



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.00 a.m. – 1.10 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 12th July 2012

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.00 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. H K Budhrani QC *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: M L Farrell Esq RD *in attendance*]

Ruling by The Speaker Use of the phrase ‘political corruption’

5 **Clerk:** Sitting of Parliament, Thursday, 12th July 2012.

Mr Speaker: At the end of a long day on Tuesday I did say that I would deliver a ruling this morning. I am glad the hon. Member is back: I thought I would have to rule in his absence.

10 In the course of his speech during the debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, the Hon. Damon Bossino said, when referring to the Government’s involvement in the Sardeña matter before the Industrial Tribunal, and I quote him:

‘I repeat the accusation that we made in our first statement to the press, which is that the Government’s decision is at best ill thought

out and at worst a manifestation of signs which amounts to political corruption. Not one of their public statements, after this party's first pronouncement on this matter, assuages our concerns.'

The Hon. the Chief Minister challenged the use by the hon. Member of the phrase 'political corruption' as offending against Standing Order 45 sub-paragraph (6), which reads:

'No Member should impute improper motives to any other Member'

and sub-paragraph(12), which reads:

'the conduct of Members of the Parliament shall not be raised except upon a specific substantive motion moved for that purpose'.

Erskine May at page 444 of the 24th edition – which is the 2011 edition – contains some useful commentary on personal allusions and unparliamentary expressions:

'A good temper and moderation are the characteristics of Parliamentary language. Parliamentary language is never more desirable than when a Member is canvassing the opinions and conduct of his opponents in debate.'

It continues at page 445:

'Expressions which are unparliamentary and call for prompt interference include:
1. The imputation of false or unavowed motives',

and at 4.

'Abusive, insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.'

The Speaker has said, in this connection, that whether a word should be regarded as unparliamentary depends on the context in which it is used. Expressions are *still* unparliamentary even when based on a quotation from elsewhere.

In the course of the debate that followed on the Point of Order my attention was drawn to the appendix of unparliamentary expressions contained at page 445 of an earlier edition of *Erskine May* which reads:

'From time to time the Chair has intervened to deal with the use of certain expressions in debate which in the context in which they were used were abusive or insulting and of a nature to cause disorder'

and lists some of those expressions, among which appear the words 'corrupt' and 'corruption'.

It goes on to state:

'It must however be emphasised not only that the list is not exhaustive but also that the permissibility of some of them would depend upon the sense and temper in which they were used.'

That appendix has not found its way into the 24th edition but, insofar as those words and expressions listed therein continue to be in use in common parlance, I am happy to be guided by it.

From the context in which that phrase was used I understood the hon. Member to allege nothing more than a 'misuse of political power' and, for that reason, I did not intervene to compel the withdrawal of the offending words. If the hon. Member will now confirm that that was the sense in which the expression was used by him then I will have been vindicated in my original assessment of his intent.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much.

This ruling is based entirely on my view of the sense in which the words were used, and I must stress that it is generally *not* permissible for hon. Members to bandy about words such as 'corrupt' or 'corruption' in the proceedings of this House. Nor does the addition of the adjective 'political' make words or expressions which would otherwise be unparliamentary, palatable.

Hon. Members elected to this House are well able to, and must, therefore, strive to articulate their views and arguments without resorting to insulting or abusive language, particularly in pre-prepared speeches to the

drafting of which clearly much time and thought will have been devoted.

I conclude by re-iterating the view I have previously expressed in this House that I know of no argument that has been enhanced by insults or abuse.

75 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Mr Speaker, may I address the Chair on Mr Speaker's ruling, for which we are grateful.

Mr Speaker has indicated, if I have correctly understood him, that he does not think that the addition of the adjective 'political' makes any difference. With respect, Mr Speaker –

80 **Mr Speaker:** Not any difference, more palatable.

Hon. P R Caruana: Well, with respect, it goes – and I would ask the Chair to consider that – actually, it goes to the very root of the distinction that he himself has made, as to acceptable and unacceptability of my colleagues' strand.

85 There are two sorts of corruption; corruption where money changes hands and improper payments are made and received – that is not political corruption, that is financial corruption. *Political* corruption – and therefore you put the adjective in front of it, 'political', to make it clear that you do not mean the other one – by adding the word 'political' corruption to the front of it, you are making it clear that you are *not* alleging that the politician has charged a fee for or that money has changed hands but rather that you mean precisely abuse of political power. If you simply use the word corruption it is open to both interpretations because corruption can either be abuse of power to help your friends, with or without the passage of money, or it can mean, as politicians – happily not in Gibraltar but elsewhere in the world – appear to do, to charge money for the exercise of power. So, I want to make it clear that, both in our parliamentary and our extra-parliamentary statement, we have always meant 'abuse of power', which is why we added the adjective 'corruption', as opposed to leaving the adjective 'corruption' out.

Mr Speaker: 'Political'.

Hon. P R Caruana: Sorry, political corruption. I meant to say that.

100 Having made that clear, Mr Speaker, there is one issue on which you may enjoy expressing your view before you vacate the Chair, and that is this, because it has arisen both in the context of *this* issue and the previous one, when a four letter word beginning with the letter 'L' was used. There is a sort of folkloric view in this House, often heard – I think, in fact it was heard on the lips of the Chief Minister when this incident took place, I was not in the House to hear it myself – that, to do that, you have got to bring a substantive motion. There is a view, long-held amongst parliamentarians in Gibraltar, that what you cannot say *outside* of a substantive motion, you *can* say if you make it the subject matter of a substantive motion.

105 Mr Speaker will be aware that when I have tried that in the past he has taken the same view of the use on the language in the substantive motion that he had when he objected to its use *outside* the context of a substantive motion, which leaves this Parliament, and I suppose all Parliaments in which that rule applies if, indeed, it is the correct rule, with the conundrum if there *is* a Government or an Opposition Member who has lied in the House, or if there is a Government or, for that matter, an Opposition Member in the context of cash for questions or whatever, that *is* guilty of corruption, is there no way that the Parliament of a country can be the place where its own members and where its executive can *actually* be held to account for possible corruption and possible lying? That can only be done on the street, *[inaudible]* it can be done everywhere except in the Parliament.

110 I do not profess to be an expert on *Erskine May*. My view has always been that proceedings in this Parliament historically have never been with a rule book in the hand – there has always been a fair amount of latitude. But this is important because it does raise the question of whether Oppositions have a duty to expose governmental corruption or, indeed, Members on the other side a duty to expose Opposition Members' corruption or abuse of position and, if so, whether it has to be done outside of this House or whether we have to tiptoe around an allegation of lying or corruption, describing all its ingredients, so that people sitting there will know what we mean but without actually using the word, because it is the word and not the concept that is important.

120 I really would appreciate the views on that, but on a considered basis. Mr Speaker does not have to reply now.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, if I can just start with the first issue. Of course we accept your ruling, and I am very grateful that you have taken the time to make a considered ruling on this issue, which I think is important, although my hon. learned friend had actually changed the word in his speech during the course of the intervention that we had on Friday, and went back and re-phrased it as ‘political dishonesty’ he will recall, as *Hansard* will show.

So, Mr Speaker thank you, nonetheless, for that ruling.

Taking the issue that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has raised that simply by characterising corruption as *political* corruption one moves it away from the suggestion of impropriety and that –

Hon. P R Caruana: Not impropriety, financial impropriety.

Hon. Chief Minister: – at least from the concept of financial impropriety, Mr Speaker – I think is wholly wrong, for this reason. He was not in the House to hear the debate that we had on this issue but the offence under the Criminal Offences Act of ‘corruption’ is corruption in public office and it does not have to be financially motivated specifically. So, therefore, Mr Speaker, the offence is ‘political corruption’. In other words, somebody who holds a political office, who allows themselves to do something in exchange for something which need not be cash... so, therefore, Mr Speaker, I think in relation to the issue of adding the word ‘political’ in front of the word corruption – I do not think it cures the ill.

It has been the case – and we all know that it has been the case, if we have been in this House for some time – but by adding the word ‘political’ in front of other words to describe behaviour like, for example, ‘political dishonesty’ that we talked about and settled on, on Tuesday, ‘political hypocrisy’ that we have often had bandied around the floor of the House, we are saying to each other ‘You are representing two points of view which are inconsistent in your political discourse.’ But, Mr Speaker, to move from that to saying that ‘political corruption’ is an acceptable turn of phrase I think is a major leap forward and I would ask you to resist that attempt to water down your Ruling – which I think, rightly, looks at the temper and manner in which the corruption word itself, without any preface, is used, rather than trying to find a way where it might stealthily be used in every debate going forward.

Mr Speaker, finally, I think that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition fails to understand what Standing Orders provide. Standing Order 45 (12), which you referred us to earlier, actually says that issues relating to conduct shall not be raised, and it has traditionally been on that rule that the issue of the ‘L’ word has settled, other than by substantive motion.

Now, Mr Speaker, when it comes to the motion, and having had the honour to be a Member on the Opposite benches for seven or eight years, I have been threatened by the hon. Member with a substantive motion on the ‘L’ word I think on more occasions than most, and I take that as a badge of honour. He never brought the motion – I did not realise it was because you told him he should not bring it perhaps in the terms that he might have most enjoyed – but I do recall that, in this debate last year, there was a motion brought against me and you interfered, rightly, to temper the wording of that.

Now, Mr Speaker, it is of course, in the hands of this Parliament to determine whether a Member has been ‘corrupt’, or whether a Member has ‘lied’ to the House. Of course it is, Mr Speaker. But it is the *language* that is used in the process of determining that, that the rules deal with and, therefore, Mr Speaker, because somebody may have said something which is an untruth does not mean that we cannot have a motion that deals with that in parliamentary language. And the parliamentary language, Mr Speaker, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, is that a Member has ‘misled the House’, and there are more words thought of in the dictionary than just the word ‘lie’ in order to be able to express that and to reach a conclusion in this House – and I sincerely trust that it will never be necessary for us to enter into such a motion – either originating from the Opposition benches, or originating from the Government benches, because what we must do is at least accept that none of us here are here to be corrupt, or are here to mislead the House, even if we have differences of opinion as to what behaviour constitutes ‘misleading the public’. But if we were to have such an instance, Mr Speaker, the mechanisms are there in Standing Orders to do it, and all that you from the Chair ask is that we do that in temperate, parliamentary language.

Mr Speaker: I will certainly take up the Hon. Leader of the Opposition’s invitation to consider these matters on an academic basis, as opposed to any particular issue which remains pending before the House today. Probably while I am sunning myself at one of our beaches during the summer months, I will contemplate my navel and come up with something.

But on the question of the word 'lie', if I may confess, only about six weeks ago the Speaker of the House of Commons ruled that the use of the word was permissible – which I disagree with – in the context of a motion which was then before the House in connection with the conduct of the Culture Secretary in the United Kingdom but, again, I disagree with that. But I will bear in mind what I have been invited to do and will, hopefully, come up with something wise.

Hon. P R Caruana: Although, Mr Speaker, the precedent set at Westminster cannot be inviolable when it suits and – (**The Speaker:** No, no!) – not to be followed when it does not.

Mr Speaker: No, with respect, I do not consider myself, as Speaker of this House, to be bound slavishly by *everything* that emanates from Westminster. We look to Westminster for guidance. They are a far more experienced Parliament than we are, so I will always be guided by anyone wiser than I am. But, as I say, I reserve the right to say I disagree with *[inaudible]* your ruling...

Appropriation Act 2012 Debate continued

Mr Speaker: Can we move on to the Hon. Jaime Netto.

Hon. J J Netto: Mr Speaker, It is a pleasure and an honour to deliver my seventeenth Budget address to this House.

This time it will be the first occasion that I do so as a member of the Opposition. In giving my address, I am conscious of the fact that this is the first Budget presented by the new Government, a Government that has not yet completed one year in office and that it needs more time to implement its own policies. I have therefore tried to be responsible in my assessment and criticism of the Government in relation to its performance within my areas of responsibilities – social security, social services and health and safety.

Mr Speaker, in this year's presentation of the Estimates Book, we see that Head 5, in the Estimates Book for 2011-12, comprising Social Security, the Care Agency and a number of other organisations providing services to the community, has now been split into two different Heads in the Estimates Book for 2012-13. One is the new Head 26, dealing with Social Security matters and the other one is Head 16, which deals with the Care Agency and the various other organisations providing services to the community. To be able to properly analyse the expenditure that covers the same services provided to all groups of people today against the previous expenditure in 2011-12, I need to add the Estimates shown for 2012-13 of £36,108,000 in Head 26, with the Estimate of £21,481,000 in Head 16. This gives me a total of £57,589,000 against the Forecast Outturn of £53,509,000, a figure which is obtainable on page 95 of the new Estimates Book. This represents an increase of 7.6%, in money terms, over a period in which the Index of Retail Prices percent has been 3%. Therefore, after adjusting for inflation, we see an increase of 4.5% in real terms.

In order to compare like for like, the financial provision made by the GSLP/Liberal Government against that provided by the GSD Government, I have repeated the same exercise for the figures in the 2011-12 Budget, using the same parameters and the actual expenditure for 2011-12 was £48,142,547 against the Forecast Outturn of £53,509,000. This represented an increase of 11.2% in money terms over a period in which the Index of Retail Prices percent was 3.7%, thereby representing an increase in real terms, after adjusting for inflation, of 7.2%.

Mr Speaker, what these figures show us is that the rate of growth for the Budget sought in this Appropriation Bill, dealing with the overall services of what can generically be termed as the 'welfare state' in a loose sense, was greater with a GSD Government than under a GSLP/Liberal Government; in fact 2.7% greater. This, Mr Speaker, at a time when the state of the economy has never been better and where revenue over expenditure in the Government coffers has never been greater, thanks to the previous GSD Government. This brings into question all the comments made by the hon. Members opposite, when in Opposition and at the time of the General Election, that the GSD Government had never invested in the welfare state and that all the money available to the previous Government only went into grand projects like the magnificent new airport terminal. Given that we were chastised by the Hon. Neil Costa – who I notice is not here in the Chamber – during the previous term of office, for what he used to say was 'inadequate funding', and now that

the new Minister for Social Services uses the mantra that these services are woefully under-resourced, why then have they not used this golden opportunity to put right such under-resourcing at a time when they can afford to do so, thanks to the economic prosperity inherited from the outgoing GSD Government? The answer, Mr Speaker, is because it was a pack of lies then by the Members opposite.

Mr Speaker, The Minister for Equality, in her contribution to the Appropriation Bill, stated that by having a Minister dedicated for the first time to equality issues that this was an important step taken by this new Government. She also stated that this will mean that 'vulnerable people will be given priority'. Seconds later, almost in the same sentence, she went on, in her now inimitable and unnecessarily high-handed style, to spew a barrage of unfounded allegations that, I had tried to change the Classroom Aides' conditions of employment unilaterally at St. Bernadette's Occupational Centre.

Mr Speaker, her personalised criticism is not something that I am concerned about, but for the hon. Lady to say that 'priority will be given to vulnerable people', and then, almost in the same sentence, misconstrue the facts surrounding the dispute at St. Bernadette's is quite another and I am not going to let her get away with it. The hon. Lady also needs to be consistent with her own statement and not be all things to all men.

Mr Speaker, the dispute at St Bernadette's was about *some* Classroom Aides deciding not to carry out their full duties within their job description and, as a consequence of that unilateral action by them, to disregard their duties to disabled persons, which brought about a negative effect on the services provided to vulnerable people. No one's contract was changed unilaterally. Now, let's be clear, I don't make apologies for the fact that, as Minister for Disability, I placed the interest of disabled persons before the unreasonable position taken by some employees, notwithstanding the fact that I have continued to be a trade union member since the age of fifteen and an old-fashioned socialist.

What the hon. Lady cannot say, on the one hand, is that vulnerable people come first, but then criticise me for doing exactly that. Her position is not just contradictory, but shows the venom of her political inclination towards character assassination. And, for the record, in relation to the suspension without pay, it wasn't once, it was twice, and if I was placed in the same position again, I would do it again, and again because, for me, vulnerable people come first. (A Member: Hear, hear.)

Despite the fanfare of the Minister for Equality about how she will now be the saviour of minority groups, how come she has not once in her speech mentioned the plight of Moroccan workers? Is it because she may think that they cannot vote at General Elections, or is it because she doesn't care at all? It is quite shameful that the new Minister for Equality does not have on her radar screen the interest and welfare of Moroccan workers, most of which have lived in Gibraltar for 40 years.

In this regard, I do appreciate, however, that the Chief Minister is on a bind here, because on the one hand he has indicated to me that he is willing to make significant progress on the issues raised by me but, on the other, he has to contend with his Minister for Social Security who has been, is, and continues to be, totally against giving Moroccans equal treatment on benefits that that they have directly or indirectly contributed to. That said, the Chief Minister cannot sit on the fence permanently without deciding what to do. Either he comes on the side of moral obligation towards the Moroccans, or he adopts the traditional stand of his Minister. If he takes the moral stand, he will certainly have me congratulating him for his principles, but if he chooses to ignore this issue, he can rest assured there will be those, like me, that will continue to fight for a principled cause.

Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady, the Minister, charged with responsibility with women's issues, went on to lecture my hon. friend, Mrs Ellul-Hammond – as if my colleague needed a lecture from her – on why the Government will not pursue positive discrimination policies for women within the Government or society. Mr Speaker, neither my hon. friend nor, indeed, the GSD, is advocating positive discrimination policies. What *she* was talking about was positive action that the Government needs to pursue to give women a greater voice and role.

Just to give the hon. Lady an example of a very successful GSD Government policy on positive action for women, was the abundance of professional continual development courses for Civil Servants. As a result of this sustained 16 year investment, today we see many women Civil Servants in middle and higher management posts that did not exist under the last GSLP Government, which never took any positive action for women or, indeed, for the Civil Service either. Well, when I come to think about it, not only did they not do anything but they tried to decimate the Civil Service. The then Hon. socialist Chief Minister tried to privatise it, and I am glad to say that, thanks to my efforts in this matter, I successfully thwarted such right-wing policies of the then socialist Chief Minister. So, for a Minister with responsibility for women's issues not to know the difference between positive action and positive discrimination shows that it is all talk and no

substance in this Government.

As my hon. friend, Mrs Ellul-Hammond, said, thanks to the GSD's commitment to social equality and social justice, the 15 years of a GSD Government has addressed much better the balance towards a more meritocratic society. The GSD helped close the gap between men and women through the introduction of social policies, such as maternity grants and equalisation of pension rights; the support of working parents, the school lunches and family-friendly hours; and encouraging upward social mobility for women through training within the public sector.

