

Ceremonial Opening
of Fifth
House of Assembly
held on
22nd February 1984

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The First Meeting of the First Session of the Fifth House of Assembly held in the House of Assembly Chamber on Wednesday the 22nd February, 1984, at 11.00 am.

PRESENT:

Mr Speaker (In the Chair)
(The Hon A J Vasquez CBE, MA)

GOVERNMENT:

The Hon Sir Joshua Hassan CBE, MVO, QC, JP - Chief Minister
The Hon A J Canepa - Minister for Economic Development and Trade
The Hon M K Featherstone - Minister for Public Works
The Hon H J Zammitt - Minister for Tourism
The Hon Major F J Dellipiani ED - Minister for Housing, Labour
and Social Security
The Hon Dr R G Valarino - Minister for Municipal Services
The Hon J B Perez - Minister for Education and Health
The Hon G Mascarenhas - Minister for Sport and Postal Services
The Hon E Thistlethwaite - Acting Attorney-General
The Hon B Traynor - Financial and Development Secretary

OPPOSITION:

The Hon J Bossano - leader of the Opposition
The Hon J E Pilcher
The Hon M A Feetham
The Hon Miss M I Montegriffo
The Hon J C Perez
The Hon J L Baldachino
The Hon R Mor

IN ATTENDANCE:

P A Garbarino Esq, MBE, ED - Clerk of the House of Assembly

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The Speaker took the Oath of Allegiance and administered the Oath to the Hon Sir Joshua Hassan, the Hon A J Canepa, the **Hon M K Featherstone**, the Hon H J Zammitt, the Hon Major F J Dellipiani, the Hon Dr R G Valarino, the Hon J B Perez, the Hon G Mascarenhas, the Hon E Thistlethwaite, the Hon B Traynor, the Hon J Bossano, the Hon J E Pilcher, the Hon M A Feetham, the Hon M I Montegriffo, the Hon J C Perez, the Hon J L Baldachino and the Hon R Mor.

MOTION RE CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, under Section 26(1) of the Constitution, "The Speaker of the Assembly shall be appointed by the Governor, acting after consultation with the Chief Minister and with the Leader of the Opposition (if any)". Subsection 3 says: "A person shall vacate the office of Speaker -

- (a) if, at the sitting of the Assembly next following his appointment, his appointment is not confirmed by resolution of the Assembly".

The consultations referred to in the Constitution have duly taken place and you have once again been appointed by His Excellency the Governor as Speaker of this Assembly. It remains for this House to confirm this appointment by resolution. It is now my pleasure to move that, pursuant to the provisions of Section 26 of the Constitution of Gibraltar, this House confirms the appointment of the Hon Alfred J Vasquez as Speaker of the Gibraltar House of Assembly.

Mr Speaker, it is now fifteen years since you first presided over the affairs of this House. It would be presumptuous of me, as well as superfluous, to praise your work during this period: the fact of your repeated reappointment speaks for itself. We look forward to yet another four years of your firm but benign presidency and guidance.

One matter which concerns you as Speaker, as well as both sides of the House, is that of the Standing Orders which regulate our procedures. Much work has been done in improving and bringing these up to date and it is our firm intention to finalise a revised draft at as early a date as possible and to seek approval for its introduction.

Mr Speaker, it is with the best wishes of this side of the House that I commend my motion for the confirmation of your appointment.

HON J BOSSANO:

Mr Speaker, I last had the pleasure and the honour of standing to support a motion confirming your appointment in 1976 and I made reference in 1976 to the excellent qualities that you had displayed in previous Speakerships in providing the guidance that new Members need. I am absolutely confident that the new Members on this side of the House will benefit enormously from your experience and from your knowledge of the procedure of the House and I can promise you that there will be the same disciplined respect for your authority in the coming years that I have always tried to give you in the time that I have been here. I think that in a place as small as Gibraltar we often have difficulties in visualising how any position that has been held as eminently and any job that has been as well done as you have done yours, can ever be suitably replaced by someone else. I hope that the House of Assembly will continue to benefit from your experience and from your dedication to the job for many years to come. I am delighted to be able to support this motion.

The Clerk then put the question which was unanimously resolved in the affirmative and the motion was accordingly carried.

