



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 11.52 a.m. – 3.02 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 25th June 2015

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 11.52 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. A J Canepa GMH OBE *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

Order of the Day

GOVERNMENT BILLS

**Appropriation Bill 2015 –
Debate concluded –
Second Reading approved**

Mr Speaker: The Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, good morning to all and apologies for arriving a few moments late to this Chamber. Technology does not always co-operate with those who rely on it!

Mr Speaker, this has been a historic debate on the Appropriation Bill in many ways. The numbers reflect historic achievement for our community. They demonstrate an economic performance which is the envy of any other European nation; indeed, if we are not to compare ourselves with larger economies, which would not be fair, even of emerging nations and smaller economies. And, as I have said from the beginning, that is not because this Chief Minister is able to produce an estimate of £1.8 billion of GDP or because this ministerial team is able to do it; this is the fruit of the work of everyone in our economy and we do not claim credit for it.

I have the honour and distinction of being allowed to get up in this place and announce those results to the nation and to the world. But this is not my work. I am not going to do what others have done before me – not Mr Bossano – which is to come here and pretend that they – one individual! – are responsible for holding the reigns in such a manner that they are the ones who must forever be thanked for that growth! That is not true and it would be a pretence to do that. I stand here as the lightning rod, Mr Speaker, of the work of every economic actor in our community, announcing what they have achieved, not claiming the credit for having done the hours of hard work that are reflected in the numbers that we are announcing during the course of this debate.

Mr Speaker, one of the things that I want to do this year in the course of my reply, is that I will not only be responding to the speeches of hon. Members opposite, I want to also reflect to the community some of the things that Members on this side of the House have done and the work that they have been embarked on for the past three and a half years.

My first point of substance, Mr Speaker, must of course be perhaps a little bit out of the tradition in this reply: instead of seeking to denigrate, I want to start by congratulating the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution this year.

I think, certainly from the point of view of those of us on this side, from the point of view of those of us who are going to take him on in the General Election, I want to congratulate him for having pitched it absolutely perfectly, from the point of view of those of us on this side. He was shrill, he was hyperbolic, he was everything except the statesman that Mr Bossino was yesterday evening – but he would not know about that because he was not here to hear him.

And he was absolutely right, Mr Speaker. Let me be clear in my position, the Leader of the Opposition was absolutely right when he said that politics is about trust. Absolutely right! And the next election will be about trust and about not big, Mr Speaker, huge lies – *huge* lies! – told to the people of Gibraltar.

So, Mr Speaker, this debate also has been turned into a debate about trust and that is where I want to go first. Because even in the course of his reply, he was dealing with the issue of liquefied natural gas and the safety of LNG as a fuel for bunkering and for power generation and the storage of that fuel. So trust is particularly apposite a quality to be talking about.

40 Mr Speaker, in particular, after another historic element of this debate this year, which is the Government's need to suspend Standing Orders halfway through the debate to make a Government Statement, to make an announcement about Lloyd's Register making an announcement themselves, which, as I will show in a few moments, demonstrated that everything we had heard pedalled for the past two weeks about the Lloyd's Register Report was actually the furthest possible from the truth that one could
45 imagine.

But in that respect, Mr Speaker, in respect of this debate about trust and LNG, one of the things I want to start with is to reflect on how we respond to each other on the substance of issues in this debate and in every debate, and parliamentary etiquette and the way that the traditions of this Parliament are honoured or dishonoured by specific Members.

50 And, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition breached parliamentary etiquette in the most incredible way in the past 24 hours. He spent most of this debate out of this Chamber! Now, Mr Speaker, it is normal for Members who are dealing with work to be in and out of this Chamber, but in the history of Budget debates in this House, as a mark of respect for the debate and for each other, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister, the Leader of the House, have sat through and heard every single contribution ever
55 made during the course of this debate, because we are the ones leading the respective teams that will have to answer and have an overview over all of the issues in politics.

Yesterday I had to adjourn, Mr Speaker, because I had urgent business after making the Statement in the House, which I will come to a little bit later, in order not to do Mr Reyes the disrespect of him making his speech, which I am going to reply to, and not being here to hear it. I could simply, Mr Speaker, have said, 'I have urgent Government business and Mr Reyes will provide me with a note of his speech or one of my
60 colleagues who is being shadowed by Mr Reyes will give me the feedback of the things I have to reply to.'

As it turns out there is very little to reply to but, Mr Speaker, I adjourned the House in order to be here, to do Mr Reyes the respect of listening to him, even if he had got up to call me every name under the sun, it is my obligation to be here to hear it, to be able to reply.

65 And it has been the tradition of this House, Mr Speaker, for generations of democratic debates about the spending that this community will do, that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House are both here to hear the full debate.

Mr Speaker, you would have thought that, given that the Leader of the Opposition has said repeatedly that the most important issue facing our community is the public finances – that is when he is not saying
70 that the most important issue facing our community is the LNG facility, but when he has the finance bug – he says it is the public finances that matter the most, that he would have sat through the debate on the public finances.

In particular, Mr Speaker, you would have thought that he would have wanted to be here to hear the speech of the person that he is likely to be describing in the coming minutes, hours, weeks or months, as the
75 other greatest Gibraltarian of all time, namely Joe Bossano. Because short of sending him a Valentine card, I do not know how else he can pretend to endear himself to him, to pretend that they share a political philosophy. Nothing could be further from the truth because Joe Bossano, as we will hear, is a man proud of not changing his spots and the other gentleman picks up spots as he walks along the streets! (*Laughter*)

80 But he did not even honour the evacuation generation by being here to hear the one of that generation who was going to deliver a speech. Mr Speaker, you are not supposed to deliver speeches, although you sometimes give us the benefit of your wisdom, but this Member of the evacuation generation was giving a speech on the public finances, on the Gibraltar Savings Bank on the other book.

The hon. Gentleman says we operate two books. I will come to that in a minute. But on the other book – the one he says we do not debate – there was a keynote speech yesterday, Mr Speaker, and he was not here.
85 Not just in breach of etiquette, in breach of his own measure of what he says is the most important issue facing our community.

I suppose, Mr Speaker, he did not want to hear the things that Joe Bossano had to say. It was in fact a master class on how to run a savings bank – and I will come to it in a few moments – but the absence of the Leader of the Opposition from this House was probably the rudest parliamentary failure in the time
90 certainly that I have been a Member of this House. And how one behaves in Parliament, Mr Speaker, reflects on one's respect for democracy. If you make, repeatedly, points which you say are important, but you are not willing to hear the response, however much you may disagree with it, however much you may not like to hear it, it shows your quality as a democrat.

95 I have sat through what I might variously describe as the most vicious attacks on my colleagues and myself, or the most comedic parliamentary behaviour, depending on what mood one might be in, in the time that I have been a Member of this House, having to put up with listening to erudite but venomous

contributions or the most boring contributions one might imagine, Mr Speaker. But one is here because 'Parliament' – '*parler*' – means talking and it is not one-sided talking, it is not just hearing your own voice, it is not just putting *your* argument.

Democracy is about the respect one gives to the other side as well and how one takes it on board, Mr Speaker, and develops one's thinking and puts it to people. And that is what was so rudely absent from the Leader of the Opposition's behaviour yesterday. Mr Speaker, that was really the least parliamentary behaviour I have seen in the time I have been in this House.

And he was wrong to leave also for another reason, because if there is one thing that the brilliant Joe Bossano does well, it is to speak in this House and, as I told him when he spoke in the debate on the Dr Giraldi home, I thought he deserved not one award of silk for his advocacy but two. I mean I think he should honestly be known as the Hon. Joe Bossano QC QC MP! (*Laughter*) Indeed, Mr Speaker, it is a very good case for him to be called *Sir* Joe Bossano but that is for another time; probably one of the longest serving parliamentarians in the history of the Commonwealth, but the other side do like to do him down.

And Joe Bossano, QC QC MP, (*Laughter*) Mr Speaker – he loves being equated to lawyers, I know! – (*Laughter*) yesterday explained, chapter and verse, pounds, shillings – in honour of the evacuation generation – and pennies, what we are doing for Savings Bank depositors, how badly they did it in the time that they were in Government and the woeful state of the Savings Bank when we were elected in December 2011.

But, having said all of that, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition need not fear, because I am going to take him through exactly the same figures this morning anyway, because I know that they make him squirm, Mr Speaker, and seeing him squirm is one thing that certain Members on that side of the House, I think, love more than even Members on this side of the House.

And he was not here to hear Neil Costa. Well, Mr Speaker, I do not think Neil Costa could be described as a Hollywood B actor even by his greatest detractors, but after his performance last night nobody will ever be able to describe him as anything other than an absolute A-lister! (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Costa was absolutely on fire, Mr – I have got to be careful talking about fire; somebody might think there is a fireball of LNG near Mr Costa, but he was absolutely on fire yesterday, Mr Speaker, as people say these days! Absolutely in top form, and he was able to deliver an excellent rendition of the four years of hard work and effort that he has put in alongside this dedicated and committed team of Ministers. It is a real pity that the Leader of the Opposition rudely decided to leave the House and miss such a brilliant performance, if I may say so, Mr Speaker.

In fact, in particular, given how much the Leader of the Opposition needs to learn how to deliver a speech, because he could have learned a thing or two from watching Mr Costa's brilliant delivery yesterday, given his flat and indescribably monotonous performance the day before. But the most incredible disrespect, Mr Speaker, by not being here, was actually not reserved for Joe Bossano QC QC MP or for Neil Costa; the greatest mark of disrespect in the Leader of the Opposition's absence from the House yesterday, was reserved for his own Deputy.

For his greatest enemy, I think, as he perceives him to be. Not for any of us on this side of the House, Mr Speaker, because the greatest slap in the face, the harshest signal of derision and disrespect he reserved for Mr Bossino. What a way for a team leader to behave – not to be here to listen to the speech of his own number two. These are speeches, Mr Speaker, which require a lot of effort, from all Members of this House – even the Leader of the Opposition whose delivery was so uninspiring; we all put in a lot of work to these speeches. I mean I suppose he probably did not put in as much because all he did was read us his press releases of the past six months – all over again!

But hon. Members put in a lot of work. I do not think the community realises the pressure that all Members are under to deliver a good speech, to summarise in an hour or two or perhaps even less, the work that they have been doing and how important it is and how it reflects on the spending of this community. And his own Deputy, Mr Speaker, got up to deliver his speech in the absence of his own Leader. What a way for the Leader of the Opposition... Indeed, Mr Speaker, what a way for any leader of any team, for any leader of men and women, to behave to a key member of his team.

And what he missed, Mr Speaker, was – as I will demonstrate in a few minutes – an excellent intervention on which I congratulate Mr Bossino. He was actually widely congratulated last night by Members on both sides of the House, for what was a measured and erudite intervention which made all the points he needed to make, without setting out to cause offence and without failing, nonetheless, in his duty to bring us to account in one or two areas of real dispute between us, which I will deal with later in my intervention, but without having to call anyone anything. Indeed, Mr Speaker, the only name that he used, the only insult that slipped off his lips, the only off-colour reference was to have called one Member of this House 'a nerd'!

Mr Speaker, he was actually applying that term to himself when he described himself as 'a political nerd' and I said that I shared that description of self with him and we have shared that description with each other for many years since our very happy teens at Bayside.

In fact, Mr Speaker, in parliamentary terms what we had yesterday from Mr Bossino was a breath of fresh air. Indeed, it was parliamentary oxygen when compared to the self-indulgent name-calling that the hon. Leader of the Opposition succumbed to in his reply over lunch on Monday. When Mr Bossino spoke, we were treated to loyal opposition at its best. It was probing, it was questioning but never gratuitously insulting and again I congratulate him on behalf of the Government for that.

But the current leader of this Opposition, Mr Speaker – and I say current not because I want him to go; I sincerely hope that he remains the Leader of the Opposition for many years – was happily not here to take any lessons from his Deputy and therefore will not be able to ape him – I do not know whether Mr Cortes and Mr Netto will allow me the use of the term ‘ape’ – or learn from him and his excellent performance yesterday.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, there is one thing that I was happy about yesterday in historic terms, thinking back for a year or two. It was actually that the Leader of the Opposition managed to force, through the executive of the GSD, that they should vote in their leadership election through the intimidatory device of a show of hands rather than a much more democratic system of a secret ballot.

I was delighted, in historic terms, thinking back, that Mr Feetham had managed that and that therefore that intimidatory way of ensuring that all those who have pledged allegiance and the one whose allegiance may have been bought in one way or another, had to put up or shut up on that issue and were not able to express their view secretly and more democratically, Mr Speaker.

And please may that be the case for many years to come – for *many* years to come – because, as the hon. Gentleman has said, Mr Speaker, he intends to stay as Leader of the GSD whatever happens at the next election, and I sincerely hope that is the case. I sincerely hope that whatever happens at the next election – although I think we all harbour a view and a prediction that is probably common to all of us in their heart of hearts as to what will happen in the next election – whatever that may be, I do hope he remains as Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker.

And I have no doubt actually – I have *no doubt* actually – that he will, because, whatever the result of the next General Election, Mr Speaker, even if the polls are wrong – and I do not mean Polish people; the hon. Member says we must not believe the polls; I do not know which particular poll he does not like or want people to believe but I will not succumb to rumour as to polls or anything like that – even if the polls are wrong, and we win by 85% and they only get 15% or we win by 95% and they only get 5% – the sort of thing that might happen if people lose trust in a leader and see that they have been hoodwinked with the reports of danger which are not actually genuine; that sort of thing, Mr Speaker – even if he only gets 5% of the vote, he is right, he will remain as Leader, because he has shaped the executive of his political party in such a way that it is a reflection of himself and his family. He has got his brother on his executive, he has got his closest friends on his executive. You know, I think even if Sir Peter Caruana were to come back now and he had lost the election by 95%, the executive would still put Danny back at the top of the Party, Mr Speaker.

Well, look, Mr Speaker, in political terms, chapeau. That level of insulation and protection against the democratic result is, I suppose, to be honoured, but at least there is not a snowball’s chance in hell that the GSD is going to change its leader for a winner any time soon.

