

# GIBRALTAR

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



# HANSARD

CEREMONIAL OPENING OF SEVENTH  
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY  
HELD ON  
14<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1992

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The First Meeting of the First Session of the Seventh House of Assembly held in the House of Assembly Chamber on Friday the 14th February, 1992, at 11.00 am.

PRESENT:

Mr Speaker . . . . . (In the Chair)  
(The Hon Major R J Peliza OBE, ED)

GOVERNMENT:

The Hon J Bossano - Chief Minister  
The Hon J E Pilcher - Minister for Tourism  
The Hon J L Baldachino - Minister for Housing  
The Hon M A Feetham - Minister for Trade and Industry  
The Hon J C Perez - Minister for Government Services  
The Hon Miss M I Montegriffo - Minister for Medical Services  
and Sport  
The Hon R Mor - Minister for Labour and Social Security  
The Hon J L Moss - Minister for Education, Culture and Youth  
Affairs  
The Hon K W Harris QC - Attorney-General  
The Hon P J Brooke - Financial and Development Secretary

OPPOSITION:

The Hon P R Caruana - Leader of the Opposition  
The Hon Lt-Col E M Britto OBE, ED  
The Hon F Vasquez  
The Hon H Corby  
The Hon P Cumming  
The Hon L H Francis  
The Hon M Ramagge

IN ATTENDANCE:

C M Coom Esq - 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 J Bossano, the Hon J L Baldachino, the Hon J C Perez, the Hon R Mor, the Hon M A Feetham, the Hon Miss M I Montegriffo, the Hon J L Moss, the Hon J E Pilcher, the Hon K W Harris, the Hon P J Brooke, the Hon P R Caruana, the Hon F Vasquez, the Hon H Corby, the Hon Lt-Col E M Britto, the Hon P Cumming, the Hon L H Francis and the Hon M Ramagge.

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

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Mr Speaker, you have once again been appointed by His Excellency the Governor as Speaker of this Assembly. It remains for the House to confirm the appointment by resolution. It is therefore my pleasure to move: "That, pursuant to the provisions of Section 26 of the Constitution of Gibraltar, the House confirms the appointment of the Hon Robert John Peliza as Speaker of the Gibraltar House of Assembly". Mr Speaker, your involvement with this House, of course, goes back a considerable way, in fact, to its very creation when the present Constitution was brought in and when you were yourself a candidate and eventually the Chief Minister. You then spent time on the Opposition benches and thereby you bring a wealth of experience to this House of having occupied all the possible places in the House, perhaps except that of Clerk - we will see if we can arrange that the next time. I know that whatever misgivings there might have been about your contribution and your performance as the Speaker, those disappeared very shortly after the 1988 Election and you have enjoyed the full support of the whole House of Assembly in the previous House. I am sure that you will continue to do so over the next four years and continue to guide us with your wisdom and experience for the better government of the people of Gibraltar and for the good performance of our Parliament. I commend the motion to the House.

HON P R CARUANA:

