workers is almost a thousand a year. So about, more even, more even. So of those who were in Gibraltar, who were exercising rights under the withdrawal agreement, probably about 10,000, the withdrawal agreement came into effect 2020. Thereafter, I mean, already half of them are likely to have gone without those rights. And yet he said that we should have done our agreement with the TCA. The TCA, Mr. Speaker, deals with issues which do not interest Gibraltar. And I do realise that they're confused and they might say, "no, we haven't said that", as I'll show Mr. Speaker, they have said both that we should be included in the UK agreement and that we should not be included in the UK agreement. So I will, I will go through both so honourable members can choose which ones they prefer, which position they've taken, which is diametrically opposed, they would prefer



today and which one they would prefer tomorrow because they've taken both positions. I mean consistency is important to most people in politics, obviously not to them. Right.

Look at what he said, Mr. Speaker, when he was the leader of the Bar in October in 2016. "As we have to take control of our own laws, the government may also wish to consider retaining the ability of EU citizens to move freely, establish themselves, move capital and provide services into Gibraltar." In exchange for nothing, he was saying. "It may make reciprocal treatment easier going forward if we send the clear signal that at least in Gibraltar, EU citizens will not lose the four freedoms." So now he says that the missed opportunity is that we gave frontier workers continued freedom of movement, which is exactly, in exchange for nothing, which is exactly what he was proposing in October 2016. Has he forgotten that? Has he forgotten that? How dangerous to have somebody in charge of the Brexit negotiating team who forgets the positions he's taken in relation to Brexit? First of all, Mr. Speaker, only three of the four freedoms apply to Gibraltar fully. The fourth freedom - freedom movement of people, capital and services applied - the freedom of movement of goods never applied to its full extent because we were not part of the Customs Union. And in any event, this is to a very great extent, but not exactly, what happened under the withdrawal agreement which he then brought his hatchet out to hit us about.

So. At one stage he's saying have a different solution, also. Then he's saying have exactly the same solution as the UK. Ironically, Mr. Speaker, when I do some of my research with these things, I find the gems which I don't expect to find. In exactly the same edition of the newspaper, also on the front page, on the 15th of October 2016, the GSD, then led by Mr Feetham, also had a headline. The GSD were then saying we have to have exactly the same solution as the UK. Claro, el integracionista, the integrationist wanted us to have exactly the same solution as the UK. They're even more confused. And I thought, Mr. Speaker, when I started to look in detail at what were the positions that Joseph Garcia and Fabian Picardo would have to kowtow to as part of the GSD negotiating team on Brexit, I found that one position was here and the other position was there, but that the negotiators were going to be there. So under Mr Feetham we have to have the same solution. No differentiated solution. This is what Mr. Feetham said on the 15th of December 2016 to Jonathan Scott in an interview on GBC: "To the extent that it is suggested by the Chief Minister or anyone else that somehow Gibraltar can negotiate a separate deal to that negotiated by the United Kingdom that involves more Europe, for example, a special status within Europe, my position is that that is not realistic for Gibraltar." Of course, his position changed. Of course, his position changed to the complete opposite of that. Okay. But don't worry. I know that it's changed. On the 25th of January 2017, he said this: "The GSD continues to believe that the best solutions for Gibraltar are that Gibraltar acquire the same rights as the United Kingdom in any future agreements that the United Kingdom makes with the European Union." Still. Same. Same. Same. Same. Same. Same.

Look at this complete volte face. By the 26th of July 2018 the GSD position on the most fundamental issue affecting this generation of Gibraltarians is to say that the interests of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar are diametrically opposed. Mr. Feetham was saying this. This was in an address to Rotary, Mr. Speaker: "Our interests are now so clearly unaligned with the



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interests of the United Kingdom, that we would be foolish to make our negotiating strategy entirely UK facing. There is no point anymore in saying that we want the same deal that UK negotiates with the EU with an opt out." Well, it wasn't us who were saying it, Mr Speaker, it was them. He might as well have said, there's no point in us saying anything because the only position that was being decried by the GSD was the GSD's position. Look, the negotiation's gone on for 21 months up to now, right? 21 months up to now. This is a complete change of position in the GSD in 13 months. So in the space of the negotiating period, they would have changed position from one end to the other. What sort of negotiators are they? I mean, I don't know. I mean, Joseph Garcia and Fabian Picardo don't negotiate like that.

Not only is there a real risk that there will be no UK deal, the issues that concern the UK are not the issues that concern Gibraltar. Now, of course, the Honourable Gentleman was saying what about reverse Greenland? Mr. Speaker, doesn't he realise that the consequence and effect of reverse Greenland is de facto what we are negotiating now? Doesn't he realise that? Well, perhaps he will, because his legal analysis of issues relating to sovereignty and to Brexit, which I will come to, is not as strong as one would have expected of a senior silk, Mr. Speaker. Not only is there a real risk that there will be no UK deal, the issues that concern the UK are not the issues that concern Gibraltar. The interests that the UK wants to protect are not the interests that Gibraltar necessarily wants to protect. Their objectives are not our objectives. We are a finance centre that wants to be both EU and UK facing. We're a small community with little space that depends on frontier fluidity. But, Mr. Speaker, I mean it's remarkable. I mean, I could go through the position that's put by Daniel Feetham a year after he put the opposite position and think it perfectly describes the position of the government. Perfectly. And Mr. Speaker, you see, the incredible thing is that he took that position. He took that position, when? When? When we briefed him on what we considered to be the right negotiating position to take. And he actually says to Rotary, look, I'm taking this position, having considered these issues with the government, having considered these issues with the government yeah. Having been briefed and having done a complete volte face on the thing which he said was the only safe position.

So what is the only safe position for the GSD? In 2016 it is to give our foreign affairs to the European Commission, to negotiate nothing other than the same deal with the UK, except of course Mr. Azopardi is saying negotiate a different one, and then in 2018 to negotiate something completely different. What is the position that we have to take in the Brexit negotiating team when we go as part of their Brexit negotiating team? What is it? I'm sure that even they don't know. On this fundamental issue, Mr. Speaker, the leaders of the GSD have gone from one side to the other, like a drunk meandering down Main Street at three or four in the morning, not knowing which lamppost to grab and falling over. And Mr. Clinton's analysis of Brexit, Mr. Speaker. Oh, no, he didn't do one. He didn't do one. So the Minister for Public Finance in the new GSD government after the general election, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Gibraltar does not address the key issue that affects the economy and by dint of the economy, the revenue and the public finances of Gibraltar. Well. Just that is enough, Mr. Speaker, to demonstrate that the analysis that we heard from Mr. Clinton is, in my view, not worth the paper it's written on. A waste of paper, Mr. Speaker. Now, in his analysis in this debate, Mr. Phillips said this: "Mr. Azopardi and his team are ready and willing to perform and



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do so well." His team, had this to say no longer Mr. Feetham's team, Mr Azopardi's team, "a team that has both experience of government and opposition. A team that contains members who have formed part of negotiating teams with both Spain and the UK." Well, actually, Mr Speaker, just a footnote. I don't think anyone on that side's ever negotiated anything with Spain. Don't think so? Mr. Feetham was in number six as Minister for Justice but didn't negotiate the Cordoba agreements, although he wrote extensively defending them. Mr. Azopardi was outside the GSD, aggressively attacking the Cordoba Agreements. So unless somebody who we've never seen in any photograph who negotiated with Spain at the time that they were in government, I don't know who it is that that Mr. Feetham was referring to. He got that, even that wrong, unless they're telling us that Sir Peter is coming back because I understand he was the only one who used to conduct that negotiation. And then it goes on: "And of course, Mr. Speaker, we have the benefit of their support from opposition, from the opposition benches when they lose the next election speaking to us, because it's our policy to have one cross-party Gibraltar delegation when addressing international fora and negotiating on our new relationship with the European Union, Mr. Speaker." ... Hell of an assumption there, Mr. Speaker. It may be their policy, it doesn't mean that we have to go along with it ... And, Mr. Speaker, he went on to say: "it's absolute nonsense. Nonsense that they are the only ones that can negotiate a new treaty with the European Union. Absolute nonsense." ... You know, a clear position from Daniel Feetham.

Interestingly, Mr. Feetham, I think, went on television even before he'd said those things, to say exactly the same things. But I'm going to demonstrate to him, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps to others on that side, as well as to the general community, that actually there's a very good reason why we are the only ones that can negotiate with the European Union, Spain and the United Kingdom. The very, very good only Nixon can go to China reference that honourable members will know because when he went on television he went even further. He said this: "We all want the best for Gibraltar. And I would assume that if we were to be elected into government," ... Assume, Mr. Speaker, assume. To assume makes an ass of you and me. Assume ... "That if we were elected into government, that Mr. Garcia and Mr Picardo would agree to form part of the Gibraltar delegation, which we have invited them to form part of." ... Well. I haven't even called the general election yet, Mr. Speaker. I haven't called a general election. In their fantasy, they've won it, they're sitting in Convent Place, ringing me up; hello dear Leader of the Opposition - If I am, because I might not be - we want you to form part of a negotiating team. Ask that lovely Joseph Garcia to come with you, would you?" I mean they're offering jobs and participation in negotiating teams even before I've said ready, steady, go to their general election, Mr. Speaker. And therefore, he said, Mr. Speaker, therefore, he said, Mr. Feetham is saying from a sedentary position that they're generous. As I'll show Mr. Speaker, they're not just being generous. I'll show Mr. Speaker, during the course of my address that they're also threatening company directors and they're threatening others even before the general election has been called. I'll show them where they've done that. He went on to say on GBC: "therefore, there would be continuity in the negotiations because what we are not going to do is what the government have done over the last four years, which is go it alone, completely ignore the opposition, not have the opposition on board." But we've never done that, Mr. Speaker. We've briefed them consistently. When we brief them, we ask them whether they had any ideas that they wanted to put to us, whether there was anything that



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they felt we had not put which should be put. Did they ever suggest anything? No. Nothing. Zilch. And indeed Mr. Speaker, past experience that we have of working with the GSD when they were in government and we were in opposition, was that even on joint sovereignty they didn't want us involved because obviously it was a battle that was going to be won and the former chief minister knew that thereafter there was a general election and he wanted all that glory. But Joe Bossano got up in this House in what I consider to be a memorable moment, which should be highlighted in the annals of our political history and said to Peter Caruana who was not including him in the teams to fight joint sovereignty, 'don't worry, before they get to you, they have to get through me.' They will have that from us. But they will not have us as part of their negotiating team. I mean, Peter Caruana conducted the Cordoba negotiations without any member of the GSD being with him, let alone any member of the GSLP or the Liberals being with him. That's typical of the GSD saying one thing in opposition and doing the opposite in government.

And what opportunities is it that they say that we've missed, Mr. Speaker? To use frontier workers like a bargaining chip, which Mr Azopardi says one day and then forgets, having said the opposite on another. That we form part of the TCA and then realise, as we've been telling them, that the TCA has nothing for us. These are not serious people to put in the context of the negotiation, Mr. Speaker, as political representatives of the people of Gibraltar who know their position on Brexit. These are not serious negotiators. Without being pushed, without being pushed in a negotiation, without pressure, I've already demonstrated they've changed their position on whether we should be part of the UK agreements or not, I've already demonstrated he's changed his position on whether we should use frontier workers as bargaining chips or not. So Mr. Feetham was wrong in the assumption that he made. We will not form part of a GSD government's negotiating team of a Brexit treaty. We will not, and for very good reason. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, by the time I finish going through the part that I'm going to go through now, I don't think anyone in Gibraltar who joins us in our view of sovereignty - and indeed some people on that side who join us in our view on sovereignty - none will want a GSD negotiating team to lead on Brexit. None. Especially if you care about British exclusive sovereignty over Gibraltar. Real, substantive and titular, and British exclusive sovereignty over the waters around Gibraltar. Now, I've still got to do a little bit of home before I get to that good bit, Mr. Speaker, because I have to go through another thing that was said during Mr. Phillips's rhubarb rhubarb style address, Mr. Speaker I'm surprised he's not here to hear me with his army of blue and yellow soldiers ready to take me on. He said this: "when Mr. Isola romantically waxed lyrical about the Chief Minister, he said we couldn't be trusted with the public finances and crucial Brexit negotiations." ... Quite right, too ... "Of course he's completely wrong," said Mr. Phillips. "I tell him something for free." ... In fact, I'm going to do it like Mr. Phillips did. ... "He talks about only one man being able to take us forward, but we have an army of yellow and blue men and women in the GSD ready to balance the books, reduce debt, restore public services and get Brexit done. Compare that to the record of one man who was failed to get a deal done before a crucial Spanish general election." ... Well, Mr. Speaker, I can remember, I can remember an English blonde political bombshell who talked about getting Brexit done and it's not just Mr. Phillips that I'm thinking of. And look at where that got the United Kingdom. Well, let's compare my record with Mr. Phillips and let's see what he and his blue and yellow army can do.



But let's concentrate on the yellow, which is the colour of cowardice. Let us be always clear. Mr. Bossino, I also have to deal with. Also replying to Mr. Isola, who seems to have drawn so much of their fire this year, so much of their fire just for telling it like it is. Mr Bossino said this: "deploying" ... direct quote ... "deploying what were inelegant references to us by suggesting that we do not have a clue, that we do not understand diplomacy and that the Gibraltarian public will understand this and re-elect them into Office, quite apart from the fact that we do have a competent team to lead the negotiations to a final conclusion." Seriously? I think even Mr. Bossino's embarrassed when I'm talking about the different positions they've taken and whether we should be part of the same deal as the UK or not, whether we should use frontier workers as bargaining chips or no, and they flip flopped on these issues. I mean, where I think Mr. Bossino's position is aligned with mine and with the Deputy Chief Minister's. I don't think Mr. Bossino believes that frontier workers should be used as bargaining chips. And I don't think he believes that we should have formed part of the TCA, which does nothing for immigration or movement of goods. But they do realise now, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that they obviously don't understand diplomacy because you can't go into a diplomatic exchange having taken so many different positions, especially on the most important issue of our generation.

Well, the truth is that Mr Azopardi, the Honourable Mr Azopardi, has no longer pursued the idea that we should hand over control of our external relations to the European Commission. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, he realised how dangerous and ridiculous it was when that was one of the things that Snr Margallo suggested that should be the case. Snr Margallo in his first post-Brexit proposal, said one of the ways to deal with this is that the external relations of Gibraltar become the responsibility of the European Commission. And of course there it would be Spain that would be responsible for those issues. I think after that I haven't heard Mr. Azopardi say the thing that he'd said before, which Mr. Margallo also picked up as one of the things that he agreed with.

And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, we cannot form part of a negotiating team that isn't putting a clear position, that is taking positions which are contrary to ours on those issues of the TCA of the frontier workers, of the European Commission President having control of the external relations of Gibraltar. Just as we cannot go to the United Nations with them because we have a different view as to what the effect of the Constitution is and whether we should attend the C 24. And because we're not going to form part of the team, Mr. Speaker, of course, if people want continuity, they need to elect a GSLP/Liberal government that will put Fabian Picardo, that will put Joseph Garcia, that would put this Cabinet in charge of the negotiations because they're not going to get continuity unless they vote for us. The deepest irony that I have detected in all of this, Mr. Speaker, is that when they have seen the reality, which of course they've understood to that that the public won't want to change the poker player at the table before the last round of cards is dealt, when the poker player knows everybody else and knows how they feign when they have cards or don't have cards, that they're not going to change, Gibraltar is not going to change the generals in the last week of the war. They're not going to change Norman Schwarzkopf just as we're about to topple the regime. But you know what the irony is Mr. Speaker? That having realised as they have, that the Gibraltarians are far too clever to fall into that trap, what do they do? They take the opposite position they took in



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2011. In 2011, they had a newspaper which they gave £100,000 of taxpayers' money to in one year, and the headline in that newspaper was 'Careful, warning, vote Picardo but you get Bossano.' That was the warning. Now it's the opposite. It's vote Azopardi, but don't worry, you get Picardo. It's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. They're not ridiculous, but their positions are ridiculous. They're saying to the general public, vote GSD, and we will deliver a GSLP/Liberal negotiating team in the Brexit negotiation. It is remarkable.

How low has the proud GSD been laid, Mr. Speaker? It's an admission, in effect, that they cannot run the negotiation. And why would we want to work with people who've been criticising our decisions all along? They've criticised the MoUs. They've criticised the tax treaty. They criticised the withdrawal agreement. They've criticised the New Year's Eve agreement. The New Year's Eve agreement is the foundation of the negotiation that we're doing. How can they be the negotiating team that goes to turn the New Year's Eve agreement that they criticised into a treaty between the European Union and the United Kingdom? Without the New Year's Eve agreement there is no negotiation for a treaty. Without the MoUs there is no New Year's Eve agreement. And without the tax treaty, there was no withdrawal agreement or New Year's Eve agreement. So, Mr Feetham's assumption is wrong. We're not going to form part of the negotiating team. We are not going to be part of the political stunt that they're trying to pull, which is to pray in aid the opposition to support their government should they ever form it. If people want to continuity in the negotiation, have to vote for the real thing. For the GSLP/Liberal team.

And Mr. Speaker, the key issue. The key issue is sovereignty. That is the key issue. Because when you look at what GSD policy is on sovereignty and you do a cold analysis, there is a thread that runs through their positions. And it is a rotten thread. I'm going to show how rotten it is and how it pervades the past leadership of the party and the current leadership of the party. Their position, Mr. Speaker, is that Andorra is not joint sovereignty. The modern Andorra is not joint sovereignty. They are the party of the potential recommendation of modern Andorra to the people of Gibraltar. And they're the party that somehow didn't see that joint sovereignty was what could come if you talked about Andorra. Let me just be very clear. I believe I have with my government the best relationship Gibraltar's had with the United Kingdom for generations and for decades. If an official, I know none at the moment who would do so because they're close friends and supportive of Gibraltar, or a minister, I know none and have met none who would do so because they are close friends and supportive of Gibraltar, were in the future in my presence as Chief Minister ever to say the words joint sovereignty and fly a kite, I have a message for whoever is in government in the United Kingdom at the time. Not only would they be told immediately to stick it where the sun doesn't shine, I would guarantee that minister or official that if they took one step forward, I would not make it my business to defeat an attempt to cast joint sovereignty again as a pall over the people of Gibraltar. I would make it my business to bring down that government in the United Kingdom. It's that simple. I would mobilise everything Gibraltar has, every resource I have to bring down a government in the United Kingdom if they dared to give traction to joint sovereignty over Gibraltar. And you know what? With the ability of the Government of Gibraltar and the people of Gibraltar to mobilise public opinion in the United Kingdom, I dare say we could achieve it. I daresay we could achieve it.



Now, what you cannot do in 2023 is forget the history of the past 20 years because the people sitting in the negotiating room are not going to have forgotten the history of the last 20 years. They're going to have read up on it. And what we're not going to do is form part of a negotiating team under a GSD government led by Keith Azopardi that has sent the most conflictive signals on the issue of sovereignty. If Keith Azopardi becomes Chief Minister of Gibraltar, if Keith Azopardi leads the Gibraltar negotiating team, like I have read it as Chief Minister with the Deputy Chief Minister, then instead of having opposite them in the Spanish Foreign Ministry, in London in the Foreign Office or in Brussels in the Berlaymont, the man who said, 'Wake up and smell the coffee, Gibraltar will never be Spanish.' Or the man who wrote the book about the identity of the people of Gibraltar, a hawk's hawk supported by the hawk of hawks. Instead of having that opposite them, they would swap our rock solid position for the position of the man, Mr Azopardi, who said in print that the Andorra solution is not joint sovereignty. And, you know, a joint negotiating team proposed by the man, Mr Feetham, who in the thick of our difficulties with Snr Margallo in August 2013, said that he was prepared to come back from France to help me with the issues affecting the artificial reef and potentially to remove the reef. Potentially to remove the reef! Imagine when Snr Margallo read that the Leader of the Opposition in Gibraltar was seeking a completely different position to the position being taken by Mr Picardo, which was we will never move the reef, it's in BGTW and the other guy, Feetham was saying, the Honourable Mr Feetham, was saying, 'Oh, I'll come back from France and if necessary, I can see circumstances where we will remove the reef.'

We are not prepared to sit opposite the negotiators for the Ministerios de Asuntos Exteriores with the guy who said joint sovereignty, Andorra is not joint sovereignty and the guy who said they would remove the reef. So we will not agree to form part of this negotiating team.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not being ungenerous. I'm doing a cold legal analysis. It's there in pages 369-373 of his doctorate book, *Sovereignty in the States of this Nation*. Very interesting read. I don't agree with the premise, Mr. Speaker. It's an important work of scholarly analysis, which is hugely relevant to this debate and it won't just have been read by me. When when he launched he knows I congratulated him on it and I read it and I remember what I read. More controversially, he says in the book, some commentators have referred to an Andorra style model for Gibraltar. This has proved controversial only because of the current constitutional status of Andorra is often misrepresented in the Gibraltar media as a form of joint sovereignty. A solution based on the Andorra model would be a hybrid formula that would not fall under this heading. His words, not mine. Andorra, still quoting from him, was not a suitable precedent for the joint sovereignty model put forward in 2002, because as a result of its 1993 constitution and of it had become an independent state and not a territory whose sovereignty was held jointly by two other states. However, the handover model does provide an interesting example of an imaginative way of addressing the sovereignty issue. The Andorran constitution recognises, in accordance with the institutional tradition of Andorra, that the co-princes are jointly and indivisibly the Head of State of Andorra, co-princes are a historical institution and are in their personal exclusive right, The Bishop of Urgell and the President of the French Republic. The co-princes perform normal constitutional functions as head of state within the Andorra system. They also have functions in relation to certain categories of



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treaties or may initiate a process of constitutional revision that appoint some members of the judiciary. It seems clear that the Andorra model is not one of joint sovereignty, but rather a model based on sovereign independence of Andorra, where the people of Andorra who are sovereign have consented to the co-princes performing government, governmental performing government, sorry. The co-princes are not sovereign in Andorra those who are sovereign, namely the people, are the representatives of Andorra. To that extent, and while it is possible to speak of the co-princess having the titular sovereignty in Andorra even that is a slight misnomer which is not accurately reflect the constitutional position in that it insufficiently describes the sovereign legitimacy of the people of Andorra. It is a moot point whether Spain would accept an end of the style solution. This could be the quid pro quo for Spain accepting that it cannot acquire sovereignty and that the people of Gibraltar are the key to of that sovereignty. Indeed, the parties may wish to enter into a tripartite agreement or treaty to replace the Treaty of Utrecht, to which the EU may become a fourth party if it is to have some involvement in the resolution of the conflict. Such a treaty could provide for the vesting of sovereignty in or for the people of Gibraltar on trust".