MR SPEAKER:

Hon Members, I am today as deeply conscious of the trust, confidence and indeed responsibility that you have just placed on me, as I was when I was first appointed Speaker nearly fifteen years ago.

In thanking all Hon Members I would also like to welcome the new Member on the Government benches and the six new Members on the Opposition benches and the fact that we are graced by a lady Member again after several years.

The Speaker presides over the debates of the House and ensures that they are conducted according to the formal procedures; I am, perhaps by accident of life, an essential part of the machinery of the House which ensures that our Parliamentary system works by implementing and interpreting the House's wishes.

Each individual Member, be he sitting on my right or be he sitting on my left, will always receive from me, as indeed he is entitled to receive, the same consideration. I will always and at all times be at their entire disposal. But I must stress that my over-riding duty is always to the House collectively. In this I will always be found unwavering.

I would like to end by expressing my appreciation and thanks to the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and to all Members of the House for confirming me in my fifth term as Speaker of the Gibraltar House of Assembly.

Thank you very much indeed.

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, ADMIRAL SIR DAVID WILLIAMS GCB

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR:

Please be seated.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Fifth House of Assembly;

Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of Gibraltar continue to attach great importance to the improvement of their relationship with Spain.

Her Majesty's Government have welcomed Spanish adherence to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and fully support the Spanish application for membership of the European Community. We all look forward to the earliest possible normalisation of relations between Gibraltar and the neighbouring parts of Spain. Then the mutual friendship between the people of the region can evolve further.

The people of Gibraltar may be confident that in their dealings with the Spanish Government, Her Majesty's Government remain committed to the assurances contained in the Gibraltar Constitution Order, 1969.

It is my hope that at the next Ceremonial Opening of the House I, or my successor, will be able to take note of steadily developing friendly relations between Gibraltar and its neighbour.

The Gibraltar Government will be engaged in a wide range of activity over the next four years. The most significant and urgent matters to be dealt with are the commercialisation of the Dockyard and the diversification of the economy to counter the effects of the closure of the Naval Dockyard.

Commercialisation is seen by the Government as offering a real prospect of employment and of renewed economic activity in the building industry and in sub-contracting.

Diversification of the economy will take the form mainly of an expansion and development of the tourist industry which the Government believes also has good prospects both in the immediate and longer-term future. Proposals to this end are now before the Government.

In this context the development of the valuable sites at Queensway and Rosia will continue to be pursued as a matter of urgency in consultation with the Ministry of Defence through the Joint Consultative Committee on land use. The longer-term strategies for the future use of land held by the Ministry of Defence and the Gibraltar Government will also be dealt with in that Committee. The new agreement on lands, formally ratified late last year, will be of substantial benefit to Gibraltar.

The Government also recognises the importance of the contribution which the Financial Sector can make to the future economic development of Gibraltar and will take all possible measures to promote its growth.

In the field of defined domestic matters the Government will continue, within the existing financial constraints, to do whatever is possible to ease the housing situation. Education and the medical services, youth and sport will also continue to command the close attention of Ministers and their Departments.

Ministers will pay particular attention to the need for economy in the use of public funds. Financial procedures are being examined to ensure that supplements to approved provisions are granted only when this is demonstrably necessary.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I declare this First Session of the Fifth House of Assembly open. I wish you well in all your endeavours, and I pray for God's blessing and guidance on your deliberations for the good of Gibraltar and the well-being of its people.

God Save The Queen.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Your Excellency,

Once again, we welcome Your Excellency's reaffirmation of Her Majesty's Government's pledges to the people of Gibraltar. The reaffirmation, made formally on this occasion, and others, is not a mere ritual or routine repetition. It reflects the continuing deep relationship between the Parliament and people of Britain and the people of Gibraltar. We on this side of the House, as the elected Government, wish, in our turn, to reaffirm Gibraltar's loyalty to Britain and our determination to work together for the good of Gibraltar and in our mutual and complementary interests.

It is with some natural pride that my party once more takes up its position on this side of the House. That pride stems from the confidence which has been placed in us by the electorate, a confidence which, at the same time, we humbly acknowledge, coming as it does after a period of four very difficult years and when more difficulties lie ahead.