Mr Speaker, in the short time that I have been a Member of the House I have been extremely grateful to you for the time and effort that you have taken both inside and outside this House to help me find my feet and to learn the ropes. I know that those five of my colleagues that are newly elected to this House will be equally appreciative of your guidance and your assistance in becoming familiar with the often intricate and difficult procedures of this House. We consider that, Mr Speaker, you are eminently suitable to hold the office that you hold and we have every confidence in you as Speaker of the House. We are accordingly very happy indeed to support the 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 thank you very sincerely for confirming me in the office of Speaker of this newly elected House of Assembly. I am particularly grateful to the Hon the Chief Minister and the Hon the Leader of the Opposition for their very encouraging words and I pledge myself wholeheartedly to follow the British Parliamentary traditions and procedures of this House, wherein the supreme will of the people of Gibraltar is enshrined through you, our elected Members. This is our greatest heritage and the Clerk and I, with your cooperation and support, will assiduously endeavour to enhance it further. It is, indeed, a great honour to be minder of the privileges bestowed on you to discharge your duties without any obstacles or impediments whatsoever from any quarter whatsoever. It is also a great honour for me to be entrusted by your good selves with the authority to conduct the procedures of this House in accordance with the Standing Orders and other established practices. I assure you that I will exercise this responsibility to my best and fairest judgement ingrained in my parliamentary experience and disciplined impartiality in order that this House can perform its functions efficiently, effectively, democratically and, in a day like this, even romantically. I must not be the first one to set the bad example here of infringing on the rules of repetition and irrelevancies. So I think I should play it safe and wind up. First by thanking the Members of the last Assembly for their friendly, sometimes lively, mostly cheerful and always very respectful to the Chair. Secondly, I would like to congratulate the elected Members who have been successful but I think it is also fair to commiserate with those who, like yourselves, had the courage and public spirit of standing for election and did not make it this time. I think they are worthy of praise because without a surplus of candidates there can be no election and therefore there can be no democracy. Finally, I would like to express my fervent desire that the result of all your counsels will be for the good of our people and the friends of Gibraltar.

I must now leave the Chamber with the Clerk to receive and welcome, on your behalf, His Excellency the Governor, our Queen's representative in Gibraltar.

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ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,  
ADMIRAL SIR DEREK REFFELL KCB

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR:

Ladies and Gentlemen, please be seated.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members of the Seventh House of Assembly. It is both a privilege and a pleasure for me to open this First Session of the Seventh House of Assembly.

I welcome all Hon Members on their election or re-election and particularly congratulate the Members of the Government on their convincing victory. I also congratulate the Members of the new leading party of Opposition on their election to undertake the important functions of the loyal Opposition. The recent election was a powerful demonstration of the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution. It is a source of satisfaction that such a high proportion of the electorate exercised their right to vote and to express their opinion on the options before them. I believe this will be the first session of the House without any elected Members of the AACR and I believe it would be appropriate for me to pay tribute to the contribution that party made to the development and wellbeing of Gibraltar, including time both in Government and Opposition, over the past fifty years.

Once again, let me reiterate that the people of Gibraltar can be confident of Her Majesty's Government's assurance laid down in the Constitution, that Her Majesty's Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. Against the background of this assurance, Her Majesty's Government wholly supports the development of mutual co-operation without political implications between Gibraltar and Spain. There are many ways in which such co-operation can be of benefit to the Campo Area and to Gibraltar. But, as I said in my inaugural speech, co-operation can only develop if it is encouraged and supported by both sides. The Gibraltar Government intends to pursue and to seek to expand the contacts it has made with local officials in order that practical co-operation between the local areas and peoples may grow, for the good of all the inhabitants of the region.

Reductions in Her Majesty's Government's Defence presence will continue here in Gibraltar as part of wider reductions in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, within the limits set by Her Majesty's Government's continuing responsibility for the safety and security of Gibraltar. The Ministry of Defence will continue to seek to execute these reductions in consultation with the Gibraltar Government in order to minimise their effect upon the local community and to release MOD land expeditiously for public use.

For its part, the Gibraltar Government remains committed to seeking to expand Gibraltar's economy despite the effects of these reductions and the wider economic recession elsewhere. Now that the necessary infrastructure is nearing completion, the Government will make special efforts to promote Gibraltar internationally, both as a Centre for reputable financial business, strictly regulated by the Financial Services Commission, and as a tourist destination, taking full advantage of Gibraltar's unique geographic situation and rich historic and natural heritage. It will be their prime task to restore and maintain Gibraltar's traditional high level of employment and to minimise unemployment. In addition, the Government will continue to work urgently to complete the improvements at present being made to the availability and standard of housing in Gibraltar.

The Government is conducting a review of the Gibraltar Constitution Order 1969 with a view to proposing changes to bring it up-to-date and to reflect developments over the past twenty years in the relationship between Her Majesty's Government in the UK and the Gibraltar Government as well as the evolution of the EC. The Gibraltar Government will seek to initiate early discussions of this complex subject with Her Majesty's Government.