Everything I have read is a direct quote from Mr. Azopardi in Sovereignty and the Stateless Nation. I respect that is his view. It is his legal view, Mr. Speaker. I'm not making anything up. I am reading from his text. I'm not being nasty. I'm not calling anyone names. I'm simply disagreeing with the analysis that he's done and pointing out to my fellow Gibraltarians, Mr. Speaker, that this is what our negotiating counterparts will know is Mr. Azopardi's position. They know for us, they can't even say the words joint sovereignty, or the words Andorra. We walk out of the room. They know for him it's the sort of thing he said. The Spanish might accept that may form part of a tripartite agreement to replace the Treaty of Utrecht. There could be quadripartite with the European Union. How can we sit that man with these views opposite the negotiators for Spain in the context of this negotiation?

Mr. Speaker, I'm starting to think that the only hope left on that side is Mr. Bossino. Look, we are all Gibraltarian patriots. I don't think Kieth Azopardi wants anything which is bad for Gibraltar. We're all Gibraltarian patriots. But I have a different view of what modern Andorra is, and the people sitting opposite me in the negotiation know that. And the people sitting in London know that and the people sitting in Brussels know that Mr. Speaker. Well, what does talking about modern Andorra do? To the uninitiated, let's just say to a person who has not done a Ph.D. on the subject, all right. Well, look, let's look at what Peter Caruana said in Seville in 2010. I can say this, Mr. Speaker, without fear of contradiction, because a government press release was issued by the GSD government on the 1st of December, its government press release 319 of 2010 and the government press release of the Government of Gibraltar issued by the GSD Government said this. There was a question put to the Chief Minister and this is what the Chief Minister answered the question by Eduardo del Campo of the Daily El Mundo asked what would be the best final status for Gibraltar to maintain the current status quo or not? This is the answer that the former GSD chief minister gave in 2010. "The current status quo does not displease us. It pleases us. But it is it the final status for Gibraltar? I personally think that it is not the answer to the question is simply this, my obligation as Gibraltar's political leader is not to indoctrinate Gibraltarians as to what they should think and not think about a possible future solution to the problem. That is not my obligation. My obligation is to



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protect their right to choose and not to be victims of imposition, which is what I do. So what if there should be proposals any would be good, provided that they are freely accepted by the people of Gibraltar. For example, I have many times said that a proposal which I do not think Spain would make is not minded to make now or perhaps ever, a proposal for a possible solution to the Gibraltar issue, which to a certain extent is problematic for everyone, would be, for example, a status like Andorra, which is a situation in which, well, you all know the Andorra posts its new constitution of 1993, obviously not the one before. Well, if that were viable, I would say that. Well, let's put that to the people of Gibraltar in the referendum. GSD policy 2010. I would even not see it as impossible, that I might recommend it to the people of Gibraltar. GSD Policy 2010". GSD Leader 2009 Sovereignty In the State of this Nation, Andorra is not doing sovereignty. But in the end, the people who will have to decide will be the people of Gibraltar and not Peter Caruana or Peter Caruana's successor.

I'm not making anything up, Mr. Speaker, in 2009/2010, the current leader of the GSD is saying that Modern Andorra is not joint sovereignty and the former leader of the GSD is saying that Modern Andorra is something we would be prepared to recommend in a referendum in Spain would put it. And we're going to put these people opposite the Spanish negotiators? Now what happens when you talk about and Andorra to the uninitiated, the question I posed before.

Well, we know what happens, Mr. Speaker. We have an empirical record of what happens in his book *Outside In*, Peter Hain talks about his conversations with Peter Caruana. He says this, "Emyr Jones Parry, then the Foreign Office political director, later Nieto and U.N. ambassador whom I trusted implicitly, advised me to meet on a 1 to 1 basis and ask Caruana what he thought a final settlement might look like". Exactly the same question that the fellow from London put in 2010. "So I did just that". So Peter Hain tells us in his book, he did exactly in private what the El Mundo guy did in a press conference. "Caruana gave an intriguing, thoughtful and encouraging response. Quotation marks from Peter Hain 'an Andorra solution would be worth looking at', he said". I'm now going to quote from Peter Haynes book, Mr. Speaker, "Andorra's status is essentially one of co-sovereignty between Spain and France, expressed through the king and the bishops, though it has its own autonomy and its own representation to the United Nations and in the European Union. I responded enthusiastically and we had a productive discussion in which he was, however, at pains to stress the need for caution, insisting that there had to be a long, familiar list of confidence building concessions from Spain, such as freeing up border controls in their access matters which had for so long caused such antagonism towards Spain. When I saw the former Chief Minister and Labour Party opposition leader, the crafty but likeable Joe Bassano, he also gave me a long lecture about never selling out, an old class warrior, he was somebody who you sensed would never change. We had a good natured discussion, which included his experiences with living in London as a Labour activist. Joseph Garcia leader of the smaller liberal group was more extreme than Bassano. A few weeks later, I decided to go to Spain for further discussions with Ramon that Miguel and his team, hosted by our ambassador Peter Tory. Having again talk to Emyr Jones Parry beforehand I decided to surface a co-sovereignty proposal. Essentially, I explained to the Spanish it would mean Britain and Spain sharing sovereignty with Gibraltar, having much more autonomy. Getting rid of all the colonial nonsense and also overriding all



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the obstacles that affected normal daily life. Border controls, restrictions on telephone access, etc. The lack of easy diversions to Malaga of incoming plane flights to Gibraltar airport in bad weather and so on. Having broken the sovereignty logjam, the Spanish were really up for all sorts of ideas and were no longer obstructive on any of those confidence building measures. My officials concurred that this meeting proved to be a dramatic breakthrough. Shortly afterwards, I briefed Peter Caruana on the Madrid meeting, telling him Gibraltar gets more power, more sovereignty in terms of your own decision making structures, things you've wanted for a long time, and you as chief minister, become a more powerful figure by obtaining powers currently determined by the British government, acting on behalf of London. All the frustrating obstacles and the intimidation preventing normal life from the rock will go. But the sovereignty has to be a part of it. If it isn't, then we are stuck with the status quo. I want you to be part of negotiating all the detail. You can shape the outcome and protect all your interests. Caruana listened politely. Then all the creativity and flexibility he had first demonstrated in a productive lunch a month earlier expired in a puff of traditional Gibraltarian obstinacy. There is no prospect of me doing that, no prospect of me agreeing with such an approach, he said. But I reminded him he had set me off on the co-sovereignty model through his Andorra idea. Well, I might be willing to go along with something like that, but only subject to all sorts of conditions, he conceded, explaining with passion that he had to maintain the confidence of his electorate. He could not go out on a limb".

And then, Mr. Speaker, we know what happened. The Jose Maria Aznar wobbled at the last minute. Ironically, it was Aznar who saved us from joint sovereignty. In fact, Peter Hain later says that he was deeply disappointed and so was Ramon de Miguel "we had negotiated toughly and in good faith. He soon phoned embarrassed, apologising profusely. Several years later, he said ruefully to me", talking about Ramon de Miguel, "shaking his head Aznar and Pique, rest in peace, made a huge mistake of historic proportions. He appreciated the supreme irony that it was Madrid which came to the aid of Caruana. I don't regret what we did", says Peter Hain. "or, the personal flak that I took in ensuring that at the very least co-sovereignty will always remain part of the future political architecture for Gibraltar. In time, I believe serious thinking on the rock will come to see it not as a threat, but as a liberating opportunity".

I suppose some have, Mr. Speaker, serious thinking on the rock. I want to be very clear that Peter Caruana denies the version of Outside In which Peter Hain wrote on the leaders debate in 2011 with Mr. Azopardi there, Peter Caruana asked me whether I preferred his version of what transpired or Peter Hain's. I said that I would choose his version every time over Peter Hain's. But of course the one thing that Peter Caruana cannot challenge is what he himself said in public in Seville, which Peter Hain says he said in private at the waterfront. And the answer that Peter Caruana gave in public in Seville is the same answer that Peter Hain says he gave him in private at the waterfront. And so Peter's never denied it. And in fact it was in a government press release. Government press release 319 of 2010.

So that, Mr. Speaker, is what happens when you talk about a Modern Andorra solution being acceptable. You open the genie, you let out the genie of joint sovereignty. Peter Hain has explained that the whole genesis of joint sovereignty comes from talking about an Andorra style solution being acceptable and an Andorra style solution being potentially acceptable is



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the basis of what I have read Honourable members from Mr. Azopardi's book. He considers it's not joint sovereignty. But look, others do and they want to go down the route of a modern Gibraltar constitution, which is joint sovereignty with Spain. And those are the people, Mr. Speaker, that if the electorate were to decide, should become the next government of Gibraltar, will sit heading the Brexit negotiating team, sitting opposite Spanish negotiators and European negotiators alongside Foreign Office negotiators, that, Mr. Speaker, is not safe for Gibraltar. So it's clear that to keep Gibraltar safe, you have to vote for the continuation of the negotiating team that you have now led by the GSLP Liberals with me and Joseph Garcia representing us and the Cabinet, with Joe Bossano in it. It's that clear. And that is why having done that forensic exercise I tell the GSD we will not accept their offer to form part of their negotiating team because just the fact that they form a negotiating team is dangerous for Gibraltar, is bad for Gibraltar and puts our sovereignty at risk.

Especially, Mr. Speaker, with the potential Partido Popular government around the corner already saying that what they want is to put the joint sovereignty proposals on the table, as you will have read in some of their pronouncements in public. Give Spain no hope, Mr. Speaker, and you do that only with a GSLP Liberal team. We are the ones that keep Gibraltar safe, Mr. Speaker. Put them in the room and we are toast, Mr. Speaker. Of course they had to defend Gibraltar against joint sovereignty in 2003 successfully, but only because they lit the match. Mr. Speaker, they lit the match. It's clear. It's clear, Mr. Speaker. And his book is the bomb at the end of the match if he becomes chief minister of Gibraltar. Even with PSOE in government, having him opposite would be a boon to the negotiators. So we will not send those signals, Mr. Speaker, ever. We will have no part of that ever. We will not form part of any such negotiating team. And I want to be clear. I do not want, I will not seek, I would not obtain agreement, leave or consent, Mr. Speaker, for my party to negotiate any Andorra style solution. And I will form no part of any team that includes people who have proposed that as something which is acceptable, let alone if. Mr. Feetham what you decide to be a candidate form part of a team sitting opposite Spanish negotiators with a man who said he was prepared to come back to Gibraltar to help me remove the artificial reef as the way of resolving the crisis that we had in 2013.

Look, where is Margallo now, Mr. Speaker? And where's the reef? Where it has to be, where it has to be. And one of them, Mr. Speaker, and one of the blocks in the headquarters of Vox in Madrid, as a painful reminder to them in particular that those are British waters and that the reef remains where it should be. If they win the general election because the people are able to decide that they should win, before they get to them, they'll have to get through me. But I'm not going to go and sit alongside them and be part of the negotiating team, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not. And we'll make our opinions known of what they come back with, just as they have, Mr. Speaker. That's. Because one thing is to help them in the negotiation, give them our views, etc. It's quite another, Mr. Speaker, to end up with Andorra splattered all over our faces like we ended up with Cordoba splattered all over our faces without anybody knowing what was going on in the negotiation there, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, to think that that Mr. Azopardi said in December 2019 that the chief minister was not the right person to negotiate Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU.



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Well, it's a good thing, Mr. Speaker, that the public disagreed in October 2019. We delivered after that the New Year's Eve agreement. We delivered the withdrawal agreement. Imagine if we hadn't had those things, we wouldn't be negotiating an EU treaty now. But, what is clear to people sitting opposite us is that we know we have what it takes to say no. We have what it takes not to blink. We are very clear that Andorra is joint sovereignty and want no part of it. We have what it takes to take the tough decisions, Mr. Speaker. We have what it takes to say no to an agreement if it's bad for Gibraltar and they are the party that had a policy 2010 of potentially recommending a modern Andorra style solution to the public. They are the ones who carelessly unleashed the genie of joint sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. They are the risk Gibraltar cannot afford to take. We are the option that keeps Gibraltar safe and that, Mr. Speaker, should be the end of this debate. Because more than whether the deficit moved to the surplus moved, whether or not there was a quarter of a million pounds more for scholarships or not. That is the defining issue of Gibraltar politics, Mr. Speaker. And on that, Mr. Speaker, the key position in this debate is not one that can survive today because they now know we will not form part of the negotiating team. There will be no continuity because we will not be there and the public know how dangerous it will be to put them at the head of the negotiation.

But let's look at the numbers, Mr. Speaker, because the next theme that they developed was that the surplus is a hopeless fiction. So let me look at the rest of the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition into this debate. He had the two key things Brexit, they'll come part of our team. Then the restoration of financial stability is not true. The surplus is a hopeless fiction. Look, there is, I hope this fiction, the hopeless fiction that somehow the opposition, the GSD, is somehow dependable in the way that they do an analysis of the figure, the figures, the hopeless fiction that the GSD is going to form government after the next election, which I suppose they need to keep going so at least they have, you know, 20 or 30 people to distribute their leaflets. But don't worry we will always feed them at the polling stations because our people are like that and we like to share what we have. Right. But otherwise, if we don't keep the hopeless fiction going, you don't even have the people to give the papeleta the blue and yellow army, Mr. Speaker, is not so extensive. I mean, there aren't that many in it. I mean, they might have to call Wagner in support if they started to run out of the blue and yellow soldiers that they talk about Mr. Speaker.

When we leave the decision as to who's going to govern Gibraltar to the people, we take absolutely nothing for granted on this side of the House, let alone the support of the people of Gibraltar. But you know the analysis that I've just done, I think, and the commitment to writing by him of an Andorra style solution being not during sovereignty, I think I think it's going to probably ring the death knell of any chance they may have thought they had of forming government. That's the only happless, not hopeless, happless fiction. But what is really unacceptable is for them to try and leverage their way into No.6 Convent Place by saying that we have massaged figures by saying that we have somehow prevailed over the financial secretary, who is an official, not a magician, and all his team to produce numbers which are untrue. And then in order to make that fiction apparently true, massaged the figures themselves. You said there's a pattern developing. They don't like these numbers, Mr. Speaker. And when they do like a number, they say it's not true. Or they say something's



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missing. They do have some very strange bedfellows, Mr. Speaker. Really strange bedfellows. I mean, when it comes to taking down the Pride flag, the curtailment of LGBT plus rights, being anti-abortion and saying that the nation's budget is not true, there's no GSD, Partido Popular and VOX. It's exactly the same position across the board. Exactly the same position across the board. So when people look at what's happening in Spain on their television screens, if they look at Spanish politics and they see the things that are being said by the right wing there, they just need to click onto here and watch them doing exactly the same thing. At least some of them. At least some of them.

Mr. Bossino when it comes to abortion and LGBT plus Q rights and and Mr. Azopardi and Mr. Clinton when it comes to numbers. Put them in the blender and you end up with Feijoo Partido Popular. I mean, it's remarkable. What next? Are they going to stop banning Virginia Woolf plays as is happening in Spain in the areas where Vox's governing with Partido Popular.

So Mr. Azopardi said this "the projection of the surplus does not stand up to scrutiny. It's a fiction, it's a convenient narrative. The Government is rewriting its financial record, pretending things are better than they are not taking a responsible approach. The reality is people should be told how serious things are. We refuse to tell our people electoral fairy tales. We had told them how serious things are. They said when the Chief Minister gave his speech about financial stability being restored on the surplus. There was a stunned silence at the chamber dinner". Was there? Well Mr. Speaker there was a very respectful silence from the minute I started talking to the minute I ended. But it wasn't a stunned silence. I mean, I don't know whether the Honourable gentleman understands what he says. A stunned silence is when some of these everybody goes quiet. But when everybody is quiet and continues to be quiet, there is respect in the room for the speaker. So, how could you talk about the stunned silence? Well, I tell you why, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't there. The Leader of the Opposition did not attend the Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner in an election year. And he wasn't invited he says. Well, I mean, I haven't been invited to chamber dinners when I've been leader of the Opposition and I've paid my way. And the party buys a table or the law firm buys a table Mr. Speaker. He wasn't there in his capacity as a lawyer. He wasn't there as a capacity as leader of the GSD. He wasn't there in his capacity as the Leader of the Opposition. It's an important thing. He then comes here and quotes the chamber report as if it were the gospel Mr. Speaker, well, why didn't he go to mass that day, for goodness sake? Why? He said that the book with the estimates was a stunt prop which sets out a financial miracle, a feast of financial recovery years ahead of time. What a magician, he said. I'm surprised that he didn't call me David Copperfield Mr. Speaker.

A surplus built on deeply massaged figures. Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, here's the happy ending, because these are not massaged figures. These are real figures, Mr. Speaker. Real figures. Mr Clinton did a similar analysis. But then actually subject what they've said to rigorous analysis, not just what's going to sound good. What can I say to damage Picardo politically? Because you can say whatever you like to damage somebody's politically. I can say anything I like about honourable members, try and justify it and it's words. But when you subject things to rigorous analysis, which is what this debate is about, it's a debate about numbers, especially when you're talking about the surplus. What happens? Let's look at the



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estimated surpluses of the past 12 years. The time that I have had the honour and privilege of being the Leader of the House and Chief Minister. Let's look at what I presented as estimates and what I presented as out-turns. In every instance, every surplus I have predicted has been exceeded except for the two years when COVID hit, obviously, destroyed everything because we started to spend the money that would have been the surplus. The lowest level of underestimation. The lowest level of underestimation was £21.9 million, £22 million in the year 15/16. In other words, in 15/16, we exceeded our estimate for the surplus by £22 million. So if this year were 15/16. The two and a half million would have become by the end of the year, 24 and a half million, the highest level of estimation, of underestimation is 66.4 million, which happened in 13/14. So if this year was 13/14 and we have an estimate of 2.5 million, it's likely that we would ended up with 68.9 million, that is to say £69 million of surplus. That's my record. That's my record. Not that I predict two and a half million and I end up with with a deficit. So the least well we have done over budget is 22 million. The most over budget on the surplus we have been is 66.4 million. It's consistent, at least, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the trend, that we always underestimate the surplus because we always underestimate revenue, which is the prudent thing to do. If you exclude the COVID years, the average and the projection, the average under projection for ten out of the 12 years excluding COVID is £44 million a year underestimate on the surplus. That is to say, if this year we were to perform to the average underestimation of the surplus, the surplus, instead of being 2.5 million, will be 46.5 million. That's not some fluke event, Mr. Speaker. It's happened every year except the COVID year. That's why the argument about the 2.5 million being a hopeless fiction is a hapless fiction. It is completely nonsensical. Just look at the direction of travel. And then he'll say, 'Well, but you you overspent'. But look, I'll show him that we overspend less than they overspent in each year and we still got the surplus. This year, this year that we are reporting to the last financial year, 22/23, we did better by 30 million. So doing better on average by 44 million, at least.

By 22, maximum by 65 has been borne out even in this year, because this year we've done 30 million better than we expected to. It wasn't enough to get us into surplus, but it pulled us from a 45 million deficit to a 15 million deficit. And that is, Mr. Speaker, despite giving 30 million to the company structure of the recurrent. So if you took the 30 million out and why would I say that we should take the 30 million out because they didn't give it to measure our surpluses like you measure their surpluses. Like they measured their surpluses. This year we would have had for the year that we're reporting, not a deficit of 15 million, we would have had a surplus of 15 million, but we gave 13 million to the companies in order not to have a £100 million holding the companies like we found when they were there. That's the reality, Mr. Speaker. And if you don't give 30 million to the companies next year, which you don't have to give, we give it because it's our policy. They didn't give it. The surplus will not be two and a half million. It will be 32 and a half million already. But look at this, Mr. Speaker. The trend is there in 2000 sorry, in 2012/13, we underestimated revenue by 32.1 million. We had an estimated surplus of 17.1 million. We ended up with a surplus of 37.2 million, 20.1 million better than the estimate. In 13/14. We underestimated revenue by 66.4 million. We had estimated the surplus of 17 million. We ended up with a surplus of 50 million, which was 33.3 million better than the estimate. In 14/15, we underestimated revenue by 25.4 million. We estimated the surplus at 34.6. We ended up with a surplus of 51.2, which was 16.6 better than the estimate. In 15/16,



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we underestimated revenue by 21.9 million. We had estimated the surplus of 18.1. We ended up with a surplus of 38.8, which was 20.7 million better than the estimate. In those years you could add 25 million if you wanted to each of those figures, because we were giving 25 million to the companies, which they did not give. So we are denuding our surpluses of 25 million, which would have flattered their surpluses if we had calculated our surpluses in the way that they do. Let's keep going. In 16/17, we underestimated revenue by 64.9 million. We had estimated the surplus of 20 million. We ended up with a surplus of 75.8 million, which was 55.5 million better than the estimate. In 17/18 we underestimated revenue by 23.1 million. We had estimated the surplus of 18.3 million, Mr. Speaker. We ended up with a surplus of 36.1 million, which was 17.8 million better than the estimate. In 18/19 we underestimated revenue by 56.5 million. We had estimated a surplus of 23.8 million. We ended up with a surplus of 82.8 million, which was 59 million better than the estimate. And then the pandemic hit. The pandemic hit and there were no surpluses. But what a direction of travel. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker I wonder if the clerk would please call the usher and distribute to all members on this side and that, a graph that shows how we have exceeded our estimates compared to how they exceeded their estimates of surplus. Indeed, in some instances their surpluses did become deficits. There is no reason to think that our surplus is a hopeless fiction. Far from it. There is every reason to believe that we will exceed our surplus. This graph is headed the Estimate Surplus (Deficit} Actual Surplus (Deficit}. Members can see how it starts in 1995/96, and how it goes. And members can see that Mr. Azopardi has tried to pretend that this does not exist. That in fact, the blue line will go through the beige line and that we will go to deficit. No. All of the data, all of the trend shows the opposite with the numbers that I have given him. No evidence of the contrary. No reason to talk about a hopeless fiction. Far from it. He is as wrong about that, Mr. Speaker, as he is about Andorra not being joint sovereignty. This is not, Mr. Speaker, a hopeless fiction of a surplus. This is a hopeless argument, Mr. Speaker, and it's put forward by hopeless advocates of doom and gloom, hopeless merchants of doom, Mr. Speaker. Hopelessly having failed to check the figures because the figures speak for themselves, the numbers don't lie and they are based, Mr. Speaker, always on the Treasury's conservative figures about revenue and about expenditure. We always look at over expenditure in some instances and surpluses.