We feel encouraged and strengthened by the renewed and increased support of the people. But, above all, we feel a deep sense of responsibility. I want to take this first opportunity in the House of Assembly to pledge to the people of Gibraltar, as a whole, that we will devote all our energies and endeavours, as Ministers, to work unsparingly to justify their confidence and support and to discharge our responsibility to the utmost.

This is only the second occasion on which both sides of the House have consisted entirely and exclusively of members of only two political parties. This may not be to the liking of those in Gibraltar who do not think that the party system is good for us. The fact remains that the party system is with us and shows no signs of going away.

The Government, after the ups and downs of that remarkable night four weeks ago, has a strong, clear and unquestionable mandate to give effect to its policies. The Opposition - certainly in my view - is there, not to oppose for the sake of opposing, but primarily to offer a credible alternative Government in 1988.

In the 'Gibraltar Chronicle' of 9 February the Leader of the Opposition is reported as saying:

"What is true is that it is possible for Sir Joshua and myself to work together for the public good on occasions when matters of differing principle are not at stake. There is no personal animosity between us".

I hope and believe that that statement will set the tone for the work of the House in the next four years. I certainly reciprocate the Leader of the Opposition's sentiment in regard to our personal relationship. Of course, we do not expect to have an easy time. We know that the Opposition will question our policies and put forward their own and that they will never lose sight of their objective to form a Government. But where a particular policy is manifestly good for Gibraltar, and irrespective of whichever side of the House proposes it, I believe it to be our collective duty to pursue it.

One of the main reasons why some object to the party system in Gibraltar is that, in the past, it has sometimes seemed - let it be said - as though the House was playing party games. Today, encouraged by the statement of the Leader of the Opposition, I look forward to a House which, if ideologically more sharply divided particularly on the management of the economy than any previous legislature in Gibraltar, will get on with the business in a constructive spirit, working together for the public good and without personal animosities, concerned more with overcoming the serious problems that face us all than with who wins the next election.

I should like at this point to refer to a misunderstanding of our electoral system which recurs over and over again. Reports on the last election in the press abroad have referred to the one-man majority obtained by my party. With our present system, this is inevitable, as shown in the five elections which have taken place under that system. Anyone who examines closely the figures which produced the election result will realise that they speak for themselves and that they give the lie to those who argue that the Government has taken decisions which it ought not to have taken because the difference in votes in this House was only one.

The fact is that the Government, whatever the size of its majority, has the duty and responsibility to govern. Where, through reasoned and rational discussion, we can make progress, so be it; where we cannot agree, let us have a democratic acceptance, in this House and outside this House, of the fact of majority, no matter its size.

I refer to this primarily on account of the issue of the Dockyard commercialisation. Last year, the then Opposition made much of the one-man majority in that decision. The fact remains that commercialisation was the main issue at the election and that that one-man majority decision has been endorsed by the electorate.

In a recent communique the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party recognised that we are now in a position to try and implement the commercialisation package but that the responsibility for this and for its inevitable eventual failure, as they say, lies solely on my shoulders and on those of my Government.

While we on this side of the House certainly do not accept the inevitability of failure, nor even the prospect of failure, we do accept fully the responsibility for commercialisation. But we can do so only if we are given a fair opportunity to discharge that responsibility. If, given the opportunity, the decision were to turn out in the end to have been mistaken, we shall accept the responsibility for that mistake. But if we are not given the opportunity, and if the chances of making a success of the commercial dockyard are obstructed by others, then any failure will clearly be the responsibility of those who might have stood in the way - and the whole of Gibraltar will know this.

It was, of course, politically legitimate for the other two parties to resist our decision on the commercialisation of the Dockyard and to contest it at a time when an election was due. It is true that the resistance has cost Gibraltar seven out of the twelve months' extension which was won with so much difficulty last July by the Minister for Economic Development and Trade and myself. But it is no use looking backwards. The situation now is, clearly and unmistakably, that the majority of the people of Gibraltar want

commercialisation to be given a chance to succeed. That majority view must be respected, not only because that is the democratic decision but because on its success, on its earliest possible success, depends the number of redundant workers who will have a job on the 1st of January, 1985, and thereafter.