In the context of the European Community, Her Majesty's Government remains committed to maintaining Gibraltar's status in the Community and ensuring that Gibraltar is able to play a full part in the development of Community affairs and to share the benefits which flow from it, as well as meeting the obligations.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members, I declare this First Session of the Seventh House of Assembly open. There is much to be done: 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 wellbeing of its people.

God Save The Queen.

HON CHIEF MINISTER:

Your Excellency, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Government for spelling out the main issues which will occupy us over the next four years and in my contribution I will therefore expand on some of the pointers that you have laid out for us.

The co-operation with our neighbours, in the Campo Area, without political strings, which has been a theme in which we put a great deal of hope in 1988, is one that once again we are looking at in the hope and expectation that there will be more tangible results over the next four years than there have been over the past four years. And I am happy to say, that at this stage the signs are certainly more encouraging than they were four years ago and we do not want to let any opportunities to strengthen and develop those links go by.

Obviously, the economic development of Gibraltar is vital for our survival as a people. We honestly believe that that economic development can benefit from co-operation with our neighbours but, that it can happen even without their co-operation, we however prefer their co-operation if that can be had without paying any political price.

Our development has to be of necessity EEC related and in order to benefit from our rights as citizens of Europe, which is what we are under Article 1 of the Treaty that has just been signed in Maastricht, we have to make sure that we are complying with Community requirements and implementing Community Directives. The Government is committed to put the necessary resources in place to ensure that in 1992 we catch up totally with any backlog on the application of Community Law in Gibraltar. The Maastricht Treaty creates the basis of the new Europe. That Treaty, as is known publicly, will need to be ratified, it has been said in the media, by the twelve Parliaments of the twelve Member States. Well, in fact, that is slightly incorrect, it has to be ratified by the thirteen Parliaments that there are in the European Community, if it is to apply throughout the territory of the EEC and I would hope to bring such a motion to this House. In fact, I would hope it will be the first House to ratify the Treaty if we can achieve it.

The External Frontiers Convention clearly is going to be for us in 1992, the most important test of our credentials in the Community. I know the House is totally united on this matter and therefore I look to the House and the people of Gibraltar to ensure that that message of solid conviction of our rights in the Community is clearly understood and that the United Kingdom will continue to take the very firm line that it has taken until now. We have no reason to suppose otherwise.

The international development of our economy clearly is going to require a great deal of involvement from the private sector and the newly set up Gibraltar International Business Development Bureau is going to be the spearhead of this initiative and will be closely involved in the drive to attract new businesses to Gibraltar.

Constitutional talks with UK, as Your Excellency has correctly pointed out, is something that we intend to pursue with speed and I have to announce therefore, that I have already arranged a visit next week to the United Kingdom where I will be holding talks, not just with the Foreign Secretary, but also with Neil Kinnock, the Leader of the Labour Party and with Paddy Ashdown, the Leader of the Liberal Democrats as well as meeting the Gibraltar Group in the House of Commons. The main purpose of the visit is to start the groundwork for the updating of the Constitution of Gibraltar which is now a quarter of a century old and which we are convinced needs to be tackled at this stage and might well have benefitted from being tackled much further back in our development when we were in the EEC and nobody was objecting to anything that we were doing. But, certainly, it cannot be left. We are absolutely convinced that over the next four years the whole

of the map of the European Community is going to be set in place and we have to have a status and a place in that map which protects us into the next century. The United Nations have declared this decade, the decade of decolonisation. I have to say to this House that we consider that the time has come for Gibraltar to be seen as it is, indeed under International Law, under Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on Political and Social Rights, a territory whose people are fully entitled to the right of self determination, and we reject entirely the argument that an 18th century Treaty of 1713, can limit or inhibit the right of a European people to exercise self determination when that right is not denied to any other single human being on this planet. Therefore, I hope that in the next four years it will fall upon this House of Assembly to play the historic role of ushering in the ending of the Colonial era in our history.