We now seek a concerted effort to positively encourage more women to participate in bodies linked to influencing policy-making; and the introduction of further meritocratic policies, such as equality legislation. And even today, it is pathetic for a so-called socialist Government to wait for a European Directive in order to implement paternity leave in the private sector. If they were real socialists, they would have the boldness to do it right now. They even have the very successful legislation on maternity leave, brought about by the GSD Government, as a tool to emulate and implement the paternity leave, or is it that they need outside consultants, as with the Hon. Minister Cortes, to tell them how to do it?

As expected, the Minister for Social Services has claimed that, thanks to this new Government, they have brought about a 'new dawn' in which they will put right the necessary resources that are needed to provide adequate services to vulnerable people, and this will be manifested by the increase in expenditure and staff, as shown in the Estimates Book. Well, it certainly is a new dawn of glitter and press release spin, but one that lacks substance and honesty to state the enormous improvements brought about by successive GSD Governments in the field of Social Services. **(Some Members: Hear, hear.)**

I will take the 'Hear, hear' and the chance to have a bit of water.

As far as the expenditure argument is concerned, let us not forget that when we came into Government in May 1996, the budget we inherited from the outgoing GSLP Government for Social Services, and the Elderly was £1,870,000. Today the forecast outturn for recurrent expenditure for the financial year 2011-2012 is £17,991,000. This is an increase of 962% in money terms and an increase of 673% in real terms, after adjusting for inflation. Therefore, on this count alone, if the hon. Lady, the Minister for Social Services, thinks that we have not invested enough then, when compared to the pittance that existed under a GSLP Government, surely she will have the honesty to condemn her political mentors between 1988-96 in the field of Social Services and the Elderly as woefully under-resourced.

The problem with Members opposite is that they don't know, or keep to the text, of the things that they state in their manifesto. Take, for instance, the example of 'Orthopaedic Equipment' on page 82 of their manifesto. It states,

'The budget for orthopaedic equipment is presently just £30,000 and this will be increased considerably'.

Well, given the remark, I quickly went to see how much this sub-head was going to be increased by, so I dashed to the Estimates Book, went to Head 26 – 'Social Security' – down to sub-head 2 – 'Other Charges' – (2) (b) 'Home Help', and what do I see? I see that the Estimate for 2011-12 was £30,000, the Forecast Outturn is £30,000 and the new Estimate for 2012-13 is – wait for it. Any guesses from the Government benches? £30,000!

So, I then looked at (2) (c) – 'Contingencies' – and what do I see? I see that the Estimate for 2011-12 was £35,000, the Forecast Outturn is £35,000 and the new Estimate is – wait for it. Any guesses from the Government benches? £35,000! So, what can we conclude? Either at the time of the Elections they did not know what they were talking about, or they said one thing at Election time and now they are doing another.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister for Social Services told us, in her Budget address, that the expenditure for orthopaedic equipment will be supplemented further by viring from other Heads or sub-heads, as and when this is necessary during the new financial year. Well, Mr Speaker, what I tell her is: 'Welcome to the real world of politics', because this is precisely what I did in some years in which the demand for further equipment surpassed the expenditure allocated under this sub-head. So she is saying she would do exactly what I did despite *all those criticisms* when they were in Opposition. Or perhaps it suddenly dawned on the hon. Lady when preparing her speech that her party in Opposition used to criticise me on this issue, realised that I would expose the inconsistency and hypocrisy on the part of the new Government and, at the last minute, sought to justify it. Well, Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady needs to understand that she can't have '*el pan mantecado por los dos lados*'. Either she criticises both the GSD and the GSLP/Liberal Government, or she acknowledges that when her colleagues criticised the GSD Government this was without any substance in

truth? So which one of the two is it? She needs to answer that question.

Again, Mr Speaker, in relation to the recruitment of extra staff, as shown in the new Estimate Book, the hon. Lady has claimed that this shows how woefully inadequate human resources were under a GSD Government in order to provide services to vulnerable people. Again, the hon. Lady needs to do the same exercise as stated before and have the honesty to state that personnel employed by the previous GSLP Government was a tiny, tiny fraction of the figures that we have today, making the Care Agency today the third biggest Government organisation after the GHA and Education, a colossal increase by the GSD Government. The employment of an extra 35 Care Workers and Social Care Workers, welcome as it is, is a small amount compared to increases in our time. Here, as elsewhere, in the Opposition political discourse during this Budget session there is an inherent contradiction; there is no money in the coffers because of the large public debt, but we have the money to employ an extra 35 workers. Could it be that, thankfully, our economy and the state of public finances are so good that it allows us to increase numbers?

Again, Mr Speaker, in her Budget address, the Minister for Social Services stated 'we have created a new post of Training Officer'. Well, Mr Speaker, this is not true: the hon. Lady obviously doesn't know what she is talking about. The fact that we can see in the Estimate Book for this new financial year a new post of Training Officer, does not mean that *she* took the decision to have a Training Officer dedicated to pursue training issues in the Care Agency. Mr Speaker, the post and the person leading the training started in my period in Government, as a direct result of my decision, as Minister, to continue to develop further more dedicated training courses throughout the Care Agency. This is a fact, and for the hon. Lady to claim credit for something that she should know was my decision, and not hers, shows a level of political immaturity which she needs to quickly snap out of. What she should do is go back to her office, get the right information, and apologise to Parliament at the first possible opportunity.

Also, Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady has stated that the coming into fruition of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Hospital and the Day Centre Facilities would further provide more job opportunities. Indeed, the completion of these ongoing GSD initiatives would have meant that whoever was returned to Government would have had to increase the number of jobs, even if we continue to witness today further delays in the opening of these facilities. It should be noted from the Estimate Book within the Improvement and Development Fund (IDF), sub-head (g) – 'Old Naval Hospital Conversion and Refurbishment Works', that there is a Forecast Outturn of £9,911,000 of works done, with a new Estimate for 2012-13 of £1 million to complete. It is obvious that, despite her attempt to rubbish what has already been done, the project is virtually complete. One hopes that, with the bulk of the works now done, we don't witness further delays and there is no attempt to claim credit for another GSD project.

Whilst talking of delays, Mr Speaker, we have a situation in which already the new independent living for the elderly at the old St. Bernard's Hospital has been completed since this last April, as stated by the Minister for Housing in Parliament, the Government has not yet opened up the facilities, thereby unnecessarily compounding the number of elderly people waiting for a place at Mount Alvernia, or by having some elderly people bed-blocking at St. Bernard Hospital, for social reasons, as opposed to medical ones. What has happened since April is that there is a tug of war between the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Social Services. The Minister for Housing quite rightly has understood from the beginning the concept behind the refurbishment, which is to provide able-bodied independent elderly persons with the accommodation it has been intended from the beginning of this project, whilst the Minister for Social Services is intent to modify the concept behind it and alter the facilities on the basis that the refurbishment is not fit for elderly persons with disability or mobility problems. This she wants to do in order to politicise the refurbishment with spurious argument that the refurbishment is not fit for purpose.

Frankly, it is a scandal that the Minister for Social Services should put petty party politics before the interests of the elderly. What the Government needs to do is to spend less time drafting press releases and getting on with finalising these GSD projects, whether this is the airport terminal, the tunnel, the power station, the Alzheimer's & Dementia Hospital or the independent living accommodation for the elderly in the old St. Bernard's Hospital, (**Members:** Hear, hear.) thereby bringing huge, huge benefits to the people of Gibraltar. This Government needs to come out of Opposition mode, and get on with governing Gibraltar! (*Interjections*).

The problem with the current policies with regard to Social Services and the Elderly is that there isn't any clear coherent policy at all. What we have is a continuation of GSD policies – even though they are constantly rubbing them – but when it comes to specifying their own policies, as stated in their manifesto, they lack detail. So far they have continued with the Alzheimer's & Dementia Hospital, although at a sluggish pace;

they have pledged to set up the Day Care Centre advocated by the GSD; they have increased Domiciliary Care funding, as has been the case under the GSD Government; they have continued the GSD Training Programme for the Care Agency – even though the hon. Lady refuses to provide me with a copy – continued with the programmes and services for Looked After Children, the Elderly, the Disabled and those with a substance abuse condition. Yes, there has been a tweak here or there but, despite the rhetoric of political distortion, nothing fundamental has changed.

On the fundamentals, the new Government is running services very much on the successful GSD formula, and the enormous amount of funding we put in place. Even the new announced policies of moving the current Day Centres for the Elderly to Waterport Terraces – which was the projected policy of the GSD, if re-elected – and, indeed, the changes to the admission policy for Mount Alvernia, one in which the GSD Government had already discussed and agreed to change upon being re-elected. So I am glad that someone, somewhere, is passing on to the Minister for Social Services the plans we had if we had got re-elected, and that she then uses these as announcements as if it were their policies. At the end of the day, we both work in the interest of Gibraltar.

On the other hand, Mr Speaker, with regard to the GSLP/Liberal policies on Social Services and the Elderly, we notice the following. When I have asked in Parliament, ‘when will the Disability Action Plan be introduced?’, the Hon. Minister for Social Services stated, ‘We are meeting all representative organisations. Once this process is complete we will be in a position to assess the content of the plan’. When I asked the Minister, ‘What features will the programme of life planning for disabled persons have and when will they implement this manifesto commitment?’ she said, ‘Yes, the Government is in the process of identifying individuals with disability.’ Well, one wonders Mr Speaker, whether it’s going to take the hon. Lady four years to identify who, and where, the disabled people are. I dare advise the hon. Lady that, by calling a meeting to her office of senior management of the Care Agency, Social Security, Health Authority, Education and Employment, by the end of the meeting, which should last not more than an hour, she will know who and where the disabled people are, and without the need of an iPad or a Mac Apple.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Apple Mac!

Hon. J J Netto: Apple Mac, sorry. I am grateful to the Chief Minister for that.

Mr Speaker, when I asked the Government ‘When will they transpose the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons?’, the answer was, ‘It’s not done yet, but we are working on it’.

When I asked, ‘What employment grants will be made available to disabled persons in order to optimise supported employment?’, the answer was a predictable one: ‘We are meeting all representative organisations. Once this process is complete, we will be in a position to assess the content of the plan and provide a cost’.

So far, Mr Speaker, the only quick and decisive action taken at the start of this term of office, with regard to disabled persons, has been to withdraw the Disability Allowance to disabled persons in employment. Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister, in his address, announced that disabled persons in employment will no longer have their Disability Allowance removed from them completely, as was the case before. Instead, the Disability Allowance will be removed on a staggered basis, and 25% of it will remain payable indefinitely and will not be removed. The truth is that when the Minister for Social Security gave instruction to the Department to remove the allowance to disabled persons in employment he did not have any inclination or willingness then of taking into account the personal circumstances of disabled persons.

The measure announced to preserve 25% is a direct result of *my* intervention in this House when I said that, before doing this, they should look into the specific personal circumstances of each individual person, given that many need to purchase either specialised equipment, or medical services, or both, and to remove the allowance was unjust. Therefore, I am pleased that my direct intervention has proved effective in changing their ill-thought policy at the time, even if they choose not to acknowledge my contribution. It is no wonder that the Chief Minister, in his address, did say this goes beyond their manifesto commitment. And it is incorrect to state, as the Chief Minister stated, that the Disability Allowance used to be removed before in the period of the GSD Government. The fact is that, notwithstanding the administrative system in place we, the GSD, chose not to remove the allowance.

Mr Speaker, yet whilst this goes on, the Government is about to lose a golden opportunity with regard to sustainable employment opportunities for the disabled. Last week, actually two weeks ago now, the Government placed a tender for the provision and operation of a portable/prefabricated kiosk at the children’s park at the Westside promenade. What I would suggest to the Government is to freeze the tender process and,

instead, look into the opportunity, as it exist in many parts of the world, whereby disabled persons can organise themselves into either charitable organisations or co-operatives in order to provide a service to the community, with the profits being re-invested for the development of further sustainable employment for disabled persons. Mr Speaker, the variety and extent of services that can be provided in the services of a kiosk could generate the kind of occupational activities that are necessary for some disabled persons to feel rewarded and motivated, and if the example works, then it can be extended to other places in Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, if I can quickly just stop there: I would really like the Chief Minister or perhaps the Deputy Chief Minister, who looks into the question of tenders, to really look into this matter, even if it is a simple moratorium on that particular tender notice, in order to allow them to have the opportunity to look at my consideration. I am more than willing, if he wants to, for me to bring on a private note my suggestion, my view. I think it is a golden opportunity. It can create sustainable employment for disabled persons and if he can put just a mark on his notes and consider the matter I would be extremely grateful, not for me but at least for disabled people.

Mr Speaker, moving on, the most *astounding* remark made by the Minister for Social Services in her contribution on Tuesday was when she said and I quote, ‘the Children Act was passed with little consultation with interested parties and that the proposed legislation was not placed for consultation within Social Services’. Well, Mr Speaker, one wonders the depths of disingenuousness that the hon. Lady is prepared to sink to. The fact is that nothing could be further from the truth. Mr Speaker, the facts are that, in this matter, the GSD Government issued a White Paper annexing the draft Children Bill, with a narrative explaining the proposed draft and that this went out to NGOs, the legal profession, the management of the Care Agency, and all other relevant stakeholders. When it went out to consultation we considered the various comments and included some in amendments. The process took months. It was an unprecedented level of consultation. And doesn’t the hon. Lady not know either, from her own practice in family law, that the Ministry for Justice and my own Ministry then, prior to the issuing of the White Paper, constituted a working committee composed of senior management of the Care Agency, the legal profession and NGOs, which lasted for 2 years in the elaboration of the Children Act. Mr Speaker, there was at the time considerable interest in the media, depicting press statements and media coverage of the work of the committee. Perhaps the hon. Lady was not living in Gibraltar at the time. (*Laughter*) Mr Speaker, if this is not consulting, as the hon. Lady is claiming, then we need to redefine the meaning of the word ‘consultation’.

The issue here is that the hon. Lady has a pathological inclination to rubbish everything that the GSD Government has done, and in order to achieve this objective, anything goes, so long as the political untruth uttered is repeated often enough for the next four years. Her comments do not stand up anywhere near to the facts. As a lawyer, she should know better. Whether the hon. Lady likes it or not, the GSD Government does have a most impressive record for having achieved enormous improvements for all vulnerable groups in Gibraltar, and certainly a much better record than the awful legacy we inherited from the GSLP Government. (**Members:** Hear, hear.)

Mr Speaker, before moving to the subject of the elderly, there is one Government policy that worries me in the Care Agency. This is the introduction of the 11-month contract, which does have serious implications for the quality of service to Care Agency service-users and for our relationship with our neighbours on the other side of the frontier. There is no doubt that the introduction of this policy has been forced into the Care Agency by the Minister for Employment.

This policy is designed for the purpose of applying unwanted and excessive pressure to British and Spanish employees, so as to pave the way for getting rid of them and then employing unemployed Gibraltarians. This policy worries me on several counts. The fact that the Minister for Employment is driving, behind the scenes, such a move against hard-working and conscientious employees will mean that the Agency will be put under pressure to maintain the high standard that has been the hallmark of services to all service-users. It is no wonder that a petition by the family of service-users is already taking place. This policy can also have a double whammy effect, in that employees made redundant by the Care Agency, as a result of the actions of the Minister for Employment, will inevitably result in press comments on the other side of the frontier, thereby exacerbating the hostile climate that now exists as a result of the Government’s bad handling of the fishermen’s dispute. If this occurs, the Minister for Employment will have to share responsibility for a deterioration of relations across the frontier, something he obviously never cared or bothered about.

Mr Speaker, all things being equal at the time that a new vacancy arises, we would all agree that a Gibraltarian should get the job, but what the Hon. Mr. Bossano is pursuing is a very different matter. He is forcing good employees, in existing jobs, to 11-month contracts, with a view of replacing them by locals,

regardless of whether they are suitable or not. This is un-socialist, it is anti-trade union, and probably illegal. Already such a plan has produced one victim. As a result of trying to impose the 11-month contract to the Nursing Co-ordinator, Mrs Lynne Cowen, she has decided to return to the UK and plans are already afoot to have her position filled with a charge nurse of the GHA by direct appointment *a dedo*. The whole episode, Mr Speaker, has the hallmark of devaluing the service in the Care Agency, demoralising the staff, unnecessarily worrying the families of service-users, and increasing conflict across the frontier between ordinary working people. (A Member: Hear, hear.) It is therefore necessary for the Chief Minister to show leadership in his Government and put a stop to the antics of his Employment Minister before things get out of hand.

Moving on to matters to do with Housing, but only in relation to the elderly and disabled, I have to say that again the policy of the new Government is very much to continue with the success of GSD policies of the past, but the pace in which they are going about doing this is starting to concern me.

Already, I have stated that the independent living accommodation block for the elderly at the old St. Bernard Hospital has been finished since this last April and, instead of getting on to offer these facilities to the elderly, the place remains closed as a result of the dispute between the two Ministers mentioned: a tragedy for the elderly people in need for this facility! Perhaps the most astonishing remark given in Parliament by the Housing Minister was when I asked the Hon. Minister what new housing provisions will be made available for disabled persons and their families by the new Government? The answer was to say that they will continue with the policy of allocating ground floor flats in the Government housing stock, plus when the new affordable housing blocks emerge, this will allow disabled persons and their families to live satisfactorily therein. Well, upon hearing this, I thought to myself, where on earth has the new Housing Minister been living for the last 16 years! Why then give the impression, as they did in their manifesto, that additional and specific housing properties was going to be built by the GSLP/Liberal Government for disabled persons and their families? Again Mr Speaker, a question of all things to all men, without the slightest intention of doing anything about it.

On another question early in the New Year, Mr Speaker, I asked the Hon. Minister for Housing, whether the new Government will continue the GSD programme of lift installations, and whether they would use the rest of the previous financial year to prepare the tender documents for lift installations so as to commence early in the new financial year 2012-13. The answer by the Minister to both questions was 'yes.' Therefore, Mr Speaker, when I received the draft Estimates Book I searched the pages for the Improvement & Development Fund, Head 102 – 'Projects' 5(w) and, thankfully, I see listed the heading, 'Government Lifts'. Then I move my eyes across to see the estimate provided and, to my astonishment and bewilderment, I see the figure of £50,000. Now, Mr Speaker, I am not a Quantity Surveyor, but from my own experience at the time when I was the Housing Minister, I can tell that the average price for the construction of a shaft, and placing the lift with its appliances and machinery used to cost £75,000. Given the number of years that I have now left Housing I would not be surprised if the average cost could oscillate between £100,000 to £150,000 just for one lift – or even more. Therefore, with the provision of £50,000 for the financial year 2012-13, the Government will not be able to start fulfilling its Election pledges, even if they have the pretty pictures to show the different Tenants Associations.