It is the declared objective of the Transport and General Workers Union, as it is the Government's, to achieve the highest possible employment on that date. That objective will not be achieved if unreasonable obstacles are placed in the way of the conversion of the Dockyard, and time is running so short that, already, No. 1 Dock cannot be ready before 1st March, 1985. I appeal to the Transport and General Workers Union, and I ask the Hon Members opposite to support me in this appeal, to remove, now, any remaining obstacles which can operate only against the interests of the workers. The decision on commercialisation has been taken and many redundant workers will find new jobs as a result. The only effect of continuing to delay the process will be to reduce the number of those jobs.

Following its decision to initiate negotiations on terms and conditions of employment in the commercial Dockyard, the Transport and General Workers Union wrote to the Chairman of the Gibraltar Shiprepair Company requesting that these negotiations be instituted. The Union has been informed that the Government is taking steps to form the Company and that a Board, which will be chaired for the time being by the Financial and Development Secretary, is being appointed. Once appointed, the Board will enter into a Management Agreement with Messrs A & P Appledore International Limited. Under that Agreement the responsibility for the handling of all industrial relations in connection with the shiprepair business will be delegated to Messrs Appledore who will accordingly act on behalf of Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited in this matter. The Union has also been informed that, as soon as the formalities for establishing the Company have been completed, a preliminary meeting will be held between the Board and the Union, as they have requested, and arrangements will be made for the actual negotiations to commence between the Union and the Operator, acting as the agents of Gibraltar Shiprepair Limited. Both sides have agreed to accept the offer made by the Government last year to assist in this matter if this was considered desirable and, as a result, the Government's Industrial Relations Officer will be present at negotiations in order to take a record but not to participate in the negotiations as such.

I would add that the Government's intention is that the Board, under the chairmanship of the Financial and Development Secretary, should consist, for the time being, of the Economic Adviser, a representative of the Overseas Development Administration, an independent person and a representative of Messrs Appledore.

On this occasion it is the practice to outline the Government's policies for the ensuing four years. I will refer to these, briefly, later. If I have dwelt on the Dockyard at some length, it is because this is the most important single issue facing us at this moment.

The second major issue I wish to speak about is tourism. As the House will know, and because of the much greater importance which tourism has assumed in our economic future following the decision to close the Dockyard, I directed that a special study be made of the tourist industry in Gibraltar. The study has been completed and a report has now been submitted to me. I am considering the report, in consultation with the Minister for Tourism, and will **shortly** be making a statement. For the moment, I will simply say that the report, which has been written after close consultation with all sectors of the tourist industry in Gibraltar and with people in Britain, strongly recommends that sufficient Government resources be allocated to the tourist industry in order to transform Gibraltar into a real and internationally-known tourist resort.

The Report identifies the policy decisions which need to be taken in order to achieve this objective; it goes on to recommend a number of changes in the way tourism is administered in Gibraltar; it ends with detailed recommendations on the steps that need to be taken in the immediate and medium-term future if Gibraltar's tourist industry is to have the new boost and impetus which we wish to give it.

I will add only, at this stage, that the report places particular emphasis on the need for all in Gibraltar to realise the importance of tourism to our prosperity, including the creation of jobs, and suggests ways and means in which all concerned, the Government, the industry itself, individuals with special knowledge or interest and the community as a whole can assist.

A particular point made in the report is that tourism, as a business, cannot be run effectively if it is subjected continuously to political controversy. I hope that this is one area in which the Government and the Opposition will be able to work together for the public good. I do not think that tourism is an ideological issue. All countries, of whatever belief, are involved in world organisations for the promotion and expansion of tourism, in the knowledge both that it leads to greater international understanding and that it creates wealth and jobs, particularly for those who have insufficient industrial or natural resources to maintain their economy. We are certainly in that position and I have no doubt that, if everyone works together on this matter, we can make a complete success of it.

On this second major issue I invite the Opposition to work together with us.

There are other issues on which I know they will not. Chief amongst these is the question of relations with Spain. The leader of the Opposition's stance on this question is well known. I do not share that position. I think I can truthfully say that, for the last 21 years in particular, since the issue was first raised in the United Nations, but also before that, I have been in the forefront in defending Gibraltar's interests, particularly on the question of sovereignty. I shall continue to do so and I know that the vast majority of people in Gibraltar will support me in this.