And there are people, Mr Speaker, on our side of the political divide who are so incensed by some of the things that the hon. the Leader of the Opposition does and the danger that he represents, not to us politically but to Gibraltar and to the wellbeing of our community – as I shall demonstrate in a few moments – that they say we must get rid of this guy, as people, I want to say, in politics. And, Mr Speaker, as I say to them, they must not succumb to that temptation. They need to realise that the hon. Member, the hon. the Leader of the Opposition, is the most important Member of *our* team going into the next election.

And when we were here, Mr Speaker, debating the finances of our nation – the thing that he has repeatedly been saying until two weeks ago was the most important issue facing; the central issue facing us in the next election – he was absent. And he was absent, Mr Speaker, trying to deal with the after effects of having been rumbled on the conflict of interest behind his Lloyds Report. Well, I say ‘*his* Lloyds Report’, Mr Speaker, not really *his* Lloyds Report at all. He has been rumbled in having been taking cash for questioning the safety of LNG as a fuel for Gibraltar! £100,000, Mr Speaker! Rumbled, Mr Speaker! But I think, even now, too foolish to realise the extent of the rumbling.

So what did he do, Mr Speaker? He made clear to anybody who was following this debate that his interest was actually outside the House; that all he is interested in doing now, having obviously lost the debate on the public finances, is to rouse a mob in any way he can to try and make his way to No. 6 Convent Place.

Well, Mr Speaker, given how he has behaved in the past 48 hours, people may start realising that he is not such a bright spark! (*Laughter*) Yesterday he left this place to go and continue to peddle that report – his sour grapes tenderers’ report, the sour grapes failures’ report – which had been paid for, for him so that he could question the safety of LNG. Cash for questioning, Mr Speaker!

He went down to Waterport Terraces, instead of being here at the time when he needed to be here. Members of this House, Mr Speaker, traditionally always do not plan things for this week – (*Phone ringing*) Urgent instructions for Joe Bossano QC QC (*Laughter*) coming in and disturbing the peace, Mr Speaker! (*Laughter*)

Members of this House, Mr Speaker, do not plan things for Budget week because it is the key political week of the year. This week and National Week are the two key political weeks of the year. We do not plan things in the evenings because we do not know how late we will sit. It is normal; it interferes with professional life, Mr Speaker.

When I was sitting on that side, a hard professional week might just happen to be combined with a hard political week if it was Budget week, Mr Speaker, and I did not have the benefit that they have, that I tell them when the Budget week is going to be. Sir Peter used to spring it on us. He might say on a Thursday, ‘And on Monday we are coming back and that will be when we take the Budget debate’. But you know things have changed. Nobody plans for this week.

So, Mr Speaker, to have seen that the hon. Gentleman *planned* and distributed the leaflet in their mendacious style to try and scare people: ‘Meeting. Be scared half to death! 6.00 p.m. at the podium of Waterport Terraces!’ Mr Speaker, it felt like an advert for a new movie. ‘Poltergeists will be visiting you between 6.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. next Wednesday!’ (*Laughter*) Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the atmosphere – gas! (*Laughter*)

He planned not to be here, Mr Speaker. He planned not to be here. He went down to Waterport Terraces, of course, to meet the hordes of people who were going to be there to hear his message of doom and so he thought, ‘Well, now, do I leave the 15 or 16 bods in the House and go and meet the thousands at Waterport Terraces, or do I do honour to my duty as the Leader of the Opposition and stay with the 15 or 16 at the Parliament and leave the thousands waiting for me – for the gas messiah to arrive; the man who will liberate them from the fireball, to arrive?’

And he obviously, Mr Speaker, as a politician, did the political calculation and he said, ‘Out of the 17 there 10 are never going to vote for me’ – well, actually he might be wrong about that; it might be closer to 16 – are never going to vote for me – ‘so I will go down and meet the hordes awaiting me for their liberation from the danger of the fireball!’

I guess, Mr Speaker, he might have been a bit late, because when he left here, before going there he had to go and put on the sandwich board – the sandwich board he walks around with which on one side says, ‘We are bankrupt, the debt is illegal’ and on the other side it says, ‘The end of the world is nigh by fireball,’ (*Laughter*) which is the inspiring message that the Opposition is selling our people about our future.

Well, having put on the disguise, Mr Speaker, and having made his way down to Waterport Terraces, it turned out there were more people in this House than in the podium of Waterport Terraces (*Laughter*) and, in fact, even when you do the numbers, most of those who were there turned up with him! (*Laughter*)

You could not make it up, Mr Speaker! In fact, there were more people in this House listening to Joe Bossano and his Deputy than there were in the podium of Waterport Terraces listening to him peddle the dirty business of one of the failed bidders of the power station contract.

Mr Speaker, when it comes to accepting cash to question Governments, Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom have resigned for less than what the hon. Gentleman has been found doing and if I thought it was in my partisan interest that he should go, I would be calling for his resignation immediately! But I have made that mistake once before, Mr Speaker, and I have had to apologise to him for having called for his resignation before, because much more Machiavellian operators than me have reminded me that the last thing that I want is for him to go – so no call for a resignation today.

In fact, Mr Speaker, what I want to do is to encourage him to continue with more of the same asinine performance that he has been doing until now in the post of Leader of the Opposition. As, in fact, Mr Speaker, he was doing the next time I saw him after he left the Chamber yesterday, mobile phone superglued to ear, and he was then next to be seen entertaining Gibraltarian families on ‘*Carry On Newswatch*’ or perhaps *Not the Nine O’clock News*, given that *Newswatch* is on at 8.30 p.m. That was the next time he made an appearance.

And let me deal, Mr Speaker, with the spectacle that we were treated to yesterday evening. Last night on *Newswatch* Hon. Members will have seen a report of the events of yesterday in this House – a serious issue about the partisan abuse of the Lloyds-registered technical report. That was the lead item, Mr Speaker. And of course it is a matter of substance that I will be dealing with in greater detail in the course of this reply.

But before I get to the substance of it, Mr Speaker, what I will say in response to what I saw yesterday on television about the response of the Leader of the Opposition to what happened in this House – the serious statement from the Government, the seismic effect of it – is that it was really quite remarkable. Did he address the issue of the funding of the report by a competitor in a tender process – a failed competitor tender process? Did he address that in any serious way? Did he apologise to the public in any measure, or indeed, Mr Speaker, to his own party? Did he engage in the debate of what exactly the report was about and

why he had cynically exploited its conclusions so transparently? Did he do any of that, Mr Speaker? No, he did not do any of that. He did not do *any* of that!

And if I may say so, Mr Speaker, his performance said *so much* about him, because the response from the Leader of the Opposition to having been rumbled on the abuse of the Lloyd's Register Report – on his reliance on the sour grapes of a failed tenderer, on him having taken this notional £100,000 report, Mr Speaker – his response was to say that, 'The Chief Minister is a Hollywood B actor'. That is what he said. I am not even as good as Mr Costa, who I think is a Hollywood A Minister! (*Laughter*) I am a 'Hollywood B actor'.

Mr Speaker, let me tell him I sincerely welcomed that. I sincerely welcomed that, I really did, because it said so much about him. It said so much about his style of politics and, in fact, Mr Speaker, the way that, on television last night, the venom dripped from the Leader of the Opposition's lips and tongue, it was clear to me, and I think to everyone in this community, that there was more of a risk to his life from his swallowing his own poison, than there ever will be from a fireball of LNG. That is what he demonstrated last night.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, it is clear that there is a new vein of support for the GSD. He is not doing that badly; there is a new vein of support for hon. Members opposite, which is patently from the most venomous and poisonous elements in our society. One just has to see that venom drip on social media. I guess that is the new GSD, Mr Speaker – the GSD in which exciting things are happening. Really exciting things, I suppose, Mr Speaker, like the Leader turning up and saying, 'Guess what, boys and girls, I have someone who is going to pay us a £100,000-report to rubbish the Government's LNG proposal and we are going to win the election by sweeping up all the votes at Waterport Terraces!' Something exciting is happening in the GSD.

In fact, Mr Speaker, so exciting that I understand that the Leader of the Opposition told one particular member of the public who was keen to share the conversation with me, that despite the Party's low ratings in the polls, they would win the election. They would win the election. 'The GSD will win the election,' he told this member of the public. And he said, 'for a simple reason,' – for a simple reason, he said – 'Hombre' – which discloses the gender of the person (*Laughter*) – and this is what he said – 'they either vote for Piccy – is that me? I guess it is – 'when I am telling them that he is going to put a bomb outside their front door or they vote for me when I tell them I am not – *y ya veremos*.'

Mr Speaker, we are all lawyers here – even now I suppose Joe Bossano QC QC, by acclamation – (*Laughter*) and we all understand the rules on hearsay, so I put very little stock by that and there may be Chinese whispers in it; there might have been some reference to *la perra* as well, which I have heard him make – the money, Mr Speaker – but it is so him, isn't it, Mr Speaker? It is so him and it is so clear now what he is prepared to do to claw his way into Convent Place.

All he needs to do now, in his view, is to somehow tarnish our plans for the power station and the LNG storage and regasification facility, Mr Speaker, and that is why we have seen the events of the past two months develop as we have in respect of the debate on LNG. In fact, Mr Speaker, there is a saying in Spanish to describe that sort of close collaboration which, given the announcement by the Hon. Mr Licudi about the teaching of Spanish in our schools, even our most infant children will soon be able to understand, and it involves *el hambre*, or the hunger, meeting *las ganas de comer*, the desire to feast or eat.

Well, Mr Speaker, it is very clear to us now that that is exactly the sort of relationship that has developed between the hon. Member and the Spark Group of Companies.

I am going to deal with this issue now, Mr Speaker and the substance of the report and the politics of it. Whilst yesterday I only made a factual statement, I have to now join up the dots for our community, in political terms. And in doing so, I want to emphasise one thing and everything else I am going to say after this must please be read with this caveat in mind.

I am *not*, in what I am going to say, imputing knowledge, or seeking to tarnish anyone else on the Opposition benches. I am not imputing to them any knowledge whatsoever of the things that I revealed yesterday and the things I am going to reveal now. I believe the only person on the Opposition benches who knew the facts I disclosed yesterday and who knows the facts I will disclose now, was the Leader of the Opposition himself. And if, in shorthand, I talk about the Opposition, I do not mean to impute knowledge or motive to any other Member of the Opposition.

Because, Mr Speaker, it is only *his* insatiable hunger to become Chief Minister that I believe has been behind what we have seen; his insatiable hunger to become Chief Minister whatever the consequences; that vaulting ambition of Macbeth, which I have referred to in a previous year which blinds him completely. It is the chip inside him, to talk in modern computer terms, which is programmed for him to become Chief Minister by any means necessary. And that is so dangerous, Mr Speaker, in anything in life. When somebody is prepared to reach an objective by any means necessary, morality goes out of the window; common decency goes out of the window, let alone –

Mr Speaker: May I draw the attention of the Chief Minister, just so that he keeps it in mind, that there is a Rule of Parliament, 45(6), 'No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member.' So I would ask him, in respect of what he is about to say, to keep that very much in mind.

Hon. Chief Minister: Indeed, Mr Speaker, I have kept it in mind in preparing these remarks because there is no improper motive in wanting to become Chief Minister. You have achieved it yourself. The motive is to become Chief Minister, and there is nothing improper about that. It is about how one gets there, Mr Speaker.

And when one does things by any means necessary, whatever the motive – whether to become Chief Minister or otherwise, even morality and the family values of this community, the core of the Rock of Gibraltar, what makes us strong and steadfast, what has delivered our achievement, our values as a community – those strong family values... that goes out of the window when you achieve things by any means necessary; and that is what his desire to become Chief Minister, by any means necessary, is leading him to.

You see, Mr Speaker, what has become transparent to our community today is that he has done a pact with a commercial entity that lost out in a fair process of choosing a new power station and a new LNG bunkering facility; a pact worth £100,000! He has conspired, Mr Speaker, against the interests of Gibraltar and its people in exchange for £100,000 paid in kind by a group of Russian and Gibraltarian businessmen who have shown an unscrupulous desire to make profit in however ruthless a manner as may be necessary.

That is the reality of what we have seen unfolding before us in the past 24 hours. Of course the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition does not present it quite like that. He, as ever, pretends the opposite. He pretends he has a genuine concern; he pretends that this advice is not one motivated by commercial concerns and that it can, therefore, be taken at face value.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, although he is not here in this House but he is politically very active, the Chairman of the GSD, who appears to have come under some sort of spell by his dear leader, introduced the Lloyd's Register Report to a press conference at the Elliott Hotel two weeks ago in a manner that we can now see was entirely deceptive – *entirely deceptive*!

Now, either the Leader of the Opposition hangs him out to dry or accepts that he shared in that deception. We can now demonstrate to the community that what Mr Trevor Hammond said was actually entirely untrue. It was actually the *opposite* of the truth. When presenting the report, Mr Speaker – and you can see this on a YouTube video, unless they have hastily taken it down, but if they have, we downloaded it – Mr Hammond says this:

'As Danny...'

– short term for the Leader of the Opposition –

'... has said, the report is by Lloyd's Register, undoubtedly Europe's most expert organisation at providing these reports, if not the world's most expert organisation, and it needs to be made clear Lloyds would not risk their reputation over something as relatively small to them as LNG bunkering in Gibraltar...'

– and, indeed, they demonstrated that yesterday.

'This report is straight down the line because Lloyds have absolutely no reason for doing otherwise...'

And then he said this:

'and, as Danny has said...'

– and therefore he cannot really cut him loose because he was repeating what Danny said, although Danny is not in the video, surprise, surprise –

'and, as Danny has said...'

'... contrast that with the reports that will be produced by Government which will effectively be produced by commercial interests who have a vested interest in ensuring this project goes ahead, because they will get an awful lot of money.'

That is what the Chairman of the GSD said. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition is laughing; maybe it is one of those laughs like the one that he was feeling when I finished my speech and he had to respond, of the sort that start in the bowel rather than in the brain. He is laughing, Mr Speaker, because he has been so caught out and his Chairman has been so caught out, because actually it is *their* report that is

the one prepared by a commercial interest with a vested interest – the opposite of what they pretended their report to be.

385 Their report is one of people who will get an awful lot of money if we are not able to do the right thing for our community; they get elected, they cancel the plans and then they give these people either another opportunity to bid or have already done a deal that they are going to give them the power station, or the facility.