Would the Minister for Housing not acknowledge that when, at the time of the Election, when they distributed leaflets telling voters that they could be trusted with their promises, that this has turned out not to be true? And when they promised the tenants of Laguna Estate, 'Vote for us and we will immediately start construction of the lifts after the Election, it was simply a pack of lies in order to get their vote by false pretences. And does the Government not understand that, by delaying, or not carrying out, the very successful GSD rolling programme of lift installation, all it means is that the quality of life of the elderly and the disabled is being constrained and devalued by the inactions of this Government?

Mr Speaker, another GSLP/Liberal manifesto promise with regard to the elderly is to build another block of flats, like the very successful ones the GSD did in Bishop Canilla and Albert Risso Houses. Yet again, when I look into the Estimate Book, I see a token amount of £100,000 for 'New Housing Projects' in Head 102 – 'Projects'. I heard *nothing* from the Minister for Housing or the Chief Minister on this. Building 1,400 affordable homes is well and good but we need to continue building rental homes and homes for our elderly, too, and I hope that in the announcement that the Minister for Housing quite curiously said that he would make imminently that they say something about this, too. I say 'curiously' because, like my colleague the Hon. Mr. Feetham, I thought Budget time was all about making such announcements. Between Mr. Cortes making announcements on Facebook and the hon. Member saying that housing projects will be announced in a press release shortly, I am beginning to wonder what Parliament is for.

The other area of importance with regards to services by the Housing Ministry to the elderly, and those with regard to a disability or medical condition, refers to the response time in prioritising such works in Government flats. At the beginning of this term of office, I asked the Minister for Housing for the amount of outstanding conversions of showers from baths and the time it would take to do the work. The answer from the Minister at the time was that there were 66 and that the works would be done in three months, something that at the time I thought was too bold for an answer, taking into account that this aspect of work only forms one part of the overall context of works by the Housing Works Agency. Now, of course, we know that not all the outstanding works have been done and there remains some still waiting beyond the three month deadline given by the Minister.

More recently, in fact at the last sitting of Parliament, I asked both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Housing if they could provide me with the number of outstanding works to be done in Government flats, arising from reports by the Occupational Therapy Department. Given that the answer provided by both differed, I had the inconvenience to ask the Minister for an explanation as to why the two figures given were different. Instead of providing a sensible explanation, or deferring the answer until they could seek clarification from their respective civil servants on this issue, I was subjected to a torrent of vitriol by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Social Services for having had the temerity of having asked for an explanation.

We witness the spectacle of the Minister for Health talking about '*heights* of hypocrisy' and the Minister for Social Services, who could not wait to have her moment of glory, saying that quote 'on one occasion a person had even died as a result of waiting for the works to be done'. Unquote. The hon. Lady felt compelled to try and score what she thought was a knockout political point, regardless of the fact that, only 30 seconds earlier, the Minister for Health had conceded that, unfortunately, delays do occur with these types of work, either because the equipment sought has to come from abroad or because of delays in the execution of the works.

Whilst I will deal in one moment with the '*heights* of hypocrisy' for the benefit of the 'new kid on the block', does the hon. Lady, the Minister for Social Services not realise that even if it were true that, in one case, unfortunately, somebody might have died before the works were done, her comments raise the question of how many other people would have died between 1988-1996 when the 'so-called' socialist government did not even provide, or thought of having, a sub-head for those unfortunate persons who could not afford the equipment or the work. And if this whole issue is such a tragedy for Members opposite, given that in their manifesto they stated that they were going to increase the Fund considerably, why then in the Estimate Book does it show the same amount as was the case when the GSD was in Government? Mr Speaker, hypocrisy, hypocrisy, hypocrisy. (*Interjections*)

What this whole episode highlights is that, despite the much proclaimed fanfare of a collegiate Government that is always in constant e-communication through their iPads, what it shows is that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing! Hence the vitriolic attack against me for exposing the myth. One can always suggest to the hon. Members opposite that to improve communications further between Ministers they should get in touch with companies in the Silicon Valley in California in order for them to obtain the latest technology in holograms. This would allow the hon. Members of the Government not just to be in touch electronically, but also to have a three dimensional image of themselves in virtual reality in order to get their act together. One drawback for the people of Gibraltar, in case the Government would be thinking of projecting their images into people's living rooms, is that it will have serious adverse health risks to them which will require additional funding for the GHA for counselling therapies due to Government spin and fantasy.

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Health took offence in Question 548/2012 because I was seeking to find an answer to the different figures being produced by different members of the Government. Instead of providing an adequate answer as to whether such outstanding works would be done in this financial year, he conveniently digressed away from the question by saying that it was the height of hypocrisy by the GSD to accuse the new Government of delays in the execution of the works.

Mr Speaker: I should remind the hon. Member he is using the word 'hypocrisy'. It is one of the words on the glossary of words not permitted.

Hon. J J Netto: Can I prefix it with 'political', then?

Mr Speaker: I beg your pardon?

Hon. J J Netto: Can I prefix it with 'political', then?

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Mr Speaker: Anyway, I should remind Members it is not acceptable.

Hon. J J Netto: Well, this is what *he* said.

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Mr Speaker: I know but, previously, it was used –

Hon. J J Netto: I am quoting what he said.

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Mr Speaker: I know, but I am taking up the point from the point where the hon. Member used the word 'hypocrisy' and, for good measure, repeated it twice more, so it is three times as unacceptable.

Hon. J J Netto: Well, Mr Speaker, one wonders –

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, on a Point of Order. You actually said earlier, in the course of the ruling, that the fact one was *quoting* from a source did not in any way, either, exempt the words.

Hon. J J Netto: He can say it, but I cannot. Is that what you are saying?

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Mr Speaker: No the point made (*Laughter*), the point made by the Hon. Chief Minister and that I have already made in my ruling is the fact that when you are quoting someone else does not make it more palatable here.

Hon. J J Netto: Well, Mr Speaker, one very much welcomes an exposition of the word that *he* said and that I am not saying now – (*Laughter*)

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Mr Speaker: That suits us well.

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Hon. J J Netto: For the benefit of Members of this House and for the benefit of members of the public, in this tabulation of examples, we can compare the delays of carrying out O.T. works in Government flats, against the fact that the Socialist Government – of which he is now one – never provided for any money, or resources, to do this kind of work between 1988- 1996.

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Perhaps the fact that, after the construction of Dr. Giraldi Home it stayed closed for two years because, in the words of the then socialist Chief Minister, 'employing professional people would be too expensive'; or rejecting a plea from the Board of Governors of Mount Alvernia to have an increase to the GSLP Government subvention was denied by the socialist Government when, at the time, most occupational activities at Mount Alvernia were carried out free by the Friends of Mount Alvernia, or that the building was closed by two thirds because it needed money for refurbishment; or the fact that hundreds and hundreds of elderly persons did not have either income at all, or very little, and it took a GSD caring government to introduce the Minimum Income Guarantee...

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Mr Speaker. the truth is that I could go on and on... so if the Hon. Minister has a desire to speak of the things which I cannot say, but *he* said it, that is fine with me, but let's keep the argument empirical and not theatrical. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

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Mr Speaker, another example where the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing in Government is in relation of the close collaboration that should exist between the Care Agency and the Employment Service. At the beginning of this term of Parliament I asked how many Looked After Children were in training programmes. The Minister for Employment answered – although I should say in a supplementary question – that there had been a lack of communication between both Agencies, which had resulted in the Care Agency not passing the details of the then seven juveniles affected by this, and that this would be rectified *immediately*. Today, some seven months later, there continue to be at least five Looked After Children still awaiting a work placement in order to start learning the importance of training in occupational skills in order to set such juveniles on a strong path for the future. This lack of communication

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and effort shown by both Agencies is worrying, as the Care Agency does have parental responsibility for the welfare of any Looked After Child. Any further delays in actually delivering such opportunities will have a detrimental effect on the juveniles at a time which is crucial in their lifetime development as a person. I do sincerely hope, that by the time I ask this question again, which will be in a couple of weeks time, the matter will have been finally resolved.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister in his inaugural Budget address alluded once more to the fact that the previous GSLP Government did a wonderful job when *they* introduced the Standard Minimum Wage, well ahead of the UK Government. However, given the manner upon which they did it, which was so disgraceful, I feel obliged to put the record straight once and for all. To the extent that the Standard Minimum Wage was introduced in 1989, this is certainly correct but, given the incomplete story of this GSLP Government initiative, I will take the trouble to complete the picture, so that ordinary people can draw a proper conclusion from a very 'un-socialist' piece of legislation at the time.

In August 1989, the GSLP Government introduced the Standard Minimum Wage Order in Gibraltar for weekly paid employees only. The only discernible reason for restricting the Standard Minimum Wage generally was that, at this time, the Administrative Assistants' hourly rate of pay was £1.68 for a 16 year old person, £1.82 for a 17 year old person, £2.22 for an 18 year old person and £2.36 for a 19 year old person. This, obviously, was less than the hourly rate of pay for the newly introduced Minimum Wage of £2.50. Therefore, the GSLP Government designed a Minimum Wage Order in which the GSLP Government as an employer could use the *deliberate loophole* of not applying the Minimum Wage to its *own* employees because Administrative Assistants were paid monthly. So we had a *so-called* socialist Government deciding, as an employer, to keep its own Administrative Assistants below the Minimum Wage. Quite shameful and, to boot, when private sector employers found out, at the time, that by transferring their weekly paid employees to monthly paid, they could pay less than the hourly rate of the Minimum Wage, we witnessed a movement to circumscribe the legislation, thereby negating the Minimum Wage concept as a living wage. Mr Speaker, to borrow a popular phrase from the Hon. Mr Costa, 'Shame' on the socialist Government of 1988-96. (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker, It took a GSD Government to close the *deliberate loophole* created by the GSLP Government, thus making all employers in Gibraltar comply with the minimum wage both in the private and public sector for weekly and monthly paid employees. This was set as from the age of 16 thereby, closing all the deliberate loopholes of the *so-called* socialist Government. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Mr Speaker, in terms of the big issues, to keep an on-going eye within the Social Security Department – the reform to the Social Insurance that the Minister has alluded to in previous Question and Answer sessions in Parliament – it remains to be seen how the details of such proposed reforms, inasmuch as future funding liabilities is concerned, and inasmuch as the benefits to be drawn by current and future recipients, develop. One hopes that, despite indicating this matter in his address, he will give plenty of advance notice of any changes, not just to Parliament, on such an important and fundamental issue, but also to the social partners in the Trade Unions and the business organisations about the general principles behind the reform and the details of such, so that people can be better informed of what is likely to affect them now and in the future in such an important area of our lives.

Mr Speaker, the Government in their manifesto, talked about legislating in order to protect people fully from discrimination. Although one feels that this is yet one more commitment that has been kicked into the long grass, what the Government can do, as I was doing as Minister for Social Security in the short term, is to continue to update antiquated and discriminatory legislation within Social Security matters. At the moment, for instance, same sex couples are not taken into account for the purpose of certain benefits, such as Unemployment Benefits, Social Assistance, Minimum Income Guarantee, etc. Changes to the existing rules can be done quickly and promptly without having to wait for the completion of a review of all current legislation. Indeed, they might also wish to review how benefits affect common-law partners, too. This is something that can be done within the next six months if the will is there.

Mr Speaker, moving on to my last area of shadow responsibility, which is Health and Safety, well, Members will remember that, whilst talking of Social Services, I stated that the Government lacked a coherent policy at all. However, with regard to health and safety, we don't even have an idea of an idea in terms of what to do. This however is a pity, because when I went to the IOSH inauguration in the John Mackintosh Hall earlier this year, the Minister did inspire me at the time when, in his speech, he did say, 'the problem with Health and Safety practices is that it is very reactive and not proactive'. So when I heard the Minister say that, I thought to myself, well, here is a man who knows what to do and is going to make a big difference in

showing how to overcome them. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker my expectation was short-lived. The only glimmer of hope so far is that the Minister has indicated to me that the Government might employ some more Factory Inspectors, although this is not shown in the new Estimate Book. That said, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Minister for Health & Safety's contribution to the Budget Address sadly lacked vision, enthusiasm and knowledge of the issues that need addressing.

Mr Speaker, month after month when I ask my questions about which industry groups have been targeted for inspections, the practical totality has been to the construction industry. There seems to be no desire, willingness or concern about using the existing resources available to spread more evenly across the whole spectrum of all industry groups, giving the same treatment for inspections across the whole breadth of the legislation that they need to monitor. It is as if the Government is signalling to all other industry groups, other than the construction industry, 'Do whatever you like, legal or not, because the policy of the Government is to turn a blind eye.'

But it gets worse, Mr Speaker. The whole episode of the KGV Hospital shows how the Government prefers to abandon common sense rather than allow good practices to prevail. Instead of accepting that the trainees on the scaffold had been unsupervised for many days, and that good practice for trainees would have meant wearing hard hats, it automatically rejected *all of this* simply to give an erroneous image that the Government never gets anything wrong. Well, what trainees need is to be supervised and taught in order to avoid potential hazards, and to be supervised in order that they may learn a trade and to wear hard hats so that good standards are instilled on the youngsters, thereby avoiding future accidents.

Mr Speaker, for the last six months I have been asking the Minister for the statistics in relation to 2011. At first the Minister told the House that his ministry had bought a new software programme and that, by April, the figures would be available. Then, when I asked the question again, he told me that there had been some difficulties with the new software programme, but he would be in a position to give me the data soon. Today, I still have not got the data and the Minister just has not got a clue as to when the data will be available. Lately, as seen in the last session of Parliament, the answers given to my questions do not even provide a clear and precise breakdown of the information requested. What we are witnessing is that, as time passes, instead of improving the systems and procedures inherited, we are actually going backwards.

Mr Speaker, if the Hon. Minister for Health & Safety sincerely wishes to have a proactive policy for health and safety, then he could well start by looking at *my* policies, at the policies that *I* developed between 1996-2000. In that period, I constituted a Health & Safety Advisory Council with specialised practitioners who used to advise me, as Minister, for the development of Government policy. We started doing Codes of Practice in order to self-regulate specific industry groups or activities, we held annual health and safety seminars in which large numbers of organisations and trade unions participated, and we applied a holistic approach to health and safety legislation across the whole spectrum of industry groups.

In a nutshell, there are three pillars for a proactive approach to health and safety. The first, up-to-date legislation. Two; proper monitoring and enforcement across the whole spectrum of all industry groups; and, thirdly, ongoing training and awareness to all industry groups and social partners.

I really hope that I may have given the hon. Member some food for thought in the development of proactive policies on health and safety as, otherwise, we are never going to get this show on the road.

In summary, Mr Speaker, I can conclude that, so far into the term of the new Government, in relation to spending into the 'Welfare State', the rate of growth has been less than last year's budget of the GSD, after adjusting for inflation, down by 2.7%.

The new facilities for the elderly at the old St. Bernard's Hospital remain closed, despite the facilities being ready for use, as a result of a dispute by the Minister for Social Services, who is more intent to score cheap political points than improving the services available for the elderly.

The Government is not honouring its pledges with regard to the disabled and the elderly, and is lowering the standard of services in the Care Agency as a result of the introduction of the 11-month contract.

Finally, on health and safety, the Government just has not got a clue on how to develop any positive ideas and, instead, feels content to just plod along and dig its head in the sand.

Mr Speaker, as always in my Budget addresses, I would like to give my sincere thanks to the staff at the Department of Social Security, and the Care Agency for their hard work and dedication to the services they provide to the community. Also, in my new role as an Opposition Member, to all the staff in Parliament for their guidance and help in adjusting to my new role. Without their help, my work would certainly have been much more difficult.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. *(Applause.)*

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think that might be a convenient moment to break for five minutes before I reply.

Mr Speaker: The House will recess for five minutes.

*The House recessed at 10.20 a.m.
and resumed its sitting at 10.30 a.m.*

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Well, Mr Speaker, two long days of speeches!
795 Ministers have put a *massive* amount of detail into the public domain about the progress of a new Government, seven months in, and also what will happen for the next 12 months.

Mr Speaker, before I carry on, I think it is appropriate, at this juncture, to congratulate all the novice speakers in this debate, on both sides of the House – but, really, one might have expected a lot more from the Members on the Opposition benches. The Government feels that there has been so little substance raised in the speeches of the hon. Members opposite that one might as well simply get up and commend the Bill to the House because there is very little relating to the Estimates that has been raised at all.

None of them, in my view, have done *any* meaningful analysis of any of the numbers in the Estimates Book: not really until this morning from Mr Netto, any comment about expenditures up or down.

Nothing really at all, Mr Speaker, on the massively important import duty reductions that we have delivered to Main Street, to stimulate the retail distributive trade.

Not a peep, Mr Speaker – not a peep – about the changes that take the lowest paid out of taxation this year, and next year even more.

No comment, Mr Speaker, on the increases in the minimum wage.

Mr Speaker, I did not hear a dickybird from the other side about the fact that we are taking pension income outside of the computation for taxation. Not a dickybird, Mr Speaker! Well, at least Mr Figueras acknowledged the new Government's very positive approach to the environment, by our reduction of import duties on hybrid vehicles to 2% - a flat rate of 2% and a very generous system of cash-backs that is introduced for the first time in this Budget.

So, instead of comment on any of those issues, congratulations, perhaps, to the Government for such a well-balanced Budget, Mr Speaker, (A Member: Hear, hear.) what did we get, instead? A re-run of all the arguments from the Election that they lost and then, Mr Speaker, something quite novel, which was a team reading of the *Hansard* between January and June. They all read very well, but that was all it was! It was us being treated to the arguments pre-8th December and what it is they have asked questions about and promoted debate at Question Time, which is not about debates, on the issues that they have raised.