We are looking therefore to create a permanent future for our people and to create the political and Constitutional basis for that permanent and secure future in order that we take our rightful place in the Europe of the year 2000. To do that, we have to safeguard ourselves politically and we also have to concern ourselves about the kind of society we want in Gibraltar, the quality of life that we want in Gibraltar and there are many things that we will be bringing to this House in order to put that thinking into practice and create this kind of vision of a Gibraltar which will belong to all of us on both sides of the House and of which we can be justly proud. There is one particular aspect that I think is important to highlight because it is the scourge of modern society. That is the question of drugs and I have to say that first of all we need to pay tribute to our Officers in the Law Enforcement Agencies, in the Customs and the Police, for the excellent work that they are doing, which has been reflected publicly in their effective control of attempts to use Gibraltar to engage in drug trafficking and drug smuggling and that we are committed, as a Government, and I look to the House for that commitment to be a solid commitment from both sides, to cleaning Gibraltar totally of this scourge and ensuring that it can never become what others accuse us of being and which we do not accept we are. But for the avoidance of any doubt, let me make clear that the message is that the commitment is 110%. Whatever resources are required will be provided to stop this place ever becoming what others say we have been and we reject that we have ever been.

Economic success is vital to our future. Controlling the quality of life is an important element which with a frontierless Europe becomes more difficult and more problematical. Both the kind of Gibraltar that we want socially and politically and the kind of Gibraltar that we want economically becomes a more demanding task in the Europe with no frontiers to which we have to belong because we are less masters of our own destiny, whether we are talking about unemployment or we are talking about anything else, we cannot entirely insulate ourselves from the upheaval that surrounds us. But we are, as Your Excellency has correctly said, committed to relatively high rates of economic growth and to

tackling the unemployment situation as a high priority. It is important to put into context what is the nature of the problem that we have. Until last summer the average rate of Gibraltar and UK unemployed in Gibraltar was of the order of 300 people. Since last summer, following the ceasure of operations of GSL and a number of other entities that stopped functioning, BCC and Air Europe, redundancies in MOD and PSA, we had a situation where the level shot up from about 300 to about 600 and it has been around the 600 mark for the second half of last year. Our commitment is to bring it back down over the next twelve months to the 300 that it was between March 1988 and July 1992. That is the objective, that is the commitment, it is a clear one and we will be able to monitor how successful we are and if we are finding difficulty in achieving those targets, then we will put in whatever measures are required to achieve those targets.

In addition, we have the problem of the Moroccan workforce. Let me say that the Government has received representations from a delegation of the Moroccan Association accompanied by their lawyer. They have made certain proposals to us which are now being studied. We have made clear to them that we are not unsympathetic and that we are prepared to see what can be done to provide some measure of protection to those who were here in 1985 when the Brussels Agreement was implemented. When I was sitting on that side of the House, Your Excellency, and the Brussels Agreement was announced, one of the things in it was that the Government of Gibraltar committed itself to giving priority to Spanish workers from the 5 February 1985 onwards, over other nationalities. That is in there. At the same time Sir Geoffrey Howe made a public statement saying that this would be without prejudice to the Moroccan workforce. It has to be understood that that was in relation to the Moroccan workforce that were there when that happened, not the Moroccan workforce that have been new entrants since that happened because the ones that came afterwards, came afterwards in a situation that was in fact clearly one where they were already in an inferior position. We recognise that there is a moral obligation to seek to protect the people in that category and I have made that clear to the representative of the Moroccan Association and I have told them that we will look at the proposals that they have put to us.