390 **A Member:** Hear, hear.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, a Point of Order.

Now, I have been very patient in listening to what he has to say. He has over-stepped the mark by a country mile but I have allowed it. But, Mr Speaker, what he has now said is absolutely, categorically false!
395 It is imputing to me a motive. What he is saying is that effectively I have agreed to publish this report, or that this report has been commissioned because of some favour that I have promised to somebody and that is absolutely wrong and it is a lie, Mr Speaker, and it is in breach of the Rules of this House!

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the Point of Order contains a Point of Order which is that I have said something which is a lie. The hon. Member needs to withdraw that. Before I deal with the Point of Order, the hon. Member needs to withdraw the use of that unparliamentary language.

Mr Speaker: Last February, I recall that the Chief Minister actually called the Leader of the Opposition a liar and it escaped me and every other Member in the House, I think – I do not know whether it was shock, even Sir Peter Caruana was here and no-one raised the issue that the Chief Minister had called the Leader of the Opposition a liar so I did not make a ruling at the time. But I have kept it in mind, as hon. Members can see, so that on the next occasion when it happens...

The reason why Members should not call each other liars, should not say that they are lying, is that it is an accusation, if you like, an attack on the whole dignity of Parliament, in that all Members here are regarded as being honourable persons. That is why you do not call a Member a liar. Therefore, the use of that word is unparliamentary and has to be withdrawn. You cannot call a Member a liar; you cannot say that he is lying.

As I say, it lodged in my mind. I made a very careful note of the date that it happened and I said the next time I am not going to let it by. So it is a word that I ask, whatever Member uses that word, has to be withdrawn.

Then we can also deal with the question whether there has been any improper motive on the part of the Chief Minister... which the Leader of the Opposition is entitled to defend himself of course.

Hon. D A Feetham: If Mr Speaker wants me to formally withdraw the word 'lie', of course I will happily do so. But, Mr Speaker, the factual statement is this: he has said that, effectively, we have commissioned a report in exchange for favours. That is what he has said. It is an improper motive and it is in breach of the Rules and I am saying categorically to him, here in his face, that it is not true. I am entitled to say that is not true.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member is entitled to say, 'That is not correct. That is not true.' You are not using the word 'liar' that is misleading. Those are the words that are normally used in Parliament but not 'lie'.

I think in my view what the Leader of the Opposition has said amounts to a withdrawal.

430 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Now dealing with the issue of the improper motive, Mr Speaker, I have no problem in this debate accepting that I am not imputing improper motive to the hon. Member but I will be bringing a motion, a substantive motion, that deals exactly with this point and then we can deal with it.

Mr Speaker, the vested interests are clearly on the side of the GSD, or rather again – I am careful to say – the Leader of the Opposition and Spark, together, conniving against the best interests of this community because of their commercial interest and his political interest.

Mr Speaker, when I said that I was not imputing knowledge to Members on the other side, just to him, I was very clear in saying that, because actually this debate is about trust and transparency; and, as people will see as I get on with my reply, it is about dealing with the pretence of a lack of trust in Government, the pretence of the lack of transparency by Government, that I will be addressing.

But in accepting, Mr Speaker, as I have when I have set out, that it is only him on the Opposition benches that I tarnish with knowledge of the way this report was obtained, I am also demonstrating that he lacks transparency with the rest, even, of his team; that he does not trust, even, the rest of his team; that he

is again a GSD leader behaving as a one-man band. And doing a deal, Mr Speaker, with a defeated commercial operator, for whatever motive – we will be able to look at that in more detail in the future – but a vested interest, dripping in sour grapes, funding their report and demonstrably the ones who have failed in their bids under this Government.

And what happened, Mr Speaker, is that these vested commercial interests to which he has allied himself, to which he has married his political fortunes, put before Lloyd's Register a proposal so amateurish and so devoid of technical understanding, that of course Lloyd's Register have said that it would be very dangerous and it should not be proceeded with without amendment.

It is literally, Mr Speaker, the equivalent of saying, 'Dear Lloyd's Register, may I ask you whether I can trust my three-year-old son with a Bunsen burner and a lighter on the carpet of the living room?' And Lloyd's Register will say, 'No, of course you cannot. You should not trust him with a Bunsen burner until he is 15, you should make sure he does not use it on the carpet, you should do it in a laboratory style environment and then he would probably be alright, but make sure he wears goggles so that he does not hurt his eyes and gloves so he does not hurt his hands!'

But if somebody were to put as amateurish a suggestion as, 'Can you tell me and advise me on whether I should trust my three-year-old with a Bunsen burner, some gas and a match?' the answer would be like the one that Lloyds has given the clowns that have put the proposal to them! And anybody would have therefore rejected the suggestion.

And you see, Mr Speaker, the thing that makes this debate even more pertinent is that what Lloyd's Register have said no to is not our plan for a power station or our plan for gas storage; it is a fool's plan, it is a nonsensical plan which no reasonably qualified person would ever have put to anyone, less still to a reputable organisation such as Lloyds, whose reputation actually survives intact, the Leader of the Opposition's attempts to mire them in this debate without their knowledge.

The plan put to Lloyds by the bright sparks at Spark, Mr Speaker, was to have a single skin gas storage tank, parallel to the cruise liner terminal – a single skin gas storage tank parallel to the cruise liner terminal! That is the height of nonsense! Who would propose that? Of course you get the result that Lloyds have given you and which the hon. Gentleman has quickly pedalled down to Waterport Terraces to sell. It could never be otherwise.

And that demonstrates, Mr Speaker, that the whole purpose of the report was not to get a genuine opinion on whether gas and LNG storage etc there could work and whether it was the right thing for our community; the whole purpose of seeking that report, the allied purpose of the sour grapes commercial interest of Spark and the vaulting ambition of the Leader of the Opposition – the whole joint enterprise – was to get a result that would discredit proper plans which are carefully thought out and to prejudice everyone against LNG. But this community, Mr Speaker, is made up of right-thinking people who see through political devices like that.

And there is a lot more to go, by the way, and the hon. Gentleman can get up and say that he has been patient and allowed me to do it, but actually it has got nothing to do with that. He has got to sit and take it because I am the Leader of this House responding on a Bill and I have the right to speak within the terms of parliamentary language in response to the speeches we have heard so far. So he is not allowing me to do anything, Mr Speaker, when he is sitting here listening to this – listening to how much we have been able to rumble his dastardly plans.

Mr Speaker, why do I say that the plan has been thought out – the proposal put to Lloyds has been thought out – to engineer a rejection, to engineer a statement that it is not safe? How can I justify that? Well, because it is now absolutely clear to us, beyond peradventure, that by the time that Spark go to Lloyds, their plans have been rejected by the Government. So they are not going to Lloyds with live plans to get Lloyds to say they work so that they can come to the Government with a report that says, 'This works'; they are not seeking validation of their plans. By the time they go to Lloyds, they have allied themselves to the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition's cause which has, for two months previously, already been to say that LNG should not be done there or in any other place in Gibraltar.

They have allied themselves to the rejectionist attitude. What they said two months before could be done, or three months before or six months before or any time before could be done and they would do for good money, suddenly they want to see rejected. And they do that by the time we have not proceeded with them and they have allied themselves to him. So by the time they are submitting their proposal to Lloyds, they are already seeking to ensure that the Lloyds Report is going to say the things that the Leader of the Opposition wants it to say.

Mr Speaker, I can reveal today in Parliament, that Spark made proposals to the Government outside of the tender process. They made proposals that were not compliant with our requirements and were technically flawed. They made proposals directly to Ministers and, for those reasons, those proposals got nowhere. That was last year and early this year, Mr Speaker, so that by the time that Spark goes to Lloyds, they know that we have awarded a contract for a power station and not to them, and they know that we are

talking to parties under the PIN notice about gas supply which will not include them and *then* they go to Lloyds.

And that is when they put to Lloyds something as nonsensical as whether you should allow a two-year-old to swim without water wings, something as nonsensical as whether you would trust a three-year-old with matches, something as nonsensical as whether you would trust Daniel Feetham to run your country!

Of course the answer from anyone with any expertise is going to be no, as it will be from the electorate to the last question I pose, Mr Speaker. But as Lloyds are a responsible, reputable people, and according to Trevor they are being paid £100,000 – or at least so he says – they then set out to put in writing what needs to be done to mitigate the risk of the nonsensical proposal that has been put to them.

And one of the things they talk about is location and another thing they talk about is method. And yesterday when, in their frustration at the way in which their report was being distorted and used for political ends – let me be clear, Mr Speaker – something Lloyds were not aware of, I can also disclose today that Lloyds were not aware that their report was going to be used for political purposes, that it was going to be handed to a political party – although the Members opposite have pretended it was prepared for their purposes.

Lloyds finally exploded – to use the terminology the Opposition like to apply to LNG – with a statement that started to clarify matters. And that statement, Mr Speaker – reproduced today in all of our national newspapers, so that everybody can read it for themselves and can understand for themselves what it said – that statement first sets out that they were not asked to consider LNG bunkering, although it is one of the things Mr Feetham says he rules out as a result of the report. In fact I think he has ruled it out before, even without a report.

And second, Mr Speaker, they say that with obvious modifications – which are clearly necessary to the moronic proposal that was put to them – the risks... those risks which the report on the moronic proposal discloses and which Trevor and the Leader of the Opposition have been so keen to exploit, can be *entirely reduced*. Not my words, Mr Speaker, they are in the advertisement that everybody can see in today's newspapers because the Government has wanted everybody to be able to read the letter for themselves; and not even a journalist's view of the letter, the statement from Lloyd's Register themselves.

Not my words, the statement says: 'the risk can be entirely reduced'. Not 'a little bit reduced and we can live with the risk', not 'greatly reduced and we can live with the risk'; *entirely reduced*. Completely. If you use the word 'completely', Mr Speaker, and you want to emphasise it more, you look in the thesaurus and it says 'entirely'. So this is completely reduced '*dale la redundancia*'. More than just completely: *entirely reduced*. (*Banging on desks*) Entirely reduced means eliminated, Mr Speaker. Eliminated.

What Lloyd's are saying in its press statement therefore, is that there are ways of making this facility, if properly planned and applying the Health & Safety Executives standard to it, entirely safe. And the Leader of the Opposition yesterday on television said, 'The statement from Lloyds changes nothing.'

Changes nothing, Mr Speaker? Trevor and him have been peddling that this is impossible to do, that it is too risky.

Mr Speaker, to say that this statement changes nothing in the debate, suggests that it has not been read. That somebody has gone on television to defend their position on the report without reading the statement. It is absolutely incredible that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition could think of nothing better to do last night than to call me a 'B-rate actor' and not deal with the fact that just this preliminary statement from Lloyd's, talks about risk being *entirely reduced*. I wonder, Mr Speaker, whether the Leader of the Opposition explained it that way to the hordes at Waterport Terraces. I think the hordes had read it for themselves and that is why they were indoors watching Mr Bossino, Mr Bossano and Mr Costa on Parliament.gi.

But what a disgraceful way to do politics, Mr Speaker, scaring savers on the Monday and scaring residents of an estate on the Tuesday. And then Lloyd's, Mr Speaker, further down their statement, go on to talk about the health benefits of LNG because it can mean less airborne pollution from the burning of diesel – that which the hon. Gentleman is so wedded to – and how commercial and bunkering activities can be promoted. None of that was ever said in the hyperbole of the presentation of the report by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition two weeks ago. I do not think any of that was said in Waterport Terraces yesterday, Mr Speaker, none of that.

All they are doing is peddling the fear of risk and danger. Fear and risk of danger which the people who they rely on says can be entirely reduced, ergo eliminated – GSD word ergo, eliminated. (*Interjection*) I am hoping, Mr Speaker, that in translation they might understand what we mean. (*Laughter and interjection*). They are peddling that fear of risk and danger, fear of accidents based... Yesterday evening at Waterport Terraces on a report that has been discredited, not because of the expertise of the people who prepared it, whose reputation stands intact, but because of the submission of a nonsensical plan by a vested commercial interest.

Let me share something with Members of this House and those of the community who might be watching, Mr Speaker. Two weeks ago, the Sunday after the Germany game, when – actually, I think just a

few days after or before the report was made public by Members opposite – I had a meeting with a director of Spark, on a Sunday in my office, on the issue of the power cuts that we had suffered during the Germany game. I think it is entirely appropriate that the Chief Minister should consider power such an important issue – power generation, Mr Speaker, not political power – that if there is a massive failure from a contractor that supplies to the Government, the Chief Minister should be on top of those things and dealing with them.

I do not mind telling the public, Mr Speaker, that on the night of the Germany game, whilst the Germany game was still on, because of the power cut I was, with Manolo Alecio and the Minister responsible, actually down at the Spark Plant and down at Gibelec to try and understand what was going wrong. Of course I did not know *really* what was happening at the time, as we now know – the light of the new dawn has now shone even on what has been happening and going on between the Leader of the Opposition and Spark.

But that Sunday, Mr Speaker, I required a meeting with one of the directors of Spark to seek explanations. Damian Carreras, the Director of Spark who came to see me, volunteered – because I did not ask him this question, Mr Speaker, this was after the report had come out, he volunteered, because it was not something I would put to him, in my office, in the office of the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, unprompted – he said that they, Spark had nothing to do with the preparation of the Lloyd's Report which had been provided to the Opposition. Nothing to do with it.

I did not ask him a question, I was not cross-examining him – but Members have heard right. This person came into the office of the Chief Minister of Gibraltar and volunteered this now patently false information. It is now confirmed that they were actually the ones preparing the report with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, people who lie to the face of the Chief Minister disrespect that office – and not Fabian Picardo with it – they disrespect every single one of the people of Gibraltar: every single one of the people of Gibraltar. And that therefore was a falsehood, an untruth, and a lie told to all the people of Gibraltar through my office. A deception in which the Leader of the Opposition is not a bit player, Mr Speaker. Quite unlike me, you see, he is no 'B Actor'.