I think it is unfortunate that the two sides of the House will no longer be following a bi-partisan policy in this matter. If anything, that places a greater responsibility on me. I am no advocate of concessions under pressure and never have been. That is not the point. The point is that, without conceding at all on the sovereignty issue, or on any matter that may weaken Gibraltar's position on that issue, there has to be dialogue - on a mutually beneficial basis. I believe the great majority of people in Gibraltar would agree with this - and I would say that to refuse dialogue not only puts Gibraltar in a false position but could operate to our disadvantage.

The point was clearly made in our manifesto. Gibraltar must, in its own interests, participate in any dialogue between Britain and Spain. That dialogue will continue and we must not be left out of it. We also said in our manifesto that "Together with Britain, we will succeed". We cannot turn our backs on dialogue, nor on Britain. It is not thus that we can defend our interests.

Your Excellency, I have spoken so far of the three major questions facing Gibraltar: the Dockyard, tourism and Spain. Enough, one would have thought, to keep us busy. But this does not mean that we shall not pay the closest attention to domestic matters and to the day-to-day problems of the community and of the individual. We shall pursue, and honour, every point made in our manifesto, whether on housing, education, sport, youth, equality of taxation for the sexes or pensions. These, and other problems, will command the attention of Ministers each in their own sphere.

One of the first tasks to which Ministers addressed themselves after the election was to consider the report of a sub-committee of Council of Ministers containing proposals on employment and retirement policies and on the possibilities of job creation. Preliminary decisions on these matters were taken in Council of Ministers last week. Our objective is to ensure that the employment available is shared fairly and, in a spirit of social justice, to assist and protect those in our community who, temporarily at least, will be in difficulty.

Some firm steps will have to be taken to achieve this objective. For instance, with certain exceptions, persons who have already retired and have been re-employed by the Gibraltar Government and persons over the retirement age should make way for school-leavers and others without jobs. In order to enable those who have no job at all to find at least part-time work, it may be necessary for those who hold a full-time job and are also working part-time to relinquish their part-time employment, unless of course, they are expressly authorised to do so. Recruitment policy will be directed generally at ensuring that breadwinners out of work are given due preference over other categories of applicants. The details of our policies will shortly be put to the Trade Unions with a view to seeking their cooperation in these matters.

I might add, in connection with the Elections Ordinance, that it is the Government's intention to amend the law so as to ensure that only those persons who are actually resident in Gibraltar will be able to stand for election in future.

There are one or two other matters to which I must refer today. As announced during the last Legislature, the Gibraltar Government entered into a new and advantageous agreement on the question of surplus Ministry of Defence lands to which Your Excellency has referred. We also reached agreement with London on the establishment of a Joint Consultative Committee on Land Use again which Your Excellency has given proper importance. This Consultative Committee held its first meeting recently and I am glad to say that a large measure of mutual understanding was reached between the Gibraltar Government and the Ministry of Defence. This does not mean that all issues have been resolved between us but I do believe that this Committee represents a real breakthrough on this question, to the advantage and benefit of both sides. One outcome of the meeting, among others, was that, on 7 March, the Ministry of Defence will be giving a presentation to the Gibraltar Government of their own plans and requirements in terms of land. This will be immediately followed by the Government's own presentation. Although one side's requirements will, of course, conflict at some points with those of the other, we have succeeded in establishing a forum in which these can be frankly discussed and, in the mutual spirit of goodwill which characterises our relationship with Britain, resolved to each side's satisfaction.

I am able to announce in the House today that on 7 March I shall be having a meeting with the Secretary of State, Sir Geoffrey Howe. The object of this meeting, as of that held on 15 November last year, is to keep in touch with each other, particularly after the general election. On that same day I shall be meeting Mr John Lee, the Minister who succeeded Mr Ian Stewart at the Ministry of Defence, with whom I will be discussing lands matters in particular.

Your Excellency, I wish today to welcome to this House Mr Joe Pilcher, Mr Michael Feetham, Miss Maria Isabel Montegriffo, Mr Juan Carlos Perez, Mr Joseph Baldachino and Mr Robert Mor. We on this side of the House look forward to our joint participation in the discussion of motions and legislation and to the establishment of good personal relationships, whatever political differences may divide us.