They put a negative loss on everything. They give a negative spin to every single aspect, Mr. Speaker. They want to talk the Treasury down. They want to talk our nation's economic performance down. They want to talk the public finances down. As long as they are not the ones in charge. It's predictable. It's unfair, Mr. Speaker. And they are wrong. Always wrong. Of course, everything is subject to performance. We could have another instance which is dramatic. We could have in another pandemic. Please, God, that won't happen. Many other things could happen. But the trend, except for the two years of the pandemic, is there. But why do they do this, Mr. Speaker? Why do they think that we're not going to keep to our surplus estimation. Well, Mr. Speaker, because perhaps that's what they did when they were in government. That is what happened, Mr. Speaker, in effect, in some years after what Mr. Clinton called their glorious march up Main Street in 1996 when they felt like they were liberating Gibraltar, he said. In 2000 and 2001, with Mr. Azopardi in the government as a minister, they had estimated a surplus of 16.8 million. They ended up with a surplus. Yes, but of 9 million. They were £6.8 million worse off.



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That year their estimate of their surplus was a hopeless fiction. In 2002/2003 with Mr. Azopardi in the Government they'd estimated a surplus of 8.8 million. They ended up with 5.2, 3.5 million worse off. That year their estimate was a hopeless fiction. In 2003/2004, the election year, they threw the kitchen sink at the electorate. There were so many goodies thrown at the electorate that people were having them knocked on the head as they walked down Main Street and past College Lane. They estimated a surplus of £6.7 million, Mr. Speaker, they ended up with a deficit of 1.3 million, £8 million worse off than their estimate. That was a hopeless GSD fiction. A hopeless fiction, which turned the surplus estimates into a deficit. In 2005/2006, they estimated 3.7. They ended up with a surplus of 2, which was 1.7 worse off. In 08/09 they had estimated their surplus at 11 million. It came in at 17.4. They did better that year, Mr. Speaker, than their estimate. Why? But you're thinking to yourself, he's been on his feet for too long. Why is he making this point? It's good for them. Why is he making this point? Well, Mr. Speaker. It's because in that year when they had predicted the surplus of 11 million and they ended up with a surplus of 17.4 million, that, Mr. Speaker, Mr Bossano should calm himself now, is the year that they took £19.3 million, which was in the Savings Bank Reserve into the consolidated fund. They plundered the reserve of the Savings Bank on the 31st of March, to turn, this is real alchemy, real alchemy to turn a deficit of 1.9 million overnight into a surplus of 17.4 million. Because otherwise it would have been £13 million worse off. That is the sort of fiction that we had to accept we were subjected to when they were in government. Of course, if that's how they behave, perhaps they think that's how we behave.

But I've shown them that the trend is completely different. It's quite the opposite. Judge us by what we do, not by what you would have done. The only time we failed our estimate targets for the surplus is in the pandemic. Even last year already 30 million up. But I bet, Mr. Speaker, whilst he is sitting there. I bet he wishes that before coming up with this nonsense of a hopeless fiction as his theme and Mr. Clinton's theme. He had done the research because he sits there now with economic egg splattered all over his face. I've even plotted it in a chart, Mr. Speaker, because a picture is worth a thousand words.

I've done the work for him, Mr. Speaker, with the team at the Treasury. I've asked them to put it on the graph, but all the numbers are there. In fact, what the estimates books are now online, so he can go and look at them and verify the figures. No insults Mr. Speaker. Not calling anyone ridiculous. Just the difficult facts that make the arguments unsustainable and demolishes the proposal that they were making, unsound arguments that they put and they took to the people of Gibraltar here and in interviews outside of here, all falsely representing a position which was not the case. And Mr. Speaker. All of those excesses of the surplus. We have done, as I've said, was contributing to the companies. So we calculate the surplus after we have taken £25 million out for the companies for about ten years now, 30 million every year. The total amount of recurrent contributions to the company structure is 311 million. Mr. Clinton says he knows nothing about what we pay back, what we don't pay back. It's all there in the book. He just wants us to do it for him. He doesn't tally it. The capital contributions that we made to the companies 162 million a total of £473 million contributed to the company structure in recurrent contributions and capital contributions in the period between 2002/03 and 11/12. The GSD only put in £49 million to the companies. That's why it had a hole of 100 million in it.



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That's how we fix the hole. Mr. Feetham. By putting the money in to plug the hole. No magic, just proper accounting for the people's money. And that is not including the £65 million that we contributed to another government company, the new International Bank, which is a company, £65 million. So, Mr. Speaker, in total, £538 million, more than half a billion pounds contributed to the company structure. It's there for all to see. And our surplus, therefore, is very real. Very deliverable, we hope will be exceeded, not turned into a deficit and in fact is very, very likely understated compared with GSD surpluses. Despite us paying into the company structure. But, Mr. Speaker, all of that could fail if spending is uncontrolled and the us because we are so profligate in the way that we spend, we are so extravagant with what we spend. It's the theme that they've been developing constantly, as they say. You repeat something often enough, it will eventually catch and they've been repeating it now for 12 years. Mr. Azopardi and Mr. Clinton both said that we are an out of control government. Mr. Azopardi said to me he should have kept to the budget, but he overspent by 90 million last year and this year. But we dealt with those 90 million, etc.. But he said, Mr. Speaker, that the estimates were the promises that Mr. Picardo does not keep. He says that we estimate one sum, but in fact, we spend more. Again, he cannot have researched those points before making them. He just must have thought that that would be what sounded good in an election year. Because if you research it, whatever period of ten years you take in the time that they were in government, he was in there for eight. So it's take those eight, those ten year periods every ten year period. They averaged a growth in expenditure of 114%, 1 1 4, 114%. That is to say, if you take ten years in any ten year period, they've doubled the budget and 14%. In any ten year period under us. And you were dividing the COVID year by two because it's a double, so just divide it by two. We've increased cost by 65%. Now, let me just be clear with them. In case they haven't got it, 114% is more than 65%. So cost growth is uncontrolled on the us, it was running wild under them, obviously. In the six years, just six years between 2006/07 and 2011/12, just those six years, their expenditure grew by 68%. In six years, they grew more than we've grown in ten years on expenditure. So who's uncontrolled, Mr. Speaker? And why didn't they bother to do this exercise before training their 'pistoletes' guns on us? Because this is what they're gonna get get back. How are you going to put these people in charge of the Brexit negotiation? They're going to say something and they are going to get cannoned back. So who was uncontrolled? They were at least doubled uncontrolled, as we are, in particular in the period when he was a minister, Mr. Speaker. He said we were trying to hide the reality from the public, and that he had warned that the GHA had to be realistically estimated. Are they serious when they make these points? I mean, genuinely, I'm asking whether they are serious. Because I again this was remarkably under-researched. GHA expenditure under the GSD went from 22.4 million estimate in 97/98 to 87.234 million actual in 11/12.

That's an increase of 290%, Mr. Speaker. In our time it's increased 74.7%. So they increased something by 290%. We increase it by 74 and we're the ones who are out of control. Mr. Speaker, they overspent in 89. Sorry in 98, 99, by 5% in 99/2000 by 8%, in the next year by 5%, in the next year by 4%, in 2002/2003 by 15%, in 2003/2004 by 9%, then 7%, then 4%, then 4%, then 6%, then 9%, then 5%, then 7%, then 10%. That's their overspend. That's their overspend. In the COVID years, we overspent by 17%, but our average spend is much lower. In fact, in the first year we underspent by 0.46%. Then we overspent by 5%. 7%, 8%. Yes, as a year we overspent by 13%. But that's less than their overspend of 15%. That 8%. 5%. 5%. 5%.



How can it be a mortal sin when we overspend on the GHA, which is demand led and yet a gracious virtue when they overspend. When they overspend in the GHA, when he was a minister for health, it was all about investing in the health of our community. When we overspend, it's uncontrolled expenditure that's going to undo us and makes the surplus a hapless fiction. Does he really think, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Gibraltar do not see the reality that they will fall for the fiction?

How could it be, Mr. Speaker, that if we spend in the GEA the amounts that the fuel costs, we're spending more, we're spending the amount that the fuel costs as the fuel is invoiced, it's terrible and you have no control over expenditure. But when they do it, it's perfectly okay because they have to keep the lights on. Why do they ask me if I have a crystal ball to talk about the price of fuel and not lend me their crystal ball that they must have had when they were in government if they got their estimates bang on. Of course they didn't. The price of fuel fluctuated wildly. What could you do? Not buy the fuel? But this is not just about the GEA and the GHA, Mr. Speaker. But before I move on, Mr. Speaker, I want to look at other areas of expenditure, the GHA capital expenditure, Mr. Speaker. They overspent on the GHA capital expenditure in 97/98, I hope that making a note, by 52.4%, the next year by 37%, the next year by 24%. The following year by 38%. In 2006/2007, they overspend the GHA capital expenditure by 73%. In 08/09 by 11%. And of course, their piece de resistance election year, in 2011/2012 the GSD overspent, the GHA capital budget by 99.7%. Sorry, no. 99.8%. We underspent the GHA budget most years. In 15/16 we overspent by 18. And in the COVID years by 9%. Every other year we've underspent the GHA capital budget. Whose expenditure in the GHA is uncontrolled. Why doesn't he research the point? Why does he make me embarrass him by showing him that the point he's made is not a bad one? It's a almost crooked one. I mean, it's remarkable, Mr. Speaker.

But actually, you know, in some of these years, they were already spending even more under the hospital loan, the off the books loan agreement. So how can they criticise us? And then Mr. Speaker, I mean, I'm embarrassed for him. He went on to criticise us for the GPMS overspend. He was Minister for Health. He should have known not to do this. Why is he making me do this, Mr. Speaker? In 97/98, they overspent the GPMS budget by 11%. In 99/2000 by 9%, the following year by 10%, the following year by 16%. The following year by 10%. The following year by 13%. The following year 2004/05 by 19%. In 06/07 by 5%. Then by 8%. By 7%. By 7%. By 8%. By 5%. In 12/13 we kept it and zero. We then overspent by 9%, 9% and 2%. And then we don't overspend again until 22/23 by 18%. How can you say our GPMS is over spending and it's a problem, when I have shown him when he was minister for health, it was overspent by more. In that period, Mr. Speaker, they increased the estimate by 111% or 96% from the first estimate to the actual. We increased it by 10%. 14 years of excesses out of 16 in the GPMS budget. Of course, look, this is demand led. We defend the spending. But of course you also have to put up the social insurance to pay for it so that you get it closer. And they attack us and say that we cannot budget? They didn't even look at the numbers before they go on the attack. It's just painful, Mr. Speaker. No insults. I'm not calling them any name. I'm just giving them back the facts, the painful killer facts that demonstrate that everything they have said is absolutely wrong and unreliable.



On sponsored patients. They overspent every year except for four, and their maximum overspend is 34%, 35%, 20%. We overspend in some years. Yes, because it's demand led. What can you do? But how can they say that we're not good arbiters of the purse strings when they overspend by more than us? Come on. Be fair. And if you cannot be fair. Well, at least find something on which you can attack us and not something which is tantamount to spitting upwards as a team and staying there to actually collect it on your forehead for goodness sake. Do the research. The public needs to look at them and feel that they can have some semblance of an alternative government in Gibraltar, not this shower, Mr. Speaker. That cannot even look at their own numbers in government before attacking the person who's standing opposite them. Are these the people who are going to sit opposite the negotiators? What research are they going to do? Well, maybe this research, Mr. Speaker. As ever, Mr. Speaker, their record in government is worse than ours. Well, look, how did they think they were going to fix all these things? How did they think it was all going to be resolved in 2004 when Mr Azopardi left the ministry? It was all going to be resolved by the appointment of David McCutcheon Mr. Speaker, on £106,000 a year, a 104.6% increase over the salary of the person he was replacing. 'Toma tela'. Anyway, what would he do? He's been a former minister for health. Did he gently give us advice? He did say, 'Look, cut the number of nurses. Oh, you have too many doctors'. I think we've doubled the number of doctors since they were in power. Maybe he would say 'cut the number of doctors. Cut the number of nurses, you've got too many of them. Don't send so many people for operations or make them wait a little longer so it straddles the financial year y te ahoras un poquito de dinero, Fabian?' No. Would he stop repatriating services to Gibraltar? No, he doesn't say any of what he would do to control the costs. Or is it that he would say they would spend more in health, that he would give them more? And if you give them more, they will spend even more. Of course. Yeah. So is it that he's saying we're spending too much and he's going to cut, cut, cut, or is it he's going to give them more, more, more, which they say we haven't got to give. But certainly on health, they come here in their political glass house to throw stones, knowing what the consequence of that is. Cracked windows because the stone comes down.

But he says the biggest offence is in temporary cover. Temporary cover in the Department of Education. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at our time in education, we have overspent on temporary cover by 10%, by 31%, by 9%, by 1%, by 10%, by 43%. We have underspent by 42%, by 2%, by 2% and by 0.7%. In their time, the thing that he said was where the overspending was worse, they grew by 325% the cost of temporary cover. Let me take them through the years that they were in office. Starting from 95/96. All the way to 11/12. This is the overspend per year, 8.3%, 23.4%, 34.2%, 25.9%, 26.6%. On budget in 2000, 22.1%. 23.7%. 25.1%. 12.5%. Under budget 05/06, 12.3%. 7.6%. 67.44%. 7.3%. 13.8%. 2.5%. Well, if overspending on temporary cover, in the Department of Education is something that demonstrates that you cannot control the purse strings, the GSD wins the bout, hands down. We are knockout Mr. Speaker. We've never managed to overspend by 67%. Don't try it, by the way. They win. They are the biggest overspenders. Congratulations. You won the prize. Except it was the thing you were attacking us with, Mr. Speaker. They were attacking us with this. Of course, when they do it, Mr. Speaker, and they know it's an investment in the education of our children. When we do it, it's a disgraceful vice because we're out of control. And what about scholarships? They overspent on scholarships by 9%, by 16%, by 9%, by 14%, by 17%. When they do it, it's an



investment in education. When we do it, we can't estimate. We don't know how to count. It's a vice in our hands. A virtue in theirs, a vice in ours. Of course, Mr. Speaker. Of course it is, because that is political hypocrisy. When you do one thing and you say it's great and you see your neighbour do it and you say it's terrible, that is hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. It's also an attempt to pretend to the public that you are the opposite of what you are. So when we do it, it's a failure to control runaway expenditure. And yet, Mr. Speaker, this is the serious politics that our community expects at the end of a lifetime of a parliament. An opposition that attacks on the things on which they are worse performers than the government that they are attacking. Mr. Speaker, the honourable gentleman and his arguments are toast. When you subject his arguments on the surplus, you subject his arguments on expenditure and you subject his arguments on safety and security of sovereignty in their hands. All of his arguments are toast. They multiply the health budget by 4 from 20 to 87 million. We haven't even doubled it yet. How can they make it an issue? How can they make it an issue? Well, I suppose they can make it an issue because they don't prepare, Mr. Speaker. And because they don't prepare, they come here and they say things that they're unprepared to realise are going to damage them. So when you do the analysis and you look at the reality of what the budget represents and of what they have represented in government, what happens is that you gut his suggestion that this is an unreal projection based on hopeless fiction. You end up realising that if there is one estimates book that you can trust, it's a GSLP/Liberal estimates book, not a GSD's estimates book. And that's just looking at the heads that he decided to take me on on. You look at all the others. It's exactly the same.

And so Mr Speaker I turn now to my analysis of each of their contributions individually, in particular the analysis of the Leader of the Opposition. The honourable the Leader of the Opposition needs to realise that when he criticises Sir Joe, it's a little unfair when he isn't here to listen to Sir Joe. He missed a part of what Sir Joe was saying. And I will tell him why I'm saying he's criticising him. What sort of a leader of the opposition has Keith Azopardi been, not since he became leader of the GSD but not Leader of the Opposition, since he became Leader of the Opposition in 2019? Has he done 80 hours a week like I was doing as Leader of the Opposition because I left my practice in April 2011 when I became leader of the GSD. Is he doing 120 hours a week as the father of the house was doing and did as Leader of the Opposition, if not more, I may be undercounting their, right? No, Mr. Speaker, he hasn't been the full time Leader of the Opposition in the run up to a general election. He has been a full time lawyer who's done a bit of opposition on the side, he's been in what Mr. Clinton describes as a plush offices, lawyers, plush offices, being a lawyer, King's Counsel, very good King's Counsel he is too. I don't doubt his professional ability. I know that they always question my professional ability. I never question theirs. He is doing his work as a King's Counsel in his plush office, earning big money, right? Indeed. Such big money that when the time came to negotiate with me the possibility of becoming my solicitor general, he wanted £400,000 a year. Well, Mr. Speaker, we weren't ready to pay it. Not Mr. Speaker, because he's not worth it. Because I don't denigrate them professionally. Of course, it's worth £400,000 a year. Of course it's worth it. But the government's not going to pay £400,000 a year for Keith Azopardi to be its Solicitor General. But he didn't have such concerns about the public finances then, did he?



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But, Mr. Speaker. The only movement that I have seen a smidgen of passion about him was when he started to talk about 1996 and all that. And so as I will say to others, when Mr. Isola spoke about 1996. It wasn't that Mr. Isola was disgracefully going back to 1996. It was that Mr. Isola was replying to Mr. Azopardi having gone back to 1996. Why? Because I said I remember a Gibraltar. I remember a Gibraltar in 2011. Of course, the change of government, not two changes of government to go. The change of government. And then he attacked me, Mr. Speaker, for saying that I want to win an election to be chief minister just one more time. Well, what's wrong with that? I understand he only wants to do one term. I understand he just wants...He's he's alleged to have offered people the ability to become his deputy. This is all allegation. I put nothing by it. On the basis that he's going to go quickly. He just wants four. He just wants to see the words 'Keith Azopardi' etched into the into the woodwork at No6 Convent Place with his name under mine, Mr. Speaker. Look, baby, just one more time like the the final sighs at the end of Careless Whisper, Mr. Speaker. What's wrong with wanting to win just one more time to finish what we've started in my case. 27 years ago, Mr. Speaker, was 1996. Seven elections ago. Not the last change of government. Two changes of government ago. He was 28. I was 24. How is 1996 relevant? Of course I'm talking about the Gibraltar I found and how I've changed it. I'm saying I remember Gibraltar when, but when I did that analysis, Mr. Speaker, I was very careful and respectful because I said Gibraltar was not a wasteland in 2011, but there were things that I wanted to change that were my policy, that were the policies of the people who made up the executive committees of the parties that fought the election to win it, that are the policies of the people who make up the Cabinet from 2011. Those are the things we wanted to change. That's why I could say I remember when in 2011.

But in 1996, Mr. Speaker, come on. Remembering the fast launches. Well, look, hasn't he seen that we had a mea culpa in our manifestos and we said there would never be a return to the fast launch activity and people voted for that. And there hasn't been a return to fast launch activity. But Gibraltar was not a wasteland in 1996. And as I said in my original address, Gibraltar was not a wasteland in 1988 either. There was a change of government that wanted to do things in a different way. Very successfully after 1988. Successfully in many respects after 1996. Very successfully after 2011. But look, to say that it was a wasteland for young people and that the GSD had to give people opportunities is utter nonsense. It was only before 96 that you had investments like Reclamation, which they were selling until the last term. Fiber put into Gibraltar, affordable housing. All of those things, Mr. Speaker, And he says: When did I attack Sir Joe? Well, in your soliloquy on 1996, when you said that everything was terrible and you had to fix it. And the terrible Gibraltar, I mean my goodness the words that he used and the liberation from tyranny, that is what we have been told had to happen. What opportunities did he create, did his government create when he was a minister after 1996, for young people. What opportunities? Scholarships, affordable housing. Well, look, I'll give them one. The bowling alley in 2008. I mean, I remember a Gibraltar, Mr. Speaker, in which every young person who was interviewed said the only thing missing here was a bowling alley. They delivered the bowling alley. Fair enough. But the scholarships, the housing for when they came back, the jobs, that did not happen after 1996.



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It happened during and because of 1996, I thought however Mr. Speaker, it was particularly therefore ungrateful and generous of him to attack Sir Joe in his soliloquy in 1996. And I thought it was particularly ungenerous of him to attack me because I became emotional. Look, Mr. Speaker, he knows me for long enough to know that I wear my heart on my sleeve because I can't hide it. However big a coat I try and wear on it. And I can't talk about family without getting emotional. I can talk about everything else. I can defend myself against him, against anybody who comes on any issue. But when I talk about family, I become emotional. It was particularly generous of him to say that I was acting when I became emotional, ungenerous and unfair, Mr. Speaker. And he knows in his heart of hearts that that was just completely cheap.