However, I think it is important to be honest with people. Therefore I want to send a very clear message out of what we are not saying we are prepared to consider because the views being put forward in the name of the Moroccans, and I happen to know that it is not a view that is necessarily shared by the majority of them, many of whom are my friends, whom I have known for many, many years, but the views being put forward by some people, in my judgement a minority, which has been reflected in that International Report, is that the system that we have here for immigrant workers is contrary to Community Law, contrary to International Law and that what we should be doing is giving the Moroccans who are in Gibraltar the right of permanent residence and citizenship in Gibraltar. I have to say that it is not possible for us or for any other Government to do that.

Under Community Law, if we give an individual worker the right of permanent residence, then we are required to extend that right to his immediate family circle. And his immediate family circle is defined in Community Law as being the spouse or maybe spouses, the children, the grandchildren, the parents, the grandparents, the mothers-in-law and the fathers-in-law. It does not take a great deal of arithmetic to work out what that would mean in terms of population and what it would mean in terms of cost of public services and what it would mean in terms of extra schools, what that would mean in terms of extra medical services. We estimate that if we took that to its logical conclusion, we would be talking about having to increase by 100% the provision that we make today for public services in Gibraltar.

It is not possible to do that and if the intimations that have been made of the matter being taken to an International Tribunal proceed, and obviously in case it does, I am not going to say what our defence will be, that will be dealt with in the appropriate forum, but I have to say that if it were to be established that that is what we are required to provide, the answer cannot be that it will be provided because it is not possible to do it. The answer can only be that if under International Law we are not allowed to retain the immigrant workforce here on the basis on which they have come, then they will not be allowed to stay. Because we cannot be in conflict with Community Law and we cannot produce hundreds of millions of pounds if we do not have the money and the burden would put the cost of the liability of former Spanish pensioners in 1988, look like peanuts by comparison, because it would be a never ending commitment whereas the other one is age related and therefore ends.

Let me say that notwithstanding my remarks, we are still hopeful that we will be able, by dialogue with the representatives of the Moroccans who do not all share this rather inflated expectations, frankly which cannot be met, we will be able to find ways that adequately protect their opportunities of continued employment in Gibraltar which we do not want to deprive them of.

Therefore, in rounding up, Your Excellency, I have to say that we are facing four difficult years ahead of us with many, many problems facing us but with conviction of our ability to succeed and full of confidence in the ability of our people to meet those challenges and to finish up in 1996 with a secure economic future and a secure basis for a decolonised Gibraltar which will guarantee our status as full citizens of the European Community as equal to any other European Community in any other part of the EEC. And it is with that vision, over the next four years, that I look to the constructive role that the Opposition will play in this House in helping us to bring it about because I am sure it is something that they will want to see as much as we do.

Thank you, Your Excellency.

HON P R CARUANA:

Your Excellency, it seems only yesterday that I rose in this House to make my maiden speech on the occasion of the 1991 Budget debate in June, 1991, following my election to the House in the May Bye-election. The seat then allocated to me in the House was the seat occupied today by my colleague, the Hon Freddie Vazquez. In welcoming me to the House the Hon the Chief Minister teased me with these words: "He occupies, of course, the seat that I had for sixteen years so he can now start getting used to how long it takes to move from that side to this side of the House". It is therefore, Your Excellency, with considerable satisfaction that I address, Your Excellency, and this House, as Leader of the Opposition from this seat after only eight months in that seat. Of course, whether or not we can continue to make the same rate of progress across the floor in that direction, as we have made along this bench, remains to be seen. But on the basis of a simple distance calculation it would appear to be roughly in 1996.

In his speech at the end of the election count in the early morning of the 17th January, the Hon Chief Minister remarked that his would be a Government for all Gibraltarians, including those who did not vote for him. So it is and it should be. Similarly, Sir, this Opposition will be the Opposition for all Gibraltarians, including for that very large majority who did not vote for us. That is how we believe it should be. We do not subscribe to the view that the size of our vote should dictate the manner in which we discharge our constitutional and political duty as an Opposition. It seems relevant to point out that between 1980 and 1984 the AACR Government with 39% of the vote and that between 1988 and 1992 the AACR opposed with just 29% of the vote. We are confident that very few of the voters comprising the very substantial majority obtained by the Hon Members opposite, will disagree with our view that in a real democracy there must be a strong and effective Opposition regardless of the size of the Government's majority.