Our warmest welcome also to Mr George Mascarenhas who is now charged with responsibility for sport and postal services.

As already announced, Ministerial responsibilities will otherwise remain unchanged between now and the budget since, before the election, Ministers had been closely concerned with the preparation of departmental estimates. After the budget I will consider what changes should be made and, as also already announced, we are giving thought to ways and means in which a greater degree of Ministerial coordination and inter-departmental efficiency can be achieved. This becomes necessary, today more than ever, because of the demands that are going to be made on the government machine, particularly in the next year or two.

These demands must be met at both Ministerial and civil service level. I have discussed the matter with Ministers and have also held two meetings with Heads of Department and other senior officials. While acknowledging the generally good work of Government Departments, I have impressed upon them the need for extra effort in the days that lie ahead, particularly in responding to the demands that commercialisation of the Dockyard and the development and expansion of tourism will make upon them and their departments.

Your Excellency, I have already welcomed the new Members of this House. I should now like to say a word about former Members. First of all, I should like to pay tribute to Mr Isaac Abecasis. I have already done so publicly, at the time when it became clear that he would not be standing for election. I now wish to place on record in this House the gratitude which, primarily, my own party feels towards him for his great contribution to public life in Gibraltar but also the appreciation of this House for his work as a Minister and for his great friendliness, cheerfulness and sense of humour which so often deflated political bitterness in debate.

Finally, Your Excellency, I should like to place on record our appreciation of the efforts of the last party in Opposition. While we differed - and differed strongly - in many respects, we acknowledge that, politics aside, they were concerned with the good of Gibraltar. I refer to Peter Isola, Gerald Restano, Bob Peliza, Willie Scott, Tony Loddo and Andrew Haynes.

Your Excellency, I reiterate the determination of Ministers to work unsparingly for the good of Gibraltar and my hope that on non-controversial issues we shall be able to work constructively together to the same end. I express our full confidence that we can look to Your Excellency personally to assist us in our endeavours.

HON J BOSSANO:

Your Excellency, I hope Your Excellency will forgive me if I have to keep him here longer than the programme provides for, I will try and keep my contribution short but there are things that I intended to say on this occasion and that I wish to say and there are things that have been said by yourself and by the Chief Minister which I think require an answer.

When I last stood up on an occasion such as this was in 1976 when Sir John Grandy was Governor of Gibraltar. The 1976 election was fought on the issue of the Hattersley Memorandum and the concern felt by the people of Gibraltar about the constitutional future and the insecurity created by the position of the British Government then, who were already being pointed in the direction of Spain, and I think Your Excellency's own contribution and emphasis on the importance attached by Her Majesty's Government in the relationship of Gibraltar and Spain is a continuation of that thinking. Let me say that the Chief Minister's response in 1976, in his speech here, was that we could not act in haste and he went about setting up a little Committee to study the matter and I don't know whether eight years later, where we are no nearer coming up with solutions on the constitutional relationship with Britain, the Chief Minister still feels we are being a little bit too hasty and we need to wait a little bit longer before we come up with any answers. I will return to this point in dealing with other aspects of how we, in the Opposition, see our role in this House and our relationship with the Government. I, of course, said in 1976 that it was a historic moment possibly because it might well be that it was not just the third House of Assembly but the last House of Assembly. I think events have proved one thing, that my powers of clairvoyance are negligible compared with those of the Deputy Governor who was able to say, early in November, 1981, not only

that the closure of the Dockyard was going ahead, which was not formally announced in the House of Assembly until two weeks later, after all he was only seeing two weeks into the future, but that in fact commercialisation was on and we should get ourselves ready for it which did not happen until July, 1983, when the Chief Minister made up his mind. I obviously cannot compete with such vision and accuracy about future events and I will not attempt to do so on this occasion, I will limit myself to predicting what I can predict, and that is what the Opposition will be doing. In doing so I have to make reference to the strength of the GSLP representation in this House of Assembly. I have been a lone voice on many occasions, Your Excellency, in this House where I have found myself not contradicted by arguments, in fact, getting sympathetic responses to my arguments but being outvoted fourteen to one on more than one occasion.