And look, he spent his time here as Leader of the Opposition, complaining about the fact that we got contributions for Campion Park. Terrible, that we couldn't even pay for Campion Park. Well they didn't make any such complaints about Commonwealth Park. We got a huge contribution from another charitable trust for Commonwealth Park. They didn't make any complaint then. So we get money to develop Commonwealth Park. No problem. We get money to develop Campion Park. Oh, terrible. And how can they say that they're better managers of debt when we have reduced the debt due to the government under the central arrears unit and they grew it because they got rid of the central arrears unit. They no longer attack us for the tax refunds because we're paying more tax refunds and ever before. Indeed, our surpluses are uncluttered and reduced by the amount of refunds that we pay about 10 million a year, which we add more to 14 million this year. So indeed, Mr. Speaker, last year, forget not giving the contributions to the companies. We ended up in a deficit of 14 million when we came sorry, 15 million when we gave 14 million back to taxpayers, which they never did when they were in government, going to hang on to it in an election year to show that we're taking it to a deficit of -1 million. Indeed, then I would have had a serious conversation with Sir Joe Bossano and say 'Mira Joe este año dejate de darle 30 millones a las compañías' and I would have declared a surplus this year just ended of 31, 29, sorry, £29 million. But no, we paid the taxpayer back in particular in difficult years because the taxpayers need their money back.

So in all of that, Mr. Speaker, with the affordable housing that is being delivered at Hassans Centenary Terraces where the snagging is going so well I understand, there is nothing to snag and people are delighted with the homes they're getting and our goods are getting and are going to get in Phase 2. With affordable housing being the foundation of people's wealth, not with the sorts of problems that people have in Bayview and Cumberland, which they developed. Well, we're going to have to bail them out of Cumberland Mr. Speaker, because the parts of the floors are sagging and falling. Sally and John that he talked about. I actually feel a lot better under this administration than they would under a GSD administration, not least because they're confident that we don't believe that Andorra is not joint sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. But anything they buy from us we'll multiply as an investment. Sure we're late on delivery. But isn't it better that we deliver late but at the right quality, Mr. Speaker, then they have to spend a lot of money rectifying because we rushed to finish on time. Well, Mr. Speaker, I put it to you that if this were not a parliament, if this were a court, I could sit down now. And if you had to deliver judgement on the public finance issues, on the economic issues, on the political issues and on the sovereignty issues, knowing the judge that you are of good



character. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you would deliver a judgement entirely for the Government with costs on an indemnity basis against the honourable gentleman.

Because look, Mr. Speaker, look, Mr. Speaker, the Gibraltar team at the Island Games is back. They've broken records. They are a broken record. All we've heard is exactly the same every year. How much contempt can he have for the people of Gibraltar to go back to 1996, as if that matter, that this electorate. Mr. Speaker. The worn out mantra that they tried to make stick. The character assassination of Joe Bossano sound of which they then regretted because they decided that they had to play him against Picardo. Vote Picardo, get Bossano in 2011 as a bad thing. Vote Azopardi, get Picardo in 2023 as a good thing. What hope can any body have that the that the GSD is led by a man with vision, by a man with imagination and by a man with dynamism? It's not, Mr. Speaker, it's a party with no energy. It's a party with no capacity to govern Gibraltar. It is led by a man with no imagination, vision and no dynamism in the political sense. I made no criticism of him professionally or personally.

Mr. Speaker, I feel almost as if Mr. Azopardi is trying to create a local Gibraltar version of MAGA, Make Azopardi Great At Last. This is not about Gibraltar, Mr. Speaker. It's about clearly about personal ambition. But the electorate sea straight through it. The electorate have a clear unease in their guts that they don't have an alternative government. That they are looking at a lack of ideas in the GSD, a lack of energy, a lack of commitment from members opposite. That is very clear. A complete lack of commitment. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's about time that all members started to give back to this community. It's time, Mr. Speaker, that the just got something done. She has the acronym as well. Get Something Done. Come on. Get something done. The least I can do is organise and really put the battle to us. Because in this two horse race, our democracy needs a serious contest of ideas and they are not up to it. They can't do this. While being in the Court of Appeal was being in the Magistrates Court when speaking, the Supreme Court was giving an opinion whilst making so much money while sending the bill whilst collecting the fees. They can't do it. They are getting money to be the political representative of people of Gibraltar and that should be their salary and that should be what they run on. But they haven't done it, Mr. Speaker. The election is now around the corner. They cannot give this the time it needs. They are taking people for a ride.

Mr. Speaker, if the last meeting that we had, we haven't finished questions yet. The last meeting that we had, the Leader of the Opposition, of the Majesty of His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, seeking to become the Leader of the House and the Chief Minister seeking to lead Gibraltar's negotiating team in the Brexit negotiations, asked the question about chickens? I get it that it matters to people with the noise, but is that really a leader of the Opposition's question Mr. Speaker? Seriously? And do we know how much each question costs? If you take, Mr. Speaker, their salaries and divide by the number of questions that they put this year so far. Mr. Reyes, wakey wakey, costs £568.76 per question. He's obviously the senior partner in the organisation, Mr. Speaker, £568 per question. Mr. Phillips, £212.34 per question. Obviously the junior in the organisation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Azopardi £350.37 per question. Senior, junior or junior, senior. Mr. Feetham, mas baratito, £256.86 per person, Mr. Speaker. Well, I wouldn't pay him that for his legal advice an hour, he might want to know. Mr. Clinton £241.29 per question. That's what they cost per question. The question on the chicken



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cost us £315.37, Mr. Speaker. I congratulate Mr. Bossino for being value for money. £151.67 for question. That's a that's more than I charged when I started practice per hour, Mr. Speaker. But a decent fee for an hour's work by a junior lawyer these days. I think it's a bit expensive per question. But this demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates the value for money audit that we've done shows that there are not value for money for the people of Gibraltar. It's a scandal. The total average per question is £291.05 per question. Each question is costing the same as an hour of a middle ranking lawyer's time. It's a joke, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Clinton wants to talk about value for money, but it's not looking at himself. If he wants to talk about ridiculous, look at himself, because I'm going to call him ridiculous, look at the ridiculous cost per question.

And we're not taxing the people more. Mr. Speaker, even to pay for that questions. We are making sure that the cost of COVID is being spread as it should. And in fact, we've been able to lower the cost already. We're taking tax down this year. I gave him 3 hours between my speech and his How could you come here about us, talk about us taxing people more? I suppose because he thought we were going to stick up the 2% for two years. Didn't he want to at least amend his speech a little bit? So, therefore he said if they were in government, taxes could go down more quickly and salaries could go up more steadily. If they spend most of their speeches telling us that the public sector costs too much, and then he talks about putting their salaries up more steadily, do they think they're going to believe that? Don't they know, Mr. Speaker, in the public sector that they're coming either to cut the cost by reducing services and reducing the headcount or cut the salary bill? Or else they're misleading everyone. But he's the one who said I was presenting a false picture of solvency and financial health to the people.

I'm not, Mr. Speaker. I know I can demonstrate as I have that our surplus estimations are reliable. He's the one presenting a false suggestion that our budget is a hopeless fiction. He's presenting a false suggestion that there will be tax cuts and public sector pay rises under them because both positions cannot be true. He is literally doing the opposite of what he said. He's not telling our people the hard truth. He just doesn't want our people to be told our good news. The good news. Now there's a reference to the Bible, the good news, because what he's trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is literally he's trying to feed the 5000 with five loaves and two fish. It will be a miracle if it were to do it down taxes, up salaries. Well, magic. Or sleight of hand. Well, I suspect he knows, Mr. Speaker, that we don't just have five loaves. He knows that we're accurately reporting the numbers. He knows he cannot give the pay rises, hinting that he knows he cannot give the tax deductions that he's hinting at. It's either one or the other. He knows either that our numbers are correct or he knows, and he doesn't mean it when he is saying that he will give tax reductions and pay rises or option three he thinks that he can emulate Christ and feed the 5000 or in this case the 32,000 with five loaves, two fish and a deficit, because that's what he's telling us we're going to produce.

He's saying there isn't a surplus. He's saying that's a deficit because the depth of the surplus is a hopeless fiction. Well, Mr. Speaker, of all the people sitting opposite that I'm looking at, I didn't have him down for Christ. I can tell you that much. I didn't have him down as the miracle worker. But as Mrs Thatcher said, Mr. Speaker, as Mrs. Thatcher said, I say of myself in the eyes of him.



If the GSD saw me, Mr. Speaker, at Eastern Beach walking on water, they would issue a press release saying it's a disgrace that the Chief Minister does not know how to swim. Where in the I&DF is the wastewater treatment plant? It's disgraceful. You're not committed to it because it's not in the I&DF, but not in the I&DF because we're not going to pay for it and it's going to be produced by a third party, the tender actually provides for them to produce the plant. We will provide the sewage for the operation of the plant, and that's why it's not in the I&DF, because there's no capital cost to the government. And he called us the most secretive administration in our history, hundreds millions of pounds in off the book transactions. We don't know where it's been spent. Now it's more than just a simple web of companies, a jungle where we have stashed the people's money away. I'll address a little bit of that in my reply to Mr. Clinton.

But to him and to Mr. Clinton, the idea that we have to explain to them what the beach sheds are for and what they intended to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, I will dissent to particulars. The beach sheds are for people to put away the stuff that they take to the beach without having to take it home. The purpose is to receive cash when we sell them or rent when we rent them and therefore produce a profit. I would have thought it was pretty basic, Mr. Speaker, this is not a complex financial transaction. Mr. Speaker, and as I said, we've been oversold. There is more interest and there are sheds, but even that they need to explain to them. Mr. Speaker, I suppose this is the same level of quality of analysis about the beach shed and what it's for as you're asking questions about chickens. Really a tasty bite of a question. And I say, I really got my teeth into that one. I would have thought it was obvious. Mr. Speaker And then Mr. Speaker, he quotes from the Chamber report talking about uncontrolled expenditure as if it were the King James Bible. But it doesn't go to the dinner to hear them say at the dinner that the Government's doing very well. Mr. Speaker, and to hear my analysis of why that part of the Chamber's editorial was wrong, maybe if he'd come he would understand. Mr. Speaker.

And what about the home owners, Mr. Speaker? Well, having to pay their mortgages against higher interest rates. Well, what about the deal that the gap is doing to keep those interest rates down? How can you talk about the negative without reflecting the positive thing that the government has done to ameliorate the cost for John and Sally that he talked about? What about the schools that children go to? Mr. Speaker. The magnificent schools that children now go to in Gibraltar? Or is it that he thought it was okay for the children of the upper town to go to St Bernard's, which was a Victorian school? Under Mr. Reyes as Minister for Education because the children from the upper town matter less than the children from the South District. Is that the reality?

Maybe that explains why they aren't so welcome, Mr. Speaker, when they visit the upper town at election time, because the children of the upper town matter as much to us as the children of the South District, of the North District and of everyone else in Gibraltar. That's why every school in Gibraltar has to be fit for purpose and to a standard. And that's where you have to judge the Gibraltar in which we live. And that's a point I make to all of them, Mr. Speaker. Talk about the Gibraltar in which we live. Being anything other than a quality Gibraltar.



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And remarkably, Mr. Speaker, having said in the first part of his speech that he was going to deliver tax cuts and he was going to raise salaries more quickly. He then said to me that the tax cut I'm proposing is not affordable. And then he said that the lump sum that we're going to pay to the public sector as a result of our negotiation with the unions is not affordable. Mr. Speaker, how can you in the same speech, say with me, taxes down, salaries up with him. The 1% tax cut is not affordable and the lump sum non-consolidated amount is not affordable. I despair, Mr. Speaker. Please can I have a serious opposition? The public deserve a serious contest of ideas. Where is Peter now? I disagree with him profoundly in everything, but the quality of the argument was much higher than the quality of the argument today, Mr. Speaker. And it's all the bribe, they say, because it's going to be paid at the end of September. Well, the unions are negotiating with the government in the run up to the budget. The budget is in June, July. We agree to pay something at the end of the first sorry, of the second quarter, the first half of the year. And it's a bribe because they think it coincides with the election.

Well, look, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, their predictions on the election have been as bad as the predictions on the estimates. Mr. Clinton was predicting an election in February 2022, and then when it didn't happen, he said March, and then when it happened, it said me. And then when it did happen, said before the summer, and they said in the autumn and they said, Yeah, in the winter. And then he said in February. And then he said in March. And then they in May and then they said pre summer. Mr. Speaker, you can't rely on them on anything. The date of the election has been obvious for all to see if the follow the instruction the father of the House gave me many years ago. When you look at the options, Mr. Speaker, they are not even reliable when it comes to looking at the calendar.

Mr. Speaker, Then what he attacked me on the delivery of affordable homes. I thought the man has taken leave of his political senses. I'm not going to do the analysis now and then do it when I deal with Mr. Bossino. But how can he attack me for a failure to deliver affordable homes when already having failed to deliver all of the ones that I promised, I've delivered more than they delivered in 16 years. And anyone, anyone, Mr. Speaker, who delivers one department delivers more than he delivered in the eight years it was a minister because they delivered zero.

So, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to rainy day funds. I would say that the honourable gentleman should take advice more from Sir Joe Bossano than from Roy Clinton, because when it comes to community care and the savings bank, those are much better under the stewardship of Sir Joe than they are under anybody else. I will prove that to him, too. He said. I wrote an electioneering headline that I wanted, which was that financial stability has been restored. I don't want that to be an election headline, Mr. Speaker. I want that to be reality for my children and for his. I want it to be reality for everyone in our community, for the patients who need care, for the magnificent public sector workers who need to be paid. I don't want to restore financial stability to win an election. I would happily, if the devil were to come and put on the table restoration of financial stability. But you lose the election. I did the deal with the devil. I shake his hand, I lose the election. But I take the restoration of financial stability for our people every time. This is not an election headline, Mr. Speaker. This is the deepest desire of the



government, which includes the man who said "the road to self determination is paid for by self sufficiency".

That's what we believe. This is not writing a headline. This is actually delivering a strong economic performance despite COVID, despite the aftermath of Brexit. And it's doing what we need to do. But he obviously decided he was going to write his speech when he saw the news report of what I'd said in the chamber dinner, which he wasn't at because he's supposed to be responding to my analysis. He did none of that, Mr. Speaker. Lazy politics. That's what they come to expect of them, a few hours of work as opposition leader a week and from there you win the election. Not quite. The people of Gibraltar expect more than part time politicians, Mr. Speaker. And no, Mr. Speaker, the people are not bailing out the government with their taxes. The people are paying for COVID with their increased taxes. In an esprit de corps, in a feeling of solidarity that everybody understands and should not be exploited in a Trumpian fashion by those who now want to suggest that we are being bailed out.

Look what has been paid for. Everything that happened in COVID and what else? The schools for our children, the scholarships for our children, the care for our patients, the domiciliary care for those who are home so that we have beds available in the hospital. And when we did the COVID things, Mr. Speaker, we did it with our full support. So if anybody has been bailed out, it's the house, the whole house that's being bailed out because they agreed that we should do the spending and incur the debt that we had to incur. And then he says, and all of this has been paid for by higher charges, higher electricity charges. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, Seriously. Higher electricity charges.

If the honourable clerk could get the usher to come, Mr. Speaker. This year, we have once again frozen electricity charges. The price per unit at the moment is £16.40, and we're not putting it up even though we said it needed to go up because the cost of fuel has going up. We're not putting it up because we understand that there's a cost of living issue. But do honourable members forget what the cost of electricity would be if they were in government. I've plotted it, Mr. Speaker. The red line shows how water, electricity charges went up under the GSLP administration between 88 and 96. The blue line shows how it went up under the GSD and the red line shows how it's gone up under us. We had to put it up because the cost of fuel was going up. Look at the cost of fuel, which is the black line, Mr. Speaker. But we stopped it going up.

But honourable members will see that the chart shows two lines moving forward from 2011/12, not one. There isn't just a red line, there's also a blue line. Do honourable members remember that the reason for that blue line. Because they can come here and say that it's terrible that I put up electricity charges in the year that that electricity cost production costs have gone through the roof. But do they really think the people of Gibraltar will forget that when we entered government, they had signed an agreement with RBS, which included a requirement on them, a legal requirement on them to put up electricity charges 5% a year for 20 years. I haven't plotted it for 20 years, but 5% per year for 20 years is 100%. I put it to where it is now. If we had a GSD government, the cost of electricity would be much higher. It would today be 21.9p. So how can they attack me for having to put up electricity a little bit? Does he



not think of these points when he makes them Mr. Speaker? If somebody has an obvious response to you, don't make the point because you're going to get it back.

But the political maturity of Gibraltar today is such that we put up tax by 2% for two years when we when we have to, we can bring it down sooner than we expected to. We pay our way. We have the support of the United Kingdom with a sovereign guarantee, but not handouts, Mr. Speaker. And all of this also with a cash reserve, a cash reserve in the savings bank and the cash reserve that exists in community care so that we don't have to give community care donations when the rain comes. So Mr. Clinton says, why don't you use the rainy day fund? Well, to an extent the community care was seen as the rainy day funds. We're using it because we're not giving it money and they are paying using the money that we have given them.

But look at the deposits in the savings bank, Mr. Speaker. Look at the deposits in the savings bank. The picture is worth a thousand words. Mr. Clinton says, Mr. Feetham says that they don't like Joe Bossano as the arbiter of the savings bank and what it does. That there's no board. There's no real decision making there. Well, look at how the savings bank deposits shoot up when Joe Bossano is in charge. Look at that. The public don't agree with Mr. Clinton or Mr Feetham or with Mr Azopardi. Look at how the cost of electricity would have shot up if the GSD had been in government, Mr. Speaker, the second blue line over the red line, 5p per unit, more expensive, a quarter more.

And what does that increase level of deposits in the savings bank do Mr. Speaker? Look at the reserve of the savings bank. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the blue line goes down to zero. As I said, when I did the analysis of their surplus, when they took they snuffed the 19.3 million in the Savings Bank reserve to take it to the consolidated fund to flatter their deficit into surplus. And yet look at what. Look at what it does. It goes up massively under Sir Joe. And finally, Mr. Speaker, one of these things that they talk about that they don't seem to give thought to. Look at community care, Mr. Speaker. Look at how it goes down to zero in 2011 and look how it goes up. And now it comes down because we are allowing them to use their rainy day fund so that we don't have to give them more in this period.

How can it be clearer? Sleight of hand and massaging of the figures. Seriously? We took a deposit balance, Mr. Speaker, and more than multiply it by five. The deposits in the savings bank in the in 11/12 were 288 million they are now 1.5 billion. The public don't agree with them that Sir Joe is not a good arbiter of where their money should be put in 10/11 there was £1,000 in the savings bank, £1444. There's now 67.1 million of reserve. That's the reality, Mr. Speaker. That's the reality.

There is no sleight of hand here and massaging of figures. This is the uncomfortable truth, Mr. Speaker. The uncomfortable truth. And that is why everything that the honourable the Leader of the Opposition tried to do was a hopeless fiction, an entirely hopeless fiction. Indeed, if you turned up with that speech to me as a publisher, I would tell them to get lost because it's not a book that's going to sell much the minute that the critics get a look at it.



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Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that that careful analysis demonstrates to anybody who may be watching that there is absolutely no reason to believe that Mr. Azopardi would better prepare himself to go into the negotiations on Brexit, that he would better prepare himself to present an estimates book next year than he has this year when he is allegedly doing the job of Leader of the Opposition. And therefore very good reasons to reject his candidature to take the top job in Gibraltar politics. That is to say, not to make him chief minister at the next general election. But if he had a strong team, Mr. Speaker, that might avail him of some support, which might at least carry him into number six Convent Place. Unfortunately, as I now move on to deal with the rest of them, it's pretty obvious that he hasn't got a very strong team.

His strongest support, I suppose, is allegedly Mr. Clinton. Now, a lot of what I've done has already dealt with much of what Mr. Clinton said on the issues of expenditure and on the issue of the surplus. And I want to start with Mr. Clinton by telling him. That he was right, in my view, about one thing. That when we work together in the winter and spring of 2020. That was our finest hour. Absolutely true. There was a gathering storm and we got together and we worked together. And nobody will ever be able to take that away from us. Not even any one of us. In the subsequent unfair and ungenerous criticism that he might seek to do of the effect of what he agreed to do in the winter and spring of 2020.

And I am actually, Mr. Speaker, for all the reasons I set out about the tenor of my address today to them in respect of their arguments. I'm actually very, very pleased that he's here and he's healthy and that the scare that his ticker gave him last year is in the past, and that we will, I hope, continue to enjoy his analysis during the course of what's left of the lifetime of this parliament and that then he will be roundly rejected by the people of Gibraltar and be one of the ones who is not elected. I wish him all the worst politically and all the best personally, as he knows, Mr. Speaker, but it was absolutely right that he should reflect, and I thought he did that generously, that it was our finest hour.

But to go from that, Mr. Speaker. To saying that Joe Bossano has a parochial small town vision. I mean, just doesn't seem to me to be something that you can reconcile, Mr. Speaker. I mean, because that's what he's saying. He is saying we have parochial small town visions. I mean, he's saying it to all of us, to him. Look, we have already extended the three loan guarantee to Gibraltar agreement with the with the banks, the loan. The UK loan is subject to the final signoff by parliament. It has to go to parliament. It has to be laid it's an exercise that has to be done and we will be able to draw down on the moneys on the new loan. When the old loan expires, the old and expires in December. The new loan kicks in after that and the 14 days in parliament in the UK will have expired in good time for that. So that is done. I've laid it today because it's been signed and I have to they as soon as it's been signed and I'm sorry for a bit of a rush there, but it was being signed and I thought he would believe it was right that I should bring it as soon as possible. He can now look at the terms of it. Mr. Speaker, He'll see that they are same terms, something which he thought would not be acceptable.