He is an A-lister of deception, he is the star of this Hollywood movie. He is at the very top of a conspiracy that had no regard for the interests of our nation and every regard for his own personal interest. You see, Mr Speaker, what we have here in an election year – because this is clearly an election year, the rules and the law provides for it – is a disgruntled company conspiring with the Leader of the Opposition to turn an election. There is, Mr Speaker, I can tell the nation today, potential interference with critical national infrastructure. We are investigating whether the power cuts we have experienced have been brought about in order to destabilise the Government at a time when the Opposition wanted to have the debate about power generation and its future.

I am not a conspiracy theorist, Mr Speaker, I believe that Elvis is dead and that Jack Kennedy was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald and that there was not a second gunman on the grassy knoll. But the coincidences that we have experienced with the failure of the Spark Plant and the timing of it, as well as the timing of the collusion between the Leader of the Opposition and Spark, leads us to have to investigate these things. Let us be clear, Mr Speaker, our gaming companies, our lawyers, our accountants, our insurance companies, our finance centre, all our business leaders, the elderly, the infirm, those with babies and young children, not least our football fans will never forgive the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition if we have suffered power cuts for him to push the issue of power generation further up the political agenda.

It is one thing, Mr Speaker, to take industrial action, give notice of when you are going to do it and be covered by the Trade Union and Disputes Act in the 1970s and 1980s to fight for parity and pay rises; but it is quite different, Mr Speaker, to bring about power cuts in the country with the largest gaming industry on earth, during a Euro qualifying game.

Hon. D A Feetham: Point of Order, Mr Speaker.

He is now completely going beyond what is reasonable, what is parliamentary. What he is really saying – and which is completely and utterly untrue, it is false, it is untrue – he is saying that I have been at the centre of a conspiracy so that there are power cuts. That is absolutely untrue, Mr Speaker, and that kind of accusation has never been made in this House and he is breaching Parliamentary Rules and he is exceeding what is proper by a country mile. And I note – because it has been brought to my attention – that indeed Spark's have today come out with a statement actually disputing any question of them being responsible for power cuts. *(Laughter)* But, Mr Speaker, what he is saying about me is absolutely false, it is not true; and quite frankly he should be brought to order because this is unparliamentary and beyond the Rules of this House.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am prepared to accept the position that the hon. Gentleman puts. He says he has nothing to do with it and I sincerely hope for the sake of our democracy that he does not;

and if he says he does not, I have no evidence to suggest the contrary and I accept his word. He has told the people of Gibraltar today in the Parliament that he has nothing to do with it. I have been talking only about if.

630 So, Mr Speaker, he says he has nothing to do with it and as a democrat and as a Member of this Parliament, I sincerely hope that turns out to be true. We will see. We will let the investigations take their course, Mr Speaker; but he will accept of course that if it turns out that he is found to have been involved, then his denial today will be even more of an indictment of his involvement and will mean that he is finished, not just as Leader of the Opposition, but politically for ever. But look, I accept his position, I accept his position.

635 Anyway, Mr Speaker, let us quickly look now at what it is – oh and by the way, dealing with the Spark's statement which I have not seen: surprise, surprise that Spark have said that they have nothing to do with it. Well, Mr Speaker... and he immediately knows about it, well never mind. (*Interjections*)

640 **Hon. D A Feetham:** It was on social media.

Hon. Chief Minister: Oh, it was on social media! Oh, Mr Speaker, well, then the Leader of the Opposition *would* know about it if it is on social media, Mr Speaker.

645 Let us quickly look at what the collaboration which has been established between the Leader of the Opposition and Spark has done for Gibraltar so far. The hon. Member may be familiar with a publication called *Bunker World*. Indeed, I think it is a publication we have sometimes debated in this House when reports have appeared in *Bunker World*. People who do bunkers, some of our best clients, Mr Speaker, rely on what is said in *Bunker World*.

Bunker World on 11th June: 'Gibraltar sets aside bunkering report'. *Bunker World*, on 15th June:

'LNG bunkering report at centre of political row in Gibraltar'.

650 But, Mr Speaker, on 23rd June in *Bunker World* – with LNG being the hot topic in the bunkering industry, with Algeciras fighting to be the Western Mediterranean's top bunkering port for LNG in the future, with this being the subject debated in all the bunkering conferences in the world, with Gibraltar under this Government trying to see whether we can continue to be the leaders in this field, but with him already having said that he rules out LNG bunkering – on 23rd June, thanks to Daniel Feetham's collaboration with Spark, in *Bunker World* read by all our clients and the ones we want to be our clients:

'Gibraltar LNG bunkering plans in disarray'.

655 Thank you, Spark. Thank you, Daniel Feetham. That is what the world is reading about Gibraltar as a result of the donation in kind of £100,000, allegedly, to the GSD by the provision of this report, by somebody who has been a member for 12 years and is a supporter that wants to help the GSD – according to the way it was put, I think, on one occasion by Members opposite. Bad, bad, publicity for Gibraltar, Mr Speaker.

660 And then, what do we find that the industry talks about in the same week that the 'Gibraltar bunkering in disarray' headline hits the international press in *Bunker World*, what is the other headline on LNG?

'Carnival Corporation to purchase the four biggest cruise ships in the history of cruising, to carry 6,000 passengers and propelled by LNG, gas storage and regasification on board.'

Well, if the head of Carnival is reading whether to bring his cruise ship passengers on the Western Mediterranean ports to Algeciras or Gibraltar and he reads this in the same publication that he is reading his press release on, we do not seem to be advancing our common cause as a people.

665 Carnival obviously now thinks that carrying passengers in LNG-fuelled ships with gas storage and regasification on board is safe. Cruise ships will therefore likely be made in this way in the future. Carnival is one of the leaders in the industry. It is likely that other companies will pursue what Carnival is pursuing. Carnival is using that as a selling point for people who want to lower their carbon footprint as a moral issue when they cruise. And the hon. Gentleman, apart from the bad press he is giving us, has already said publicly there will be no LNG bunkering in Gibraltar if he becomes Chief Minister.

670 Well, Mr Speaker, I can tell him he is not popular in the port. Having written off LNG bunkering, as he has, he has written off the medium and long term future of our port and the jobs that go with it and the revenue that goes with it. Is he not concerned about revenue, Mr Speaker? This is not about putting commercial concerns before safety. Is he not concerned about revenue? If things can be done safely, shouldn't we be doing them, and shouldn't we be in that market?

675 If you have concerns about safety, you do not fly. You certainly do not fly into Gibraltar Airport if you want a zero risk mentality – especially if you think the Air Traffic Controller might be too busy reading a

report. And of course, Mr Speaker, one of the things he is also writing off is our future as a cruise port. Imagine what this would do to our passenger numbers, let alone our bunkering revenue.

Mr Bossino, yesterday, in a much more visionary view of where Gibraltar should be going, said that one of his dreams shared by all of us on this side of the House, is making tourism a more important and reliable part of our economy going forward. I cannot say pillar, Mr Speaker, because Leading Counsel, Leading Counsel – twice – sitting next to me, would make me sit down because of course he does not believe that there are any pillars other than our people, our land and the best use for them, but an important part of our economy going forward.

But, if we say that we cannot have LNG facilities and storage, and it is so dangerous and we will not even allow an STS out in the centre of the bay, surely if we are going to be consistent – not the forte of the Leader of the Opposition by any measure – we would also be saying that the cruise ships cannot dock at Gibraltar, because they are within 400 metres of Waterport Terraces, where there are easily maybe 900 to 1,000 people living. Never mind there are going to be 6,000 sleeping on top of the tank.

So, Mr Speaker, what would this nonsense commitment do, that he has given, not to do LNG bunkering. He would not be able to sell LNG bunkers to the cruise ships that are going to have this storage facility, and they would not be able to come in, and we would not have the huge increase in passenger numbers which would enable me to reply to Mr Bossino in a future Budget debate even more forcefully about how well we are doing in passenger numbers – although calls might be lower, because he has in one shot, assassinated or blown up two industries, bunkering and cruise liner tourists.

Well, Mr Speaker, I am just passed by the technologically savvy Albert Isola, an article appearing a moment ago, and which I also have to refer to this House and to the community, appearing in the publication that is known for its devotion and love to the Rock and the people of Gibraltar, called *El Confidencial Digital* in Spanish – elconfidencialdigital.com – the hon. Gentleman, when I read this to him, he will want to put it on social media, so it is elconfidencialdigital.com and if he presses the button on his i-Phone he can then put it on Twitter or Facebook.

Mr Speaker, it talks about, it has a big heading ‘Security’ it says in Spanish, ‘Risk of catastrophe in Spain because of the new gas facility in Gibraltar’. Subheading ‘A report from Lloyd’s assures that an incident at the plant would affect thousands of people.’ Incredible, Mr Speaker, incredible. I thought this was going the only thing I was going to be able to point to the damage that they were doing, that *he* is doing, Gibraltar in his marriage with Spark. And yet look at that, our best friends are aligning themselves with him.

That could not have come at a better moment... Mr Isola is very prescient because I was about to move on, in relation to the power station generally and not just the LNG aspect, that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has the ignominy of being quoted with approval by the Partido Popular leadership in Brussels, not just *El Confidencial Digital* but by the Partido Popular leadership in Brussels, Mr Speaker. So, not content with rubbishing Gibraltar’s reputation in the bunkering world – I am not going to suggest he is rubbishing our reputation with *El Confidencial Digital* readers, they hardly have a high regard for us I am sure – he has now become the poster boy of the Partido Popular leadership in Brussels.

This is what *Señor de Grande*, the Leader of the Partido Popular in the European Parliament had to say to the Commission in a question a couple of weeks ago. Question to the Commission:

‘According to local press reports in Gibraltar,’

– congratulations to our media who are obviously read far and wide –

‘the leader of the main Opposition party in the colony’

– even they understand that there might be another one soon, given the job he is doing –

‘(the Gibraltar Social Democrats), Mr Daniel Feetham,’

– there you are quoted by name by *Señor de Grande* –

‘has announced that, after months of study,’

– it turns out it was actually just June that they were studying –

‘in which he consulted experts in power generation and the environment, he is opposed to the construction of a new electric power station on the north mole of the harbour. (Filling works are in progress on the mole for the purpose.) The reason is that he believes the plant would endanger public safety.’

‘The leader of the Gibraltarian Opposition recently drew attention to the risk of explosions on the new thermo-electric power plant which the local authorities of Gibraltar are building.’

Before the Lloyds Report, Mr Speaker.

- ‘1. Has the Commission received detailed information about this project?
2. Has the Commission assessed the risks to the safety of residents near the project for a new electric power station on land to be reclaimed from the sea on the north mole of Gibraltar harbour?’

725 Thank goodness, Mr Speaker, that this community can rely on this Government. Indeed Mr Speaker, not even on this Government, not even on this administration, on the professional work that the civil and public servants of Gibraltar do in everything they turn their attention to. Not the politicians; the guys on the ground – the Hector Montados, the Manolo Alecios, the Liesl Torreses of this world. True professionals in what they do whether they do it for us or they do it for them when they are in Government, Mr Speaker. The
730 people who make Gibraltar tick. Thank goodness that they do things so well, so conscientiously, that they care so much about their community – so much more than those who recklessly throw away these remarks that are then picked up by the Partido Popular. That even our old antagonist, that other Partido Popular favourite, Mr Arias Cañete had to read out this answer which must have stuck in his throat a little bit, this is the answer given by Señor Arias Cañete in the Commission.

735 In answer to Question 1:

‘1. The Commission has received no information about a project for a power station in Gibraltar. There is no EU legislation requesting a Member State to inform the Commission on its detailed energy projects (except for nuclear infrastructure)

2. The safety assessment of a project is under the sole responsibility of the Member State, without any assessment from the Commission.’

That must have stuck in Cañete’s throat. If we had done anything wrong, Mr Speaker, on the reclamation, if we had failed in some way, then they would have had a field day with us. So my thanks, on behalf of the people of Gibraltar, to the professionals who are dealing with the new power station project and the LNG facility and who are under so much pressure as a result of the unconscionable behaviour of the
740 Leader of the Opposition. (*Banging on desks*)

Let me carry on, Mr Speaker, dealing with how the hon. Gentleman manages to assist, to help those and to work with those almost – metaphorically although not in the same room and probably not even talking to each other – but all of those who want to rubbish Gibraltar internationally. And in doing so, I want to analyse what he said in this House on Monday, and what he said about what he said in this House on
745 Monday on television.

Mr Speaker, he said that I was leading a Government that does not deserve the trust of the people because it is the most opaque Government in Gibraltar’s history. And yet, forget the numbers of meetings – there are more meetings than ever, they ask more questions than ever, we give them more information than ever – but already absent at the meetings, there is more information in the public domain than ever. It is not
750 just more meetings, all the information that we used to ask for – which they sometimes did not give and the information they did give is now provided monthly on the website – and the only issue that they take is that sometimes because of the pressure that the people in our statistics office are under, and the magnificent job that they do and they produced a brilliant census whilst doing it, they are sometimes a couple of days late and they may not be able to ask a question based on the latest available statistics.

755 Mr Speaker, there are reams of information put out. The information that we had to pull like teeth and sometimes did not succeed in obtaining is now available online. What don’t we give them? We do not give them the names of the borrowers of Credit Finance Company Limited; and we do not share their view about the way that Government companies are incurring expenditure and how they use the money in the pool of companies. That is not *not* to give them information, that is not to share their view, Mr Speaker. They have
760 more information about the Savings Bank than they ever had, they have it every month when they used to have it before at a different time. It is really quite incredible, Mr Speaker. Do they think that people believe this?

Then he went on to condemn our spending priorities, and on the new power station. He was still saying on Monday, Mr Speaker, he was going to cancel our contract and he was going to go back to theirs. So
765 went from the Mole, or the Upper Rock; does he put this on the corridor of the Barbary Partridge up at Lathbury or does he put it on the new land at North Mole? They were going to put a power station in Lathbury Barracks.

I used to accuse the hon. Gentleman of doing a left, right, left, right and he pre-empted that this year. He said, ‘I am pre-empting you saying left, right, left, right you say it every year.’ Not any more, Mr Speaker,
770 he is very clearly right. He has adopted the methods of the right wing, he has adopted the policies of the right wing, but he is condemning Gibraltar to a debate on Rock/Mole, Rock/Mole, Rock/Mole. Does he realise what he is doing? He is saying we should go back to the old plan if he is elected. As if he could, Mr

Speaker. It would require another couple of years of getting the tendering back, getting the environmental assessments back – incredible. (*Interjection*) Unless, as Mr Isola says, he gives it straight away to Spark. It would take *years* to be able to get the power station project going again up at Lathbury.