In 1976 the Chief Minister's analysis was that the people had voted in a way which showed that whilst they gave importance to the Trade Union Movement they did not want Trade Unionists here because in fact the Trade Union candidates of the GDM were the ones who were left out. I do not make that analysis of that election and I do not make the analysis now because there is a clear distinction between the function and the role of the GSLP and of the TGWU and I will return to that point in answering the Hon and Learned Chief Minister when he talks about obstruction by others and I do not know whether we are included amongst those others who might or might not obstruct the moves to commercialisation. But let me say that in fact we have today for the first time, I think, in Gibraltar, a solid, united, socialist Opposition committed to a socialist programme and prepared to defend it. And that indeed not only do we say that we have seven Members on this side of the House we can in fact lay claim to having ten Members in this House of Assembly because Messrs Valarino, Perez and Mascarenhas stood in the 1976 election with us. Yes, they campaigned against the AACR, they now defend it. And you, Your Excellency, as a newcomer to Gibraltar might ask yourself, why the sudden conversion? What is the secret that makes people change their minds so radically?

HON A J CANEPA:

Ask Michael Feetham.

HON J BOSSANO:

Well, you can ask Michael Feetham.

HON M A FEETHAM:

You kicked me out.

HON J BOSSANO:

I will try and give an explanation, if I can deviate slightly from the general thesis that I am developing and that is that there is a little quirk in the Gibraltar character which Your Excellency might want to be made cognisant of and cherish as a memento of our folklore when you eventually leave us and you remember us with a sense of endearment as I am sure you will, Your Excellency, as all other previous Governors have done. And that is that there is a flaw in our character and we are a very proud people, we think very highly of ourselves whatever others may think of us but we also recognise that we have got our little shortcomings and one of these little shortcomings is something that we call in our own patois in llanito: "irse para el sol que mas calienta". That is in colloquial English: "to shift to where the sun is shining warmest". Now that, which is very common in Gibraltar and we are very aware of it, is precisely what the GSLP will not do, that is, the GSLP will be totally uncompromising in its commitment to the policies on which it has fought this election and to the policies it will continue to defend over the next four years, and I agree entirely with the Chief Minister that our role is not to show how obstreperous and how obstructive an Opposition we can be, but how well equipped we are to be an alternative Government if the people of Gibraltar should choose to have an alternative Government and therefore what I said immediately after the election about the relationship between the Government and Opposition I stand by and I will also, as Your Excellency will no doubt know from your knowledge of me already, I will also be absolutely frank, verging on the undiplomatic, which is something I have been accused of on many occasions. In keeping with that I have to say that we, in fact, will look at the Government's attempts to make the commercialisation project work, from this side of the House, critically because in fact our objection is not to the way they went into it alone. We accept entirely that the Government has been elected and not just that it has a majority of one but that it has a 1,000 more supporters than we have, that they obtained a 1,000 majority over us and that therefore they are entitled to govern and we are entitled to critically examine their performance in Government in the expectation and the hope that if we expose their blunders that 1,000 will be our supporters in the next election. If they wish to consult us we will enter into any process of consultation with an honest and frank attempt of giving them our view. If it is a view that they can share then fine, if it is not a view that they can share then we shall have to part ways, they will go their way and we will go ours. It is on the question of commercialisation that the Government can expect from us a constant role of questioning how the thing is proceeding and how the targets that were laid down are being met and let me say that the Chief Minister now talks about the No. 1 Dock not being ready until March, 1985, well, then I can tell the Chief Minister that the proposals that his Government accepted from the preferred operator in May, 1982, provided for the employment of twice the number of people within six months of the contract being awarded and there is still ten months left, whatever may happen to No. 1 Dock. In the original proposals it was never intended that No. 1 Dock would be ready at the beginning of the operation. The commercialisation proposals accepted by the Government provided that the conversion work would be done during the course of the year and that 550 people

would be employed at the beginning of the year. Those are the figures that the Chief Minister or whoever answers questions of this nature in the coming months in the House of Assembly will certainly have to do some more solid work than was done during the election campaign to be able to come up with answers and I certainly have to say, Your Excellency, that the Opposition cannot have a situation in the House of Assembly where we are sent off to ask Appledore for the answers to the questions. The machinery of negotiation between Appledore and the representatives of the workers deal with the mechanics of how the operation is but the political responsibility rests in this House and that political responsibility must give answers in this House.