And then he goes on to talk about the jungle. Well, we're all in the jungle, Mr. Speaker. In the mighty jungle. But he's made the mistake of waking the lion that was sleeping. Sir Joe already replied in the analysis that was shared by Gilbert Licudi on how they got it wrong on



departmental expenditure. But look, we are running. We are running an organisation with an income of over £700 million, with expenditure in the region of 500 to £600 million. Of course, the accounts are complex. This is not a salary coming in, paying for the mortgage, paying for the car and paying for the baked beans. This is an extraordinarily complex beast. Now that's why there's 100 more pages to our estimates book. Of course, if you if you don't understand that, you think it's a jungle, but all of the information is in there. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's also true outside of this place, beyond the frontier. It's a jungle out there. It's a jungle out there with the the law of the jungle. And Gibraltar has to be fleet of foot and needs to be able to defend itself and in some instances cannot afford to lay Hansel and Gretel like clues to others as to how we do things, or they would seek to stop us from doing it. There are people out there who wish us harm. And we're not going to give those people a route map to how we are going to ensure that our people survive. And I thought, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, that was particularly ungenerous of him to call me ridiculous because we were doing a bit of heckling. They were doing a lot of heckling during our speeches. We didn't call them ridiculous. We may have said they were nervous. But I think on reflection, Mr. Speaker, given the things that we say to each other personally, not politically, he could have called me many other things, political things, and not ridiculous.

Okay. Because he confirmed again that he's not an economist. And so. Assume that he will be content. When I say that, I am therefore less than impressed by his economic analysis. Yes, we did. The Hon gentleman says he didn't do any economic analysis. Well, he said that he he didn't think that interest rates would come down. Well, that's an economic analysis, Mr. Speaker. Right. He must be the only banker in the world, Mr. Speaker, because he's not an economist that thinks that now is a prudent time to fix for 25 years, because he was saying it's terrible that we had them fixed for 25 years and we know the fix for three. I explained why we don't only fix four three because we think in three the rates are going to be down. We may or may not be right. We don't have a crystal ball. But look, he seems to think the opposite.

The front page of the Sunday Times section on money. This weekend was all about the fact that it's very likely that interest rates are going to come down in three years. And it's giving advice which may be wrong. Could go up or go down to people who are taking mortgages or going to floating or going to fixed but hold for three years. Who knows, Mr. Speaker, nobody has a crystal ball, but neither does he. So he cannot say that we are wrong to have fixed four three and wait to try and fix for the remaining 22. I haven't, Mr. Speaker. The prevailing wisdom, so to speak, is that interest rates are likely to come down. And if you look at what Rishi Sunak has done in saying to the to the Bank of England that they must tame inflation, that suggests that interest rates are going to go down very sharply before a British general election and then drop as they try and get inflation down.

Look, we may or may not be right. If we're not right, we'll have to fix up another three and then find the right moment. A sweet spot to try and fix for the 22. We'll see, Mr. Speaker. We'll see. We'll see. But then he makes inferences Mr Speaker in the way that he that he addresses us, which are very, very ungenerous. He says he's not there for the knighthood. He's not there to represent any sectorial interests. He's only there because he's worried. I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that he's there for all of those noble reasons. But why is he saying it to us as if we



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were here for anything other than the same noble reasons? Is it that he thinks that that I am here for the knighthood or that Joseph Garcia is here for the knighthood, or that you know any of us? Certainly we all know that Sir Joe Bossano was not here for the knighthood. But why must he think that the rest of us are somehow here for a knighthood or a gong?

Maybe it's one of these excuse, one of those things where you don't see the mote in your own eye, where you're saying something to someone, what you actually mean about yourself, because it's what you would be doing. I don't know whether it's that, Mr. Speaker. He was, he said he was a, he didn't understand that I was a man of depth he said who could quote Shakespeare. And he was very impressed by that. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe he needs to look at himself a little bit. Maybe he has some of that ambition that leaps itself and falls on the other, which is from Macbeth. Well, maybe there's something dark inside him that he wants a gong he wants a knighthood. Maybe the more apposite quote is 'stars hide your fires that don't like to see my deep and dark desires.' Also from the Scottish play. Maybe those are the things that are playing out inside him, Mr. Speaker, because for me, this is a vocation. I'm here because I love politics. I think Keith Azopardi and Damon Bossino are here because they love politics, because they started in politics with Joseph Garcia, with Vijay Daryanani and with me. I think the others are also here because they love politics, because we love Gibraltar. We love politics because we love Gibraltar.

I've just told you, Mr. Speaker, in the analysis I've done before, that I'm prepared to do everything it takes to bring down the British government. If they talk the words joint sovereignty in front of me, you'll think I'm here for a knighthood. I wouldn't get perhaps to see the end of the night if I try and take them on, but I take them in the middle of the night and under the hood. Mr. Speaker. So it's wrong to make inferences, Mr. Speaker, that suggests that he's here for noble reason. And we're not with respect to him. On the issue of the reconcilable 26 million, Mr. Speaker. He spent a large part of that saying, you know, how can we go from 45 million loss to 50 million loss? He explained how part of the revenue is made up of the additional employment and the additional 2%. And he shows us exactly where he's able to find these things.

Why is he doing that? Why is he showing us is working out just actually to demonstrate that his main thesis is wrong? If he says, look, I worked it out because it's the 2% here is the employment that shows it's all in the book. You can work it out in the book, but knowing that Gibraltar has to refinance, Mr. Speaker, he takes every opportunity that he can to try and denigrate the book, which is what people will put to rely on someone doing an economic analysis. Well, the real experts in hate Treasury in London and the real experts in the lending banks have taken a different view. That's why I've been able to lay this document today. But he says he cannot reconcile this 26 million, and he says it must have been done, therefore, by some sleight of hand.

Of course, because if he doesn't know how it's done, it can't be done. If he doesn't know how it's done, then it must be a trick. If he doesn't know how it's done, then it cannot be correct. I mean, to an extent, Mr. Speaker, the Hon gentleman will forgive me for saying that. That's pure, unadulterated political arrogance. Political arrogance. If I can't do it, if I can't see how it's



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done, then it can't be done. And in that, Mr. Speaker, he reminds me a little bit of Iago in Othello. There more depth, Mr. Speaker. I mean, he took the easy reference, the Cassius reference to yonder Cassius with a mean and hungry look at him meaning hungry compared to me these days. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, I'm the hungrier person in this place with my intermittent fasting. Very hungry. Very hungry. I hope not mean Mr. Speaker. And Albert Isola can be described as many things Charming usually, mean never, Mr. Speaker. So, frankly, I think he's getting his he's getting his Shakespeare wrong.

But in Iago Mr. Speaker, we saw someone who used to say, I am not what I am because he hid something, Mr. Speaker. And so when he got up and he said, I'm not here for gongs, I'm not here for knighthoods, I'm here for a noble purpose. I was almost reminded of that other Iago quote, I know my price. I am worth no worse a place. Which was Iago saying that he actually was better than everybody else, which is a little of what he says that he is. And then, of course, when we ask him about any issue. He says, you work it out. And then he complains when we tell him that, too. Well, look, Mr. Speaker, I'm. I'm very clear that there is no sleight of hand here. And he gets documents from us confidentially, which we agree to provide them as part of the covid process, which give him some information. And yes, as a result, I'm surprised that he comes here and says that we're not transparent. We're actually giving him a lot of information confidentially. And, yes, there's a uptick in in March 23. But he doesn't do what a fair minded person would do, which is perhaps to ask me. Or think, well, maybe this film is part of the February receipts? No, he doesn't pose a question. He comes here with a warped theory that in my view, says more about him than it does about us. Mr. Speaker, his questions assume we've done something underhand, which might be, you know, somebody not seeing the mote in their own eye.

The answer is actually the numbers were just banked in March for February, as they always come in at the end of the month and actually contrary to his narrative, but consistent with ours. Revenue payments on account are actually up and hopefully this signals the shoots of recovery out of COVID. But of course that doesn't work for, Iago's, narrative. Mr. Speaker. Because despite knowing that we had to renew with the banks, he was still thumping and thumping and thumping. and worried and worried and worried, but not so worried that he didn't want us to ensure that we take taken the full 500 million possibility because he wants to have the 75 million in the unlikely event that he's elected into office, he wants to know he's got that 75 million. Is it for tax cuts? Is he borrowing for tax cuts like Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng Mr. Speaker, is he borrowing for pay rises? Is that how they're going to fund it, Mr. Speaker? Well, I've just laid the document, Mr. Speaker, the answers to his questions are this. We did receive 24 million from state aid recovery in September 2022. There was some doubt as to whether this will be challenged. As a result, it has not been taken into revenue to flatter the figures, but rather it's been kept on deposit despite the fact that it's very likely that we'll be able to keep the lion's share of it.

So we did not flatter the income tax receipts in March by generating excessive government tax company payments. Gibraltar Commercial Property Company Ltd, GSBA Ltd, Gibraltar Carparks Ltd and GSTR Ltd met their statutory obligations to tax by making their total tax payments. Mr. Speaker, and this is in line with their obligations. And CFCL did not make a



payment as it was a credit balance held at the tax office. Again, perhaps the above points to what he might have done differently the situations were reversed.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that he thinks that he can just grab the book and other books and have his reports and sit in his office, which I assume would be somewhere in Convent Place as Minister for Public Finance And just review your reports like Warren Buffett and in that way control the expenditure and control everything. He is not. Mr. Speaker, the Oracle from Omaha. God help us, Mr. Speaker. If if he hadn't heeded Buffett's advice, because we have and when the tide went out, we were not caught without our bathing costume, even know with the tide coming back, we still have our full reserve in the savings bank.

If we had followed his advice and put all our indirect following borrowing on the balance sheet, we might not have got the borrowing that we needed when we needed it, Mr. Speaker. But how deluded is he, Mr. Speaker, when he asks for these value for money audits as the way that he will identify waste? Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, the Principle Auditor with no reason connected to the government is delayed. The last value for money audit that the auditor identified pointed to 2.5 million of expenditure, Mr. Speaker, as being something that needed to be addressed. Of course not the whole 2.5 million.

So. So what is he saying, Mr. Speaker, that his job as Minister for Finance will be simply to wait to receive the principal officers report on value for money and then address that, which of course, should be addressed. That's what is going to do. So the estimates process with Roy Clinton is the same again as last year, except the bit that the principal auditor has said we need to look at value for money. Well, Mr. Speaker, he will be a much less effective minister for finance than this minister for finance or indeed the former minister for finance, because I sit down and I go with my team through the estimates, line by line, trying to identify any area where in a new year we could be able to cut costs. He's not going to do that. He's just going to wait for the principal auditors report. Well, Mr. Speaker, I put it to him. He will not be very much value for money if that's what he's going to do as minister for public Finance.

Of course, interest rates have gone up and our interest rate costs are higher. Everybody knows that. How can that be a point that he makes as if it were a salient, important new points to make during the course, of course, of this debate. But that's why we've. That's why we've not fixed for longer than three years, Mr. Speaker. Because we're doing the right thing and I value more, doing the right thing, and fixing for a shorter period, even though as a result, I haven't been able to come here and say the fix for 25 years. It would have been a great political boon to come here and say fix for 25 years. I could have done it at today's rates. I had the offer. I will tell him I had the offer to fix for 25 years at today's rates. I chose not to. I made what I think is the right call for my children and for everybody's children, because otherwise in 25 years they'll still be paying today's rates when it's very likely that if they fix for 22 years, in three years they'll be paying lower rates. We don't know. But it's the right thing to do for Gibraltar because all of the thinking suggests it's going to be going down.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's very unlikely to be higher. And all the advice I have from economists, from banks tells me that it's very likely to be lower. So, Mr. Speaker, I've taken that advice in



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the interest of Gibraltar. I'll tell you what. I'll have him out to a beer. Three years from today, whoever is Chief Minister whoever is Minister for Public Finance. None of us might be by then. If the interest rate is higher, I'll pay for the beer. If the interest rate is lower, he'll pay for the beer. Mine's a Peroni anyway, Mr. Speaker, look, it's very clear to me that if all it's going to do is look at reports and look at the auditor's value for money, audit is going to be an armchair general as he is today, even when he's on the front line. He's going to sit in number six convent place, waiting for reports to read, and that's it.

He's not going to be on the front lines. He; not going to be sitting with the financial secretary going through line by line with the controlling officers etc. Always behind the report. Never on the front line. Never in touch with the issues in the GHA. Never in touch with the issues in the GEA, except when finally the lights go out. And when they come in and they bring him his mug of tea. Made with cold water. And they call him chancellor, as he no doubt will require his secretary to call him. And she says, Chancellor, your tea is cold. And he says, How dare you bring me cold tea? And she says, Chancellor, you haven't paid for the petrol for the generator. He will realise that you have to have an eye to what's happening on the front line and not just sit behind the report and think that you can run Gibraltar from a report that number six convent place.

But all of this, Mr. Speaker, is all about Project Fear. We've seen it today, Mr. Speaker. They've taken a complete part of the Tory campaign machinery Project Fear on Finances. Get Brexit done. If you vote for them. My goodness. Mr. Speaker. Oh, my goodness. Of course their mission is to hold us to account. I get it. I have no rancour in their trying to hold us to account. But that doesn't mean just criticising us. And they have to understand we have a mission to and it's a critical mission. Our mission, Mr. Speaker, is to lead and lead we do. And when we lead, Mr. Speaker, we do the things that we have to do to ensure that the tunnel is finished, that we close the East side deal, that we don't project for further borrowing if we can avoid it, that we finish the affordable housing, that the dockyard is turned around with a new operator where we drive a hard bargain on the lease but we get what we want there and we see them succeeding where the banks have agreed to a three year extension on the same terms as before, with the 22 years to come afterwards, where we work with the United Kingdom to have approval for this extension of three years with a sovereign guarantee with more to come for 22 years, I'm confident. 30 new companies in the gaming centre continuing to grow financial services, 747 more jobs. Mr. Speaker, that is how you lead, Mr. Speaker, not by sitting behind the report and looking at a value for money audit sitting in convent place. And that is what we are doing.

And we are not saying, Mr. Speaker, that with the 10% of the surplus we're going to pay for the loans, it's 500 million. We're not saying that's how we're going to pay for it. We are saying that we are committing 10% of the surplus to go towards the surplus to reduce it, and then we pay the surplus at the end. It's payable in the bullet at the end, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're talking about. But look, if we have a GSP Liberal government with an average with an average surplus of 44 million, an average surplus of 44 million in ten years, we will have paid 40. In ten years, Mr. Speaker, towards the capital, which will reduce the interest. And all we're doing is giving a commitment on 10%. We're not saying that's how it's going to be paid. If we have a



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surplus of one hundred million, we can get 50 to repay the debt. We have a surplus of 25 million we can give ten to repay the debt. What we're saying is we are committing to at least paying 10% from the surplus.

But of course with the Speaker, they think that we're never going to have surpluses and if we choose them, the surplus will always be lower because I've done the analysis that demonstrates it, Mr. Speaker, and what the expenditure part of the book that he criticises so greatly for. Mr. Speaker. I was surprised to see he was suggesting was somehow wrong. I done the analysis already with Mr. Azzopardi. Our expenditure grows by 65% in any ten year period. There's by 114. How can they criticise us, Mr. Speaker?

In fact, their average is 114. It's a maximum of 134% in the six year period between 6,7 and 11/12. They grew their expenditure by 68%, Mr. Speaker. That's what the numbers objectively show when they have control of the purse strings, when they weren't just sitting there criticising, when they were number six doing. They were worse at controlling expenditure. They grew expenditure more.

And they were wrong in his analysis to think, Mr. Speaker, that there was anything wrong with our revenue. Absolutely wrong. For the reasons I have shown and demonstrated with graphs, Mr. Speaker. Our revenue is more reliable than theirs. Our surpluses are more factual than their fictions because the one that they had to raid the savings bank reserve for was a fiction. And then he says you bang the GDP about. Don't you realise listen to Sir Joe? Don't you realise GDP has nothing to do with public finances? Of course, GDP has nothing to do with public finances. It has the same to do with public finances when I mention it as when Sir Joe mentioned it in his speeches as when Sir Peter Caruana mentioned it in his speeches. Those are the economic indicators. So you talk about the economic indicators. He better perk up because if there is the slightest chance that he's going to win an election after the after the autumn, he needs to design the budget speech because he's the Minister for Finance. And there's a section in the budget speech delivered by everybody who's delivered the budget speech, whether it was the financial secretary or thereafter Brian Trainer referred to Sir Joe when he took over. And that section is the economic indicators. And there you give the GDP, you give the numbers for employment, etc., etc.. That's got nothing to do with public finance, which is what this debate is about. But it's an economic indicator because this is a state of the nation address. So why is it wrong that I talked about it in exactly the same ways as Sir Peter talked about it? Sir Peter would go on about GDP for a lot more than that. I never linked the GDP to wages. I never did that. It was unite the union that did that in their report. But I'm grateful because I think it's foolish to link GDP to wages. He agrees with me, therefore, that the reports of Unite on Wages in Gibraltar is based on the false premise, although the honourable lady went on to rely on it greatly.

So when the GSD Chief Minister refers to the GDP, it's magnificent. It shows the growth that they're presiding over. When I refer to the GDP, I should listen to Joe Bossano and not talk about it although Sir Joe Bossano talked about it when he used to be Minister for finance. These people tie themselves up in so many knots, Mr. Speaker, that they are completely unreliable. The public must be saying, my goodness, why are they putting poor Mr. Picardo



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through this, having to explain this to them. It's remarkable. Of course GDP is not public finance, it's a measure of growth of the economy. Those two are different. There's a there's not a linear connection between them. But as the economy grows, usually public revenue also grows because there's economic activity, interaction for the government, more payments of taxes, more payments of all government fees. That's why it's relevant.

And Mr. Speaker, as the GDP grows, also our kitty grows usually it's not linear. It's not connected. But there are some non-linear connections. But when he talks about us taking on unseen debt, he seems to think that he can conveniently, completely ignore the companies under which they borrowed, not just one. GCP, carparks the borrowing on the hospital. They've all said the new GSD all say that the hospital was hidden borrowing. Even the person who was Minister for Health at the time. And when it comes to Joe saying it's just an estimate, as if that were irrelevant.

It wasn't Sir Joe saying that Sir Joe was quoting Sir Peter. The man that one of their members has described the greatest Gibraltarian of all time. No you said all time. You said all the time. Anyway, he dropped the book, Mr. Speaker. He dropped the book to say this is worthless waste paper. Well, Mr Speaker you know what he should do. I haven't brought it because I think it's a it's a bit childish, but he should drop the last GSD book, the 11/12 book, and listen to the thud it will make and then drop our book and listen to thud it will make because ours has 100 more pages, Mr. Speaker. It's like comparing my manifesto of 2015 The Strongest Foundations Manifesto when that fell with the pamphlet that the GSD delivered in 2015 didn't quite sound the same, Mr. Speaker.

But there's something in it. We've got 100 more pages. How can you say that there isn't disclosure of the facts of the finances of Gibraltar with 100 more pages? It's remarkable, Mr. Speaker.

The Jungle from Guns N Roses, Mr. Speaker. But it is a jungle out there and therefore having a national economic plan which is assisting the savings bank in its own growth and assisting with the growth of the economy is a very good thing because the jungle out there could get a lot more dangerous for us in coming years, Mr. Speaker. So whether it's sheds on the beach or any other positive, profitable economic activity, the honourable the Minister for the Savings Bank has the full support of the whole Cabinet in what he is doing there and I think of the whole of Gibraltar. So, Mr. Speaker, when he talked about the Jungle Book, I was surprised that the honourable lady actually smiled and they were a little positive to each other about it, because The Jungle Book was written by Rudyard Kipling. When I quoted Rudyard Kipling's Magnificent If last year, I was told in response it was terrible. I had done so because Kipling is now seen to be responsible for anti-Semitic tropes. And if that is the case, Mr. Speaker I won't be quoting Kipling, but I was surprised that despite having heard that he went down the route of quoting The Jungle Book.

Well, I'm not going to go down the root of the jungle quite yet. But if this is a jungle I may be Tarzan, but he's no Jane, Mr. Speaker. He's more like a he's more like Cheetah monkeying around with the estimates book, throwing it around. Amusing, but not serious. Amusing, but



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not serious. If we are dealing with the Jungle Book, Mr. Speaker, then maybe he is more like King Louis. The the man who sees himself as the king of the swingers, the jungle VIP, the one who wants to gong, the knighthood yeah, he's reached the top. But what's to stop him going further? I can hear him singing to me, Mr. Speaker. The king of the Swingers, the jungle VIP I've reached the top of the opposition and had to stop and that's what's bothering me. I want to be a minister Cub, and stroll right into office and be just like the other ministers. I'm tired of monkeying around.

Is that what he's saying? Is that why he sees it all as a jungle? Is that why he's talking about gongs and knighthoods? Is he just tired of being an accountant and he wants to be a minister instead? And his idea he is get completely flatten the jungle is not one that is met with support from the Minister for the Environment. Taking down jungles is not a good thing, Mr. Speaker. It's the root of all evil affecting the planet. As is the sort of politics that is done by people like Trump and Bolsonaro, where they get up and they threaten people. And the Hon gentleman got up said that the directors take that into consideration in their plush offices when he was talking about the charities that make up the national economic plan. So already without the election cold, they are threatening people, threatening people. The honourable gentleman, I'm very grateful, is nodding his head and I'm grateful of Hansard would reflect that. When I said that the honourable members are threatening people, the honourable gentleman has nodded his head. It's remarkable. It is remarkable. We are back to the same old GSD with a blacklist of people whose heads they're going to cut off when they are elected. If they are elected, that's not the Gibraltar that we want, Mr. Speaker.

That wasn't about leading a liberation up Main Street in 1996. Mr. Speaker And then he says that the burden of tax has increased on the ordinary worker. Has it Mr. Speaker. I've just taking it down 1%. The older workers paying with everyone. I have put up tax where they added at 5% to 27%, not on the ordinary worker, but on people earning hundreds of thousands of pounds. And they said you should tax property developers. Did he miss the measure I announced in respect of taxing contracts? And this is what we have to have as a finance bill, because everything is about going back to the old ways and how things were done. He is, Mr. Speaker, the Jacob Rees-Mogg of this chamber. He just wants to go back. If he were in the Mr Men, Mr. Speaker, he would be Mr. Victorian. He just wants to go back to the way things used to be done. And the one thing that he was very clear about, which I'm grateful for, is when he says that that we should only have given the pay rises to those earning £34,000 with a lump sum. At least he's clear the GSD position, the position of their chancellor, is the measure of payment of the lump sum or the pay rise should be for those earning £34,000 or less. That's a very clear position and I'm very grateful that he's put it and the unions should know and all public sector employees should know that they would have given a pay rise to those reaching up to £34,000, Mr. Speaker. Okay. But then he reads the bulletin from Unite and says, It make sense with the second limb. So he agrees the second limb he agrees this limb and the second one.