And then he said this, Mr Speaker: ‘What we have witnessed over the last four years, is the systematic destruction of parliamentary governance in Gibraltar; the use of the Gibraltar Savings Bank to fund Government expenditure and projects with Credit Finance Company Limited and Gibraltar Investment (Holdings) Company Limited’. And he said this made a complete nonsense of the budget, because rather than being open and transparent as he pledged, I had done everything I could to keep from taxpayers what I am spending their money on, and I had not played it straight with taxpayers, he said. Well, Mr Speaker, what does he think I am spending on?

Even assuming that he was right in everything else that he says which I will demolish in a moment, how does he think that I am spending this money in a way that taxpayers are not aware of it? Can’t he see the cranes? Doesn’t he see what we are building? Does he think we are spending money... well, I suppose on what? On feathering our own nest, our No. 6, The Palace? Well, look, you can see it, you might not agree with it, it is in the book; you might not agree with it, but it is there. So the idea that we are hiding the spending... the problem is that he identifies all the spending and says he would not do it. But then he does not say which project he would not do, because he does not want to annoy the people who want a berth at the Marina, he does not want to annoy the people who are going to have their children in the new school – he does not want to annoy *anyone*. Well, talk about wanting to be all things to all men and being seen through by everyone, Mr Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has guaranteed that everyone sees through him, even the people sitting around him.

The fact that we are spending via companies, Mr Speaker, if that is the most heinous offence we have ever committed... what about them and their spending through companies? Where does that leave the greatest Gibraltarian of our times as he describes the hon. the backbencher? If I am the worst Chief Minister ever for that reason, how can he be the greatest Gibraltarian of our time? It is just incredible. At least I am not going to lend £20 million to developers to develop something in the middle of the town and become an equity partner of them. Something, by the way, we found out only because I asked a question in this House, apparently the most heinous way of finding anything out. And then he said he did not know how the eye-watering debt of £847 million, which is wrong but it is his calculation... how was that made up? I will come in a moment to a part of my address where I am going to adopt all of his theories and show him the effect of them on the GDP ratios.

He said, Mr Speaker, that the architect of the rainy day fund, the disciple of budgetary discipline and of not living beyond one’s means. Mr Bossano the hon. QC QC, has left a man in charge of his party that has absolutely no conviction for the core values of those founding fathers of the GSLP as far as these issues are concerned. I thought we could not talk about fathers and GSLP, Mr Speaker, I thought that elicited an immediate crackerjack from the hon. Gentleman.

Well, Mr Speaker, look at the rainy day funds, look at them. Is it that this horrible Chief Minister has undone the rainy day funds? No, the rainy day funds were undone, as the hon. the backbencher said yesterday, by him. Because the big philosophical divide of the 1990s and the ‘noughties’ as he described it, was the divide between Joe Bossano’s rainy day fund theory and his spend for growth theory. That is what the hon. the backbencher, who the hon. Gentleman describes as the greatest Gibraltarian of all time – or *our* time, because he does not want to annoy the daughter of the other great Gibraltarian – that is what he said, Mr Speaker.

And what has happened in that respect? Now, is there an element of consistency here, are the rainy day funds at zero? Am I really that awful a Chief Minister, that I have spent all this money and undone the rainy day funds? Have I stopped the father of the GSLP from accumulating his rainy day funds? And by the way, this idea that anybody is left in charge of the GSLP is really a GSD way of thinking, Mr Speaker. The GSLP belongs to all its Members. It is not run by one man, it was not run by one man when the hon. Gentleman was the Leader or while I am the Leader, we really are a democratic party of all our Members. Clearly, and in particular given what we have discovered about the way the Lloyd’s report was handled, that is not the case on the other side.

So what has happened to the rainy day funds? Rainy day fund inherited from Opposition *re* Community Care. In other words, assuming that by giving money to Community Care, that independent trust, what we are doing – and this is an issue that has appeared in social media recently – is not requiring the consolidated fund to give them money to pay pensions because they have their own fund, they do it independently and therefore we do not have to go the GSD method of giving them the cash each year so they can spend it.

How much was in that on 9th December 2011? Hang on, we left it at £65 million in 1996 and let me think, at rates of about – it must have grown by 35% inflation – it would have been in the region of, oh it must have been almost £100 million in it by the time we got it. *Zero*, Mr Speaker. So if he is a disciple of rainy day funds, he at least needs to be factoring that in to who he calls the greatest Gibraltarian of all time,

the person who allowed the trustees to have to spend that money and did not continue to give them capital. *Zero.*

835 How much have we given, Mr Speaker? One hundred and thirty four million in total by the end of this financial year! (*Banging on desks*) It is because it is a manifesto commitment. But look, if that is the way to honour the founder of the GSLP by demonstrating commitment to the rainy day fund philosophy – and everybody describes that as one of the rainy day funds although it is completely independent of the Government – well, honour number one, Mr Speaker.

840 And the Savings Bank Fund: it was £30 million. Joe Bossano told us yesterday, in 1996 – he was not here to hear it – £30 million. So I mean inflation... what was it, £60 million by the time we came in on 9th December 2011, £100 million? It was *zero*. The other established rainy day fund of this community in the Savings Bank in its reserve, Mr Speaker – *zero*. So how can he dare to get up and preach about rainy day funds? He does not know what he is talking about and he is demonstrating it by putting himself in the firing line with remarks such as that which are so easy to reply to.

845 Then he says, ‘You are operating two books. One book which is the budget and the other book which is your borrowing from the Savings Bank – and that is off-balance sheet.’ That is a snazzy term, Mr Speaker, accountants use it, ‘off-balance sheet’. So he has used that term, see if I can capture the imagination, it is off-balance sheet. Has he looked at the balance sheet? This is the balance sheet of our community, these are the estimates; the one that comes out after this debate is the *actual* and it sets out the revenue and expenditure that we expect. And then the auditor audits this. He seemed to have forgotten on television recently, when he was debating with me, that we had an auditor.

850 Can I ask him and anybody else in our community who might manage to have a copy to hand, to look not in the detail hidden away of this book, but in the index, Mr Speaker? Can I invite him to look up the words Savings Bank, indeed Savings Bank Fund, Appendix L, page 210? Off-balance sheet? It is in the index of the balance sheet! All he needs to do is his homework, his understanding. All he needs to do is look at the numbers and then he gets a breakdown of where the money is invested in detail. And then all that is referred to in the audited accounts – and we are having the debate! He is saying we are hiding it, it is off-balance sheet. It is there on the balance sheet, Mr Speaker, we are talking about it.

860 He disagrees with how we are spending it he says... although I am sure he would do it if he were here, but where can he conject the argument that this is off-balance sheet, that we are operating two books. Look, Mr Speaker, it is the same book.

865 It is so difficult to argue with somebody who lacks understanding and I so miss Peter Caruana; and I know I am not the only one, because at least when you argue with somebody who knows what they are talking about, it is easier to reach some conclusion. Even if the conclusion is that you agree to disagree. But there is nothing hidden, Mr Speaker, and one has to be a dyed-in-the-wool disciple of the hon. Gentleman. One needs to see him as a political messiah – and actually after today he is more likely to be seen as a political pariah – to believe that there is anything hidden. It is in the same book and this is soon to be available for £5. I think we should be charging more, just the paper is worth more than £5 now. So how can anybody pretend that there are two books and that things are not going through the House?

870 He might disagree with what we are doing with it, that is fine, he is paid to do that, to disagree – at least that is his interpretation of loyal Opposition. And he says that there is growth – 10% and all the rest of it – but it is all being fuelled by Government spending. I had a whole section that I was going to refer him to about that, Mr Speaker, I had gone back to the *Hansards* where Sir Peter had indicated that was the way he wanted to do things. But helpfully Sir Peter himself yesterday explained his spending for growth criteria and explained that in particular when there was a time of crisis and banks were not lending it was important that the Government spend in our community, and when there were projects to be done.

880 Sir Peter’s view now is that we have done most of the projects that need to be done; he would say that wouldn’t he? But he explained this, Mr Speaker, in a way that just so completely flies in the face of what his new leader, his successor, has said in the course of this debate that at least I understand why the only part of Sir Peter’s erodent valedictory goodbye to this Parliament, which he had to read, was the bit in which he pretended to praise him. It was not lost on any of us. I think that his eulogy of Sir Peter was much shorter than mine, and that Sir Peter’s eulogy of him was the only part of his speech that he had to carefully write and read, Mr Speaker. It certainly did not come naturally.

885 Then, dealing with the issue of LNG in his speech, he said this... well, in fact, asked by the interviewer on *GBC* he said this about the things he had said in his speech:

‘You spent a large part of your address tackling the issue of an LNG power station and bunkering facility at the North Mole. Is this a key electoral issue for you?’

Of course the key electoral issues had been nepotism before. Now that we have demonstrated that there is no nepotism, and in fact we do more work with people on that side than we do with every other sector of the community, because we are open to all, he does not talk about nepotism. Then it was the stadium, but

890 when 1% of people in a poll – which he did believe – said that the stadium mattered to them in an election and 99% said it did not, the stadium is no longer relevant. So now the key electoral issue is LNG – well it was until yesterday and the Lloyd’s Report.

But he said this:

‘Absolutely, I can give you a cast iron guarantee’

895 – well his guarantees are not worth much –

‘to all those people living in Waterport Terraces, in West Side One, in West Side Two, in Europlaza, in Peninsular Heights, this LNG bunkering facility the Government is planning to build is not safe, and if we are elected, not only will that not be built, but we will not build an LNG power station at North Mole.’

‘This LNG bunkering facility’ – but he does not know what LNG bunkering facility we are going to build, that is his other complaint. We have not settled on the plans yet so how can he say it is not safe? How can he be against something that is not yet planned? Something that is not yet out in the public domain? What is he against? Maybe what he is against, Mr Speaker, is the single skin tank alongside the cruise liner terminal which would require cruise liner passengers to get on to the ship like this, let alone the danger of it being single skinned.

And he said, ‘Anyway, it is going to take four more years to build that power station, it is going to be beset by problems.’ He is already looking into the future like he looks into the future and says he is going to win the 2019 Election, even if it is not held in that year. All of this is crystal ball gazing, Mr Speaker: beset by problems, we may as well scrap it, start from scratch – but he is going to build a new power station immediately in his next term, because how is it going to take four years?

It is going to take two years, it is not going to take four years. There are not going to be any setbacks – although engineering is engineering. And it is the wrong decision to go back to that we are going to use diesel. And if he was sitting here, he would be saying what I am saying about LNG being the future, Mr Speaker. He is not sitting here, but he wants to sit here. And he is just thinking about votes, he is not thinking about Gibraltar. But the greatest Gibraltarian of all time in *his* estimation told him yesterday that the time has come to stop thinking in purely partisan terms when we are thinking about the future of Gibraltar. And he is not taking his erstwhile leader’s advice, so I suppose I should not be surprised that he is not taking mine.

But if he does not want to take my advice, I do not mind. I do not mind, that is his problem, Mr Speaker, he never takes my advice. Bossano, Caruana, Picardo: all those names he hates in different ways, we are all different and we have all done things in different ways at different times, in different styles. But the one thing we have in common is that we have led winning teams, not abysmally failing teams. So I am really happy that he is not going to follow Joe’s advice on debt, he is not going to follow Peter’s advice on a non-partisan approach – or my advice on anything, because perish the thought he might twig and start listening and he might turn things around.

On one particular issue where we have a serious disagreement, is this issue of finances. I have dealt with the fact that he says we have two books and that he cannot scrutinise things, but actually he can because they are in the same book and he scrutinises them every month, Mr Speaker, which is *res ipsa loquitur* that he is wrong. Every month we have the same debate about what we are spending on, every month he is looking at things with a magnifying glass. Which is fine, that is what he is paid for, but it demonstrates that we are looking at it and it demonstrates that there is parliamentary scrutiny.

And then, Mr Speaker, he says on trust, ‘This is a Chief Minister who is prepared to answer no to the question whether the Government has directly or indirectly provided any loans to the owners of the Sunborn when in fact a Government-owned company had provided a loan of between £30 and £40 million.’ Well, when he wants to scare people, he says, ‘This is savers’ money, it is not the Government’s money.’ When he wants to say I am a liar, he says, ‘It is the Government’s money, and when I asked you whether the Government had lent, you said you had not.’

He has got to make up his mind, Mr Speaker. Either I am profligate in spending savers’ money and therefore savers have to be careful, or it is Government money and I should have answered yes. He cannot have it both ways – I put it to his election. At least Mr Benzaquen, a speaker of his Executive, does not appear to have agreed with him on this subject, having written to *The Chronicle* saying about this subject, true that it was not Government money. But then he went on to say that this was all done through a company we had incorporated in secret. He just says these things, Mr Speaker, he says these things. Every time he opens his mouth his brains fall out. (*Laughter*) Frankly he should take an action against his brains for failing to perform.

How can you say that a company has been incorporated in secret? It is not possible to incorporate companies in secret. There is a Companies Registry, the company only exists when it is on the registry, the registry is public, Mr Speaker –

945 **A Member:** And he is a lawyer.

Hon. Chief Minister: And he is a lawyer and was Minister for Justice – but he is not QC QC; he is not even QC. (*Laughter*) It is impossible to incorporate a company in secret. Just in case he has got confused, the debate today internationally – sometimes he might switch on the news and something might flash in front of his eyes and he might not realise what it is about – is about whether we should disclose in all of Europe and indeed in the rest of the world, the ultimate beneficial ownership of companies on the register. It is not about whether the companies are public or private in the hidden sense, it is not possible to incorporate a company in secret. Unless, I suppose what you mean is you go to Liechtenstein, you appoint some nominee directors, you leave a letter as to what happens when you die and your son takes over and manages the money. I mean that might be incorporating something in secret but that is not what we are dealing with here.