On the question of the relationship with Spain. Let me say, Mr Speaker, that the Chief Minister has said that he has been at the forefront of the issue for twenty years and that is perfectly true. After all, if he has been forty years in politics it is only natural that he should be at the forefront for twenty years. But twenty years ago, in the United Nations Committee of 24, Mr King, the representative of Her Majesty's Government, categorically stated that the question of sovereignty Her Majesty's Government did not agree was something that came within the terms of reference of negotiations with Spain or of the Committee of 24 or of the process of decolonisation. There is a House of Assembly resolution carried unanimously that says that the future of Gibraltar is not a matter for discussion with Spain. I cannot understand how you can have a dialogue between the deaf and the dumb, which is apparently what is going on and perhaps because it is a dialogue between the deaf and the dumb it is required to be kept so secret. But certainly we will have no part of it. We are opposed to the Lisbon Agreement because for the first time, and it has been admitted publicly, it is not just that we say so, Your Excellency, it has been admitted publicly by Her Majesty's Government, for the first time the possibility of discussing the issue of sovereignty was admitted and that is unacceptable to the people of Gibraltar, unacceptable to this House of Assembly, by a resolution carried unanimously and unacceptable certainly to the GSLP. And the trend of events show quite clearly that if that was a sop to the Spanish Government to get the removal of the restrictions it is an unnecessary sop because the removal of the restrictions will come about as a result of the EEC requirement if, in fact, it happens that we do nothing ourselves to put right the catastrophic consequences for Gibraltar's economy and particularly for the private sector in Gibraltar of our present terms of membership of the EEC. Again there, a motion that I brought to this House asking for the matter to be taken up on the 7th July, 1980, with Her Majesty's Government, was amended by Government and Opposition to one setting up a Committee to give urgent study to the matter and here we are in 1984 and there are still no proposals before the Commission and according to the public statements we have the Commission saying they have received nothing from UK and we have Mr Malcolm Rifkind saying in the House of Commons that whatever is negotiated between the EEC and Spain will automatically apply equally to Gibraltar. That is a policy which the GSLP is totally committed to changing and we will try and go it together with the Government but if we do not we will go it alone. On the Lisbon Agreement again we have got a clear position and on the commercialisation we have got a clear position.

Coming, perhaps, to more day-to-day things, I think that it is important that another area where, for example, the House has had a lot of time taken up in the past which has been the criticisms from this side of GBC, well then, as far as this new House of Assembly is concerned, that is a thing of the past, the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party is fully committed to GBC Television. We think it is essential in keeping and maintaining the identity of the people of Gibraltar that that service should be maintained. We expect GBC to provide value for money like we expect everything else to provide value for money, but we are in no doubt about the professionalism and the ability of the staff that GBC employs and the fact that if we compare television per unit cost in Gibraltar with anywhere else we find that the service is expensive because we are small, it is not expensive in absolute terms. That is one thing that is going to be different. As regards the public sector, again on the question of efficiency, I think the House has often seemed to verge on being hypercritical of people employed in the public sector and we consider it is the Government that is responsible for the performance of the public sector and not the staff the public sector employees and that is where the thrust of the Opposition will be. Therefore, what I can promise the Government and what I can promise Gibraltar, Your Excellency, is an Opposition fully committed to improving the quality of debate in this House by eliminating trivia from it and there are things that are trivia in the context of a Parliament which are still of fundamental importance to the individual concerned. If somebody has no water supply then that can be a catastrophe in his house but it does not require a debate or a censure motion in the House of Assembly in our estimation. What will require a censure motion in the House of Assembly is if after the Member responsible on this side, has brought to the attention of the Department and the Minister countless cases like that the thing is totally ignored, then what we would be tackling is not that there is no water but that there is no action to put the matter right. Therefore, with that tone, we hope that it will improve the performance of the Government but not so much, Your Excellency, that they get re-elected again in 1988. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The House then adjourned.