Well, I mean, Mr. Speaker, I mean, it's remarkable. It's remarkable that he should challenge one, but accept it with the other. I just don't understand it. And then he talks about the billions that we owe, which are the calculations, that he does, that are always completely wrong. Just



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trying to pick up any figure that appears to have been borrowed without taking into consideration all the amounts that are being paid. For example, the 500 odd million that I've told him has been paid into the companies structure. And he talks about this billions owed to try and scare people about debt, but he never talks about the asset side of the balance sheet, because if you're going to talk about the fact that we owe so much, talk about the billions of value that the government of Gibraltar owns, the government of Gibraltar owns billions of pounds of assets, Billions, many more billions than even in his worst calculation, he can suggest we have in debt. And so there's absolutely no reason for people to be worried. No, no reason for people to have to be concerned. And then he told me that I hadn't done much for the public sector, for the private sector. Well, what does he want me to do? Reduce the revenue more because by doing things for the private sector, what he's asking me to do is to reduce taxation or to reduce charges or to give handouts. He's telling me on the one hand that we haven't got money to even do the payment to the public sector because that's going to wipe out the surplus. And then he turns his tongue with the fork that he has nailed it into to say, give more to the private sector as well. No, it's not just to 6000 people give to 31,200 people.

I mean, I mean, I know he's not an economist, but can he count? Mr. Speaker, this is remarkable. Remarkable. And, Mr. Speaker, on the public accounts committee, can I just make it very clear to him if he goes with a policy on the public accounts committee, to the general public in his manifesto, he must know that he is going to be misleading them because the opposition, if it is the GSP Liberals, will not form part of a public accounts committee. We said it before, we said it in 1996. We will not form part of we think it's a bad thing for an economy that Gibraltar to have the public accounts committee process. We think that is a bad process. We said it in 2019. We said it in 2015 and we said it in 1996. So if he goes with a policy that says it's going to be a public accounts committee, he needs to understand it's not going to become a reality in the nature of how public accounts committees are organised in other parliaments.

Then he talked about, Mr. Speaker, again, when you got most animated about 1996 and how people were liberated from the tyranny of the GSLP, in other words, the great Sir Joe who he worships, who he thinks is great, who he thinks is magnificent, was a tyrant in 1996 who we all had to be liberated from. To bring in Mr. Speaker, the person who then went on to spend more than all of the estimates he ever proposed. That was the person who committed all of the sins that Mr. Clinton is attacking me about. But, Mr. Speaker, 1996 1996 was not about a new hope. 1988 was a new hope. 1996 was the Empire Strikes Back. As I told them before, they went marching in the liberation. They were marching as the emperor finally got the place in his grasp. Because I don't want to mix my metaphors, Mr. Speaker, and my issues, because by the time we got to 2010, 2011. Senior politicians in Gibraltar were giving interviews to Spanish television about issues affecting life in Gibraltar, which would not be carried locally and not just Sir Joe Bossano on the DR Giraldi Home but also KEITH Azopardi, who also gave an interview on The Doctor Giraldi home. The Liberation of 1996, Mr. Speaker, was a little like the liberation of Warsaw or the liberation of East Berlin, which was a moment of liberation before the Iron Curtain came down. That's the reality, Mr. Speaker. And indeed the leader of the GSD today as leader of the PDP was talking about tyranny in Gibraltar in 2011 and the undemocratic nature of what Gibraltar is. Although Mr. Clinton is right, at least he stayed in



the GSD. Mr. Azopardi walked in liberation in 1996 and then walked back in 2011 saying that it was all tyranny again.

And how can he say with a serious face that we want to rule by decree? Mr. Speaker, we have curtailed the Henry VIII style measures that have been implemented in Gibraltar considerably from the Henry VIII style measures that have been proposed in Westminster. We've curtailed them a lot more. We've agreed them with honourable members opposite. So what ruling by decree. Mr. Speaker, this was a complete joke of a speech. He says We don't want to come here to answer questions we answer more questions than they have answered. We have monthly meetings of the house when we can . Demonstration of that we had them monthly before the referendum and then afterwards it's been very difficult, but we tend to have monthly meetings and then COVID got in the way.

How could you say these things and think that we will not think that what he says is a joke? To such an extent. I thought I was watching. Carry on, Roy. Which was not as funny as Carry On Cleo. And much more in the nature of carry on up the Khyber. Which was a depiction of the charge of the Light Brigade. Mr. Speaker, by the carry on squad. To end his contribution by saying, well started to end his contribution or starting to end his contribution by starting to say let in people who care is once again supremely ungenerous because he suggests that the people who are here do not care. Does he really think that we don't care, that I would have lost what I have lost, that that that I would have done what I have done, that I would have given what I've given if I didn't care that all of us would have done what we've done.

Lost what we have what we lost given what we've given in the time that we've been in government, if we didn't care. Come. You let yourself down very seriously when you make statements like that, Mr. Speaker. Be serious. Because that remark, that remark, although I'm prepared to accept that he didn't mean it, that remark was cruel and it was unnecessary. Unnecessary, especially after this term and everything we have given in this term. When he reflects, I hope his conscious will tell him he was wrong to suggest that we do not care. Well, Mr. Speaker, the butcher will have many supporters, he said, for his kill. All the lawyers refrain. More eyebrows were raised on his side of the House than mine, Mr. Speaker, when he said that. But I suppose that in saying that he was just confirming that he still wants to be the leader of the GSD, that vote Roy is not a campaign that we've seen the end of Mr. Speaker so much for Bossino 27. It may not be such an easy attempt as Mr. Bossino might have thought, but look for somebody who wants to lead a political party in Gibraltar to say that he thinks that you have access to Downing Street and having the opportunity to speak to the Prime Minister, on the issues that relate to Gibraltar, doesn't matter. It's just a photo opportunity is really not sensible, is really not sensible because it's hugely important to be able to put the case of Gibraltar to the Foreign Secretary, directly to the Prime Minister directly. Those are hugely important and it means that I am not the new Dawn False prophet. It means that he, Mr. Speaker, somebody who fails to understand the basics of politics.

The basics of politics and the politics around him because he says, where are the schools, where are the new schools that you're delivering this year in the book? Where are they? Well, Mr. Speaker, one of them is rented so it's not going to be there. We've told him we'll be able to



determine the rent when we've finished the conclusion of the agreements. And two are being paid for by the TNG Foundation. He knows that. He knows that because we made a public statement about that in lieu of the premium for Bayside agreed at 21odd million they're building the schools so they don't have to be in the book. Mr. Speaker, it's that simple. So what was so remarkable? One of the key themes he was developing. They do things that are not in the book. Hidden, hidden, hidden. It's all out of the public statements and the information that we've given them. It's remarkable, Mr. Speaker. Remarkable. But to say that the book is just a waste of paper is a demonstration that with friends like him, Gibraltar needs no enemies, Mr. Speaker. Gibraltar needs no enemies.

We don't need Peter Hain to say that the things being done in Gibraltar are a scam. If we've got Mr. Clinton to suggest more or less the same thing before everyone in this chamber would at least defend the work of our civil servants. Now GSD attack, the work of our civil servants and the GSLP. Liberals defend the work of our civil servants. We're not seeking a blank cheque, Mr. Speaker, from the public. We account for every penny that we spend. That is the reality. Even if he can't see it because he's not good enough to understand the book, Mr. Speaker, because let's face it, he is sometimes not able to work things out. And when we tell them they're in the book and we show him what they are, he says, I look forward to the closure of the COVID fund formally by the chief minister. Well, actually, it's not the CM that can close the COVID fund. There is a reference in the rules tht the CM can close the COVID fund, but the law says it has to be closed by the governor.

So he's wrong about that as well. And he says people should know only 33% of the COVID fund was used to pay BEAT. 77% was used to get government revenue, which enabled the government to pay everything else the salaries, the GCHQ, etc., etc.. And we should have used the rainy day funds when it was pouring. Well, look, I've just shown him that we have permitted community care to run down its reserves. That is to say, to use that reserve. But we have been able to get through and restore financial stability, as I have shown him. We have and we will, as I have shown them in the charts without touching the reserve of the bank. And it's a very good thing that we've done it without touching the Reserve Bank and not what they did, which was to take the 19.3 million in order to be able to still have some elements of a surplus without leaving the savings bank reserve and zero or community care at zero, which is what they did to us.

I guess I do think, Mr. Speaker, that the hospital deal is wonderful because it means we're going to pay much less interest and we're going to have much more left over for them for the use of the general costs of health care, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in relation to Mr. Clinton, I do think that at one stage the device of throwing the book was the only way he knew that he could keep people awake for the rest of his speech, so I forgive him it. But I will never forgive him saying that we have to be replaced by people who care as if we didn't.

Mr. Speaker, I move on now with a little left, but I hope to be finished. Mr. Speaker, I hope by 2.



To deal with Mr. Bosino. And Mr. Bossino has been called many things, Mr. Speaker, principally by the people who sit with him. He's been called Slim Shady and all of these things that the people sitting next to him call him. I'm not going to call him anything of that sort. I'm just going to do him the honour of referring to him in the same way as Mrs. Thatcher referred to Geoffrey Howe after he'd retired, because listening to him really was when it came to attack, it really was like being mauled by a sheep. Shaun The sheep actually, because he looks a little like Shaun the sheep with that beard that he has left.

And, and an intellectual sheep at that. Mr. Speaker, because none of his arguments could actually fly. They were all grounded by the facts. And, you know, I give the same economic analysis every year. I wasn't giving it because any business of tourism, I go through those economic indicators every year and the economic indicators showed that all the things that he had been saying about the terrible minister for tourism. Well, actually, untrue.

But look, everything has to be set in its proper context before I come to that detail. I've heard Keith about this say the Honourable Mr. Azopardi say the honourable Mr. Feetham say so many times now. Whilst Keith Azzopardi as leader of the GSD, there'll be no way back on equal rights for LGBT plus people and women's rights. But I think it's important that I translate to the general public who may be watching today what that means. What Mr. Feetham is saying in code and what Mr. Azopardi is saying as both a sword and shield is that when they fall in other words, once Keith is gone, it's Damon. And when it's Damon, it's an obligation for reasons of conscience to undo the amendment to the Crimes Act on women's reproductive rights. That is to say, abortion and the obligation to undo or have no more progress on matters relating to equal sexual rights, etc.. I mean, as the hon lady said, I don't know whether he was here to to here, but he represents the sort of politics of Uganda, Mr. Speaker. The politics of Vox, the politics of Vox, of taking down the pride flag, of not having a pride cavalcade down Main Street. He is to be seen on Main Street every Saturday, taking his picture with whoever happens to be out in town organising anything public. He captures political coverage on the day of the Pride parade down Main Street every year. I say political coverage advisedly because I think if he didn't have to go down Main Street, he will probably wear a mask in case he caught anything. Mr. Speaker.

In case he caught LGBTQ or plus. It's remarkable. It is remarkable. So you see, when I talk about GSD austerity and when I talk about just the cuts, Mr. Speaker, what the general public need to know is I'm not just talking about cuts to services, to salaries, to the head count of the civil service and the public sector, i'm talking about cuts to rights. Cuts to rights, cuts to progress, austerity. In the rights that the people of Gibraltar have acquired, to love who they want to love, to marry who they want to marry. To have a termination if their circumstances so require it and their in keeping with the rules that this House has set out and the public commenced. Austerity, not just in the financial austerity. There is a constituency for that, Mr. Speaker. Of course there is. We didn't win the referendum on abortion by 100%. We won by 70 odd %. But if you want to represent that constituency, the GSD wants to represent that constituency, of course they should that position of political representation. But you should stand up and say that you stand for that. And he's not shy of doing so. And I encourage him to



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do so. To say that except on the sovereignty of Gibraltar, where I consider him a hawk rather than a dove. He is Vox, OPUS, Vox you name it.

We all know what he is. He knows what he's and he's not shy of it. And it's good that he's not shy of it. He defends what is. That's absolutely right. He should allow the others to camouflage who he is and who his party are. Whilst Keith Azopardi s leader of the GSD. And then what? And then what? Then you go, Mr. Speaker, he talks about a Parsons lodge and and the Moorish Castle. It's almost as if he wants us to refurbish these places, which would entirely undo their heritage value. Yeah. As if we were bad managers of that. With £10 million the GSD gives you a hole in the ground where they used to be a theatre. With £1 million the GSD gets you UNESCO's site. With 1 million a year the GSD didn't even have to start with the foundations of the theatre Royal. And when it comes to being managers of our heritage, Mr. Speaker. I was reading this article by Keith Azopardi on the 21st of September 2006, warning against the GSDs Cordoba agreement. Azopardi warns against shop tooth wolf in sheep's clothing. I don't think he meant Shaun the sheep, Mr. Speaker. He meant Spain, I think then because it was before he'd written his his treaty on modern Andorra not being joint sovereignty. And I found I'm always fascinated by the articles I find around what I'm reading. PDP Executive Tax Lead Way for New Members. The GSDs is management of one of our prized heritage assets, the tanks that contain the water. That victoraled, the victory on its way to victory at Trafalgar were destroyed.

This is what the PDP, led by the now leader of the GSD, said. It was the tanks that drove more people to become actively involved in the PDP. So the leader of the GSD was leading a party then that thought that the management by the GSD over the heritage assets was so gross that it was driving people into the party. That led to the state losing the election in 2011. Thank you, Mr. Azopardi. I never thank him enough. We won by a very little margin in 2011. If it hadn't been for him, the GSD would not have had its vote split and they would have won the election. We one it thanks to the current leader of the GSD. I think we're going to win in 2023. Also, thanks to the current leader of the GSD and his position on sovereignty and Andorra. So I have to thank him for 2011 and for 2023. But on the management of heritage, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bossino needs to think a little bit more. What about the large scale projects that we've done at Wellington Front, the ongoing work at the Northern Defences, the Mount, the Lime Kiln, the Upper Rock, the Almond Tower at the Moorish castle. He also wants to bad talk Museum and Knights Field he wants to talk it down. And he says his key compromise, Mr Speaker, his key position, key policy, Fundamental. When I am elected, I will publish the Knights Field contract. Look, I think it contains a confidentiality clause. But, okay, look, if he were elected, perhaps he could negotiate his way out of it. But it's not the contract that we negotiated. So the great reveal that the GSD will do when they publish the Knight's field contract will be to publish the deal that the GSD did with Knight's Field. The great disclosure is of there, allegedly now not so good activity in government. If that's what he's saying, because we didn't do that deal. And says that environment and Heritage don't talk. Has he realised that environment and heritage are the same guy in this room? Mr. Speaker.

The same Minister of course they talk, of course they're in contact. And that he has no idea, no vision the Minister for for the Environment, Oh, yeah? We brought the Antiquities Act to



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Parliament. We set up Heritage Vision, Mr. Speaker. We work with the Heritage Trust. And when he says that we don't coordinate between environment, heritage and tourism, the National Park Coordination Board was created by the National Parks bill, which they voted against. You couldn't make this up, Mr. Speaker. You couldn't make this up. Has he seen since 2011 the number of projects that John Cortes has led on? When it comes to heritage, etc.? Has he been to the upper town? I go very regularly. I love the upper town I was born in the upper town and I lived in the upper town in Calpe. Albert Isola who he denigrates used to live in Bell Lane. We're town people, not South District people just like him. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't lucky enough to live in the Rock Hotel. I lived in the Calpe, Mr. Speaker. But when I go out with my bike, I come down. I go through all of that area. Has he seen how good the area around old police barracks is, the refurbishment of the Moorish Castle Estates, the refurbishment of police barracks estates and old police barracks, the new schools at St Bernard's. Has he seen how good it looks? Is it perfect? No. Is it better? 100% better, Mr. Speaker? 100% better.

And how is it that when we talk about the air terminal costing three times or four times what it was anticipated to cost, that's talking about old chestnuts. But when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and gives us soliloquy of 1996, that's talking about contemporary issues. Seriously, seriously. I mean, Mr. Bossino has demonstrated that he too is soon going to no more and no less than a FLOP. He's going to be a Future Leader of the Opposition. But that's it. It's clear, Mr. Speaker, a future leader of the Opposition.

On airlines we now have 39 flights a week. The flights are full. We have been operating three flights 22 Saturdays this summer. The first time for our airport, a daily flight to Manchester since last summer also a first with capacity increased. You look at the facts and it's better under Vijay Daryanani than it was under Joe Holliday, despite Joe Holliday being called Holliday. But he doesn't want to listen because he wants to attack. He doesn't want the facts, Mr. Speaker. He wants to make it up. I think, Mr. Speaker, you've got a guy like Vijay Daryanani, who despite it all, because this is the theatre of gladiatorial conflict, who has to listen to him saying the things that Mr. Bossino says. Despite the indicators all showing the magnificent performance sent him a letter on the 17th of February. Maturely, "Dear Damon. During the question and answer session in Parliament earlier this week, I extended an invitation to you for a meeting in my office where we brief you confidentially on Royal Caribbean International's decision not to call it Gibraltar during 2024. I once again extended an invitation during last night's Viewpoints debate. As I've said publicly, we are dealing with a publicly listed company and consequently there are matters under discussion which are commercially sensitive. It is not appropriate to air these in public. Gibraltar is a serious, reputable jurisdiction and the government is of the view that further public statements will harm Gibraltar. Now that the viewpoint debate is over and your concern of being muzzled for the debate is no longer an issue. I once again make myself available to brief you confidentially and answer any questions you may have. Our offices can arrange a mutually convenient time. I look forward to hearing from your very best wishes, Vijay Daryanani".

What is the response been, Mr. Speaker? Tumbleweed. He hasn't replied. He's laughing from a sedentary position, a mature person in the shape of the Minister for Tourism, inviting him to a discussion to deal with the issues. No reply. He pretends to be mature. He then doesn't



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behave as if he were mature. He hasn't got a moment to reply to the minister to write and say Dear Vijay, of course we should work together on everything that we can. But I consider this to be a highly political issue. I want to exploit it to the maximum. And I don't care about Gibraltar. I just want to make the most of it for my own party political ends. I'm not coming to see you. Nada. Zilch. Not even an acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker. That's not maturity. Not not maturity, Mr. Speaker. A number of new cruise lines are coming to Gibraltar. Royal Caribbean is coming back in 2025. What are the issues? There's been a lot of repositioning. They've changed where they were. Well, he says we need a strategy as if we didn't have a strategy. We're already down no more, no less than the rest of the world is down on cruising. And with more new cruises to come. Pure spin.

And when you look at the indicators, when you look at the numbers, you look at the money coming in, it shows that it's all pure spin, spin delivered with the usual charm and charisma and gusto. But God bless us, Mr. Speaker. Should we end up with him running Gibraltar with just charm and charisma? Because it doesn't get you very far, Mr. Speaker. Well, these are the honourable the Leader of the Opposition doesn't rely on that. Because he has no charm and charisma. And then he goes and calls us a shanty town, Mr. Speaker. How is it that he thinks he is using his pulpit for the public good in Gibraltar, describing any parts of Gibraltar as a shanty town? Does he know what the shanty town is? Because there's no part of Gibraltar that is a shanty town any more, Mr. Speaker. There might have been and we're not going to take his advice and go to Fitur Mr. Speaker. We're not going to take that advice.

But, you know, you look at what he says. He says, don't go to see trade, which is the place where the maritime industry is represented in the Minister for the Port and Tourism should definitely be. Go to Fitur instead, they used to say, don't go to the C24, New York. It's a waste of time. It sounds to me, Mr. Speaker, that they want to go Fitur. They don't want to go to Miami and they don't want to go to New York because Miami and New York for a short period, not the wibbly wobbley it is too much like hard work. And Fitur is a tapas run in Madrid. But whilst we're here, we'll go to the ones that matter, the conferences that matter, to continue to bring business. And note not to tapas runs in Madrid. I'll leave that to him. Hopefully not paid for by the taxpayer Mr Speaker. And in all that time, Mr. Speaker, as shadow minister for the port not to have raised for one moment in a positive statement the incredibly successful, careful, a remarkable work done by the Port Authority and the captain of the port in particular on the removal of the wreck of the OS 35 is just remarkable. And I tell him why, my. Usually our critics are outside of Gibraltar. On this issue even the Spanish media and Spanish officials have praised the excellent work done by Juan Luis Ghio as captain of the port and the team at the Port Authority and Vijay Daryanani as its minister. And he and the Leader of the Opposition have just criticised. So the Port Authority of Algeciras, our critics beyond have said an operation very well done of the OS 35. Absolutely well delivered. Did the right thing when the time came. Put it in the right place and now removed in the right way. And then nothing. Que savorio.

Negative, just rancor, not praising even officials. Say, well, look, the minister is has done very little because the Minister is a minister. But here, the officials in the Port Authority that we in the GSD created, you created the authority, turned from a department to authority, gave them



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12% extra pay. That's how you controlled the expenses. They've done a magnificent job. This guy, who's now the captain of the port, was employed by us when we were in government. What a great choice. He's now captain of the port. He's done a magnificent job. He's put Gibraltar up there because when we've been under the microscope, nobody serious has criticised us. Everybody serious has praised us. Not a dicky bird. Instead, he prefers to say, what was the minister doing going to Bangladesh instead of going to Fitur on tourism? Well, I mean, you talk about mixing apples and pears, Mr. Speaker. The Minister didn't go to Bangladesh for anything to do with tourism. He's also the Minister for business. It was a business conference, a Commonwealth business conference. So how would he connect the two? How can it be so nonsensical in his approach to the politics? This is the man who thinks of himself as the next leader of the GSD and then sees himself as the next Chief Minister of Gibraltar. We're not a Spanish town, Mr. Speaker.