Well, Mr Speaker, I remember when the Hon. now the Leader of the Opposition used to rule the roost on this side of the House, he used to tell the hon. Lady, Miss Montegriffo, who I had the pleasure of being in this House with – for reasons that I will come to later, when she was here is important – in this debate he used to say to her that she simply spent her Budget speech regurgitating her press releases and questions from previous sessions. And I recall, Mr Speaker, at one stage he said that was cumulative and, actually, she had been in Parliament for many years and, by the time she left, she did speak for quite a while.

But what a humiliation, Mr Speaker! What an utter humiliation, to now see him and his whole team do exactly the same thing. Exactly the same thing. Except, of course, without Miss Montegriffo's innate political flare and panache. I almost felt for him, Mr Speaker – and my feelings of empathy grew as I heard him rely on an argument, not from 8th December 2011, not from this Election, but from an Election 40 years ago – from the 1972 Election.

Mr Speaker, 1972 is the year when Mr Bossano was first elected to this Parliament, it is the year when Mr Bossino and I were born! What currency and argument from the 1972 'Big Lie' Election – well, actually, you know what, Mr Speaker, perhaps it is because 1972 is the year that I was born, the arguments struck a chord with me: the 'Big Lie' Election. I found myself, for once, in 'man bites dog' category: I actually agreed with him. I think there was a lot to be said in characterising the Election of 2011 as a 'Big Lie' Election because, you see, Mr Speaker, in the same way as Sir Joshua had seen off the 'Big Lie', so had we. So had we.

In 1972, the electorate saw through a big lie. That was *his* argument when he made it on Monday. Well, Mr Speaker, if the analogy is appropriate, then the electorate saw through a collection of big lies in 2011. (A

Member: Hear, hear.) Does he not want to hear it? Sir Joshua *won* in 1972. *We* won in 2011. The ‘Big Lie’, as he characterised it – and this is his argument, not mine – must, therefore, have been on the lips of the incumbent. And if the analogy, Mr Speaker, is to be seen through, then the ‘big lies’, if that is analogous to 2011, must have been on the lips of the incumbent and that is him. *He* was the incumbent in 2011.

Well, Mr Speaker, at least in 1972 there was only *one* alleged lie. You see, in 2011, in the analysis of the hon. Gentleman, there was more than one ‘big lie’ at the Election. He took a complete scattergun approach at what he says were our ‘lies’ at the Election. He said, Mr Speaker, that debt was actually what he always expected it would have been in 2011, that our manifesto *is* unaffordable, and he said, Mr Speaker – repeatedly – from the moment of this Budget debate, if not before, up to and including Election Day, that we, and in particular I, were unfit to govern.

Well, Mr Speaker, just like in 1972, the lies that he said then were on the lips of the incumbent were seen through by the electorate. We know that the public chose the right team for Government and the right manifesto for the future of our nation. What we did not all know was that the hon. Gentleman would find it quite so difficult to get over, that, seven months later, he is *still* trying to make the same arguments that the electorate saw through, that he is *still* going on about it.

Mr Speaker, he was Chief Minister for 16 years. I think the public will have forgiven him for having raised the same arguments that he tried to raise in the General Election at the Ceremonial Opening of the House. The man has been there for 16 years: twenty one days after losing an Election, he still wants to continue fighting it. I do not think it was a particularly elegant address at the ceremonial opening but I think the public might have forgiven him for it.

But, Mr Speaker, in the seven months that there have been between now and the Election I thought he was starting to realise that his role in this place now is to ask questions and he less frequently breaks out into soliloquies, into chiefly soliloquies, that you have to pull him back from. One would have thought that, by now, by the Budget debate, we would all know what our roles are in this new world order. But he gets up, Mr Speaker, and tells us that *we* have to snap out of Opposition mode and stop rubbishing *his* ‘golden legacy’.

Well, Mr Speaker, *he* needs to snap out of it. Why is it that he has put himself in a position where he is going to invite me to *explain* the hollow ‘golden legacy’ to all and sundry. Has he taken leave of his political senses? Does he not realise it is going to be worse for him in the long run to make allegations of that sort?

The reason why we sometimes have to criticise what happened before 8th December 2011 is because there is important material that has to be put into the public domain. And the reason he wants us to stop doing that is because he knows that there is a lot that, justifiably, will not stand up to scrutiny when it is put out in the public domain. In fact, Mr Speaker, he made a list of the things that we had said about events pre-8th December 2011 and he enumerated the *excellent* press releases that have been issued by the Government dealing with all of those issues.

But did he tell us what the counter-arguments were? Have they replied to all of those press releases? Where are, Mr Speaker, the detailed explanations? Where are the rebuttals to all of those arguments? Nowhere.

Mr Speaker, we had to say to the public, who are entitled to know, that pretty pictures in the GSD manifesto were paid for by the taxpayer. I thought it was bad enough that they were using taxpayers’ money to fund their campaign in *Seven Days*. (**Hon. N F Costa:** Shame!) Pictures in their party political manifesto paid for by the taxpayer and yet we have not heard a word either of explanation or apology from the opposite benches. They have just made a list of the things that they would rather we did not say.

Mr Speaker, on the Culture and Heritage Agency, where we had a debate across the floor of this House, where I gave him the Principal Auditor’s Report, he has said twice in Question Time that he is going to deal with all the criticisms that the Auditor made, that I raised in the course of those debates. Mr Speaker, nothing has been said to date. Nothing! Either the bold assertion that ‘everything was done properly’ but no descending to particulars. Well why, Mr Speaker – why is that the case? Well, it is simple, because there are no good explanations for the many issues that we have raised and the hon. Gentleman, taking something out of the most basic 2.0 Rulebook, as it is known in modern parlance, on how to manage the press, do not want to go into a political argument that they know they cannot win.

Just for a moment moving on to something that Mr Bossino talked about – editorials in one particular local newspaper – let me assure him, Mr Speaker, that for the Government to put into the public domain information relating to the things that the previous administration did is not trial by media. Trial by media, Mr Speaker, was the sustained attack on me and on my colleagues, and on me in particular, which was funded and orchestrated from No. 6, Convent Place, when the party he now sits on the opposite benches with was in

power. *That* was improper use of Government resources. *That* could properly be referred to using the word that he used, then withdrew, and which you have, quite rightly, said we should not bandy lightly across the floor of this House. £150,000 of taxpayers' money spent on GSD propaganda to attempt – *attempt* – trial by media against members of the now Government, then the Opposition.

Well, Mr Speaker, they used to say that *Seven Days* was not a taxpayer-funded political rag but, if any proof were needed of what *Seven Days* was, *vide* the fact that the said publication is no longer in print, once the taxpayers' subsidy was choked off and proper democratic accountability re-established as from 9th December 2011 – that new dawn, Mr Speaker, the sun of which so burns their eyes... So, Mr Speaker, when Mr Bossino makes the mistake of making a reference to the 'c' word, I warn him not to develop that theme too much or it may come back to haunt his colleagues who were previously in Government, in the months and years to come, to the *massive* political benefit of the current Government.

But what rudderless and leaderless Opposition they have become and what an interesting role my old classmate, Mr Bossino, is now playing in it. Mr Speaker, can you imagine, last year, anyone in the GSD delivering a speech in flat contradiction of the political theory of the then Chief Minister, now Leader of the Opposition. Never, Mr Speaker. In fact, I would less fancy the chances last year of a GSD Minister who went off-Caruana-message than I might have fancied my own, actually taking him on from where he is sitting today. (A Member: Hear, hear.) (Laughter)

But I won, when I did take him on and yet, this year, Mr Speaker, hardly seven months after he lost power, he is already being challenged on core GSD messages – but not by his Deputy, the one who sees himself as the shoe-in for his job. No, but none other than by, Mr Bossino, whose address was totally contrary to the GSD dogma on what our Election programme is. And if it was not enough that he said it in this House, I congratulate him, Mr Speaker, for sticking to the message and saying it last night in his snippet, or sound-bite, on GBC's *Newswatch*.

Well, Mr Speaker, we know that the GSD approach – it is a political approach, it is up to them – is to develop a theme and stick with it, even if it does not work: if you say it often enough, you hope that that will stick. It is the media world in which the Leader of the Opposition was brought up in the mid 90's. It used to work then. I do not think it works now, with so much disparate social media etc, but it used to work then, when there were two or three television channels and the odd newspaper that everyone would read. Repeat it, repeat it, repeat it... and it will stick, whether it is true or not, whether it is realistic or not.

Last year the theme was 'Picardo is this, Picardo is that' – it does not matter that it would not stick – and, this year, Mr Speaker you can see those themes developing. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to observe what one's political opponent is trying to do. So, Mr Speaker, *everything* we do is a U-turn – even though we said we were going to do it and it is set out in our manifesto! All we are trying to be is 'all things to all men', and just because we get on with people, Mr Speaker, we talk to them and we do not tell everyone what it is that they have to do and impose our will on them – 'all things to all men.'

Importantly, Mr Speaker, and this is why this is relevant to this analysis, the GSD dogma, in seven out of eight speeches – sorry, six out of seven speeches – Mr Netto went on for so long I thought it was almost two, that is value for money for you – the thread is that we promised *too much* at election time, that our manifesto was *too full* and we cannot afford to deliver on our manifesto commitments. And *that*, Mr Speaker, is why we are talking about the problems of public finance – as an excuse, a door the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition said, through which I will walk whenever I want to cry off any of the manifesto commitments that we cannot then fund – not because the money is not there but because we did not cost our manifesto properly. That is the thread and it has been constant since the ceremonial opening of this House.

Well, Mr Speaker, imagine my surprise when, off-message, stage left, I heard Mr Bossino say yesterday in this House, and on GBC, that we have actually an empty, vacuous programme for government. So, six out of seven say we have got too much to do, we cannot afford it and one out of seven says 'That is why you are spending so much time criticising what we did, because you have got nothing to do, nothing to be getting on with, there is nothing in your programme.' Well, somebody is standing out from those benches, Mr Speaker! I commend him for taking that line, even though, of course, both lines are completely wrong. Our programme, which people have rightly chosen, is the fullest, most ambitious, most properly costed and deliverable programme that Gibraltar has ever selected at a General Election! (Applause) (A Member: Hear, hear.)

But could it be that somebody is actually going to challenge Mr Caruana before he finally goes? Well, Mr Speaker, it may be that it is Mr Bossino. I guess that, for both of us, life really does begin at forty! (Laughter) What happens on the Opposition benches is a matter entirely for them. I am not going to get involved in their

leadership issues, as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition used to so enjoy doing when he was Chief Minister and, look, I know that a kiss from this side of the House to anybody there in respect of the leadership is probably a kiss of death so I have no intention of pressing my lips to anybody's flesh across the way.

What is clear, and it is becoming clearer beyond peradventure, is that there really is not, on substance, other than on spin – on substance – a unified message coming from those benches any more. So, some of them, Mr Speaker, say that we have too much to do and we cannot afford it. Others say that we have nothing to do except act like an Opposition. Well, Mr Speaker, look, hapless, divided and rudderless – hapless, divided and rudderless – that is what the Opposition has become in the seven months since they lost the throne of office.

In fact, Mr Speaker, it is neither of those because, if hon. Members opposite had bothered to actually listen to the speeches to which they had already carefully crafted replies, they would have realised, actually, quite how advanced we are on delivery of the manifesto which the people chose in December. How, Mr Speaker? We have actually re-committed ourselves to delivery of the manifesto commitments. I have not walked through the door that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition suggested I was purporting to prepare to walk through, and what we are sure of is that we will deliver on these manifesto commitments without having to walk through the trapdoor that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition was setting for us.

Mr Speaker, perhaps that is why they so fear the press releases of Dr. Garcia when he sets out more and more fully completed, entirely delivered and honoured, manifesto commitments already in just seven months. They must *hate* it every time those lists with hundreds of completed commitments hit the news racks. *Our* political success is the salt to the fresh wound of their electoral failure.

One of the main things that we are already delivering on is the reduction of our nation's debt. I have already shown, in my first intervention, that this year – in this financial year – we will be reducing gross debt by one eighth, that is, Mr Speaker, from £518 million, down £68 million to £450 million, bang on track to deliver the 50% reduction in gross debt that is set out in our manifesto.

Could they at least not have said that, although they believe that we should be reducing, if we want to reduce anything, *net* debt, could they at least not have said, 'Well, look, your manifesto says you are going to reduce gross debt by half – one eighth in your first four years – if you continue to deliver, it will be four-eighths in four years, ie. half: you are on track to deliver that which we believe you should not deliver but, *chapeau*, you are on track? No. Well, I suppose, Mr Speaker, it is a novel concept because, as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, when he was incumbent Chief Minister, said during the course of the General Election debates and, in particular, one interview on radio, for *them* their manifesto is an expression of hopes and wishes, not a binding commitment with the people, as it is for us. I guess that is why it does not matter to them that we are delivering on what we promised. It has never been relevant to them.

Why is it that we *have* to deliver on debt reduction as a priority? Well, because, Mr Speaker, whatever he may say now, the hon. Gentleman knows that debt has got too high in the spending frenzy that he embarked on in order to try to get himself re-elected. I guess that is what happens when a tired administration tries to spend its way back into power.

But what demonstrates all that, Mr Speaker, in financial and accounting terms – which is what this debate should always be about – is the *stunning* statistic that I disclosed during the course of my intervention on the Second Reading to move the Bill. I told the House then – and I feel I have got to repeat it because it is essential that the hon. Members opposite understand why we make this argument – they spent *more* on capital projects in the *last two years* of the last Parliament than they had in the 13 previous years since 1996. They spend *more in two pre-election years* than they ever had before. It is an absolute political scandal, Mr Speaker.

But it is worth analysing how the debt grew, in gross and net terms, under the hon. Members when they were in government and, Mr Speaker, of course the figures I am going to refer to are all the figures provided to me by the Treasury and the Ministry for Finance.

Also, Mr Speaker, it is worth noting, and I will do this analysis at the same time, how it is that that growth in gross public debt and net debt is *completely contrary* to what the hon. Gentleman used to say were the 'golden rules' of his economics. In this debate, Mr Speaker, before your time and before my time, in 2001 the hon. Gentleman explained that the fourth of what he then called his four economic policy objectives was this; that capital should be invested, whilst maintaining reserves at a prudent level, whilst maintaining public debt at a prudent level and using mainly budgetary surpluses to finance capital investments and thus ensuring that we do not raise public debt significantly or substantially and thus avoid mortgaging future generations with things we do today.

He did not say then, Mr Speaker, whether the raising of debt etc. that he was against was in cash terms, in ratio terms, or as a percentage of GDP, but it is really not relevant that he did not say that because, before the hon. Gentleman was possessed by the desire to build a Pharaonic project like the air terminal, which has mortgaged to it, in our view, Mr Speaker, many generations of Gibraltarians *and* hypothecated to it the many other projects that should have come before such a lavish air terminal, he said more about the 'golden rules'.

In 2003 he re-visited his 'golden rulebook' and there he was specific about what he meant in respect of his fourth rule. The fourth golden rule, as explained to this House in 2003, was a prudent, conservative – that word does suit him – policy of public finances that will curtail public borrowing and maximise public reserves. *Curtail* public borrowing: well, in 2003, before I was elected, in that Budget debate the Hon. the then Chief Minister gave himself, as he was wont to do in these debates, a glowing report for having complied with his four 'golden' economic policy rules.

That year, Mr Speaker, the position was that gross debt was £78 million on a borrowing limit of £100 million. It was actually the Hon. Mr Feetham, the leader, then, as he was, of a third party, who spent much of the 2003 campaign *criticising* that level of debt. Incidentally, Mr Speaker, Mr Feetham was then also proposing the introduction of capital gains tax, raising the tax of Category 2 citizens by 50% and calling the Theatre Royal – which the hon. Gentleman used to call 'his vision' – a white elephant. Well, what can I say! (A Member: A lot.)

Anyway, I just pause there, Mr Speaker, to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have in my office a painting by the excellent Gibraltarian painter, Karl Ullger, of the Theatre Royal as it used to be: it does not belong to the Ministry of Culture, it belongs to me. It is from my personal collection, and I hang it in 6 Convent Place to remember *always* the dangers and folly of Chief Ministerial visions and where they can take us – almost £10 million down a visionless black hole. I suppose Mr Feetham and I still agree on some things! Perhaps more than one might air in this debate.

Well, Mr Speaker, let's cut forward from that glowing report he gave himself in 2003 to last year, to 8th December, in fact to 7th December – the evening of 7th December – when he and I had the pleasure of debating at the leader's debate with Mr Azopardi. Then he said something that caught Mr Azopardi, Mr Neish and myself completely unawares. The whole Election campaign had been predicated on the gross debt of £480 million but, on that day, the hon. Gentleman let the stink bomb down in the studio that, actually, *gross* debt was closer to £520 million!

The hon. Gentleman last year in this debate – surprise, surprise – also gave himself a glowing pre-Election report, much as he had done in 2003. But in 2003 his glowing report was based on having complied with the 'golden rule' that was to curtail public debt. In 2011, the glowing report ignores the fourth 'golden rule' and gives himself a glowing report, despite gross debt having rocketed.

Well, Mr Speaker, bang goes another GSD myth. The 'golden rule' had been smelted to dust. The once economic policy objective, the curtailing of public borrowing, was now a rotting, forgotten footnote to Gibraltar's economic history. Borrowing had rocketed. Prudence was banished to her room, and debt was the financial drug of choice. The principle that we should not mortgage future generations was hypothecated to the lure of spending one's way back into office.

Goodbye, golden rules! Therefore, Mr Speaker, when the analysis continues we will demonstrate goodbye to the myth of the 'golden legacy'. In fact, Mr Speaker, if Mr Feetham, who is the one who usually enunciates the vein, the spin of U-turn – he is the one who talks about the U-turn, that is his mantra – wants to know what a U-turn looks like, he should learn from his fading leader's tossing and turning on debt.

If the public want to see a U-turn, Mr Speaker, all they need to do is look at the 'golden rule' of 2003 and the Estimates Book of 2011/2012. That is a U-turn and the rest, as they say in Spanish, *es historia*. But then – Mr Feetham may not want to hear it – anybody who goes from being the putative leader of the GSLP to becoming the putative next leader of the GSD does not need the hon. Gentleman to teach him what a U-turn is. I guess that he has his tongue firmly on his cheek when he says that *we* want to be all things to all men. But I must say, Mr Speaker, I guess that going from anti-GSD putative leader of the GSLP to being anti-GSLP putative leader of the GSD is a little bit like a military march, 'Left, right, left, right'. So much so, Mr Speaker, that now every time that I watch one of the splendid parades that the Royal Gibraltar Regiment put on and I see them march off to the refrain of the Sergeant Major's, 'Left, right, left, right', I am always put in mind of the hon. Gentleman going from the GSLP to the GSD!