950 But he thinks he can get away with it, Mr Speaker, and I suppose his sycophants – if he has any of them left after what has happened in the past 24 hours and people must be running away from him like the pariah, politically, that he is – are now going to start repeating ‘Danny caught them incorporating a company in secret, and putting it on the public register in secret.’ (*Laughter*) If things were not this serious, they would actually be funny.

960 Then he said that we have taken advantage of the fact that any debentures issued by the Gibraltar Savings Bank which they are using to fund their programme, is a debt of the bank and not a debt of the Government. Taking advantage of it, Mr Speaker? Where was he during the last election? The whole debate was Sir Peter saying, ‘Look, this issue is... I can get rid of this public debt in five seconds, I can just make it a debt of the Savings Bank.’ (*Interjection*) In some measure, although I do not accept any of what was said at the time, Mr Speaker, but in some measure we have just followed the advice of the greatest Gibraltarian of our times.

970 But he must have taken absolute and utter leave of his senses, or forgotten his senses, or left his brain behind at Spark, Mr Speaker, when he said this:

‘... the only possible explanation for the huge explosion of Gibraltar Savings Bank debentures, where the Gibraltar Savings Bank was paying between 4% and 5% interest, the interest rate. No credible bank in the world is paying that kind of interest. Those interest rates are there to attract more debenture holders, so that the Government can then use the money for its own expenditure.’

975 Mr Speaker, again pen engaged before brain and then tongue engaged before thought. Has he forgotten that it was – he does not like me calling him the backbencher, so I am going for the other term now – the man who *he* says was the greatest Gibraltarian of *our* time, now carefully nuanced not to offend anyone... the greatest Gibraltarian of our time who fixed the rates at 5%? (*Laughter*). (*Banging on desks*) It is just too easy, Mr Speaker. All we have done, two months ago, is lower the rate. That busts his argument so completely, so completely that it is actually quite incredible that he did not think that through and not give me this very easy goal to score.

980 But he does not do much thinking, Mr Speaker. Let me just show him exactly what has happened in the Savings Bank, given that he was not here to hear the masterclass given by Mr Bossano yesterday. It is a real pleasure to hear Joe Bossano when he is in full flow. I will always remember his contribution in the Giraldi Home Enquiry, when he took silk twice. But this is what he had to say yesterday when he was out peddling the distortions of the Lloyd’s Report. In fact, Mr Speaker, I think Mr Bossano was very kind yesterday in saying that even though he might not agree with Joe Bossano, he enjoyed his contributions and it said a lot for a man aged 76 to do two hours on his feet in this place, and having got up at three o’clock in the morning to write his contribution. And I would say that there is life in the old dog yet, except of course there is more life in the old dog than there is in any of us younger dogs sitting around the table; (*Laughter and banging on desks*) and just as spotty as ever, too; (*Laughter*) and all of them in the same place, all those spots in the same place.

990 And he said this, Mr Speaker, and the hon. Gentleman would be wise to listen to these words of the founding father of the GSLP, the rainy day fund man, the man he says he agrees with and who does not agree with me, and all the rest of it. My dear Joe Bossano, he said this:

‘In 1988 I set out to expand the role of the Savings Bank. It was not an easy task in those days because the Secretary of State had the last word and the Foreign Office had to consult with the Bank of England. The reply from the Bank of England was that the Savings Bank was supposed to be a small colonial bank, as if it was still in 1832, and we should not be allowed to get any bigger.

Well, as the Leader of the Opposition will know, the GSLP Government of the 1980s was not the sort of Government that took no for an answer.’

995

This is much better than being in Waterport Terraces with a few hangers-on.

‘So I used my well-known powers of gentle persuasion’

and I have yet to come across those, the gentle part at least –

‘and they finally agreed to let me get on with the job of making it profitable, and a growing institution.’

1000 Then he set out the history in financial terms, of the bank:

‘We inherited in 1988 a Savings Bank with £2.6 million in deposits – £2,672, 384.89 to be exact. The profits for the financial year 1987-88 were £60,187.96. The profits for the year were retained by us and added to the reserves increasing them to a level of £398,227.

In our eight years we increased deposits, profits and reserves. In other words we did then what we are doing now. By March 1996, deposits had grown from £2.672 million to £179.433 million, an increase of 6,715%.’

In case people think they have misheard, Mr Speaker, it is a 6,715% increase.

‘On this level of deposits we made a profit of £4,705,698 in one year compared to the £60,000 in one year in 1987-88. We added the profits to reserves and left them there for the GSD to spend when they came in the following May.

The reserves we inherited in April 1988 had been £398,227.’

1005 So, less than half a million.

‘The reserves the GSD inherited from us in April 1996 were £30,549,249.’

1010 So the GSLP Government increased the reserves from £400,000 to £30.5 million. And then he went on to say:

‘The reserves we inherited from the GSD in 2011 were £1,444.’

1015 With all the greatest of respect to Mr Speaker and the fact that many years of inflation have passed, the AACR left £400,000 when they left in 1988. The GSLP left £30.5 million when they left in 1996. The GSD, the party he is so in love with that he will never leave it, left £1,444. What unrequited love, Mr Speaker.

Joe Bossano, carrying on, said:

‘So perhaps the Members Opposite may forgive me if I feel that I do not have to accept any lecturing from them on prudential management or looking after our people’s money. We had the same moaning from the Opposition between 1988 and 1996 as we get from the Opposition now, Mr Speaker. The same idiotic arguments about risk and exposure’.

As clear as ever there...

‘But taking it to new heights, if the GSB lends to the Government and the Government fails to repay, the liability falls to the Government as guarantor, how much circular can an argument get! In case Members Opposite think that GSB lending money to the Government is new, it was already happening before 1988 but on a small scale as the whole of the assets was only a couple of million pounds.’

1020 Before 1988, not before 1996, before 1988 under the AACR.

‘However, by 1996 the GSB was investing in Government Debentures to the tune of £59.334 million.

This time round, however, the critics did not even try to have an element of truth in what they say. So for example, the former Tax Collector, gamekeeper turned poacher, Mr Chris White had the audacity to claim that we had UK ex-pats like him, I suppose, who he says are the depositors of the £1 billion who I am providing with risk-free investments at the expense of exposing Gibraltarian taxpayers.

This, even though I have told the GSD Opposition in this Parliament on more than one occasion that 99% of the deposits are from local sources and not expatriate money.’

Can you please listen to the argument so that we can have it on a sensible basis?

‘...– not that I see anything wrong with accepting expatriate money, which would be very welcome.

Mr Speaker, as a political gimmick this takes the cake. Mr White should stick to advising his clients how to reduce their tax liabilities.’

1025 Very wise words indeed, if I may say so.

‘The Savings Bank between 1988 and 1996 was an important part of our economic plan for growth and prosperity. It has been since 2011, and will continue to be in the future.

The GSB we inherited in December 2011 had £273 million of deposits and £1,444 in reserves. The results for 2014, audited and published last year, showed deposits at £856 million’

– 99% from local sources – note Mr White and anybody else –

‘profits from the year of £8.91 million and reserves of £11 million. For the year ending March 2015 we expect, subject to audit, around £1 billion in deposits, around £9 million in profits, and around £20 million in reserves.’

Mr Speaker, we shall defend our stewardship of the Savings Bank when the election takes place and will continue to grow its deposits, profits and reserves when we are returned to Government.’

If I may say so, Mr Speaker, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) to Joe Bossano’s words, Mr Speaker, vintage Bossano in every way. What a pleasure it is to be able to quote a Jedi Master in his brilliant interventions yesterday. (*Laughter*)

1030 But, most importantly, Mr Speaker, a reflection to Mr Bossano that it is a very good thing indeed that this particular leopard does not change its spots. Very good for the community, very good for savers in the Savings Bank and very good that we can deliver great growth again and again doing the things that Joe Bossano has demonstrated that he can do so successfully for our community, in the past and is doing again.

1035 Mr Speaker, really for the people, the issue of the Savings Bank is really now *who do you trust?* Do you trust Joe Bossano and Albert Mena, the Financial Secretary with your money, given the track record that Joe, in particular, has established and the reputation of Albert Mena? Or do you hand over control of this money to Mr Feetham? That is really the litmus test for people, Mr Speaker. Joe Bossano and Albert Mena, with the track record of Joe Bossano and the reputational integrity of Albert Mena, or Daniel Feetham and what he is saying about the bank? Who do you trust with your money, Mr Speaker? That is the question – I think that is a no-brainer, Mr Speaker, even for people without brains, which means even he must know the answer.

1040 What is the main accusation on debt? He says, Mr Speaker, that the debt in Gibraltar now is larger than ever if we include company debt, which you can’t see in the book, but is there by his measure being the amount in the Savings Bank investment and credit finance, by his measure, which we do not agree. But he says that is what it is, it is in the book. Well, company debt is *not* government debt and it never has been government debt. It wasn’t when they were in power, Mr Speaker, when they were happy to spend through companies, but now they want it to be government debt.

1045 So what I am going to do now, Mr Speaker, is to for one moment allow myself the horror of putting myself in his brain, in his mind, and accept that company debt is government debt and even accept another premise which is wrong, which is that what he says is the company debt is the company debt. In other words, I am going to accept all the false premises of his argument as true. So please do not turn around and say that I accepted any of this, I am just doing it because I want to demonstrate to Members Opposite how wrong they are, even in respect of this particular interpretation. So for one moment, Mr Speaker, I will put myself in the horror of his brain. Oh, I have just seen a spark fly! (*Laughter*)

1050 Gross debt, Mr Speaker, with company debt in 2008 – when the hon. Gentleman started his journey with the GSD in Government, the first time he was elected in 2007, in 2008 when he was in Government with the person he calls the greatest Gibraltarian of our time – gross debt *with* company debt was 17.8% of GDP. That assumes, Mr Speaker, that they have to understand that there was company debt. There was company debt at the time, even of the hospital, Mr Speaker. That is the thing they clapped so hard when Sir Peter talked about his legacy. He was against it in 2003; he has told us on a number of occasions. Gross debt including company debt had grown by 2011-12 – their last financial year in office, with him included – enormously from 17.8% of GDP to 51.2% of GDP. It jumped from 17.8% to 51.2%, under them.

1055 And what has happened since? Assuming all the things that were wrong in the way that they wanted to calculate debt, what has happened since then? Well gross debt today, Mr Speaker, including every penny paid as investment in redeemable preference shares in credit finances debt, which it is clearly not, but I am going to do the exercise anyway, is estimated to be 49.2% of GDP. It was 51.2%, it is 49.2%, two points down. And that is if every penny of the investment in credit finance were debt of the Government, which it is not. They are redeemable preference shares, down a whole 2%, even using his nonsense figures. Using the figures he wants to use, it is down, using that £400 million as debt.

1065 But let us do another thing. Even he will accept that the amounts lent by credit finance to third parties are not government debt, because they are lent to third parties, they are somebody else’s debt. The Sunborn, they like to talk about, that is Sunborn’s debt, not the Government’s debt. So let us take out the amount that we will see and what I like to call the balance sheet and he doesn’t like to call the balance sheet of credit finance on the website – that thing which he says we hide but we put every month on the website, Mr Speaker. That is spending that is the second book but is every month available to him to come and quiz us

about here, and which is referred to in this book, Mr Speaker, under the Savings Bank fund. If we take out that debt, which is third party debt, then gross government debt against GDP is 45.71%, Mr Speaker. But if we do a really precise calculation and we take out of there as well the payment of the commutations, because that is not government debt, clearly, Mr Speaker. None of it is, but anyway. And we take out the third party debt then the gross debt including company debt, assuming that every other penny is company debt, although it is in the pool and not spent as the hon. Gentleman pretends it is, but assuming all of that erroneously, the gross debt to GDP ratio is 42.9%. So what they left at 51.2%, Mr Speaker, we have reduced to 42.9%. What is the problem? Even doing the calculations erroneously, as he wants to do them, and using the information in the book and on the website, everything which is public, Mr Speaker. Everything he says we are hiding, but which is public, quite unlike the way that he was hiding who had funded his Lloyds report.

Just to understand it in household terms, Mr Speaker, what is happening is that we are earning more each year. Our salary as a community is bigger. We used to earn £340-odd million under them, we earned £559 million next year, at least, Mr Speaker. The overall income into the household has grown, not just one actor but all actors together used to bring in £1.1 billion, now we bring in £1.8 billion, next year, at least.

Debt as a share of income in the household was higher under them, even when including company debt, which should never be included and has never been included. This Gibraltarian family, Mr Speaker, is doing very well indeed and there is no need to pay any heed to the claims of illegal debt, debt ceilings being breached, or any other nonsense of the sort that he and his disciples put about.

What is most galling, Mr Speaker, is that in this respect, as in every other he does not think of the consequences of what he says. He said on television that we had exceeded the legal borrowing limit. He has not said it again. I think the tongue, again, engaged before brain and even his advisors have told him that he went too far, and he was so looking forward to that programme he had said. If he was right and if he was able to peddle effectively what he is saying, and if he were able to persuade anybody to cause a run on any bank except the Savings Bank, where you cannot run from anyway, it would mean that he would have achieved that we would not be able to pay civil servants, that we would not be able to fund schools, that we would be in crisis. Mr Speaker, is that what he wants?

He wants to persuade people, institutions that deal with the Government of Gibraltar, that we are 'skint', he used the word here, Mr Speaker. And therefore, what he is saying is that we should not pay any civil servant, we should not pay any service, we should stop spending. We, Mr Speaker, when we found ourselves with very little money, did exactly that, we stopped spending on the things we did not have to spend on. But he is saying we have exceeded the debt limit. If we have exceeded the debt limit, Mr Speaker, that is a legal issue. Every penny has to go to get us back to that. Well, look I will tell the civil servants I see he does not want me to pay them. But it is, thank goodness, Mr Speaker, not the case in any way or by any measure.

People much more experienced than him – institutions much more understanding than him of these issues, have X-rayed us, not because they pay any heed to what he says, but because we had a revolving credit facility that had to be renewed because we were going to do an expression of interest exercise that was going to lead to a huge investment in Gibraltar. Gibraltar has been X-rayed, Mr Speaker, and his arguments looked at as well, of course. The Principal Auditor X-rays us every year, but he does not seem to have much regard for the Principal Auditor these days, given what he has said on television.