And by the way, the criticism of the roundabout outside of the airport tunnel I thought was particularly laughable. Because we built the design, they left. We didn't want to change the design because it would have cost consequences. So we built a design. They left. So again, he's not just criticising themselves by suggesting there's something wrong in the Knightsfielf contract. He's criticising themselves by criticising the roundabout which they left. I mean, it's just tragic, Mr. Speaker, to see an Opposition that puts such little thought into the work that they're doing. A little like Mr. Speaker, and I have got to take these two themes together now. Mr. Reyes I'm grateful he's back and Mr. Bossino.

No we have built, he said the sporting facilities too far from residential areas. If we build them closer to residential areas, they took an increase in congestion, which is what Mr. Reyes said we're going to create by putting Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor's Meadow where we're putting them at the Europort Avenue. I almost pulled every single one of my hairs out when I heard that, Mr. Speaker, Every single one. How could Mr. Williams attack us for putting Bishop Fitzgerald on Governor's Meadow at the Europort Avenue? They put Bishop Fitzgerald on Governor's Meadow at the Europort Avenue. We've just rebuilt them. It's remarkable. This is remarkable. They are worse than a shower. And Mr. Bossino says it's terrible that you put the sporting facilities there. The sports days were a disaster. Nobody could park. Well, I went to the sports days up at La Brea. Everybody could park. Everybody was delighted. It was packed, Mr. Speaker, And there was space left over. And these are wonderful new facilities. I don't just say it, Mr. Speaker. I know they've had new people take it into their executive. Mr. Speaker, very proudly announced new people that they've taken into their executive recently. Some females in particular.

Kim Chang who's the director of the Gibraltar Institute for Sport, said this on Newswatch, Mr. Speaker, last week about the the sporting facilities in Gibraltar. "One of the other legacies from the Gibraltar Island Games is we have these fabulous sports facilities and now we're capitalising on that. We just launched the Gibraltar Institute of Sport. So we've got that and we recently had Lady Mary Peters over. She's going to be the patron. So that's a fantastic coup for us and we're just going to maximise these fantastic opportunities in Gibraltar for warm weather training to try and boost the athletes who've done so well here and try and better those performances for Auckley in two years time and then the Commonwealth Games. And



let's try and increase high performance sport in Gibraltar". This is the director of the Gibraltar Institute for Sport, a guy who knows something about sport, and then Lady Mary Peters. You know, she is the Olympic gold medallist. On GBC as well, "I'm absolutely falling in love. I came for three days to see all the facilities that Joseline is going to set up the Gibraltar Institute for Sport to see if we can bring people here to use the facilities, these facilities, because they're fabulous. This is an Olympic gold medal winner. Mr. Bossino, forgive me for putting more score by what she thinks of what the track at Lathbury is like than him. And he goes for the odd joke, but he ain't no Olympic gold medal winner. Mr. Speaker, we have seven. This lady says, this lady says of Northern Ireland, We have 1.7 million people and I don't think we have these facilities and you've got 34,000 people and you've got them. So I think you've got to increase the participation in sport, although it's already increased in the schools. But I'm going to bring elite athletes here to use the facilities to train and the youngsters will be able to watch them and train like them. And Jocelyn Smith, also an Olympic gold medallist, says the same thing. They're fantastic facilities here. We're looking at bringing elite athletes and high performing athletes. The facilities are outstanding. There's no reason why anybody in the world wouldn't want to use these facilities.

And they say Mr. Reyes says, well, it's a bit windy up at Lathbury. You should have put it somewhere else. Or Mr. Bossino said, I mean, Mr. Speaker, Gibraltar really does deserve a better position. Not because the opposition should become the government, but because the opposition should be roundly discarded, I'm becoming disappointed Gibraltar Together have given up. They should have taken over from them. It's remarkable. Remarkable. And this is what you must have Rooke to the highest bidder. No, we haven't sold Rook to the highest bidder. We've sold Rook to the lowest rise bidder that provides the best project for our community. Wrong again, Mr. Speaker.

And then going onto housing, he says the housing. This is staggeringly an unacceptably high, Really? Really? Well, let's look at the golden legacy. He's the one who said that the GSD left us a golden legacy. Mr. Speaker, in 1988, the housing waiting list was 2126. When the GSLP left office, it was 265. It's in the Hansard for the 28th of June 1996. So the GSD inherited housing list that was 10% of what it had been when the GSLP had inherited it. By 2011 it had gone up to 1433. So in 16 years they multiplied the housing waitlist by six.

Well, we've already halved it by January this year when it was 792. So our performance is double as good as you. Not as good as Pepito yet, but double as good as you. So where is the housing list that is staggeringly unacceptably high. He set the benchmark. He said the GSD left us a golden legacy. A golden legacy is 1433 people in the House awaiting this. We've got 792. Ours is platinum. But the GSD's handling of housing development is marked by appalling mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, Appalling mismanagement. The GSD's handling of housing developments is marked by appalling mismanagement. I didn't say that. He did. The GSD's handling of housing development is marked by appalling mismanagement are not my words. That's the PDP manifesto signed by Keith Azopardi in 2011. That's what the leader of the GSD thinks of the GSD's performance in respect of housing development. You couldn't make this stuff up, Mr. Speaker. He complains about the Affordable Home. He says that it's terrible that they are delayed.



Well, how many more affordable homes did they promise to develop in 2015. In the thing that Mr Feetham will remember was a pamphlet. Yes, absolutely no affordable homes were promised. In 2019 the commitment is this: we will pursue to completion any housing projects that are inherited from the GSLP in respect of which there is an existing contractual commitment that may have been commenced by the time we were elected to government. That's it. They promised to build zero affordable homes. In 2015 and in 2019. And that must ring true, because, let's face it, in 1996 and in 2000, they built zero affordable homes. Zero. Maybe that's why the leader of the GSD said that the GSD's handling of housing developments is marked by appalling mismanagement. He was right. But let's look at what he says is our lost generation. It's what he said. Nonsense. Look at the number of affordable homes that we developed in our respective periods in office. The first GSLP administration delivered 2442 affordable homes under the 50/50 regime. 305 a year over eight years, the GSD delivered 801 over 16 years, 50 flats a year. In the 12 years to date, we've delivered already 1273 delivered. Actually delivered. That's 106 flats per year. When we finish the current programme, which I hope we will be able to finish if we are returned to office by the people. We will deliver 2141 homes. Say definitely in 14 years, but let's say 16 years. So we do the calculation in the same way, 178 flats a year versus 50 flats a year. Who's got the lost generation? They do. Who has the responsibility for the appalling management of Gibraltar's property development? They do. Who has failed the young people of Gibraltar? They have. That's the reality. And if he'd done the research, he wouldn't have exposed himself to the point being made against him. That's why he cannot be chief Minister of Gibraltar, because he doesn't bother to dissent, to particulars. He doesn't bother to understand the point is making. He doesn't bother to realise the risk he takes with the things he says. And he should never be empowered to take risks with Gibraltar on behalf of the people of Gibraltar. And this, Mr. Speaker, is a demonstration of how wrongly they've got it and if he's going to build a rental estate. Mr. Speaker, with what money? They say that they have to tell us the difficult truth. And they say that we have no surplus and they say that we have no money. So how are they going to build a rental estate? Now, Mr. Speaker his gut tells him or he was saying to me, that I had said that my gut told me that we were going to win. But he said that make up was smaller. So maybe I was wrong. Well, I mean, for this year at last, I can genuinely say, Mr. Speaker, that reports of my girth are greatly exaggerated because now I am of a smaller gut. It's new for me to be thin. It's completely new for me to be thin. New wardrobe, new, new look. Not for him, Mr. Speaker. He's always been gutless.

Always something I've always been jealous of. But now I am brave and thin. Mr. Speaker, he talked about my photograph of my mug at Catalan Bay. Doesn't he know that because of data protection, I never take a photograph of the mug with the person I'm seeing. I only take a photograph of the mug on its own, and I was far from lonely at catalan bay, but I got a lot of business done. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, if people told him I had very few people with me, well, I can tell him, the few people I had with me were more in my private meeting than went to their public meeting at Catalan Bay. That I will tell him for nothing. Mr. Speaker, and I must tell him I'm very sorry to disappoint him, I cannot recall being booed at a recent awards ceremony. If I had been, I would take it because people are entitled to boo - you're a public servant. But it does ill behove him to just make it up. But I suppose he just makes it up, Mr. Speaker, that Isola



got up and and responded to some of the things that had been said because I was supposed to be the one doing the reply. And yet they then went on to have seven bites of the attack cherry suggesting that they can do what they like and we can only reply through me. Well, look, I suppose it's typical, Mr. Speaker, that when somebody says to them that they're wrong, it's inelegant, and when they call us every name under the sun, it's proper politics. It's that's typical mixing of the virtue and the vice.

Maybe he called Mr. Isola inelegant because he hadn't heard what Mr. Clinton called me. And then you said that if they are elected, we will have a clean Gibraltar again. I don't think he meant the streets. And that's not inelegant. That's not an elegant well, Mr. Speaker, frankly, I think that his yardstick of elegance is very one sided.

He then went to try and suggest that there was a difference between Joe Bossano and me on the issue of the treaty. Far from it. Every word that Joe Bossano has spoken, he speaks for the government and for Joe Garcia and for me, every word, especially about the four year horizon, especially about the four year horizon. This treaty, if we do it, has a four year time frame because of the thing that is supposed to happen at the end of the four years is not something that we negotiate our way out of. We will not agree it. And that's it. But given that they say they're going to take over the negotiation, how do they purport to negotiate that that four year horizon does not materialise? Is it that they're going to say we need the treaty to continue at whatever price? Please, could you change the bit that we don't like? Or is the better negotiating position, which is our real negotiating position, and not just the tactic to say, oh, yeah, well, if that's going to happen in four years end of treaty. What does he think is the right way to negotiate the way out of that which we don't like? Of course it is by doing exactly as Joe Bossano has done and I have done, which is to set out the reality of the position to say that the people generally will not accept that and that there will be a four year horizon. And these are the people who say, put us in charge of the Brexit negotiation and come along so that when we crash the car, you're in it too. Good luck with that. It is no coincidence, however, Mr. Speaker, that things are being done in the last months of the lifetime of this Parliament. It's, you know, people are electing a government to be there for four years to do until the last day of the four years. And in this particular lifetime of this parliament, we've had two years where we couldn't do anything. So of course we're delivering towards the end in some respects, but delivering we are, Mr. Speaker, when we don't deliver, he chastises us for not delivering in the lifetime of the Parliament. Well, therefore, he has to accept that we deliver when we deliver in the lifetime of the Parliament however late.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Reyes delivered his short 31 minute speech for which we were grateful. Making points which are frankly remarkable. He says that the GSD would never use taxpayers money for the stadium.

Well if there was one thing in the pamphlet, Mr. Speaker, it was a stadium paid for by taxpayers money. So the GSD's position has been to pay for the stadium with the taxpayers money in 2015 and to never, ever pay for the stadium with taxpayers money today. Because it's convenient. I mean, really, genuinely, if anybody is interested in looking at what they say



versus what they have said, it is really quite remarkable. They say one thing today and another tomorrow.

But what really I thought was shameful was that Mr. Reyes should say to us that he hoped for our children's sake, that the new school buildings which will come into use from September proved to be a product conforming to the higher standards. How dare Mr. Reyes say that to us. He is a very affable person. He's a very affable colleague in Parliament. But this is an affront. And we have to delivered as from September apart from the Jewish school, every school will have been built by the government of the GSLP Liberals, including St Joseph's, which is the first one done in the first GSLP administration. They presided over surpluses have shown the surpluses were smaller than mine, but they had surpluses and they allowed the children of the upper town to continue to have to suffer the Victorian building that was St Bernards and it was Victorian. And it felt Victorian. John Cortes and I cried when we went to see the KG 5 and we saw how our Alzheimer's patients were being treated. We shed a tear to where we went together with Gilbert to see St Bernards. It was my alma matter. That's what posh people call the school that they used to go to. I had very deep affection for it. I was ashamed, although it was in the very first months of my leading this community, I was ashamed to see that the good people of the upper town were having to have their children put through that school in the way that the GSD had left it.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that Mr. Reyes was Minister for Education frankly, I think it's remarkable that he had the gall to say to us that we have to deliver to the highest standards when we are delivering to the highest standard. Really remarkable.

On vocational courses, for example, Mr. Speaker. The hon gentleman doesn't seem to know that we've offered a vocational course in Bayside and West Side for construction, and it's had to be discontinued because it was taken up by zero students. Zero students. It's remarkable.

And the idea that the teaching profession is somehow being ignored when the teaching profession is actually working with us on the school developments. They are involved in the planning. The head teachers are involved in the planning of talking to the staff to make sure that they get the schools that they need. And I'm so looking forward so looking forward to finishing this part of the programme when on the first week in September this year, we have the handover of the new Bishop Fitzgerald, of the new governance meadow and of the new St Mary's. Mr. Speaker, because the programme will be almost complete, we will then move to the jewish school, we hope, and every school will have been developed by a GSLP Liberal government if the people of Gibraltar return us into office.

So, Mr. Speaker, I come almost now to my conclusion dealing with Mr. Phillips and Ms Marlene Hassan Nahon. Mr. Phillips, frankly, was loud. That was it. He was loud. But he is not here to hear me respond to him. He hasn't told me where he is. The Honourable Miss Hassan Nahon has told me that she has to be away from Gibraltar. Of course. She said she intended no discourteset and I I fully accept that. Mr. Philips has just not turned up, Mr. Speaker. Just not turned up. I'm not surprised. Because nobody can objectively look at our record in government



and say it is hopeless. Nobody can objectively say that our book reveals half the story. Nobody can objectively say that we want no oversight or transparency.

Mr Speaker. What is actually regretful is that a member of this House should suggest that for the last four years, four years in particular, we have been playing Monopoly because we have been playing games. I don't know whether Mr Phillips has enough Spanish to know the phrase that suggests that his face should fall of shame for having said that. How can anybody seriously say to this team that has been through what we have been through, who had to lock down this community, who had to pay a bill, who had to take the risks that we had to take in ending lockdowns, in creating a silver and golden hour. That had to address the community every day at 4:00 in the afternoon to tell them what was happening and what was going to happen next. That we have been playing a game.

Maybe it sounded funny when he sat there and in the infantile way concocted a speech that he thought might connect with some of his own supporters, but go no further. But it is deeply disrespectful to this House and to every public servant of Gibraltar and indeed even to the other members of this House who sit alongside him and who co-operated with the government to suggest that we have been playing a game for the past four years. It's deeply disrespectful to our families in particular, given what we did. It's extraordinarily disrespectful to the families who lost loved ones in the past four years during the pandemic. To the people who are experiencing problems at the frontier because their blue ID card holders and we have not been able to do a deal because it's not safe and secure to do a deal on the terms that have been put to us. Deeply disrespectful. The past four years have not been a game, Mr. Speaker, and I deeply resent the suggestion that they have been. Mr. Phillips can't even come up with something funny to say for himself. He had to adopt Ms Hassan Nahon's Planet Picard reference from last year. Well, at least for her, it was an original thought. Couldn't think of anything original for himself. He attacked Mr. Isola for talking about 1996, probably because it missed that the person who talked about 1996 was Keith Azopardi, his leader and Albert Isola was replying.

But then, most remarkably, because I know you had been here last year, he said we had not heeded the warnings of a potential perfect storm. Well he said. Mr. Feetham and Mr. Clinton have been warning of the potential perfect storm. Has he forgotten what Mr. Feachem said, Mr. Speaker, about the perfect storm and the effect of it. I'm surprised because it was the cover of my budget reply notes. This is a quote I put on the cover of my budget reply, which was the theme of my response in 2021 and 2022. It's a direct quote from Daniel Feetham to Mr. Speaker, because Daniel Feetham sometimes makes the point for me even better than I make it myself. He said this "of course, no one on this side of the House is saying that if they had been prudent with the people's money over the last ten years, we could have avoided an £157 million deficit, which is of course, COVID related, and no one could have predicted the pandemic." So much, Mr. Speaker, for the warnings that we were being given by Mr. Feetham. He himself said my warnings were irrelevant because we would have ended up in the same place. No, it's all, Mr. Speaker, for Mr. Phillips about getting Brexit done. It's all about the Venetian Palace at number six. It's all about criticising the music festival. Mr. Speaker, the honourable gentleman has become the daily express of political speeches.



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Although I am surprised he criticised the music festival because he and his family were there enjoying it with us. Mr. Speaker, enjoying perhaps a bit too much of a few too many of the drinks that were shared at that time. So I'm surprised. Maybe he'd forgotten because he had too many of the drinks but he'd been there because he was criticising his own spending. So I don't accept, Mr. Speaker, that I'm leaving a broken health service, decimated public service. I really don't accept that. I really don't accept that. And the idea that I'm giving jobs for the boys, literally. Well, I suppose the only way you can make that out, Mr. Speaker, is by arguing about the 26 people who are not who are unemployed and not members of the GSLP. Because everybody else has a job. Mr. Speaker, those are the numbers that Mr. Feetham says he cannot believe. I'll come to them in a moment. I'm going a little on a little longer than I expected, but not for very long.

He said something which I thought was right. He said, the people who broke the system cannot be trusted to fix it. Absolutely right. That's why they can never come back to government, Mr. Speaker, because they're the ones who broke the system. As I've shown with the numbers I've gone through, Mr. Speaker, and neither did I say and he completely misinterpreted that we are the third richest country in the world, Mr. Speaker. We're not the third richest country in the world. I did the GDP per capita calculation saying, I think it's a nonsense, Mr. Speaker that it doesn't work. But it's been done every year, so I have to do it. But even the nonsense argument is not to suggest that with a third richest country in the world. I did think at one stage she reminded me a lot of Lord Farquaad, Mr. Speaker, from Shrek, in the way that he was that he was going on.

Look, if we haven't done the Brexit deal, it's because it's not safe. If we haven't come off the FATF grey this, it's not because we're not doing things properly and came into the property. We are very likely to come off it much sooner than Cayman did because they were on it for two years. There's no proper governance in Gibraltar. The GSD will concentrate on this when in government. This is utter nonsense. This is worse than spin, Mr. Speaker. Worse than spin. And what he says is disgraceful is that I made them come back in the afternoon to give speeches because we should be on summer hours, he said. And what utter nonsense is that, Mr. Speaker? I'm surprised that Mr. Phillips should suggest that we should only come here in summer hours. It was actually quite pathetic, Mr. Speaker.

What about the times that we have been here late into the night? I have delivered the budget speech at 9:00 in the evening, Mr. Speaker. He had none of that. Mr. Speaker, he and the Hon Lady complaining about being made to come here on a summers afternoon when obviously they prefer to do something else. I deliberately manipulated the diary of this house. Well Mr. Azoaprdi spoke at 3:30. Mr. Reyes at 12:30, Mr. Clinton at 5:30, Mr. Bossino at 8:30. Mr. Feetham at 4:30. Ms Hassan Nahon at 5:00. So what's wrong? I have given speeches at 9:30 at night. Before this was on television, before it was being streamed, people had to listen on the radio if they wanted to. I mean, I suppose I had an audience. I'm here aren't I?

So he's criticising the GSD for that in effect, and the fact that this no line on mental health is so terrible, Mr. Speaker, he says it's disgraceful. He says it's really terrible. Serious, Mr.



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Speaker, demonstrates we have no commitment to mental health. What does he know that he sits next to a former minister for health in the GSD. And does he know that when the honourable the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Health in the GSD, there was no separate line in the estimates book for mental health issues. Talk about being stabbed in the sight, not in the back, Mr. Speaker, Honestly, I think Benny Hill does a better job, even though he doesn't say a word and he just runs around.

Mr. Speaker, we're not cutting locums, Mr. Speaker. We're employing more consultants. You have less locums when you fill the consultant post. This is a remarkable, remarkable approach to these estimates. It's not even worth going through the detail of what he says, the smelly bouses from greenarc that he talks about. Does he know that they signed that contract? Which is still enduring. So just like Mr. Bossino was criticising the Knightsfield contract which they did. As I told you at the beginning, twe changed so much, we even changed what they think of themselves. Even they think that the contracts that they did were not good contracts. He doesn't recognise the better air quality that there is in Gibraltar. None of that, Mr. Speaker, because he thinks he knows it all and he says that he has a blue and yellow army ready to do the Brexit deal that they're going to get done. I mean, I really did expect a lot better from Phillips when he was elected to this House than the diatribe that we were presented with in the way that we were presented with.

Mr. Speaker the Honourable Mr. Feetham treated us to what may be his, maybe his valedictory. As usual, Mr. Speaker, I am persuaded of my view that he imatures with age. He he really does remind me of Gaston in Beauty and the Beast. The primary antagonist of the beast known for his muscular physique, his handsome appearance, and his self-centred personality. In the story, Mr. Speaker, Gaston is infatuated with Belle, the film's protagonist. Here, I suppose we are both infatuated with Gibraltar. So Gibraltar rejects Gaston's advances because she values intelligence, kindness inner beauty over physical appearance. But Gastons arrogance leads him to become increasingly determined to win Gibraltar's affection and eliminate any competition, primarily the beasts on this side who Gibraltar has developed feelings for. So the whole story is about Gaston and the conflict that he feels he tries to manipulate and harm others to achieve his goals. It's so apposite, Mr. Speaker. Throughout that cartoon, Gaston displays manipulative behaviour, rallying the villagers against the beast and organising a plan to dispose of him. However, his arrogance ultimately becomes his own downfall and his actions lead to his own demise. The parallels, Mr. Speaker. They're all they're they're all there. And yet he gets up to round up for the opposition as if he were still the Leader of the Opposition. He gets up and he makes the first mathematical mistake. 23 years in politics. He says half my life. Mas quisieras el tener 46 anos. when you put all of the rest of the numbers that he says to Mr. Speaker in context he can't even multiply 23 by two. And he calls me Mr. Speaker, his principal political opponent. I think I'm supposed to be flattered, but he's not my principal political opponent. My principal political opponent is Sir Peter Caruana, and they haven't yet been able to produce anyone who has been able to stay the course as leader of the Opposition for long enough to remove me. So I'm not going to accept that we are principal political opponents.