Mr Speaker, when the Hon. Leader of the Opposition was first elected as Chief Minister in 1996 he also made great play of the fact, in that first Budget debate, that he was going to ensure, then in respect of companies, that all Government expenditure was reflected in the Estimates. He said, in his first Budget

1060 speech, that the book had been restructured for that purpose and this brought clarity at last to the public
accounts of Gibraltar. Well, Mr Speaker, how that attitude changed. Another U-turn: so many millions of
1065 recurrent company losses were parked off-balance sheet by the hon. Member that one can only conclude that
that must have been designed, as his lustre as a political leader faded, to try and artificially boost numbers to
reflect a better economic performance than was the case in pre-election years. Indeed, Mr Speaker, keeping
those losses out might have produced a much larger surplus every year but it would not be a real surplus at all.
It would have been, as it was, a surplus born from that discipline of economics that he used to cry off so
much. It would have been, Mr Speaker, a surplus of voodoo economics – voodoo economics – that he decried
so often and then gorged himself on in the final years of his stewardship of our public finances.

Let us face it, Mr Speaker, even in the simple grocery example that he gave of accounts, you have always
got to factor in all your recurrent expenditure before arriving at your net cash surplus position. And he is
1070 wrong, and in my view, he knows that he is wrong when he says that we have included in the £28 million
amounts which amount to capital before we make the deduction on the surplus. He says, Mr Speaker, that we
are including there not just recurrent expenses but capital expenditure. It does not, Mr Speaker. The £28
million does not include *a penny* of capital expenditure. *All of it* is recurrent. All of it is recurrent and,
1075 therefore, is *rightly* applied to the calculation before determining what is left over, ie. the surplus. Every
single amount deducted is a recurrent, continuing cost, not a capital cost.

I told him where the capital costs of the company losses would be met from, from the I&D. There is no
secret in that at all, and it does not affect his surplus. So, Mr Speaker, when he makes an argument that we
included, in the £28 million deduction, some capital elements, he is wrong. And unless he has completely
1080 forgotten everything that he knew on 7th December, before we both met our fate at the polls, he knows that
what he is saying is not true, and I am left, Mr Speaker, with the view that there can only be one conclusion,
as a result. That is that he is setting out to mislead the general public.

Mr Speaker, we now also know the figures for unemployment given to us last year were not correct. Mr
Bossano gave us the detail of that. But I guess it sounded good, in an Election year, to pretend that
unemployment was down. It sounded good to say, when you are going to the polls, ‘remember there are less
1085 unemployed’, but it was not true, Mr Speaker. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I assume that there was a hidden
meaning when the then Minister of Employment under the hon. Gentleman came to this Parliament, brought
us the Employment Survey and you said, when he tabled it that, it was ‘ordered to lie’. I have not quite
picked up how easy it is to use the ‘L’ word in this House!

The reality, Mr Speaker, was that there were many more unemployed. And it was given away by the Hon.
1090 Mr Feetham in the course of the pre-Election debates when he said he had calculated what the Future Job
Strategy would cost. Well, of course, it did not make sense, based on what *his* interpretation of what the
Future Job Strategy was and the numbers of unemployed that there were, but he was bandying about the
figures that he was bandying about. Mr Bossano has told us the reality of that in this debate, Mr Speaker. The
1095 Employment Survey this year is ordered to inform the public of reality, and not to lie, and we have the good
news, in the course of this Budget debate that, each month now, Mr Speaker, there are more Gibraltarians in
employment in our economy. *Exactly* the trend that we want to see, but apparently a *huge* disappointment to
the hon. Members opposite, who are Members for *el campo de Gibraltar* more than they are the Members for
the local resident unemployed.

In fact, it was interesting to hear the Hon. Mr Feetham talk about our obligations under the European
1100 Treaty. He will know that I have given the same answer in this House about what the Treaty of Rome says
but, Mr Speaker, I did not perceive that that was an attack by Mr Feetham on the policy of the Government. I
concede that, in saying what he said, he was not attacking Mr Bossano, he was not looking for a *mano a mano*
with anyone on this side of the House, Mr Speaker. This was all part of a wider political plan, because it
1105 seemed to me, Mr Speaker, that that remark about Gibraltar, and Gibraltar’s obligations under the EU Treaty
etc., was a carefully aimed dagger at the heart of the person who stood up in this House and said that the
Government was implementing a new plan to ensure that, in cleaning and in construction companies, no
Government contract would be given to any company that did not henceforth employ as many Gibraltarians as
possible (*Applause*) and he said it, Mr Speaker, with the support of those of us who were then sitting where he
1110 sits now. But it was none other than the Hon. the now the Leader of the Opposition, then the Chief Minister,
who made that speech.

So, Mr Speaker, when Mr Feetham now appears to take a contrary position and Mr Netto takes a contrary
position and starts talking about the need to create employment opportunities for people in the *campo*, I
appreciate that this is another manifestation of the rudderless and leaderless Opposition that we now face and,

1115 of course, in that very clear and pointed contradiction to that policy enunciated by the hon. Gentleman when he was Chief Minister, perhaps a first step towards the heart that makes those statements. Or, Mr Speaker, another U-turn.

1120 One year a GSD leader says 'we will favour local residents for employment'. Another year – almost 365 days to the day – a previously anti-GSD GSLP member, putative GSLP leader, now anti-GSLP, putative GSD leader says the opposite. Well, thank goodness, Mr Speaker, that we are committed, as the hon. Gentleman said *he* was last year to, first and foremost, reducing local resident unemployment and that *this* party is the party delivering on all its commitments and Joe Bossano is in charge of that and is doing a magnificent job implementing the policy that the Hon. the now Leader of the Opposition enunciated from this place last year. Thank goodness, Mr Speaker, that this rudderless, almost leaderless Opposition did not win the Election and that we did and are delivering beyond expectation.

1125 Another one of our commitments is that we will not be putting up utility charges. We thought, Mr Speaker, having heard the hon. Gentleman in last year's debate, that that would mean that it would stick post the 3% increase in electricity charges that he announced to the House last year. Imagine our joy when we found that, in fact, we could go further and, because the 3% had not yet been introduced, we could, in effect, stick to where we are and therefore reverse the 3% increase that the hon. Gentleman had announced last year!

1130 But, look, I agree, talking about electricity that, if possible, the power station going forward should not be an issue of division. We all agree that something needs to be done as quickly and as reasonably as possible about our three existing, ageing facilities and their location. But why is it so urgent, Mr Speaker? Because we have had 'power station' from most of them: 'power station, power station, quick – tunnel, power station.' Well, Mr Speaker why is it so urgent? Why is it that the Government has been here for seven months, even when it was here for two months, for three months, for four months, for five months, for six months, was being told: 'Power station, it is urgent. You have got to do it quickly: power station, urgent. Do it now.' Mr Speaker, is it, perhaps, because they did nothing about it in 16 years? Or, at the very least, in the past *nine* years when they were in possession of the PB Power Report that told them, in 2003, that by 2010 we would all be suffering power cuts because of the state of Waterport Power Station?

1140 Mr Speaker, if they were told in 2003 that something had to be done and by the time we were elected in 2011 – almost 2012 – nothing had been done, could they at least, when they urge us to do something about the power station, put their hands up and say 'please act quickly, because we didn't?' Is that not at least the politically honest, mature approach to take if we are going to be non-partisan about this?

1145 Mr Speaker, 2003 to 2011, December 2011, almost 2012, is two Parliaments – *two* Parliaments – and, as I will tell Mr Figueras later when I deal with his intervention, in that period of eight years he will not be able to rely with many of the excuses that he referred to in the course of his intervention as to why progress had not been made.

1150 Mr Speaker we have been here seven months – they had *96 months* to do something about it! And moreover, Mr Speaker, I am going to give *you* an exclusive today: you, Mr Speaker, and just the people within these four walls and anybody who might be listening – just between you, me and the microphone – the thing that was not said by the hon. Members during the General Election campaign that they have tried to re-run in argument in the past 48 hours of debate of this House, is that when they *finally* did something about it, in the dying months of the *ancien* regime, what they signed up to but did not tell anyone during the Election campaign... because they wanted to be all things to all men, which is what they say when we do not say something during an Election campaign. Do they say it because they want to be all things for all men? So, therefore, what is good for the goose is good for the Opposition gander. What they did not say in the Election campaign about their new power station was that, in order to finance it, the document that *they* were going to sign for financing would commit Gibraltar to increased electricity charges by 5% every year for 20 years! (A **Member:** Shame, shame!) (*Applause*)

1160 Mr Speaker, if they did believe in transparent and open Government, if they did believe that during a General Election campaign one has to explain all the nuances of every potential policy, if they did believe that finances were not too high, or debt was not too high, why did they not tell us that, actually, for the power station they would have increased the cost of electricity by *100%* over the 20 year period and that the party opposite them, in the General Election campaign, were saying zero electricity rises. That is the choice, in fact, facing the public on 7th December but hidden from them by the hon. Members. So they kept *that* pretty quiet during the General Election campaign, Mr Speaker.

1165 Let me turn now to one particular aspect of what the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition said about public debt. And I promise, Mr Speaker, that I am not going to keep him three and a half hours, like he used to keep

1170 us. I am just going to do a little bit more of analysis. As I have said before, when we first arrived in office
there was barely £20 million left for Gibraltar to spend. We had not yet been brought our first and very
convivial cup of tea at No. 6 Convent Place when the highest official at the Treasury put before us a
1175 resolution. A resolution, Mr Speaker, that was necessary to go beyond the £20 million because the borrowing
limit was going to be reached and, therefore, we needed to come to this House to seek further funding and £20
million in December, with four months left to run of the financial year, was not very much! Especially given
the millions of pounds committed to GSD capital projects still to be incurred!

We were advised, Mr Speaker, given the rate of burn – cash burn on these projects – ‘You have got to go
to the House as quickly as possible with this resolution, in order to be able to exceed the current legal limits
on debts’. Mr Speaker, I almost fell backwards. Not out of concern, because I know that with the people that
1180 I have in my team, with cash I have no problem. This party will comply with its obligations to reduce debt
and to increase the GDP. But, Mr Speaker, what was it that I said in what I regard to be my famous, not
infamous, Facebook podcast? That we were reaching the limit on debt, we were reaching the limit on debt and
this could not go on and, Mr Speaker, I have it on good authority that the campaign that the hon. Gentleman
ran against that podcast was actually something he had promised all the people around him would be one of
the things that would win them the Election – Picardo’s *mistakes* in the Facebook podcast.

1185 One of the themes of the Election was how high debt was, and one of the themes of the podcast, the
famous, successful – obviously we won the Election – podcast, was that we were reaching the limit on debt. I
was told repeatedly in this House, I faced a motion on it, Mr Speaker, and I arrive at No. 6 Convent Place, I
have not yet sat down, they have not brought me my cup of Earl Grey, (*Laughter*) and the highest official in
the Treasury tells me: ‘You had better quickly go to Parliament and get this resolution approved because you
1190 are going to hit the limit on debt.’

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman brought the motion on the Facebook podcast, spent six months
rubbishing *me* and it and, in his first intervention in the *Ceremonial Opening*, disclosed to us, by what he said
about the resolution and what he has said about it 48 hours ago, that he knew exactly as much as the officials
1195 at the Treasury knew about those numbers and about the need to come with a resolution to this House to get
further funding because, otherwise, we were going to hit the limit on debt. QED, Mr Speaker! *He knew* that
the limit on debt was going to be exceeded and that it required, therefore, an action of this House, either by
change of law or workarounds of the law, as provided for in the existing legislation, to exceed the limit set out
in the law. And he actually offered us, Mr Speaker, very generously, his support, should we bring such a
resolution to the House and he repeated it again in *this* debate that he would have done that.

1200 Mr Speaker, does he think we are going to fall for a trap like that? To borrow more when we have
promised to borrow less? But what does this mean in respect of the central arguments that he put? Given that
he wants to re-run the General Election campaign, let us re-run it, Mr Speaker, but let us re-run it with all the
information on the table – with *all* the information on the table. That argument was clearly, objectively, only
1205 capable of resolution – if you will excuse the pun – in favour of the argument put by us that we were about to
hit the limit on debt. And once you hit the limit you either come to this House and change the law as to how
the formula calculates debt or you change the provisions of maximum debt by a resolution of this House.

So, Mr Speaker, despite the bluster and the eloquence, for which I have always had the maximum respect,
we were right and he admits it, whilst pretending not to. That means that the hon. Gentleman is actually
1210 himself what he called me in the last debate, on these Estimates a year ago. *He* Mr Speaker – and I am using
his words – is the ‘political con artist’. He admits the crime, Mr Speaker, in the same sentence as he pleads
not guilty. ‘The debt is not too high, you are not going to reach the limit, there is nothing to worry about.
Come to the House with a resolution and you will be fine!’ Mr Speaker, why come to the House with a
resolution to go beyond the limit if we are not going to hit it? His argument, Mr Speaker, does not admit of
any intellectual rigour once all the facts are on the table.

1215 Mr Speaker, in his analysis now, in this debate, he said that Mr Bossano, when he was Chief Minister, was
more bullish about debt levels in 1996 than I am now in respect of the ratio to GDP. He even went back to, I
think, one of the debates in 1988. Well, Mr Speaker, if he wants to look at what Joe Bossano’s attitude was in
1996 to debt then we also have to look at what *his* attitude to debt was in 1996. You see, in 1996, *net* debt
1220 was *zero*, and he says that the appropriate measure of debt is not gross debt, it is net debt. Net debt was zero.
There was a gross debt of £83 million, £60 million of reserves in Community Care and other reserves. I
reminded him last year, Mr Speaker, on that gross debt of £83 million, on a GDP of £327 million, he said that
the level of debt, his party said that the level of debt was ‘a millstone round the necks of Gibraltarians’. That
was the campaign. ‘Gibraltar is bankrupt. £83 million of debt. Gross debt is a millstone round the necks of

1225 Gibraltarians.’ That was his attitude to debt in 1996, and yet now, Mr Speaker, he calls the ‘golden legacy’ of £520 million of gross debt on a GDP of £1 billion perfectly manageable.

1230 Because he does not like what we are doing, when looking at the recurrent side of the book, by bringing in all the recurrent expenditures from his companies, he says – headline grabber, spin artist of the mid 90’s that he is – ‘You are cooking the books!’ Well, Mr Speaker, if by applying all the recurrent expenditure properly, and without capital, to all the recurrent income, before calculating the surplus, we are cooking the books, well, then, Mr Speaker he is a veritable Nigella Lawson without pouting lips. He is a Jamie Oliver without the Cockney twang. His forked economic analysis is worthy of a number of Michelin stars, but only for the creative aspect to his accounting. Mr Speaker, saying that we are ‘cooking the books’ is a very serious allegation, which suggests that, in seven short months after the cup of Earl Grey, we have been able to persuade the Financial Secretary, the Accountant General and everyone in their Departments to re-state expenditure in an inappropriate manner. How dare he impute such professional breaches to people who also served *him* so loyally for so many years.

1240 Mr Speaker, at least he had the decency to say, after the Election, on a number of occasions, including in this debate, that they would have increased the legal debt limit for the power station and the tunnel, although he never made any remarks about how they were going to pay for the power station eventually.

1245 Mr Speaker, there again, looking at the ‘big lies’ of the Election campaign – another admission! A power station and the tunnel would have been paid for with further public debt. Well, Mr Speaker, I am vindicated. I went round the estates saying that if the hon. Members won the Election they would finance their manifesto with D.E.B.T – debt. We were right, we were right! So, thank goodness, Mr Speaker, that Gibraltar was not captured again by the GSD and escaped the asphyxiation of debt and borrowing that we would have been subjected to if they had pulled the wool over people’s eyes and people had not, as they did in 1972, seen through the ‘big lies’ that were presented to them by the incumbent at the General Election.

1250 On another occasion, Mr Speaker, he said that we were bringing in items of capital expenditure against recurrent expenditure or against recurrent income, something which I told him is not the case, but he said that we are mixing apples and pears in that respect. Well, look, Mr Speaker, by analogy he must have made a veritable fruit salad of the Government’s finances. He has changed the layout of the Estimates Book, in the 16 years that he has been in Government, more than anyone has ever before. He has changed the legal definition of net debt twice, he has really messed it up so much, Mr Speaker, that it is impossible to follow the Book from year to year and he finally got himself caught up in the mix on 8th December, and I think will never politically recover from that.

1255 I recall that, on this debate, on every occasion that I have been in this House, he used the opportunity to tell Mr Bossano that he felt that leaders around the world who lost political elections should immediately resign and make way. I believe, Mr Speaker, that I am now echoed in putting the same thing to him by at least two Members of the Opposition benches. But, Mr Speaker, he is still a master at least of spin, or at least attempted master, if much diminished, but nonetheless a master of that dark art of spin. He said the GSD have left Gibraltar, or ‘*a* Gibraltar’, that shines when contrasted to the rest of the EU. Their hands must have hurt, Mr Speaker, from the amount of banging that they did on the table, but what sparse ambition for our nation. How can they clap and hail the fact that we are doing well, compared to Spain or Greece, or the rest of the EU? If he had said ‘With growth rates beyond Hong Kong and Singapore I leave you a golden legacy’, they should have *bled* their hands in banging the table. But to compare us to Spain, to Greece, to the EU that is suffering, and to cause on his own benches such fervour really shows what little ambition they have for where our nation should be and how we should be performing economically.

1270 Mr Speaker, in that context, and given the ‘golden legacy’, and the ‘golden rules’ and how well they have done, one would have thought that *they* would have they seen themselves as clearly to be returned to office on 9th December, as they announced constantly whenever they could, so why, Mr Speaker, why sign contracts 24 hours before the Election? A week and a half before the Election? Why the frenzy of signatures if you are so assured because you have done such a great job? Surely there is no need to insure oneself, or the people one has been doing business with, against an *impossible* eventuality of an Election lost?

1275 There were many contracts signed just before the Election. Some of them were signed as contract extensions on 30th November, committing the Government, already in the middle of a General Election campaign, already as caretakers, to millions of pounds of expenditure: some of it in respect of consultancy fees, payable, in some instances, in almost hundreds of thousands of pounds a month! And again, without tender, and signed by the person who used to sit outside his door when he was the incumbent at No. 6 Convent Place. In some months up to £120,000 of expenditure committed to on 30th November. The Hon.