And what has happened, Mr Speaker? The revolving credit facility has been renewed without a problem and an investment of £1.1 billion into communities is likely to be confirmed very shortly. Banks do not lend £50 million to countries that cannot repay them – well, not these days anyway. People do not invest £1.1 billion in economies that are not going to prosper because the public finances of the place are going to crash. Mr Speaker, he might not like it but that is the reality of the situation. When independent third parties come and look at what we are doing and what we are saying, they side with us, thank goodness, not with him on this subject. Not with him or his merry bunch of men.

There are two points there to take. The first is that, I suppose it is one of the things that sets us apart from them, that when we obtain loans we do not obtain them on terms which we do not intend to keep to. In other words, we do not say to banks we will pay this money back by adding 5% on the cost of utilities every year for the next 20 years, only to have a Member of the Cabinet that agreed that deal say, 'Oh, we never intended to do it.' That is a loan, Mr Speaker, obtained in a manner which this Government will never obtain a loan.

Then, of course, there is another consequence of what he has said; he has said in this House, on a number of occasions that we are 'skint'. I think the Hon. Mr Figueras whispered that word to him and he adopted it – not blaming Mr Figueras he wasn't on his feet, it was Mr Feetham who was on his feet. To summarise his argument he said we were 'skint' and on television he said, 'The debt has exceeded the legal ceiling,' well, Mr Speaker, they have no choice now. This book, and let me show him... because I do not think he has even looked at it. This Bill is to enable us to spend £½ billion more. If he votes yes to this Bill he is recognising that we are not 'skint', because he is giving us licence to spend £½ billion more. So if he

sticks by his guns, and believes we are ‘skint’ and believes we have exceeded the debt limit he has only one choice, two really. He can abstain, and take the cowards way out, or he can vote no and stand by his principles. But what he cannot do, without accepting that he has been wrong all along, and that we have been right all along, is vote yes. So when he votes yes – because I assume that he will bring the consistency to this debate that he brings to everything that he does, we will feel vindicated in every argument we have had in respect of public finances.

Mr Speaker, I am very concerned that we are on the cusp of probably the most divisive and dirty general election campaign this community has ever seen. The way in which social media actors, supportive of the hon. Gentleman opposite, are behaving on social media, denigrating even the Chair of this Parliament in ways which I believe are frankly, defamatory and potentially even criminal, are frankly unacceptable. If that is the way that this general election debate is going to continue I think that we will emerge even stronger winners, because if there is one thing that Gibraltar does not like, Mr Speaker, it is a dirty politician. It is a politician who goes into the gutter to try and make an argument. Who cannot make a rational political argument to try and persuade people, as gently as Joe Bossano has made an art in the past 43 years, Mr Speaker. I counsel everyone in this community, because we are very political, that we should have the debate, it should be harsh and it should be forceful, but it should not descend into the sort of behaviour that we are seeing from some of their social media actors, Mr Speaker.

The Hon. Mr Bossino in his address, which I have already described in positive terms – I do not think I should fall into the trap of continuing to eulogise him otherwise I might be doing his political back a disservice and he might find himself the subject of an assault soon – talked about tourism and I think we share the views that he expressed, and I have indicated that. We have very few concerns about the tourist expenditure survey because that is a finger in the air, whilst the receipts from companies etc, which is real cash, are continuing to go up. So it would appear that there is something happening there and either we are about to get much more cash in if tourists come back and spend more, or actually a lot of tourists come and do not spend anyway, although we estimate what they spend, we might need to fine tune what we take from them.

But, Mr Speaker, what are we going to do in tourism should the heavens fall in and the GSD form Government? We are going to lose 6,000 passengers per cruise call every time Carnival Corporation pass the Straits of Gibraltar with one of their spanking new ships.

It was actually very refreshing to hear, Mr Speaker, his intervention in respect of our EU office commitment and the work that Sir Graham Watson is doing. Such fantastic work that he is doing with the people from Gibraltar who are there with him, learning through him about the institutions, and I think that is going to be work that – as everything that the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister does – is conscientiously done and delivers in the long-term interests of the community. The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister always says to me, ‘Remember that lobbying is a long-term gain ambition and that you don’t immediately see a return, but you do many years from now.’ As somebody who started to talk to Sir Graham Watson over a decade ago, and has turned him into a real champion of Gibraltar. I think he has demonstrated how right he is about that and what a fantastic job he does when it comes to these things. Mr Speaker, he was *very* kind about Sir Graham Watson and the office in the EU, but he said he was concerned about cost. I think we all agree that we want things done, but they cost money. If you want to get a D list actor to represent you it costs less than if you want to get an A* representative in Brussels, and we have gone for the A*.

Mr Speaker, he was very kind also in his remarks about the Minister for Equality and Tourism and the work that she is doing. I am grateful for that because she puts in a huge amount of effort, as do all Members on this side of the House. And although he has disagreed vehemently with some of what she has done, and some of what we have done, in particular in the field of equality, it is absolutely to his credit that despite those continued disagreements, which is what politics is about, and life is about, he recognises the work that we are all doing on this side of the House, and I want to thank him for that.

The Literary Festival, which he thought was a fantastic thing, was created by us and we are very happy to have done that and we are very proud to have done that. Calentita was created by them, and it was a very good thing too, and we have continued it and improved it and I think – and I am not saying improved it to claim any credit – they might have improved it if they had been in government. I think festivals like that, a food festival, a literary festival, also a music festival, a jazz festival, all of those things are the sort of things I think we all agree – certainly those of us who are capable of agreeing across the floor of the House – are exactly the sort of thing we need to be doing in order to promote Gibraltar as a place where niche tourism can prosper.

Mr Speaker, he, I think will allow me this moment to praise also, Steven Linares for the work that he has done. Gibraltar does not often have a government which can announce that it has opened two new art galleries in the space of, I think, under a year. The Mario Finlayson National Gallery of Art and the Gibraltar Exhibition of Modern Art, the GEMA, and it is to the credit of Steven Linares that that has been achieved. Steven is a real driver of the Ministries that I have encharged him with and he is tireless in pursuing the objectives of this Government. And in particular, Mr Speaker, he has not just done that, he has

also delivered a fabulous jazz festival every year, which people are enjoying more and more and is becoming more and more popular. And he has delivered something that I think people could never have imagined would be as fantastic as it is, which is the Gibraltar Music Festival which goes from strength to strength. *(Banging on desks)* I am sorry that Fabian Vinet is not in the House, I see he has left – he would have heard me eulogise his Calentita achievements. I lament the fact that we have not yet had Marillion for the Gibraltar Music Festival, *(Laughter)* but I am very happy as an 80s man to have heard Tony Hadley singing in Gibraltar and to soon hear Simon Le Bon and the gang with Duran Duran on Saturday night. There is everything for every taste, for every generation. I think the only person who does not enjoy the Gibraltar Music Festival is the Leading Counsel to my left who is busy working on his legal briefs that Saturday night – nay, now that Saturday and Sunday night, because what seemed a dream only four years ago is now actually a two-day festival.

It is popular to denigrate Joe Bossano but if you look at what he does and actually there is very little grounds for really criticising him because he has produced results like never before. It may be popular to denigrate others, it may be popular to denigrate Steven Linares, he has *delivered* art galleries and now festivals like no other Minister for Culture has before and he deserves recognition for that. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity of doing so in his kind remarks about the Literary Festival, something which of course Neil Costa, with his energy and enthusiasm and intelligence was one of the prime movers of. I think what Neil has achieved in that respect, apart from all the other things he has done in the time that he has been a Minister with me since 9th September 2011, that is one thing that *the minute it happened*, became established. The minute we had our first literary festival everybody said, ‘We are not letting go of this.’ People across the partisan divide, people who don’t care about politics, people who just love their books and love Gibraltar and love literature suddenly said, ‘We are not going to let anyone get away with not having a literary festival now as an annual event,’ and that is a huge credit to the way that the Literary Festival was organised in the first year. It immediately became a feature of our lives. That is the way to do Government, Mr Speaker. *(Banging on desks)* I usually bang from a sedentary position, Mr Speaker, and it is strange to bang when one is standing up.

If I may say so to the hon. Gentleman, again, in the same way that that is the way to do Government, his way is the way to do Opposition and it was a pleasure to hear him and to take the points that I am taking now.

Mr Speaker, we believe in strong growth in the port. The number of ships coming in 2012, which was the year which we inherited because they are booked in 2011, was 172. He likes to look at the number of cruise calls, rather than the number of passengers, and by 2015 it is 212. So he can judge us against their best year, but obviously the fairer thing, and given that he is a fair man and I am giving him the credit for it, is to judge us against their last year. In other words what we took over and how we are growing it and that has grown by 212. Of course, the size of the increase should not just be measured in the numbers of calls, but in the numbers of ships, because in the same way as these magnificent new LNG ships are going to bring in 6,000 passengers already the larger ships are bringing in four-odd thousand passengers and the number of passengers in 2012, the numbers that they left us was 290,395 already the joint efforts of Samantha Sacramento and Neil Costa in the period that he was Minister, 302,697. Of course we all want more, of course we all want to emulate the highest year there might have been. I do not know whether that was under the GSD or the GSLP or the AACR. We want to be higher than the highest there ever was and that is where we are going, but I think we are demonstrating the trajectory in this place.

The only thing that he said which was a slightly snide reference was to these companies at No. 6 and Town Range. I fear, Mr Speaker, that the longer I see him sitting there, the more he is likely to catch the infection, although he has done very well to avoid it, the infection that there is such a thing as a secret company, nothing to uncover or nothing secret, Mr Speaker.

But actually work that is done very very well indeed because if you look at the numbers of companies then the fact that they are up is a good thing and he seemed to be against the numbers being up. The more economic actors there are, the more revenue there will be. The fact that there are more economic actors by way of companies in the construction industry is a good thing. The fact that there are more people employed by them is a good thing and this demonstrates that this start-up scheme – he might not like how we referred to it – actually worked very well indeed.

I forgot to take a point that he had asked me to take in my reply, Mr Speaker, which was to explain to him why revenues were estimated to be down from £300,000 to £60,000 in respect of the Literary Festival and I can tell him that the information I have from the office of the Minister is that because in one year two years of revenue were booked together, for some reason, and in this year we are not just booking one year we are booking half a year because revenue comes in over years but the better way to do it is to book in less of the revenue.

He said, Mr Speaker, that I should not pretend to be the ‘saint’ – he didn’t use that word, he might not feel comfortable with using it, ‘The saint delivering an economic miracle.’ I do not pretend to be, Mr Speaker. He said I should recognise the contribution of the GSD in that respect. Of course I do and he was

here for what I think might have been fairly described as a fulsome remarks that I made in respect of Sir Peter's valedictory remarks. I said that we were building on 16 years of GSD Government, and we were not denigrating what had been done. We disagreed with a lot of it, and we would have done things in a different way, but of course, we were building on it.

When you look at the economic position when we took over, if you are looking at usable cash reserve, if you are looking at the bank, if you are looking at community care, that was the position then. Look, the economy is running. The economy had grown to £1.1 billion. I am not pretending I have created an economy that next year is going to be at £1.8 billion. All I am saying is...and I am not claiming the credit for myself, as I said earlier. I happen to be the person who makes the announcements, who has the reins, but not responsible therefore for everything, with the 10 others, that delivers the growth in the economy to £1.8 billion but from £1.1 billion. So I give full credit for the growth between 1996 and 2011 to the hon. Members who were here, but not because they delivered it, but because they were the ones in charge then of the economy that delivered it, and everyone in it that delivered it. But he is absolutely right; I am not pretending that we started an economy on 9th December 2011, but we did start to replenish the pots and he has to accept that the data is there. It is not our data; it is data from independent civil service of the Ministry for Finance and the Treasury that demonstrates the size of the pots today. And he will allow me to say I do not believe that that is a miracle, I believe it is just the fruit of management in the way that we have done it. The Hon. Mr Bossano's intervention yesterday demonstrated what the growth had been in particular in respect of the Savings Bank.

He does not like the Future Job Strategy, Mr Speaker. But it is a strategy also that he has to accept has worked in terms of getting people in to work. Those people are now people with real jobs, they have real dignity and they are making a real wage which is paid at the minimum wage, at least, Mr Speaker, whilst under them it was not.

When he says that they want to do all these things that they want to do and they want to grow tourism and they want to grow the port. All I will say to him, Mr Speaker is that if he wants that – if he really wants the port to grow in bunkering, if he really wants the port to grow in cruise calls, if he wants the port to grow in passenger numbers, given the stated position of his leader, not allowing LNG bunkering, not allowing cruise ships with LNG on them, etc to call at the port, I invite him formally now, to cross the floor, and he will be very welcome on this side of the House. *(Laughter)* Because of the objectives that he has set out, which are common objectives to people here, and I offer him the hand of friendship that is always there, but in political terms also and to come over, and he will be a very welcome Member of this side of the House. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, *(Interjection)* he reflected on how difficult it is to be in this House, not just for Ministers but for everyone, and in particular for someone who is a partner in a law firm – and I know that because I have been a partner in a law firm at a time when this House was not as structured as it is now, when you did not know when you had to be here and you did not know what time you might adjourn to and you could not fix meetings. But I will put it to him, because we have been political nerds together since the 1980s, that actually there was one thing that he failed to reflect, which is actually harder, and I am sure he will agree with me: it is harder to be a good husband and a good father – that is very hard indeed.

Then, Mr Speaker, he expressed his own views of a deeply felt need for Sir Peter Caruana to continue in politics for four more years in 2011. Well, I was very generous, I think, with Sir Peter Caruana yesterday, but if anybody had asked me on 8th December 2011 whether I thought he should stay around for another four years, whipped as we were in those days, nothing could have been further from my mind. Now that we have persuaded him of so much else, he did not say it but I detected in there that he believed that we have not done so bad a job, actually, and that there was no need for Sir Peter to stick around and that he was seeing numbers which were not so bad.