But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that the honourable gentleman was was not a close second, but he is at least I will give him this, he is a distant second. He is the only one who really at least took the fight to us for a little while. Mr. Speaker. And then he goes on and says that I'm not elegant. Okay, well, look, he may say I'm not elegant, but but. But Gibraltar has preferred me on three occasions to him. And Gibraltar doesn't tend to get it wrong. But as he was delivering what is, to all intents and purposes, a valedictory, I think it is in effect a valedictory, although I know him well enough to know that he still harbours the chance they will ask him to stay and that they'll beg strongly enough and he will reluctantly say he will. I almost felt a little like saying this is the moment that Andrew Neil was referring to when he talked about Liz Truss, you know, finally realising that her ambitions and her ability didn't match. Always painful, always sobering. He's right that we're divided on the estimates book. We say we are honest they say we're not. But look, when you look at the numbers and you look at who compiles numbers, which is the civil service, not the politicians on this, unless they have the habit of telling people what to put in the book. It's clear, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that our estimates book is an honest reflection of our prudent management of the economy.

He says that the people won't want a government that gets away with any abuse of power. What abuses of power? There are no abuses of power, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely none. And if there are, there are courts to go to, no one has sued us for abuse of power, Mr. Speaker. In all the time that we've been in government, they had a couple of cases of abuse of power, in particular a case involving gold. We didn't. We did not. And he said that Mr Isola could not undo the great work that Keith had done because that's what they had done on joint sovereignty. Well, Mr. Isola doesn't need to undo the work that Keith Azopardi may or may not have done. You just need to rewatch the leader's debate of 2011 to see Peter Caruana say to Keith Azopardi "Oh for goodness sake, if you were just in charge of financial services, he had nothing to do with the public finances of Gibraltar" and absolutely denigrate the contribution of Keith Azopardi. But given what he told us, how he jumped onto the analogy of the jungle, I was reminded in his case of so many characters, but that was reminded in particular of The Snake in the Jungle Book, Mr. Speaker. Because Kaa a snake in the Jungle Book spends his time saying much what he said repeatedly to the people of Gibraltar, unsuccessfully. Just as Kaa was unsuccessful. Just trust in me. Trust in me. Shut your eyes. Trust in me. That's the song that Kaa sings to try and hypnotise the boy. You can sleep safe and sound knowing I'm around. Slip into silent slumber. Sail in a silver mist. Trust in me. That's what he's been trying to do for the past 12 years. Persuade the people of Gibraltar not to trust the government, but to trust him. And on every occasion that he's put himself up, Mr. Speaker. He's lost. He's lost. He's lost. Just like the Snake in the Jungle Book. I really do think it was not a good idea to talk about the jungle for the other side.

They were warning about the problems. They were wanting all these things, he said again. So he fell for the trap of repeating what Elliott Phillips has said about them, that they had been warning about the problems. But in fact, he'd forgotten that he had said that even if we had heeded his warnings, we would have ended up in the same place. He is hoist by his own petard. His own words undo his warnings, Mr. Speaker. But if you look at the thing that he said, which I thought was most fundamental this time, he said, based on all the indicators, they, the GSLP liberals, have failed.



Except, of course, if you look at the indicators, even using the words indicators, because you read it in the Times and you thought, I'm going to say indicators when they go to parliament next time I'm going to say indicators, financial indicators. If you look at the indicators, you have failed and then you actually do the work of looking at the indicators. When you look at the comparison of the budgets, within hours of them, I given them the graphs. Look at the growth in GDP. You look at the growth and jobs, the reduction in unemployment, look at the housing waiting list. Look at the affordable homes delivered, you name it, on all of the KPIs. We beat them hands down except on one; expenditure. They increased expenditure by more than us. Except this thing expenditure is the problem. So expenditure is more controlled by us than by them. And then you went on to attack Joe Bossano, which you couldn't help because I think there's a there's a thing there about 2002 in the executive. He couldn't help it. And I had to say to him, look, he's got to get over that. It's 20 years since he left the executive of the GSLP. Come on, we can all be friends. I'm serious. This is not my poker face. Because when it came to this debate, Mr. Speaker, and I was preparing my notes, I always put the quotes at the front. Two years it's been his, Mr. Speaker, because the whole subject of this debate, in effect, is about trust. About trust on the numbers and in particular, it's about who you trust to go and run the negotiation for Brexit, who finishes the Brexit negotiation, who sits there across the table from Spain, from the Europeans with the UK in this negotiation?

What did he say? I don't think he meant it as a compliment. But what did he say of me? Mr. Speaker, I have to say I have never met anyone. And there was a sneaky admiration that I have for him on this front with a greater ability, a greater ability to keep a poker face. And of course, I am referring to the Chief Minister. But, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be in the manifesto because when we go into the negotiation, what we need is a poker face. That's what you need in the negotiation. That's why it's called a poker face. It's somebody who, in a negotiation is able to keep their wits about them to such an extent that the other side are not able to see what he's thinking. That's the poker face. And he has said in this debate where he and the leader of the Opposition were saying that they should be the ones running the Brexit negotiation, that the guy with the best poker face he's ever seen. Is me. Can you say those words again so I could get it from a party political broadcast? Or do I have to rely on the video of here, Mr. Speaker? Because that is the best the best compliment he could have given me, where the key issue in the election is going to be who goes to the negotiation. Obviously, the guy with the poker face who is going to go, the guy who wrote the book saying that Andorra is not joint sovereignty. This is not a poker face, this is a full house for the other side. Anyway.

Then he went on to the 2011 general election and what he was doing there, the boom, boom, boom, boom. Mr. Speaker, it is too late in the afternoon for me to have to once again demolish the arguments that we've demolished and that the jury of public opinion, namely the electorate, has already determined he was wrong about at every turn. But I can, if you like to have a coffee, take him through everything that he said and show why it is absolutely wrong. And Mr. Speaker, he can't rewrite history, Albert Isola was here from 1996 to 2000 hitting at the GSD he was in the UK. So he can't say that, Albert Isola was somehow a cheerleader for Peter Caruana. Look, at least Albert Isola stayed in the GSD. Look he didnt come back from the UK and then join Peter Caruana and perpetuate his time in power. The one thing, however,



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that I'm not going to let him get away with is the thing that to the things that he said about unemployment. Mr. Clark, please call the usher..

Because, Mr. Speaker, a picture is worth a thousand words. And he said, he said that he did not believe that there were 26 people unemployed in Gibraltar, as we have told him. He said, he sees so many people who are unemployed. Well, maybe because they do part time politics, he might see a couple of day. And those other 26. But he did not believe that those were the numbers. So I'm giving them a chart now, with registered unemployment in Gibraltar from 1995, with employee jobs from 1988 to 2003, jobs from 1996 to 2022. And when it gets it also unemployed average between 1990 and 2022 and unemployed average.

Well, look, the numbers speak for themselves and a picture tells a thousand words. Look at how unemployment falls. Measured in the same way that they measured it. Look at the number of employee jobs as the curve goes down in unemployment the curve goes up for employment. Look at that. Between 1996 and 2022. That's the answer. He can believe it.

Or is it that he also believes that it's not just the financial secretary that puts in the numbers that I tell him to put without any regard to what the reality is? Is it also he thinks every employer who returns an employment record in the employer to the employment service. So the employment survey is skewed and it produces these results. So he doesn't just not believe me, he doesn't believe every employer who returns every return over the employment service. And there's a caption there because when he was sitting here next to Peter Caruana, who I know was not really next to it, bit further down, Peter Caruana said this, Look, if I am unemployed, an unemployed Gibraltarian person and we know there are around 280 to 300 something of them. Some of those are unemployable. Some of those are not looking for employment. And if they are, they are so choosy and selective that I suppose they want to wait until the office of Chief Minister is vacant to apply for it. And if they cannot get that job, they go around saying that they cannot find a job. No, what they mean is that they do not want to accept any of the many jobs that are going. That is what Sir Peter said in the Hansard in 2008 was the view of the GSD with 300 unemployed with him sitting there next to him. That is not our position. We said we could get more people in jobs and more people in jobs we have got. That's the reality. That's the reality. And the numbers speak for themselves and you can see those numbers for yourselves, Mr. Speaker. We have left no stone unturned to find jobs for Gibraltarians, and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. What I did not think was fair, Mr. Speaker, what I did not think was fair was that he should end his address, that he should end his address by praising the police in a way that suggested that we don't. Let's be very clear. The Royal Gibraltar Police enjoys the confidence of the whole of this House, not just the opposition. The commissioner of police enjoys the confidence of the whole of this House, in particular the government, not just the opposition. This commissioner enjoys the full confidence of the government. I have said so on television. He didn't have to come here to suggest that we don't. He does his cousin no service by pretending to come here to help him to do that. Mr. Speaker, he does the opposite. He attempts to do what he always attempts to do. He attempts to politicise the police for his own purpose. But I will tell him how you undermine the police. I will tell you about you undermine the police. You undermine confidence in the commissioner of police by sitting next to him when he's having a meeting



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with the GDP and telling them what the shift patterns are going to be if they merge and saying, No, Louis, that's not how you're going to do the shift patterns and telling them what you think as CM the shift patterns should be, which is what happened when he was minister for Justice, when Louis Wink was commissioner of police, and when Sir Peter was Chief Minister of Gibraltar. Well, he thought he was also the commissioner of police. That's how you undermine the commissioner of police and that's how you undermine confidence in the police.

What you should do is let them get on with what they do better than any other organisation, and that's what we do. Mr. Speaker, that's not to say that there can't be issues. Of course there are issues and of course they have to be dealt with. That's the interaction. But not to bring here any suggestion of a lack of confidence in order to curry favour with the police in particular. Mr. Speaker, when you're saying that this is your valedictory, I mean, I thought at one stage it was going to grab the microphone, he was going to jump here into the centre dais as if he were Robbie Williams and treat us to the clashes good old should I stay or should I go? If I stay, there will be trouble. If I go, it will be trouble. For goodness sake, Mr. Speaker. What a performance. It's the same old frustrated Daniel Feetham. Mr. Speaker, the same old broken record. But look, the one thing that he doesn't get by going through all of the scaring that they've done since 2011 till now, the one thing he doesn't get is the moral of the story of Monsters University. The Moral of the story of Monsters University in Monsters University. Mr. Speaker, you have an ecosystem where the whole city is powered by the screaming of children, and the monsters go out and scream, scare the children so that they scream and the screaming fills the tank with power.

But the moral of the story, which is deeper than just watching a cartoon, is actually that the monsters work out, that they get more energy from the children by inspiring them and giving them hope than by scaring them. And that is exactly the difference between him and me. It's exactly the difference between them and us. They have spent the last 12 years trying to scare the public into voting for them. We have spent the last 12 years telling people what we want to do with Gibraltar for Gibraltar and alongside them and inspiring them. That is the difference between him and us. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, he should give Mike a call. Anyway, look, in the end, Mr. Speaker, in the end, this may be his last budget address or it may not. If it is, Mr. Speaker, well, look, in the end, our relationship will be more like a like coyote and the Roadrunner than anybody else. Another cartoon where the roadrunner always got away. Anyway, the Hon lady is not here to hear me respond to them.

And there is very little that I intend to say, because she's already indicated that she will not be standing for election. But, Mr. Speaker, she said some things which need to be replied to and some things that I want to say to her. First of all, I'm very happy, Mr. Speaker, and that the honour the lady leaves politics as she entered it. And that to me is as a very good friend. We've had our ups and downs. We've had serious issues between us, but we have remained close in the time that we have both been members of this House. In particular, she's worked very closely with us on issues of progressive politics. And I do think that in the future, should those progressive policies ever come under attack, the public in Gibraltar, if I'm retired by then or have been discarded by then, will know that I am available to come and fight for those progressive policies. I'm sure Mr. Azopardi will to, I'm sure Mr Feetham will to and I'm sure she



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will too. And she has, to a very great extent, led on those issues, and I think she has a very proud contribution that she can look back on in the context of what she has done in respect of progressive issues and in particular women's reproductive rights.

Mr. Speaker, the state of our nation today is appalling, is what she said. Really? I mean, that's when you start to say things like that is when you are not being serious in your analysis. Gibraltar is becoming unbearable to live in because with so much development and unpainted railings, apparently unpainted railings is something that one refers to in the budget speech because it makes Gibraltar unbearable to live in. What about Commonwealth Park, Campion Park. Railings painted every two years. What about you tunnels with Art and Upper Town with art. What about all of the new areas that there are? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that if the honourable lady looks at the schools to which our children go, the homes of which our children, our people are living. Of course there are still some things to go. Gibraltar is not more appalling today than it was in 2011, in 1996 or in 1988. Of course there are issues. Of course they have to be resolved. But frankly, frankly, Gibraltar is not going to consider that a statement such as that Gibraltar is appalling to live in is going to be serious.

What about the bike lanes, Mr. Speaker? What about the green walls and the new schools? Come on. The Upper Town is not abandoned. Mr. Speaker, the upper town needs work still in some areas, but it's looking better than it has ever looked before. So when you ask where has the money gone, Mr. Speaker? Well, it's in the schools. It's in all of those new developments. It's obvious, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious. I was grateful that she had picked up the GSD also in the way that they were attacking the issue of tax because she was more serious when it came to tax.

But I thought that she was wrong to suggest that we had been using dirty tactics because of the way that we had timed the debate on the estimates had gone through that already. She referred to vanity projects. I still don't know what those vanity projects are. I suppose that the vanity projects of are the schools, I suppose the vanity projects are the primary care centres, the affordable housing or the sports facilities, I don't know what the vanity projects are otherwise, but look, in the end, Mr. Speaker, she's come to politics, she's done politics, she's leaving politics, and she leaves a friend and she leaves with the regard of the government for the work that she has done.

Mr. Speaker, I now round up. It is really quite remarkable that members opposite have told us that they are once again going to vote against the budget this year in particular this year in particular for a simple reason. They say that they are going to become the government in the autumn, which means that they will be running the government with estimates that they have voted against. They are going to vote against being able to spend money the day after the general election.

They're going to vote against being able to continue to pay civil servants after the general election. We will be gone in their world in that hopeless fiction in which they win a general election. They have voted down the money they are going to have to spend. It is really quite remarkable. Mr. Speaker. It is very clear that all of their statements were flops for the reasons



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that I've gone through, that many of them are already flops because their former leaders of the opposition that Mr. Azopardi is soon to be a former leader of the Opposition, not because he's going to become chief minister, but because he's going to be got rid of by the GSD when he doesn't become chief Minister. And then Mr. Bossino is soon going to be a flop, a future Leader of the Opposition. But what they have demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, what they have demonstrated is that they haven't got what it takes in this budget debate.

They have got what it takes. Oh, we're tired. Of course we're tired. We're tired of that, Mr. Speaker. We're tired of the negativity. We're tired of them not having full regard for our people. That's the reality. We're not tired of delivering the best affordable homes in our history. We're not tired of delivering new schools for our children. We're not tired of serving our people. In this last state of the nation debate. What have they offered our people except flawed analysis, flawed understandings of the estimate. Their policy which has fallen immediately, which is to suggest that we should form part of their Brexit negotiating team. Nothing is what they have offered our people and what have they done in the past four years, Mr. Speaker? They do have hasheo politics, the politics of rumour and innuendo, the politics of what they call perception because they can't point at anything in reality. In reality. In particular, Mr. Azopardi and Mr Bossino one asking questions about chickens, the other one running like a chicken away from a meeting with the Minister for Tourism. Mr. Speaker, always ready to criticise, never ready to meet and discuss.

Mr. Azopardi and Mr Bossino do seem to be, Mr. Speaker, the new Clottey and Cynthia of gallantry to style politics that they seem to be running, bringing gossip, gossip and hasheo to this place. And to think, Mr. Speaker, that that opposite us used to be the party of Peter Montegriffo and Peter Caruana.

We might have disagreed with them, but that was a party of substance. But now the party of Azopardi and Bossino. I don't know which way round. What substance is there now in the GSD that we have before us? Well, Mr. Speaker, they arrive together and they smile together. But they are obviously at political loggerheads. The next election for Mr. Bossino is not about government and it's not about Gibraltar. It's about leading the GSD. It's the final act, in my view. Mr. Speaker, of the Post-Caruana civil War, in which Mr. Bossino and his Vox like values, I believe, will prevail. And then we will have the final real battle looming between progressive GSLP liberal politics and GSD deep conservatism. Because, Mr. Speaker, they the GSour D, are all about opposition, not about leadership, all about opposition, not about vision, all about opposition with no plan for people's future. The GSD stand against everything, but they stand for nothing. We know everything they are against, but we know nothing about what they might support other than that Andora is NOT joint sovereignty. so our people know now, Mr. Speaker, that the GSD are not a credible option for the future. It's the GSLP liberals that will keep Gibraltar safe, we'll get Gibraltar through the jungle just like we've got our people through COVID, just like we're getting us through the Brexit crisis. Our message to our people who have suffered these COVID years, who may have lost loved ones, who are suffering the cost of living issues is that we will continue to work for them as we have these past four years, these toughest four years.



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And when our people look back and they look at the challenges of COVID, they look at the conclusions of the New Years Eve agreement, even whilst we were in lockdown, they look at the way we dealt with lockdown and with furlough. The way we designed beat, the way we got the vaccine, because of the way we nurture the relationship with Britain, the way we got our sovereign guarantee because of the way we nurture the relationship with Britain. All of those photographs at number ten, which are more than just photographs. Everything we did for our businesses and our citizens alike, and they see how the economy and the public finances have recovered. And they look at the alternative. I believe our people will genuinely and deeply value what we have done. They will genuinely and deeply consider the work that we have done, which shows our good faith, demonstrates our hard work, shows that hard work pays off and evidences our deep and undying love for our country and our people. Because there is only one coalition of parties in this parliament that is on the side of the Gibraltarian people, and that is the GSLP Liberals. There is only one coalition of parties that is ready to stand up always for the Gibraltarian people and that is the GSLP Liberals. There is only one coalition of parties in coalition with the Gibraltarian people and that's the GSLP Liberals. Only one coalition of parties that is the political wing of the Gibraltarian people, the GSLP Liberals, never caring for ourselves, always acting in the best interests of our people.

Whether our actions are popular or not, judge us. Mr. Speaker, on our record on judgement, we were right about Lisbon, Strasbourg and Brussels processes from the beginning when the GSD defended the Brussels process in the tense talks. We said no, we were right then and we are right now. When the AACR defended the 87 airport agreement and the GSD defended the 2006 code of our airport agreement, we said no. When the GSD spent 100 million on the airport before spending a penny on a KG5, we said no. We were right then and we are right now.

And the public will also look at the contribution by honourable members opposite. Reflecting on these toughest four years, they came in to criticise everything and recognise nothing and on spending. They criticise our record, but they forget that when they had the purse strings they lost the public's money. Yes, the GSD lost the public's money. They lost 10 million on the Theatre Royal, they lost 7 million which they loaned to OEM and was never paid back. They made no investments in the comprehensive schools. We had to deliver that. No investment in a Victorian St Bernard. We had to deliver that. A number of multi-generational projects which needed doing, delivered on time and on budget by the GSLP Liberals, the new PCC, a new children's PCC, new affordable homes at subsidised prices and great quality new sporting facilities so our athletes do not have to go to Spain to train anymore unless they want to. Which of these is an extravagance and increase in public sector pay and improving terms and conditions? Which of these do the Opposition say is an extravagance? If they now argue that we should increase some of these things more? They talk about not spending too much, but they never point to the one thing they would not have spent on. They say we need to lobby and market more and then they say we should not fly on the flights available because they cost money. This is nonsense. Opposition from parties with only nonsense to propose to the general public in Gibraltar the Gibraltarian public no, the GSD is not on their side. The GSD is on their own side. They don't want to win for the Gibraltarian. They want to win for the GSD. They want to win for the rich that they represent the people who they used to tax at 5% and



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we now tax at 25%, not for the working people that we defend and whose side we are on because that's how they defended the working people.

Mr. Speaker, by having the tax on those who earn hundreds of thousands. Pounds at 5%, and the tax on those who earn 20 or £30,000 at 25% - we do the opposite. Speaker We make sure that everybody pays their share. So what was the golden legacy of the GSD? That the rich pay 5% and the rest pay 25% taxpayers money loaned to OEM and lost? That was the golden legacy. When you spend one minute looking beyond the headlines, Mr. Speaker, and the social media noise that they try to make, you can see the truth. And the people of Gibraltar can see the truth. They will not have the wool pulled over their eyes. And the public, in my view, will see that the only option available at the next election, the only choice that will keep Gibraltar safe will be the GSLP Liberal team and that these estimates for the year ahead are the best demonstration that we continue to work to keep Gibraltar safe, Mr. Speaker, and that we keep the vulnerable safe and that we keep the incomes of working people safe, that we keep our public finances safe, that people who work each day in everything they do in this Cabinet team do it to keep Gibraltar safe. We are the only safe choice, Mr. Speaker.

We are the only ones that will keep Gibraltar safe, especially given the clear position of the leader of the party opposite on an Andorra style solution and what it means, which once again puts Gibraltar at risk under the GSD, puts Gibraltar sovereignty at risk with a GSD chief Minister who has specifically written down that an Andorra style solution is not joint sovereignty. That creates the risk once again that under the GSD a joint sovereignty solution would be mooted and that is something that the electorates will want to avoid at any cost. They will want to avoid the risk that the vote for the GSD presents. The electorates will want to act to keep Gibraltar safe. And in my view, Mr. Speaker, they will vote to keep Gibraltar safe and they will do that by returning us to government to keep Gibraltar safe. Because in this election, like in every election, it is always first and foremost for us about keeping Gibraltar safe. Just like this appropriation like every appropriation is for us about one thing above all else about keeping Gibraltar safe. And Mr. Speaker, with this one, it's about finishing what we started, about the social justice that we want to do, about the protection of the vulnerable, which these estimates are designed to do. And so, Mr. Speaker, for that reason, I once again unhesitatingly commend the bill to the House and because nobody does it better. I commend the renewed Liberal government talking. I'm a speaker. I just learned one thing. I would propose that we come back and we look at the detail of the estimates in the committee stage and third reading at 4 p.m.

ENDS