That said, Sir, we believe that we know what the role of an Opposition is. We will probe and scrutinise the conduct and performance of Government so that its acts and omissions are exposed to public accountability. At the same time we must expose our own policies so that we stand ready at all times as an alternative Government. In the authoritative words of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice: "The role of the Opposition is to direct criticism of the Government's policy and administration and to outline alternative policies. Criticism" - Erskine May adds - "which is primarily directed towards the electorate with a view to the next election or with the aim of influencing Government policy through the pressure of public opinion". These, Sir, are responsibilities and duties which we will discharge with diligence, vigour and persistence.

That said, this Government, like all Governments, enjoys a mandate from the people to implement their policies and to govern Gibraltar in the best interests of us all as they see them. It forms no part of our task to obstruct them in that important endeavour and we have no intention of doing so. To put that proposition in its usual form, we will strive to be a firm, responsible and constructive Opposition.

Sir, there are in our view, important deficiencies in the practices and procedures of this House which detract, in our opinion, from its function as a Parliament and from the ability of an Opposition to perform its parliamentary duties within it. The Hon the Chief Minister has said recently that the role of this House is to legislate. That is, of course, an important aspect of the work of a Parliament but it is by no means the only one. Parliament is also the body in which the conduct of Government and of public affairs must be scrutinised and held to public account and in which issues of public importance or interest are raised and debated as and when they occur. But even in the legislative field, we feel that during the previous House the Government had excessive recourse to Regulations to introduce important new laws in Gibraltar thereby depriving the House of the opportunity to debate them. We believe that if this House and, in particular, the Opposition within it, is to effectively discharge its proper role in a modern parliamentary democracy, it must meet more often and on a regular basis. There is, in our opinion, insufficient opportunity for the Opposition Members to put questions to the Government and to bring motions for debate at a time when their subject matter is most topical and relevant.

During the nearly four years duration of the last House of Assembly, the House met for only forty-three days or parts of days, an average of eleven days per year. In those nearly four years the Opposition had eleven opportunities to put questions to the Government. Compare that to the position in the United Kingdom where Ministers answer questions on four days each week and the Prime Minister once a week. Your Excellency, I do not make that point or cite those statistics to suggest that the position has been better or worse over the last four years than it has been historically so, I have not done that comparative exercise. I make the point simply to state the position as it is and how we would like it to be different. Another characteristic of this House that distinguishes it from practically all other Parliaments, is the almost total lack of Select Committees of this House. There is only one on Members' Private Interests. In the House of Commons Select Committees play an active and important part in the form of criticism and scrutiny of the aims and actions of the Executive. Such Select Committees usually have power to summon people to give evidence and to call for papers and records to be produced to it thereby providing a powerful tool in obtaining information about the Executive and the conduct of public affairs. As a starting point we would welcome the re-establishment of the Public Accounts Committee which we shall seek at the next meeting of the House. In addition we would like to see further Select Committees established in

relation to other aspects of public affairs. In our opinion, only by these methods can we ensure open Government in the sense understood in other parliamentary democracies.

Sir, we have in recent months highlighted the potential dangers and weaknesses, as we see them, in the Government's economic policy. We will continue to do so. In particular, we will closely follow the implementation of the Government's policies for the resolution of the major problems that Gibraltar faces in the economic field. The creation of jobs, the attraction of new businesses to Gibraltar to fill and utilise the results of the large infrastructural development that has taken place and that continues to take place and, of course, the regeneration of the tourist industry. That said, Sir, the success of the economy is so crucial to Gibraltar's future that it will give us, on this side of the House, enormous pleasure to see the Government's policy and approach to the economy succeed with flying colours. As in other aspects of Government's work, our contribution to the economic debate will be intended to be constructive since, as I have said, we all, as Gibraltarians, have a common interest in the success of the economy which, as far as concerns us on this side of the House, overrides all party political considerations.