1280 Mr Bossino said, in respect of a press release on that subject issued by the Government ‘Well, the GSLP did it, too, so what are you complaining about?’

1285 Well, Mr Speaker, in what was undoubtedly, I must say, the most eloquent of all the speeches from the Opposition benches, even including the Hon. Mr Caruana’s lacklustre contribution this evening... but Mr Bossino needs to look at what the Constitution says now and what it said before 2006. Given that one of the ‘golden legacies’ that they claim they have left Gibraltar and us is the new Constitution, one would have thought that each of the Members would be able to recite some of their most operative sections by rote. Does he not remember how we were taught to learn Chaucer and recite it at the drop of a hat? Can he not recall section 45 (9) of the Constitution? Does he not know that it was not there in 1996 and it was included in 2006 at the *insistence* of the then Chief Minister? And does he not know, Mr Speaker, that *that* clause since 2006 *prohibits* a Government, once an Election has been called, from committing the Government of Gibraltar to expenditure? Is he saying, Mr Speaker, that if it is done by a wholly owned Government company, the Constitution does not apply? Is that the rule, as they interpret it? Is he saying, Mr Speaker, that if the director of that Government company sits outside the door of the then Chief Minister, closer than his secretary, and commits the Government to expenditure through a company, contrary to the rule in the Constitution, that that is alright? Mr Bossino should know, Mr Speaker, in my view, that eloquence will not be enough to put him in the place that he appears to be gunning for. He needs to be more careful, Mr Speaker, when he spits into the air next time.

1295 The hon. Gentleman says, of course, that we should not be going back to that point, we should only be looking forward, but they spent most of the time that *I* was in Opposition in debates of this sort, talking to us about what happened between 1988 and 1996. In fact, Mr Bossino today talked about – or when he gave his speech – what had happened in 1996 when he talked about agreements signed during a General Election campaign. So they do not want *us* to talk about what happened before 8th December but *they* want to be able to talk about what happened before 1996.

1300 One of the ‘golden legacies’ that they like to talk about, Mr Speaker, is the on-line gaming industry that we have been bequeathed. There are two types of politicians – those who say the world started ‘when I was elected’ and those who say ‘I will build on and fix, where necessary, what was there before’. In the Budget speeches that I have read, in particular the Budget speeches of May 1996, which were the first when the hon. Members were in power, he will see that there were members of the then GSD who acknowledged what the GSLP had done before the date of the Election and said they would build on it, people of the temperance of Mr Azopardi and people of the temperance of Mr Montegriffo. There was one Member, who moved the Bill, who pretended that the world had started the day that the GSD was elected, or *otherwise*, Mr Speaker, would he not have acknowledged that the remote gaming industry already existed before 1996, that the first licence was granted by the Hon. the then Chief Minister, Mr Bossano, before 1996, to Ladbrokes, that, in those days, that vision was in the GSLP?

1310 Look, I am quite happy to admit that it was developed by the GSD since then. Because I am not one of those politicians, Mr Speaker, who believes that the world started on 9th December 2011. We have identified what we said was wrong on 8th December and what we will fix, but Gibraltar did not start then. Neither did it start when they were elected in 1996. But I commend to Mr Bossino and to anybody else who may be on the Opposition benches a read through the contributions of his present leader in this debate to see how it is possible to move Genesis forward from the Garden of Eden to the Mackintosh Hall on the day that the GSD were elected in 1996 and to say that Rome was not built in a day, will make him quiver when he sees the way that the hon. Members opposite pretended that *everything* started with them.

1315 Another ‘golden legacy’, Mr Speaker, in the list of ‘golden legacies’ – I am starting to think that Odyssey should be contacted to try and find these golden coins that nobody can locate – was company tax down by three quarters – a ‘golden legacy’. Mr Speaker, that was not by choice, that was with a gun to the head because the hon. Members’ *first* plan in respect of corporation tax was to reduce all companies to zero and it was despite the first ‘state aid’ gun to the head, only with a second ‘state aid’ gun to the head that that would not be acceptable that they moved to the 10% plan. So things which one does with a gun to one’s head, one really should not then claim, three years later, is one’s ‘golden legacy’. But I could see how things were going and how badly things were developing for the Leader of the Opposition when he claimed for himself one other ‘golden legacy’ – the bus shelters! If I had not been sitting, I would have fallen from a standing position! What a legacy, Mr Speaker! For a man who has portrayed himself, and persuaded others to portray himself, as a political giant of Gibraltar, to claim the *bus stops*! Mr Speaker, even I could argue that he has better legacies than the bus stops... He is a very good interior decorator, Mr Speaker. No. 6 looks very good

indeed.

1335 'A stable and secure Gibraltar' – a stable, secure and prosperous Gibraltar, that is the legacy. Wow, 'stable and secure' with the world in the worst credit crisis in which it is in and 'prosperous' with half a billion pounds of debt, £20 million to spend in the final quarter and the Financial Secretary saying to you 'there is a paper you need to take to the House quickly': not even he can believe that porky.

1340 The world did not start on 9th December and we will build on what we believe is there that is worth building on and we will fix the things that were there that we believe need fixing and we will do new things, but we will do it, Mr Speaker, with a much more prudent approach to debt and a much healthier approach to employing local residents.

1345 Mr Speaker, talking of legacies, the GSLP did leave an *excellent* legacy to us in 1996. And yet, despite my very carefully worded invitation about Community Care, not even a peep from the hon. Gentleman as to what his proposals might have been that he referred to during the course of the earlier interventions that I alluded to in my intervention. Not even a 'I will tell you privately'. So, Mr Speaker, I think it is possible now for listeners – and I hope, in the future, readers – to realise that what the hon. Gentleman said before in 2010 and in 2011 that he was going to replace Community Care with an alternative system which would be future proof *and* would mean nobody would suffer any loss, he had no alternative system, he was speaking with forked tongue firmly in cheek on this, and on so much else, to the electorate.

1350 Mr Figueras, who I consider to be a close personal friend, said that Ministers' speeches on this side of the House were like Opposition speeches, not Ministerial speeches, because we referred back to what had happened seven months before instead of only looking forward to what was going to happen in the future. Well, Mr Bossino says nothing is going to happen in the future because there is nothing in our manifesto... But the hon. Gentleman, if he is going to be a politician, needs to engage some time in understanding the place in which he comes to do gladiatorial political battle. He needs to read some of the *Hansards* of what it was that his hon. predecessors for the GSD used to do as Ministers.

1355 There was not one Government speech whilst I was in this House as an Opposition Member between 2003 and 2011, that did not say, 'Mr Speaker, between 1988 and 1996...', 'between 1988 and 1996'... It was constant. I still hear it. Mr Netto, who now *should* be giving an Opposition speech, gives the same speech from the Opposition benches in relation to the GSLP, as he used to give from the Government benches. So before spitting up in the air, the Hon. Mr Figueras should do a bit more reading to understand that if he is trying to – with that device – ridicule these Ministers, he is ridiculing *those* Ministers who used to do the same thing when they were here.

1360 Mr Speaker, it is one thing to do it seven months after you are elected. When you are dealing with a Book that, in great measure, represents – as I said when I started – eight months of income and expenditure under *them* and four months under *us*, it is perfectly justifiable, when you talk about the whole year, to talk about what happened before you were elected, because the year includes parts and months when one was not elected. But, Mr Speaker, *his* party – and therefore he must agree that it was right because he stood with them based on that record – used to do it *sixteen years after* the GSLP had gone into Opposition. And he said, I guess not taking his cue from those who say that we only need to look forward, he said on planning, 'How can you take the position you take, given what the GSLP did in respect of the Dockyard Gates?' – I think that was in 1989 – and I am not going to say which was the Minister responsible, or who was the Minister responsible. He opens himself and, unfortunately, his Leader to a retort which is not pleasant, which is to say 'Look, actually, I was in school when the gates to the Dockyard were destroyed. I don't know what was behind that, but I was in Parliament and in politics when the Rosia Tanks were destroyed (**Members:** Hear, Hear.) (*Applause*) on their watch – the tanks from which *Victory* victualled herself before going to Trafalgar... and he is going to come to this House to talk about planning and heritage.

1370 And then he said, Mr Speaker 'They are sitting there, although they have the slimmest of victories in the polls'. That was a theme that trickled through all of those benches. Well, Mr Speaker, you know what, I used to say that, too. I used to say that, too, and I suppose it is not a bad thing that nobody enjoys massive majorities, although when you use the term 'majority' you need to be careful, in our Parliament, not to seem not to understand the fact that there are three more here than there, which is quite a *big* majority, given that, before, the majority used to be one, and one is talking in electoral percentage terms.

1380 The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition used to say, when he was Chief Minister – and I used to goad him, he might remember – 'You got in by a whisker over four hundred votes'. 'So what', he used to say, 'I am here, you are there: the people have chosen.' So, look, Mr Speaker, if it was the 'slimmest of majorities' he and I need to take only one cue together from that, which is slim – we have to accept that we are here and they

are there.

1390 And ‘Government projects are not going to planning, as you said they would,’ he said. Well, Mr Speaker, look, the position has been made clear to him so often that I am going to assume that, despite the fact that he has got ears, he can’t hear. Government projects are already going for guidance to the DPC. The position going forward has been made clear by the Deputy Chief Minister. Unless there is a security reason, things do go for guidance to the DPC *already*. ‘But’, he said, ‘you have got to ensure, as a Government, that you lead, that you build, that you do what the community needs. You have to build airports...’ Well, we are going to have to build airports and that is a reason, apparently, why Governments should not go to the DPC because you have got to build airports, you have got to get on with it.

1395 Mr Speaker, does he never listen to the British news? Has he never read a British newspaper? Does he know what the potential for one runway to be built at Heathrow is causing, in terms of analysis in the United Kingdom? The number of processes through which an application for a new runway at Heathrow will have to go through, or the opening of a new runway at Gatwick, or the creation of an airport in the Thames Estuary? Does he know that? Does he know that, or is it that he pretends not to know it and therefore suggests that, in our community, *our* citizens should have less rights than those in the United Kingdom who might have an airport, to take his example, built next to them?

1400 That is why, Mr Speaker, he has been told, repeatedly, that absent security concerns, urgency concerns, safety concerns, all the things that Dr. Garcia told him, this Government will be going for opinions to the DPC and fulfilling our wider manifesto commitments in respect of the DPC but I guess, Mr Speaker, that is not what he wanted to hear. What *we* say is never going to affect the fact that they want to say something which may be contrary to reality.

1405 ‘Paralysis on the power station’, said the newly elected Minister for the Environment and I thought that this was one of the many jokes that he and I have shared over the years which I enjoy so much. Paralysis on the power station: Mr Speaker I am not going to tell him again when the problems with the existing facilities were first identified and the failures of his Party in respect of that. But, I will tell him this, I will tell him this: the arguments deployed to justify the delay from the moment that the GSD was told that Waterport Power Station was no longer going to be viable after 2010 are not, cannot, enjoy play from 2003. There was no residential development near Lathbury that could have injuncted the Government in 2003. There was no financial crisis that might have made it impossible to secure financing in 2003. *All of those excuses* deployed in this debate, and before, by the hon. Members have played *only*, if one accepts that his Party delayed the necessary steps to build a new facility *until* there was already a residential facility close to Lathbury and there was already a financial crisis.

1410 Then he said ‘all these environmentalists’ on the Government benches, what are they doing creating *double* car parking in the town area, I suppose influenced by the very laudable ‘In town without my car’ campaign. Look, Mr Speaker, there are people who live in town and they also deserve a place to park, or is it that GSD policy is to develop car parks in residential areas outside of the town area, but never to provide for people in the town area. We believe, Mr Speaker, that if we needed more parking in the area of NOP because there is a need to provide also for people who live in the town area but, that’s alright, they all know now that he does not believe that they deserve a place to park. And, anyway, they say they still can’t believe that Commonwealth Park will happen and all the rest of it. He will see, Mr Speaker, when he walks along the grassy byways and highways of Commonwealth Park.

1425 He said that the World War II fortifications demolished was ‘a scandal’, that this showed that we were not committed to the Government being subjected to the planning process. Well, Mr Speaker, is it that he doesn’t know, despite being told repeatedly in this House that this was a GSD-approved project that was already ongoing when we were elected, or is it that he is saying ‘Get on with things, but even if they were things that were started before you were elected and started by my Party, now you take them to the Development and Planning Process and stop them half way through’? Is that what he is saying? That has no logic at all and I am just going to assume, Mr Speaker, that he did not have time to clear his speech with those more senior on the Opposition benches, who might have pointed out to him that he was actually going to commit “political hara-kiri of his credibility by taking that position.

1430 But he went further than *that*, Mr Speaker. On that issue he says: ‘When I was told that they had demolished the World War II walls, I could not believe my luck’. Those were his words! Those were his words. ‘I could not believe my luck’. Well, Mr Speaker, it shows he really didn’t care about the World War II wall. It is an admission that he *is* a political opportunist, that all he wants to do is to rubbish, rubbish, rubbish. He doesn’t care about the wall, he cares about the argument he is going to build because the wall had

1445 been demolished, without thinking, of course, that it was *his* Party that started the project and decided to demolish the wall.

1450 There was a bit that I heard – I forget – I think it was during the course of the last Question Time, where people were expressing concern that World War II veterans had not been consulted in the demolition of this wall. Of course, concern expressed by the Party that ordered the demolition of the walls, but now *faux* concern that World War II veterans had not been consulted on the demolition of the walls. So, Mr Speaker, how can we juxtapose that *faux* concern with ‘I couldn’t believe my luck when I heard the news that that the World War II walls had been demolished’. I will put it down to this. It is his first Budget debate. All he cared about was writing a speech to fill an hour: when he has made public statements all he cared about was writing a press release to fill a column, writing, though, Mr Speaker – and I say this in political terms, never in personal terms, I hope – his own political obituary because he has displayed in this first substantive debate, where he had an opportunity to wow us and perhaps even take a putative step towards the leadership of his Party, that all he has displayed is cynical – (*Laughter*) don’t worry, I am going to sponsor Jaime Netto, as well, (*Laughter*) – cynical opportunism and cack-handedness by disclosing his feelings of glee. I honestly, honestly, expected better. I really think that we are not getting bang for our £25,000 of his Opposition salary.

1460 And then he said, Mr Speaker, look at what has happened in one establishment at the beach. No planning permission in respect of something refused by the previous administration. Well, he also needs to check his law. Temporary Erections – amusing though that may sound! (*Laughter*) – do not require planning consents. It is only permanent structures that require planning consents. What that establishment required, as a consent, was landlord’s consent. Nothing to do with the DPC. The Government, as landlord, allows people to do things on property, as head lessor, or doesn’t allow it. That is the control that Government has. Government, as landlord, has given consent for things to happen there but, Mr Speaker, he should be very careful, in my view, not to push too hard on the door of the treatment meted out to that particular establishment last year, and in years before, by *his* Party when they were in office, because he might find, Mr Speaker, that that actually opens the door to bigger problems than he bargained for. Perhaps, next time, he should have his speech checked by one of the more senior members of his Party before he gives it because, then, he went on to say, 1470 ‘The GSLP, in Government, when they were last in Government, they did not have a Ministry for the Environment: we created it’. Wrong! You need to check these things. Of course there was a Ministry for the Environment in 1996 and the argument is so contradictory, Mr Speaker, because, on the one hand, he says you don’t *care* about the environment... Doesn’t he know that there *was* a Ministry for the Environment? Doesn’t he know that the Upper Rock Nature Reserve was created by the GSLP? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) 1475 Doesn’t he know that there was no culling of apes before 1996? Doesn’t he know, Mr Speaker, despite the constant references to it in this place and in the press, that the Nature Protection Act was made in 1991? Did he miss that? Wasn’t he saying that Mr Cortes cares too much about the environment and that is why he is hard-headed? And now he says ‘Ah, but you are the Party that doesn’t care about the environment’. Where is the logic, Mr Speaker?

1480 It is not difficult. Come on, at least to deliver a speech that is internally logical. But he says that caring for the environment, in effect, may be bad for the economy. Mr Speaker, wrong again. Caring for the environment actually creates many economic opportunities – many – not least in Tourism. Look at my Budget measures and how those may stimulate some businesses and do well for the environment, as well. And I know, Mr Speaker, that what it is with Commonwealth Park is actually a quite genuine and quite proper, I think, political fear that when this magnificent park is developed in the centre of our city – and I very much hope he comes and enjoys it, and he parks his hybrid or his electric car in one of the car parks – that that will be such a magnificent facility that the people of Gibraltar will (a) always thank those who did it and (b) never forgive those who opposed it.

1490 I think that what happened here, you see, Mr Speaker, is that Mr Figueras really had nothing to say about the *excellent* and exemplary manner in which Dr. Cortes is running the Environment Ministry. ‘Mr Environment’, now Minister for the Environment. So with nothing to say, Mr Figueras, like the others, decided to run a critique of our Election campaign and our Election strategy, which was so successful, and had nothing other than that to say – I can understand that representing the Party that took five years, *five* years, to prepare an Environmental Charter – that it was drafting a Charter, that it was looking at ‘the detail of every word’, that this was going to be ‘a Charter for Gibraltar’, but then came up with a Charter which was one word different from the Overseas Territories Environmental Charter that had been there for ten years. 1495 What can he say on the environment? Even the penguins in the Antarctic Territory beat us to the Environmental Charter. Well, look, Mr Speaker, I think his speech on the environment was really a much

better contribution, or would have been a much better contribution to the comedy channel than it was to the debate on these Estimates: 'Commonwealth Park is just a pretty picture for their manifesto'.

No. But, look, if it was, at least we paid for it! We didn't rely on everybody's tax pennies to fund the pretty pictures in our manifesto. If it *is* just a pretty picture, at least we paid for it. And he seems to be *against* planting more trees. I mean he must be the only person represented in a Parliament with a responsibility for the environment, who is *against* planting more trees. Against – I just couldn't get it. Is this actually happening? I suppose, Mr Speaker, I couldn't believe my luck... A person with parliamentary responsibility for the environment saying that there should be less trees. I mean, where is he living, Mr Speaker? Planet Clarkson? Was he in Top Gear mode when he said he would insult Dr. Cortes by calling him a tree-hugger? Mr Speaker, to Mr Cortes, to me, to every Member on these benches, a tree-hugger is a compliment, not an insult. Please feel free, petrol head!

Anyway, I thought he was wrong, though, Mr Speaker. I thought he was wrong to then take on Dr. Cortes for having used a ministerial car. As I told him afterwards, but I think it is important to put it on the record, the reason Dr. Cortes has had to use a ministerial car is because he had a broken leg from which he has not yet fully recovered and he cannot walk certain distances and, for that reason, he uses a car. But always for longer distances, as I understand it, than the Hon. Mr Reyes who, as he will recall, I had cause to criticise last year in this debate for having used a car – a ministerial car – to take him from National Day concert at the coach park to his home at Harbour Views. The Hon. Minister explained that he had been to other functions that evening and that is why he had the car. Fair enough, Mr Speaker, but look, if he was then going to go home after the concert, one would have thought, given the sort of concern that the Hon. the Member for Planet Top Gear has now put, one would have expected that Mr Reyes would have wanted to walk home the short distance between the coach park and his home and relieved us of the burden of overtime for the chauffeur.

Mr Speaker, I mean honestly, despite my deep personal affection for him – and that will endure despite our political differences – I am sorry to say that, in political terms, he is becoming just an unfunny comedian who really needs to ensure he doesn't lose the day job. He said, as well, that I had rightly been taken on for saying that culling of apes was 'killing' of apes, for using that sort of language in respect of that matter. Well, Mr Speaker, can somebody please tell me what 'culling' means, because the last time I checked it meant killing and he says that I should not have used that argument when I was talking about the apes, because that was inflammatory. If that is the case, if when *they* were setting out to kill apes – which they called 'culling' because culling means killing – I should not have used the killing word, I should have used the culling word because, otherwise, I was being emotive and over dramatic. Well, then, Mr Speaker, he needs to tell his colleagues, Mrs Hammond and Mr Feetham, that they should *certainly* not use the culling word in respect of whether people are in employment or out of employment. Because culling meant *killing* a year ago and it means killing today. And if it was over-dramatic to use the word culling to describe killing, which is what it means, then how unnecessarily over-dramatic is it to use the word culling to describe whether somebody gets a job or doesn't get a job?

Anyway, Mr Speaker, that policy of culling, which he commends to Dr. Cortes as the right thing to do because it was *their* policy, their policy of *killing* mammals – which was their policy and he now appears to be so proud of – doesn't he know that, because of the pressure I put, and others with me, from the International Primate Protection League etc., they stopped it. Does he know that, Mr Speaker? Doesn't he know, Mr Speaker, when he makes his political argument that the population of Macaques in 1996 was lower than the population of Macaques in 2011? So, Mr Speaker, who is he trying to kid? He can't make a monkey out of us; he is making a monkey out of himself with those arguments.

So, on all of those issues, Mr Speaker, on an increasing population of Macaques, on a delay on building a power station, on *all* of those issues, when he complains, when he wants to understand what went wrong, when he wants to press, let him press and ask and look to the side, and not forward, because the fault lies on the benches opposite, not here. He said, Mr Speaker, that we haven't progressed enough in respect of alternative energy because the hon. Gentleman, Mr Cortes, has an adverse, hostile, reaction to wind turbines affecting birds. Well, that is actually a view that I and all the other Members here responsible for the governmental environmental filter may share in some respects, and may be resolved in some other respects, as technology changes. If there is not a wind turbine in Gibraltar today, in July 2012, it is not because Dr. Cortes has stopped it, it is because Mr Caruana wouldn't allow them before 8th December 2011. So look to your left to ask the question.

Alternative energy should be a priority, I agree. Look at the answer that Ernest Britto gave me – if you do your research on this issue – when talking in this House about the GSD's commitment to alternative energy in

1555 the 2007 manifesto, where he *admitted* that they had done nothing and not enough and they were going to miss their own targets. That's why, Mr Speaker, we agree with him: alternative energy is just not a priority now, it *should have been* a priority before.

1560 So look left and ask the question why has nothing been done for sixteen years. The 'bad old GSLP', he says: well, Mr Speaker, look, there is as much good and bad old GSLP here as there is there these days, so perhaps he should also look left to his next putative leader if wants to make those arguments – an infection of course Mr Speaker, that doesn't affect Mr Bossino, given that he and I were together with Mr Garcia in another Party at the time. But, anyway, Mr Speaker, in that alleged vein of the old GSLP 'spectre' that they like to raise – not the 'good old GSLP', the 'bad old GSLP' – in that vein, Mr Reyes said that people are saying – faceless people – that only party supporters of the GSLP will be appointed to middle and top management in the Civil Service under us. Where has he been? Do they believe that people will simply forget what happened in the last twelve months of their reign, because that is how appropriately one can describe the manner that Government was run before. Actually, what has happened since 8th December, but which is ignored by Mr Reyes for the purposes of putting together the speech that he obviously quickly needed to scribble to deliver, is that we have released the Civil Service to start filling vacancies for itself, with the PSC, with nobody being told who gets appointed to where, with nobody being appointed *a dedo*. Who is it that we are going to forget who was made Grade V in the GSD *a dedo*? Or was then made a Civil Servant *a dedo*? Who was appointed to the Culture and Heritage Agency *a dedo*? Whose salary was fixed *a pluma*. That's not just us saying it, Mr Speaker. It is not *us*. It is the Principal Auditor saying those things, Mr Speaker. They want to raise a spectre, Mr Speaker, an image. Well, that's their spin of things going wrong and heads being cut off. But, Mr Speaker, it can't stick, and it won't stick because, if there is one cardinal rule in politics, criticism has to be based on reality, not fantasy. Otherwise it does not stick.

1570 Well, Mr Speaker, we come to that part of the debate where I felt I had to rise to make a Point of Order. In what was otherwise, in terms of delivery only, an excellent maiden speech, on which I congratulate my old classmate, Mr Bossino, he marred the whole debate and *his* contribution, by a massive wobble on the use of the 'C' word – the word corruption – which Mr Speaker said we should not be using in Parliamentary language. Clearly, Mr Speaker, something designed to grab headlines. It was designed to grab a headline in their press release: it grabbed a headline. It was designed to grab a headline here: it grabbed a Point of Order and a Ruling. But, look, I am very grateful to the hon. Members, in the course of their wobble, for having admitted that when they put the eye catching word 'corruption' in their press releases and when they used it in this House, although I hope that, given Mr Speaker's Ruling, we won't be going down that route, they don't actually mean 'corruption', they just mean not so nice. So, the headline that said 'political corruption' meant political behaviour that was not so nice.

1585 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Now that is not true. No, Mr Speaker, that is not true. That is... What he has just said is simply not representative of what we have expressed in this House. We *meant* corruption, in the context that we used it, which the Speaker has ruled not to be out of order. I do not see why he is re-inventing what anyone who has been sitting in this House still remembers.

1590 **Mr Speaker:** I think we reached a conclusion that the hon. Member who used the word accepted that it was really intended to mean 'a misuse of political power'. I think that was the final conclusion.

1595 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Yes and, on that basis, the use of the word was not out of order. That was your Ruling.

1600 **Mr Speaker:** Because of the context, yes.

A Member: Exactly.

1605 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Mr Speaker, he needs to read what his deputy/putative Leader said during the course of the debate and what the wobble actually was - because he was not here at the time - and then he will see exactly why I have said what I have said. It doesn't relate to this morning, it relates to late on Tuesday.

So thank you for having clarified, late on Tuesday, that 'corruption' does not mean corruption because, Mr Speaker, I am quite happy to have a debate on corruption, if he wants and I hope that we don't ever have to go

1610 down that route in this Parliament because if misuse of political office is what corruption means, then, Mr Speaker, we are going to have a lot of fun analysing again, how much was paid to *Seven Days* for what period, how much was paid to what law firm for what period, how much was paid to what individual lawyer for what period and what that individual lawyer might have been paid for in that period. Not least, Mr Speaker, what taxpayers' money may have been used for, including funding pictures in party political manifestos.

1615 But, Mr Speaker, on the Sardeña case, he said 'It is totally improper of you to have dropped a defence and then negotiate a settlement. That is the evidence of what you are doing wrong. That is the evidence of how badly you are behaving. That shows that you have misused your public political office.' Mr Speaker, dropping the defence and then allowing the Industrial Tribunal to come up with the compensation is exactly –
1620 *exactly* – what the GSD did in Government in respect of the other Industrial Tribunal case, Joanna Hernandez. They did it, Mr Speaker, so all of the things that he has said *ab initio* of that political 'C' word is exactly what his *current* Leader did in respect of another Industrial Tribunal case. Again, Mr Speaker, next time check it out before you spit up into the air.

Mr Bossino, who was developing this concept of how the economy had grown under the GSD – he said it again last night – this 'golden legacy' that we must not vanquish. But let's do a bit of maths here, you know.
1625 They don't want *us* to go back to before 8th December, but *they* want to constantly go back to before 8th December. Well, let's go back to 1996, which they used to enjoy doing so much. The rise in GDP between 1988 and 1996 amounts to an average rise in GDP of 14.6% per year. That is worth banging on the table.

The rise in GDP in the *sixteen* years between 1996 and 2011, on average per year, is 11.5% – that is a whole quarter down. A whole quarter down. So if I *was* to accept the hon. Gentleman's argument that we have had a 'golden legacy' – which for the reasons I have carefully gone through, I have shown him is an unsustainable argument – if I *was* to accept that, at least on GDP, he should have the confidence to get up and say, 'You are right. The golden legacy was the GSLP golden legacy on growth of GDP between 1988 and 1996.'
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He should go further, Mr Speaker, and say the golden legacy in respect of reserves was the GSLP golden legacy because, when you look at reserves compared to borrowing, and you include the £60m in Community Care, that was a golden legacy compared to £520m of debt in an economy of one billion.
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And when it comes to the quality of democracy, Mr Speaker – look, this is a bruising debate, it always is – but the level of communication that there now is between the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister, the information that Members have about when Parliament is going to meet, the attempt to accommodate them as much as possible which I think has been seen from the attitude the Government has taken to this debate in particular, the opportunities for Questions, the opportunities for motions, *that*, Mr Speaker, has just been *transformed* since 8th December.
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Despite how well that may be going, elderly people have to stand on the bus, he said. At least we were spared, Mr Speaker, fifteen questions on the bus timetable, which is how he started in January but we will put that down to a learning curve. Elderly people have to stand on the bus. Well, Mr Speaker, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that should not happen. Whenever there is an elderly person standing on the bus, there is something wrong. We have got to make sure that either a younger person gets up and lets them sit down or that we have better systems to ensure that elderly people do not stand on the bus. We need to ensure that there are not broken seats, but we have been here for seven months, they have been there for sixteen years. Their buses are nine years old, eight years and six months old, the day they left office, with broken seats.
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So, Mr Speaker, taking all those things into consideration I assume that his speech in that respect was a *slap in the face* to the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition. An intended slap in the face, another step, perhaps, towards the Chair it appears he is so interested in slyly taking. Because, wasn't it, Mr Speaker, under the old GSD administration that elderly people were not just standing on the bus, elderly people were left standing at the bus stop, not the ones that protected you from the sun, the ones before them, because the buses were full of tourists because they were free for everyone. What a disaster, Mr Speaker. (*Applause*)
1655

He is right. (*Applause*) He is right, slyly and coyly as he does, to slap his Leader in the face for having done that. Well done, Mr Bossino, and I extract from what you said, what you wanted extracted and deliver it in that way for you.
1660

My concern for the elderly, Mr Speaker – that, obviously, does not apply to the elderly at Both Worlds (*Laughter*) – there is a concern for the elderly in other geographical areas, I assume. But, look, I am delighted, Mr Speaker, that the elderly at Both Worlds *are* considered by this side of the House and, therefore, also have their service. He also complained that, for five months, the bus company had been without directors. *Five*

1665 months the bus company had been without directors. It cannot be, this is bad for governance, bad for governance. Right, okay. I extract from what he said, Mr Speaker, rightly and coyly and slyly, another slap in the face for his Leader and I am happy, because he has obviously got vested interests, that I should be the one to deliver it but look, it is fine. (*Laughter*) He and I are obviously understanding each other because wasn't it, Mr Speaker, not the Gibraltar Bus Company, GBC, but the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation, GBC, that was without a General Manager, or a CEO, for almost *four years* under the previous administration.

1670 (*Applause*)

If it is bad for governance for GBC, the bus company, to have not had a CEO for five months, what did it do for governance at the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation, GBC, for *it* not to have a General Manager or a CEO for *four years* and defending that in this House, as they were. So, Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman wants me to say those things, I can appreciate, from his speech, but he is not foolish enough to have said those things, without understanding the consequences of the argument and he wants me to deliver that slap in the face to his present Leader and I do, not with pleasure, because I don't think that politics should be about slaps in the face. But, Mr Speaker, GBC, the broadcasting company, was without a General Manager through a General Election campaign, and we have said how dangerous that was, we have maintained that we think that that was dangerous and that, in our view, did serious damage to governance at GBC.

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1680 Having said that, Mr Speaker, I am going beyond GBC. If he says five months for a vacancy is too long, he needs to understand that not just at GBC, but throughout the Civil Service, his Party in Government, his Leader – I was going to say previous Leader, excuse me, his Leader, mustn't pre-empt anything – left *hundreds* of vacancies open in the Civil Service, in the Development Corporation, in Agencies, hundreds open and that is why we have had to unblock promotions.

1685 So if leaving a vacancy open is bad for governance, as he says, and he is clever enough to have understood these things, then he must also be saying to me, deliver another slap in the face to the man who led the previous administration and tolerated that. And I reluctantly accept his invitation to do so and realise that he is clever enough to have said all of those things, knowing that it would result in that. Because the other alternative, Mr Speaker, is that he has said those things without thinking of the political consequences, without putting them in the political context and would have been very foolish to do so. And out of respect for the fact that we come from the same *alma mater* and in the same year, I will believe, and wish to believe, that he actually was much more politically astute than that. But then, Mr Speaker, he describes the mild mannered and temperate Deputy Chief Minister, who would not hurt a fly because he is such *buena gente*, Mr Speaker, as 'vicious' (*Laughter*) – as vicious. Mr Speaker, he does not understand 'vicious'. He does not.

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1695 By addressing these arguments that they have put, and not *them*, I am being a pussycat compared to what the mover of this Bill in this House was like last year. If he wants to see viciousness, Mr Speaker, he needs to see the hon. Gentleman with the venom on the tip of his fangs wringing for my neck last year. If he wants to see political annihilation, he needs to see a Party that stood here and didn't just go to play the man instead of the ball, which might have been bad enough, they went to play the man, his personal life, his political life and his professional life, all as part of the cynical attempt to save themselves from electoral defeat. I commend to the hon. Gentleman a reading of the last debate in this House, in particular his current Leader's Reply. I actually enjoyed it as a study in psychology.

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And then, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Netto called Miss Sacramento, this morning, a 'character assassin'. A character assassin! Come on! I mean, I will keep saying this, you have got to hang your political argument on a hook of reality. All Samantha Sacramento has done since she was, rightly, elected to this House by the people of Gibraltar, who deposited their trust in her and us, is work hard to sort out the mess that she found at the Social Services Agency, and well done for what she has done to date. (*Applause*). But 'character assassination, viciousness and annihilation', Mr Speaker, come on! Mr Bossino and Mr Netto – and Mr Netto was here – Mr Bossino at least should read the *Hansard*.

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1710 Never, Mr Speaker, never whilst I am Chief Minister will there be a Budget session of Parliament like the one last year. Never ever, because the then Chief Minister approached it with such personal animosity towards the then Leader of the Opposition, with such attempts to denigrate me, personally and professionally, that I believe that the office of Chief Minister was brought into disrepute and the people of Gibraltar delivered their verdict on who was, and was not, fit to be Chief Minister on 8th December, 2011. (*Applause*)

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And we are talking of Tourism, Mr Speaker and, again, I know that he has been very sly and very politically astute by saying that we are wrong to have made no investment - despite our promises - in the Upper Rock in the past seven months. I once again pick up his request that I should slap in the face his current Leader for the *sixteen years* of under-investment in the Upper Rock. But, Mr Speaker, next time – it is getting

1720 tiresome – next time he wants to deliver a political slap to the GSD, can he please stand up and do so himself. I have already been put in a position where I have to deliver three: can he please – because I know he thinks and he realizes that this is going to be the consequence of saying stuff like that about the Upper Rock – can he please deliver the next slap himself. It might do him good; it might raise his profile in the Party.

1725 Then Mr Feetham said that the GSLP had built nothing for rental for people who are on the housing waiting lists in the 80's to 90's. Look, Mr Speaker, again you see you test an argument and you apply pressure to an argument by looking at the facts that underlie it. We might not have built as much housing for rental as they did, we might not have developed an estate, but housing for rental we did develop as part of the existing estates. So if you want to be taken seriously, and an anti-GSD putative Leader of the GSLP, now anti-GSLP putative Leader of the GSD, must want to be taken seriously, at least initially by his Party and then by the electorate, *you have got to get your facts right*.

1730 Then he said all this business about employment: 'I myself put 47 people in employment in construction when I was Minister for Justice'. Mr Speaker, he was talking about putting Gibraltarians in employment and then he said that that was contrary to EU law. He said the more that this is talked about, the more it imperils Gibraltar because you are employing Gibraltarians at the expense of Spaniards – and then promptly continues talking about it and he is the only one who is talking about it! But, Mr Speaker, it is transparently clear that he does not care about imperilling Gibraltar. All he cares about is that he should become Chief Minister at some stage in his life and that, Mr Speaker, means that, first, he wants the chair to the left of him and then he wants the chair opposite him. That's all that matters. (*Interjection*)

1735 That's all that matters. And he will accuse the Government, Mr Speaker, of any falsehood or of any failure that *he* thinks will get him closer to assisting him in that agenda. But let me take one point, Mr Speaker, because, again, you see I don't think these arguments have been thought through. If *he* put 47 people in employment in the construction industry in Gibraltar in the last few months that he was Minister for Justice, what the bleeding heck was the Minister for Employment doing? That Minister for Employment that he represents in another capacity and is saying to us we should take on to do a job that obviously *he*, when he was a ministerial colleague didn't believe that he could do. But, of course, Mr Speaker he did not care about young people until a few weeks or months before the General Election. Because he says to us, we don't want people languishing as trainees on the minimum wage. We don't want people languishing as trainees on the minimum wage.