Sir, we also, on this side of the House, welcome Your Excellency's re-statement of Britain's assurance and commitment to Gibraltar on the question of sovereignty. We believe that that assurance and commitment provides the confidence and security that Gibraltar needs to participate in dialogue and to contribute our share of the effort and goodwill to normalise our relations with our neighbour.

The people of Gibraltar are rightly and justifiably determined that two overriding principles must prevail. Two principles upon which I believe all Gibraltarians are united. Firstly, that our future shall be decided by we Gibraltarians ourselves in accordance with the principle of self-determination. A principle which now appears, as the Hon the Chief Minister has said, to be available to all and sundry in Europe and elsewhere but which some still seek to deny to us today. And secondly, that we should be allowed to take our place and enjoy the rights that belong to us in the European Community that exists today and in the new European Community that is intended to emerge from the recent Maastricht Treaty. Rights which we have enjoyed long before those who now seek to deprive us of them. In this connection we are gratified to hear Your Excellency's statement of Her Majesty's Government's commitment to maintaining Gibraltar's status in the Community so that we can play our part in the development of its affairs and share the benefits that flow from it. In the realisation of these hopes and aspirations we will need and we trust in receiving Britain's full support and assistance. We welcome Britain's resolute stand in resisting Spain's current attempts to exclude us from the European Community External Frontiers Conventions. This House will, like the previous House, be unanimous in its position on this crucial matter. We call upon Her Majesty's Government and trust it to maintain that

resolute position in the face of Spain's obduracy. It is our view that because of Britain's assurances on sovereignty and relying on Britain's support and protection in defending and upholding the principles that unite us all and which I have just described, Gibraltar's elected leaders should be present at all talks at which Gibraltar and our affairs are being discussed by others including and notwithstanding their structural deficiencies, talks under the Brussels Agreement. However, in the debate about whether or not Gibraltar should be present at those talks, it should not be overlooked that the important thing is dialogue and not the Brussels Agreement as an end in itself. Only by dialogue can there be progress on normalising the relations between Gibraltar and Spain. Even so the process would be long and arduous but without dialogue tension can only continue to increase, in our opinion, to our own detriment. At a time that Israeli talks to Palestinian, that black talks to white in South Africa, at a time that dialogue is the only internationally acceptable medium for the solution of problems, it seems inconceivable that there should not be direct dialogue between Gibraltar and Spain. We call upon Her Majesty's Government to impress upon Spain the need for her to accept that Gibraltar can and should now speak on her own behalf through its own Government in all dialogue with Spain. We welcome the Hon the Chief Minister's recent reported offer to participate in dialogue with Spain regarding Gibraltar's relationship with her in a European Community context and we call upon Spain to accept that offer in the spirit of bona fides that must exist in all meaningful and productive dialogue.

Sir, the next four years will be important to the long-term prosperity of this community. We, on this side of the House, look forward with apprehension and caution but with commitment and enthusiasm to play in the role that corresponds to us in ensuring that that supreme endeavour prospers.

In replying or in commenting, Your Excellency, on some of the points that the Hon the Chief Minister has made in his address to this House, we on this side of the House look forward, if and when the Government puts to us its proposals in relation to the constitutional development that it seeks from Her Majesty's Government, we look forward to being able to support those proposals so that the Hon the Chief Minister can go to London in the knowledge that he has the unanimous support of the Members of this House.

And on the question of drugs, I have no hesitation in offering the Hon the Chief Minister the solid commitment of the Members on this side of the House to eliminate that problem and that scourge from the midst of this community. Not only for the reasons that the Hon the Chief Minister has mentioned, but also in recognition that it is perhaps the greatest social evil that attacks the fibre of this society domestically and not just on an international basis. Thank you, Sir.

ADJOURNMENT

The House then adjourned.