1740 Mr Speaker, how can they say that with any shred of political credibility, when they allowed those same young people to languish in their scheme at *half* the minimum wage. (*Applause*) It beggars belief, Mr Speaker. I assume what he is saying to this House is that he is maintaining the position he had before the General Election, that the Future Job Strategy is not affordable and that what he is saying by saying we do not want them languishing as trainees on the minimum wage is that he wants us to take them back and *cut their pay in half*. It is not going to happen, Mr Speaker. But the level of political hypocrisy is just *staggering*. Political hypocrisy –

1755 **Hon. P R Caruana:** The word hypocrisy can now be used.

Hon. Chief Minister: With the epithet political.

1760 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Sorry, if the epithet is political, [*inaudible*] applies to the Opposition.

Mr Speaker: No, I have not ruled against the Opposition using that phrase.

1765 **Hon. P R Caruana:** [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Chief Minister: But, Mr Speaker, look –

Mr Speaker: No. Political hypocrisy, I have not ruled against the Opposition for its use.

1770 **Hon. P R Caruana:** The word 'hypocrisy' has been referred to this morning as being on the list of forbidden words.

Mr Speaker: Yes, but –

1775 **Hon. P R Caruana:** Putting the word ‘political’ in front of it is thought to be unsuccessful in sanitizing it.

Hon. Chief Minister: And so, Mr Speaker, despite the *nervousness* on the Opposition benches, I have to go on and say to the hon. Gentleman you have got to be very careful with what you say, unless Mr Feetham is also engaged in this astute game, which is to criticize things done by my predecessor – his current Party Leader – in a manner that then he knows is going to result in my getting up and slapping his current Party Leader around the political face because of the things he used to do. I think Mr Bossino is astute enough to pick that up. I didn’t think *he* was, but I will give him the benefit of the doubt.

1780 ‘Don’t dumb down entry into the Civil Service’, he said. Well, Mr Speaker, doesn’t he know, in respect of the public sector, that the ones who dumbed it down the most are them, when they were in Government. Given that people were taken into the public sector who have absolutely *none* of the qualifications that one was always required to have to enter into the public sector, some with no qualifications at all, some of them even without speaking English because they are not local residents – incredible, Mr Speaker. It is incredible! It beggars political belief.

1785 And then, Mr Speaker, he has this game where he tries to characterise Mr Bossano as the person baiting him to go downstairs and he talks about the *mano a mano*. Why does he make me get up in this House and say that people are not stupid and that when they read *Hansard*, they will see that the phrase, *mano a mano*, is only on *his* lips, that he comes up with the terminology of the *mano a mano*. He baits, he cajoles, he tries, he swings and then he says, ‘Ah, you challenge me to a *mano a mano*.’ How cheap, Mr Speaker, to bait the Father of the House, a man thirty years his senior. But I guess that is what ends up with debates being personalised and petty.

1790 And they criticise, Mr Speaker, our Future Job Strategy and how that might have had an effect in the Election campaign and Mr Bossano has explained how well that is going. And they say it was an Election bribe. Well, Mr Speaker, clearly it was not, but what is coming across from this re-running of the General Election campaign is actually quite a convoluted *chapeau* from the Opposition benches, because what they have done is say ‘This is what you did for the General Election campaign: this is what you did and this is how you did it.’ Of course, what they don’t say is – ‘and you won. Well done’. So thank you for the compliment, we take it in the spirit in which it was not intended.

1800 So he said, Mr Speaker, in respect of one particular thing on the age of consent and the Criminal Offences Act, ‘we have got to protect our young people. We have got to stop internet paedophiles from grooming young people in Gibraltar.’ All of the things that everybody would agree with, Mr Speaker, because that is where he likes to be, on the ground where he is all things to all men. That is where he feels more comfortable. And he presses the Hon. the Minister of Justice, who has other responsibilities, and does such a fantastic job in all of them, for not having transposed the Criminal Offences Act version that is now available into law already in the seven months that he has been there. And he says he will give us a year, otherwise he will be ‘hard on our heels’. I can feel the rabbits trembling already, Mr Speaker.

1810 He was in Government for four years and I am not going to say that his arrival on those benches is what was the final *dénouement* of the GSD because that is much more convoluted than that. But, in those four years, he had time to draft a law, bring it to Parliament and make it law – and he didn’t do that. Four years! Four years of internet paedophiles not being subject to the punishment that they should be, subject etc. Now we are here seven months and we should have done it already, otherwise it is all our fault. Doesn’t he remember, Mr Speaker, that I had to put questions and a motion on this issue? Mr Speaker, doesn’t he remember that he was here for four years with the power to bring a Bill and get it passed and just suspend one or two sections, if necessary. *If he had a shred of real concern* in respect of any of the matters that he highlighted, he would have acted, instead of meekly keeping quiet, as he did when he was told to shut up and sit down by his then Leader.

1815 Then he says to us, Mr Speaker, on that and on other issues, ‘I have always tried not to politicise issues. I want to work for the good of Gibraltar.’ But, Mr Speaker, again these things have to be hung on a hook of reality.

1820 Does he think for one minute that we, or people outside this place, are stupid enough not to see through his *faux pretense* at constructive politics? Doesn’t he think, Mr Speaker, that people now know him and his political style well enough to know that the only thing he is interested in working for is not Gibraltar, it is P.O.W.E.R., Mr Speaker, and I don’t mean the station. All he is interested in is in pretending to depoliticise issues in order to get closer to the chairs that he craves. Well, he still doesn’t appear to understand the difference between an announcement and a restatement. All this banging on about Facebook, saying things

1830 which Mr Cortes did not even put on Facebook, about directions to police etc. etc. He just doesn't care, Mr. Speaker, that what he is saying is picked up in Madrid – the *Partido Popular* comment in the Spanish press about the fact that they are siding with them on the '99 Agreement. He does not care because it has never been about Gibraltar and Gibraltar's widest interest. Never! It has always been about becoming Chief Minister.

1835 Mr Speaker, advice was given, or comment was made, in respect of Macbeth's own ambition, which in that Scottish play was said to have 'o'er leaped' itself and fallen on itself. I commend to him, Mr Speaker, more reading of Shakespearian tragedy and less watching of Laurel and Hardy, if he wants to make a serious contribution to debates like this, because his quotes were from a Laurel and Hardy episode rather than from the Bard. Bless you. And he becomes, in this House, an advocate for the same argument as Mr Margallo, for the same argument as Mr Landaluce, for the same argument that Mr Masa put in the Spanish press. Well, look, I suppose they have to be represented. They have to be represented. Whatever it does for our community, it has to be represented here in some way.

1840 Mr Speaker, this is the politics that does so little for our community, but the politics of substance, the politics that really is designed to deliver for our people, that, Mr Speaker, is the politics that Joe Bossano has represented for forty years and I want to pause for a moment, Mr Speaker, to embarrass him again, and congratulate him on his 40th intervention in this debate. (*Applause*)

1845 It is relevant because, of course, Mrs Hammond was talking about 'culling' of Spanish workers and we had that issue with the word 'culling' and whether it was killing or not. It is really, Mr Speaker, quite unfair to use that argument to describe the work that Joe Bossano is doing to get more Gibraltarians into employment. But, Mr Speaker, I am afraid I have to say to Mrs Hammond that her contributions will also be tested and the quality of them will be tested by checking them against empirical data to analyse whether what she is saying stands up to scrutiny or was wrong. And I am sorry to say to her that, on a *simple* reading of her speech, it falls at the first hurdle.

1850 I agree with her that the more women there are in this House, the better. But, Mr Speaker, it is not true to say that, on this occasion, Parliament has more women than ever in it, one on each side of the House. That is what she said – she can check her speech and if she likes I will read it for her. Since the year 2000 and until the year 2007, Mr Speaker, there were two women in this House, one on either side of the House, Miss Marie Montegriffo, with whom I had the pleasure of serving as a Member of the Opposition, and Mrs Yvette Del Agua, who appears to have quickly slipped out of her memory now that the people rejected her in the Election campaign. So Mr Speaker, *everything else* that she has said has to be seen in the context of the fact that she got something *as simple as that wrong*. As simple as that. And it is not difficult to check that, because one of the magnificent reforms that we made shortly after being elected and which Dr. Garcia led, was the creation of a Parliament website, *Parliament.gi* and there, Mr Speaker, I was able to confirm myself my recollection by checking the results of the 2000 and 2003 General Elections.

1860 So, Mr Speaker, Mrs Hammond, who I welcome to this House as much as I welcome all the other novices who have contributed to this debate, needs to understand that there needs to be rigour in checking one's facts before coming to this House with argument. Mr Speaker, Mrs Hammond also said that Dr. Cortes has visited the UK on three occasions. It appears from Dr. Cortes' diary, which we checked in order to make sure that we are not getting this wrong, that he has only been to the United Kingdom on *two* occasions to deal with these issues: one to deal with GHA matters and one with environmental matters, but we stand to be corrected, if Mrs Hammond, who said that he had been there on three occasions, to build her argument about how he was going off to take advice, if she can substantiate that there were, in fact, three occasions.

1865 And she said, Mr Speaker, that the NHS has been characterized as seriously dysfunctional, that Dr. Cortes refuses to listen to experienced professionals in the GHA who might help him ensure the GHA doesn't go down that route. Well, in fact, Mr Speaker, Dr. Cortes has consulted *more* than any previous Minister of a GSD administration. *Some* people are saying to Dr. Cortes – the professionals – 'Wow, it is the first time I have ever been in the Minister's office: thank you for listening to me.' One very high ranking member of the management of the GHA, perhaps the most high ranking except for the Minister, has said to the Minister, that he has listened more to anyone than ever before and that he puts in more *hours* than any Minister ever before.

1875 She said that the Board was not meeting often enough with the Minister. Well, in fact, it has met more already with the Minister that it met with the previous Minister. In some years there were no meetings of the Board, or one only in one year.

1880 The Board, Mr Speaker, had concerns before 8th December about KGV but nothing was done so the Board was not listened to. Now it is listened to and quickly action taken on KGV. She does not like the policy of openness and of holding meetings in the open, but doesn't she know, Mr Speaker, that that is the

1885 way that similar Boards meet now elsewhere in the European Union. But at least I respect the fact that she stands up and says that she is *against* transparency, she is *against* openness and she wants to move *back* to secret meetings of the Board of the GHA.

1890 Mr Speaker, I met with consultants before the General Election and I have had meetings with various consultants after the General Election, so has the Minister. Mr Speaker, they have been kept aware of exactly what discussions and proposals are being maintained in respect of their contracts, and have had more information, and have had more debate and made more progress in respect of their contracts in seven months with this administration than in sixteen years with the previous administration. And, Mr Speaker, in respect of her arguments about what a fantastic GHA they left us – another ‘golden legacy’ – and the record that she talked about, doesn’t she know, Mr Speaker – or perhaps she is the most politically astute of all, and really wants *this* slap in the face delivered to the now *departed* Leader of the Opposition – that, since 2006, there have been recommendations for urgent action to develop a dementia facility and *nothing was done about it* and Gibraltar, therefore, now has a *serious* problem with elderly people who cannot be cared for at home and for whom there is no space in a medical hospital.

1900 Mr Speaker, Mr Netto this morning I also congratulate for having made what I considered to have been his most animated intervention in the time that I have been in this House. He said that the Minister of Social Services had said nothing about Moroccan workers, he never mentioned them. Well, Mr Speaker, the time I have been there on those benches I don’t recall serious mention of the plight of Moroccan workers *at all* by the hon. Member, or any Member here. Is it, Mr Speaker, that he forgot about them for sixteen years and has remembered about them now because it sounds good? Well, I will tell him what, the policy conference of Unite was very clear about how they felt about the treatment of Moroccan workers before 8th December and very happy about what has happened since then. But there, Mr Speaker, and not for political gain, I know that what he is doing is setting his Leader up because he knows the problems that he created for them.

1905 And then he went on to talk, Mr Speaker, about the disability allowance. I didn’t hear him talk about the *increase* in the disability allowance. I didn’t hear him talk about the fact that disabled people are being taken out of taxation. I didn’t hear him talk about the plans there are for disabled people to have sheltered, indefinite future-proofed employment going forward. I didn’t hear him talk about the fact that they are going to earn a lot more and they are on the minimum wage. None of that. Just ‘you shouldn’t take the disability allowance from them at all’. Well, Mr Speaker, the disability allowance was removed *entirely* from a disabled person before 8th December if they went into employment – *entirely*.

1910 And after 8th December it is removed on a staggered basis but 25% always remains payable. *And* when they go into employment, instead of earning half the minimum wage, they earn the full minimum wage and because they are disabled people, all of that – the minimum wage full amount and the disability allowance – which *might* take them into taxation, depending on how the disability allowance and the minimum wage rises, is exempted from a tax computation. And they are *massively* better off as a result. I didn’t hear him talk about any of that but I heard him talk about a hologram. Maybe, Mr Speaker, it is one of the things we could create with a Mac Apple in the future! (*Laughter*).

1915 He said that we should create holograms of ourselves. (*Laughter*) No need, Mr Speaker. We are all perfectly comfortable in our own skins. But one of the things I am going to pursue, as a result of his intervention, is the creation of a hologram of the Member who used to stand *here* in these debates and the feeding into the hologram of the *Hansard*, so that when we do televise – not just on GBC, as the Hon. Mr Feetham suggested – but in every media, making available a feed from this Parliament to all newspapers, to all broadcast media, to all internet facilities, maybe one of the things we should be re-running are the episodes going back, as well as current, so that people – or rather, as that *Seven Days* used to put on its front page so often – ‘Lest we forget’.

1920 Well, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Reyes said that people were having their heads cut off, as I said before, but it has no credibility. Have they forgotten, when he talks about senior people only being promoted if they were members of the GSLP, have they forgotten – or is it that Mr Reyes also wants me to give his Leader a slap in the face ? – the *enchufes* that went on in the twelve months before the General Election, let alone sixteen years? Have they forgotten that, Mr Speaker? I don’t think they have. It is just that for pensioners, for workers, for the business community, for the disabled, for young families, this has been not just a good Budget, it has been an *excellent* Budget.

1925 But, Mr Speaker, for the Opposition, this has been a very bad Budget indeed. No imagination, no analysis, just a re-run of the General Election arguments, which they lost. But, Mr Speaker, I want to thank them for not having done better. They are, single-handedly, embarked on a process to guarantee us the public

- 1940 support in increasing numbers at the next General Election. Please, Lady and Gentlemen, do keep it up.
- 1945 My concern, Mr Speaker, is to see what little value for money the Opposition are giving to the people of Gibraltar. I mean, what a poor performance, what an inability to co-ordinate to sing from one hymn sheet. There are so many factions by the end of my analysis, Mr Speaker, I really don't know who is going to be the next Leader of the Opposition. But in that context, as I started, Mr Speaker, I realise, that when we put our minds to it, how much we can agree on.
- 1950 For the reasons I have already gone through in detail – excruciating detail for them, I know – it was a 'Big Lie' Election. The *lie* that employment was about four hundred, the *lie* that debt was under control, the *lie* that we had healthy cash reserves, when it was almost running out at £20m, *lies* that are uncovered now. A 'golden legacy', Mr Speaker? Unemployment at over 1,000, housing over 1,600 people on the waiting list, four times what they inherited when the best Housing Minister Gibraltar had ever had, Pepe Baldachino, left office in 1996, and a debt, Mr Speaker, of over half a billion pounds. A 'golden legacy' much like the 'golden rules', abandoned, smelted, rotting.
- 1955 And on democracy, Mr Speaker, on democracy, that we were failing in not coming to this House and giving full answers etc. And Mr Feetham saying that it is 'terrible', in public statements, that we would not read our press releases of 2006 to him and would not read our manifesto: we would just refer them to him. Wasn't he here, Mr Speaker, when I asked a written question and an oral question that the Hon. the then Chief Minister and Leader of the House felt were similar and decided that he was not going to answer the oral one and I could have the written one and, therefore, prevented us from having a debate on the issue.
- 1960 Mr Speaker, we have delivered a development and planning process that is more open than ever, a Parliament that is more open than ever, a timetable which they can use to plan their professional lives around their political responsibility but they say, Mr Speaker, that *everybody* wanted monthly meetings. Well, Mr Speaker, I take once more, finally before I sit down, the opportunity that Mr Feetham gives me, either because he is too stupid to realise that I am going to do it, or because he is very astute indeed and wants me to do it, to say that the fault that we did not have monthly meetings of this Parliament for the previous sixteen years was of the current Leader of the Opposition.
- 1965 Mr Speaker, they have called me many things in the past year but I am certain that politics are about substance. It is about what people really see, it is about reality and it is not about making an issue where there is none. And I would invite them, Mr Speaker, in particular all of those – and I have lost count of how many there are now on those Opposition benches who want to be Leaders of their Party – to become Leader of the Opposition, to have a chance to take a jump at the chair in which I now sit, to understand that, despite how much they denigrate me – and I am not one to sing my own trumpet – I am actually the most successful Leader of the Opposition ever, having held the post only for seven and a half months before elevating myself, thanks to the confidence of the people of Gibraltar, to the post of Chief Minister. So, perhaps, instead of so much denigration, a bit of study of how we did it. (*Laughter*)
- 1970 Mr Speaker, this is not an austerity Budget, it is a Budget of common sense and prudence. This is not a Budget crafted pretending we are in splendid isolation from the rest of the world, but a Budget for the less well off, for the disabled and for business. And nothing that has been said by the Members opposite has addressed that careful calibration that we have done to deliver on all fronts and implement the best manifesto Gibraltar has ever seen.
- 1975 *Nothing* that has been said so much as dents the public's confidence that this Government is clearly on track to deliver. Nothing, Mr Speaker, to deter me from once again commending this Bill to the House. (*Applause*)
- 1980 And I move Mr Speaker that we now adjourn for a good lunch.
- 1985 **Mr Speaker:** May I suggest that I put the question to conclude. It will only take five seconds, I hope. I now put the question, which is that a Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ending on 31st day of March 2013 be read a second time.
- Those in favour. (**Members:** Aye.) Those against. Passed.
- 1990 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I now move the House do adjourn until 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.
- Mr Speaker:** Is that convenient to all the hon. Members?
- Members agreed.*

1995

Mr Speaker: This House will adjourn until 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1.10 p.m and resumed its sitting at 2.30 p.m.