He told us about how he had been persuaded by Leading Counsel on the issue of Brussels many years ago and how he never thought that Sir Peter would become Chief Minister. Well, Mr Speaker, it was generous of him to say so, and I think we have all been very generous in the way that we have dealt with Sir Peter's intervention yesterday. But there is one thing that I still would not be able to accept, and that is that in a referendum in Gibraltar a Gibraltar Chief Minister might recommend an Andorra style solution, and I think that is another reason why the hon. Gentleman might want to think again and realise that there is room for 11 on this side of the House if he ever decides... especially given the way that he was abandoned by his peers yesterday, Mr Speaker. There was more tumbleweed on the other side than there were Members of the Opposition to hear him, and yet all of us – almost all – were here. If you believe, as Mr Bossino does... But there was no leader; there was no Peter Caruana. If the hon. Member will allow me to say, the biscuits on some occasions obviously got the better of temptation, because he was not here for the whole thing! *(Laughter)* I sat through the whole bleeding thing!

Mr Speaker, he says, absolutely rightly, that debating issues and not insults should be the way to do things. Well, I consider that I am somebody who deals with appropriate force with the attack put on me, and if he looks at my opening speech he will find that there were no insults in it. If he looks at the speech that I

am responding to, in terms of his dear leader, he needs to understand that the insults did not originate on this side of the House.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank Mr Reyes for his intervention yesterday. I am sorry that I had to delay him by having to adjourn the House. He was also very generous in complimenting Steven Linares and the work that he has done. This was obviously the last intervention, of this Parliament at least, for him and he was very good in acknowledging the work that we have done.

He said that we had not yet fulfilled our commitment in relation to instruments and the orchestra, but actually, in the speech just before that Steven Linares had indicated how that is going to be dealt with.

He is absolutely right to say that we have not been able to progress with as much alacrity as we would have wanted in relation to the new Theatre Royal project, and that is something that we are working on designs of and he will see the fruit of that. It is not going to be possible in the time left before the General Election – short of bringing in a Meccano set – to have a new theatre, but we are working on that already and the work is very, very advanced.

Mr Speaker, the publication date for completion of the refurbishments was also something that the hon. Lady had given just, I think, a few hours before the hon. Member spoke, so I think he needed to take that into consideration in his speech.

He said he is disappointed because we are not building flats for rental, but actually we are building flats for rental because we are building flats for rental for the elderly. He recognised that and said that was not enough and said we are building Charles Bruzon House. Well, actually, we are not just building Charles Bruzon House; we are also building Sea Master Lodge, so there are two sets of homes being built for the elderly for rental. Why are we not building other rental blocks? Well, for a simple reason, Mr Speaker: because by building these apartments, the people who will move into them will release the rental accommodation, so we get 154 rental flats by building 154 rental flats for the elderly. For the elderly we will build one-bedrooms – not 1RKB that means, but one bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and sitting room – and for families we would have to build three-bedrooms, four-bedrooms and all the rest of it. We get back very large flats, as he will know. We get back five-bedroom, three-bedroom, four-bedroom properties that a single elderly person may be living in now, by producing this type of accommodation.

If I may say so – and the Hon. Mr Bossino will be pleased to hear me say this – I think that one of the things the GSD did in the time that they were in office, which was one of the best innovations and developments, was the creation of Bishop Canilla House, which then led to Albert Risso House. We are continuing that strategy in building Charles Bruzon House and Sea Master Lodge and in that way releasing apartments for rental. And anyway, Mr Speaker, what money would the hon. Members like me to spend on rental flats? If they think that I am doing too much by refurbishing the existing, how should I build new? If I build new I am not going to have to refurbish the existing.

Another thing he said, Mr Speaker, was that the works being done to the existing housing stock, not the refurbishments – which I have talked about; he has got the timetable for the completion of those in the hon. Lady's speech – but the works done in each apartment... the complaints due to... that the Housing Works Agency has to do... that that is not working well and there is no transparency. Well, that is not true. As the Hon. Joe Bossano indicated, and I think he responded immediately, there is a quote from the Housing Works Agency, then that quote is put out to three quotes from the companies that are then going to do the work. And there are *very* many, very many happy clients and we have broken the back of the backlog.

Is it always perfect? The hon. Gentleman needs to know that in building work nothing is ever likely to be perfect. You do an extension to your home and you are very happy that it is finished, but then you start to snag and you have to fix. The best builders in the world require snagging. If there are works that are not completed properly, in the words of the Hon. Mr Bossano, please let us know and we will ensure that we deal with it. In the old days, Ministers were not allowed to call and make complaints – shadow Ministers, rather. Shadow Ministers had less rights than citizens. Today, you know you can pick up the phone and we will deal with an issue that you put to us in terms of a constituent. If there were I do not know how many thousands of outstanding complaints and there are now a handful at any time, well that is a very good thing and most of them have been done properly. There may be some complaints in respect of some, and already Joe Bossano has told us how that is dealt with.

Mr Speaker, he then talked about the criteria for the allocation of affordable homes and said that we were not doing it properly and that there were complaints about it because we were not following the proposal to allow people who had sold and then gone to Spain etc... We are following the housing list first and foremost, and then the other criteria is published – and it is published at the time. What we are not doing, which hon. Members opposite did do – and they accused us of not being very socialist in the way that we dealt with things – what we are not doing, is selling four or five-bedroom homes to the highest bidder. We are selling four or five-bedroom homes to somebody who might require a three-bedroom home if, by the time we have gone through the housing list, everybody who is entitled to a four or five-bedroom has said they do not want to buy. Then the three-bedroom entitlement is able to choose from what is left. That is how we did it. That is not how it worked in the time the hon. Members were in office. As he knows,

the highest bidder won. So if you were prepared to buy 100%... If you were a single person, energetic, enthusiastic and intelligent – a single person, a barrister, young, free and single at the time – able to afford a beautiful maisonette on Waterport Terraces with views of the new LNG facility, when it comes... (Laughter) a four-bedroom maisonette and you had the money to buy 100%, the GSD sold it to you before selling it at 50% to somebody who had a family and six children. We think that was not very socialist and we think that was the wrong criteria, so now we sell to the people as entitled, not based on the percentage that they are prepared to buy – although good luck to those who did.

In relation to mortgages, Mr Speaker, I think it is very clear now that actually there are going to be much more mortgages available than are going to be required. People sometimes forget that Barclays is still going to be in the market for mortgages, although it is not in retail banking – I think mortgages over £100,000 – and therefore anybody who is buying 100% of a property is going to be able to go, even in respect of affordable homes, to Barclays, as I understand it.

Mr Speaker, he was extraordinarily kind to the Hon. Minister for Equality in the work that she does internationally with him and others when they travel to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings. If there is one thing that has always united the House it is the work that we do in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Clerk of the House is very helpful in organising all those events and successive Clerks have worked very hard indeed. It is one of the bits of the work of the House that we forget about, and I know Members enjoy it in part because of the spirit of camaraderie that we take out there together, where party-political affiliation is forgotten and Gibraltar always comes first.

Thank you for the words that he used about Samantha Sacramento and the work that she has done there. She was, when first elected to this House on 9th December 2011, a person who had no parliamentary experience. The way that she has discharged the conduct of her responsibilities in the time that she has been here has demonstrated her huge ability – she is a bit Joe Bossano-like and does not like to be praised – and demonstrated why it is that she has brought such value to this community and delivered so much in such a short time.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank him also for the work that he and colleagues on his side of the House do in respect of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association when we go out there. It is an important job that we all do for Gibraltar. Recently, Joe Bossano showed how it can be harnessed to make important points, like the rights of all the Overseas Territories to be represented in Commonwealth heads of government meetings when those happen.

Mr Speaker, he did not talk about the issue of allocation of housing, which was the recent press release by Members opposite – I assume because he realises that there is a non-point there and the Minister allocates housing as the allocating authority under the law that *they* created. The 155 allocated, most of them are on advice, but not all of them, telling her to put to your charities here, move people here etc. But what was telling was the speech from the hon. Lady, where she indicated in fact that 490 direct allocations had been made by hon. Members when they were in government, not 190 we had done 155 – 490 on one occasion. I think it was one week, actually, and it was just before the 2007 General Election – or the 2003 General Election, I forget – for flats at Mid Harbours, for flats which did not exist, as I am energetically, enthusiastically and intelligently reminded, and all of those allocations were made not even, not by the Housing Allocation Committee, not by the Housing Minister, they were made by the Chief Minister from No. 6 Convent Place, as Sir Peter yesterday amusingly reminded us.

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Figueras gave an intervention, which I am going to deal with now and I want to start with a reflection. Some years ago, when we were in this House debating, I called him my ‘erstwhile friend’ across the floor in the debate, and I am very pleased we are no longer ‘erstwhile’ – we are now, once again, firm friends. But he said that having meetings in public of the DPC does not mean that it is any more open, transparent or accountable, because the people cannot vote out the DPC over the Government. Well, if he has those thoughts, they are so far away from the types of thoughts that the GSD used to have in office, which were that not only did they appoint the DPC, they held the meetings behind closed doors. There is room for a little one here if he wants to come over too, because we believe in more democracy but what we do not believe in is appointments being made to DPC by a general public vote, either by show of hands or by secret ballot. The Government has to do something we appoint the DPC, but actually we do not appoint the DPC to a very great extent; this House appoints the DPC and we vote the DPC by creating the legislation on behalf of the public, and the town planner and all the other people he has issues with – the office, not the planner – are put there by public vote of the people.

Mr Speaker, he said there was no problem with investing in Gibraltar, the place we call home, which I thought actually was very telling and I entirely agree with him and I think flies in the face of what we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition. He is keen to see private industry taking the wheel of the growth in our economy, which I agree with and I indicated in my opening speech I think is what is happening. The only dark cloud that he sees is Credit Finance. Well, as he has seen, I think, during the course of the debate, Credit Finance is no dark cloud. The Savings Bank is getting stronger than ever.

I am not going to go into parking and things like that, but the one thing he talked about was the cost of the Mott McDonald report, and I put it to him he got that wrong, Mr Speaker, and that he has added all of the totals for the financial years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 to reach the sum of £838 million-odd that he talked about, or £829 million. Actually, £586 million of that is made up in a different way. Part of it is traffic counters – that is £60,000; the fees of the consultants are £380,000; and the purchase of speed radars and speed enunciators, speed cameras, which are coming soon, is £140,000. So it is not quite like the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Mr Speaker, the one issue on which he and I, and the Government and he, have a big difference is the issue of the Marrache case. On 7th February 2012 Benjamin Marrache and Solomon Marrache presented a constitutional motion to the Supreme Court seeking their discharge as defendants in the case which was pending against them. The motion was based on three grounds: (1) that the Legal Aid (Fees and Expenses) Rules 1981 were *ultra vires*; (2) that the Legal Aid (Fees and Expenses) Rules 1981 were unconstitutional in that *inter alia* their rates were so low that criminal defendants were precluded from effective representation; and (3) that the claimants' rights under section 8(2)(c) and (d) of the Constitution, the right to be provided fairly with representation at the public expense where the interests of justice so require – that is what the Constitution says – had been violated and that they had not been provided with legal representation in circumstances where the interests of justice plainly so required and where they had been and remained unable to do so through impecuniosity themselves to secure this.

James Neish QC, of Triay Stagnetto Neish, was asked to advise on the likelihood of success of the constitutional motion. His advice was clear and categorical. On 2nd March 2012 he advised the following, and I am going to reveal this advice, Mr Speaker, conscious of the fact that the Government is not obliged to reveal the legal advice that it receives. He said this:

'I consider that the motion'

– what I have just read to him–

'is likely to be successful. Alternatively, the grounds relied upon in the motion are likely to constitute good grounds for appeal.'

Mr Neish was also provided with a copy of a draft Legal Aid Bill which had been prepared by the previous administration – the one he often refers to – specifically by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Justice. This is the Bill which the Opposition have so criticised us for not introducing. Mr Neish was asked to advise whether the position would be different if changes were introduced to the Legal Aid Scheme with improved rates as set out in schedule 4 of the draft Bill provided to him, which the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition claims credit for having drafted as Minister for Justice. Mr Neish QC advised as follows:

'I do not consider that the proposed new rates are likely to secure effective representation unless a competent practitioner can be persuaded to act at those rates. New rules were published in March 2012 which allowed Messrs Marrache to secure effective representation and which allowed them to be tried on charges of serious fraud. They were subsequently convicted and sentenced to 11 years and seven years imprisonment respectively.'

Had we done what the Opposition had been urging us to do it is likely, as advised by Mr Neish, that they would have been discharged and would not have been tried at all. We acted responsibly, therefore, Mr Speaker, and in the public interest. Gibraltar's reputation as a financial services centre is too important for us to risk by allowing people who acted criminally – because they have been found guilty – to get away with it, as was finally the case in that matter.

In any event, Mr Speaker, what could possibly have been our alternative interest in funding their legal aid and not the legal aid of others? Can Members opposite explain to us why they think we might have done this for the Marrache brothers and not for others? I do hope that they are not allowing rumour and innuendo to fuel even their most exotic fantasies. Why would we want to spend money on legal aid that we did not have to spend, if we were not advised by an eminent leading counsel – not Joe Bossano, but James Neish QC – that we *had* to do it? If they have a different allegation to make, they should make it; or else they will realise that if they had been in government they would have had to do this too. If the law developed by them failed this advice, as it did, it could not be implemented and therefore we had to act immediately.

Mr Speaker, I pray to deal now, with the Hon. Mr Netto's intervention. Let me start by saying that Mr Netto did not say a word about health. I understand he is now supposed to be shadow... Oh, right, okay. Well, if he is not, I apologise. I thought he was supposed to be shadowing. So let me just take the point on health, whether it was Mr Netto's responsibility to make it or not. But we have not heard a word from Members opposite about health. I think that demonstrates how healthy the Gibraltar Health Authority has

become over the past four years. (A Member: Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) There was a lot to say about the Gibraltar Health Authority three and a half years ago, but nothing now, and I think that demonstrates that of all the people who have been Minister for Health – and there have been many good ones and all of them, of course, with the right aim to ensure that our community has the best possible healthcare – few have achieved as much in as little time as John Cortes. (A Member: Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) Not for good reason is he *Dr* John Cortes, Mr Speaker. It is not just the Barbary Partridge, that secretive species, that benefits from his expertise, but every upright mammal walking in this country of ours. He has done an excellent job. It is a real pity that during the course of this Budget debate and the way that the news is taken over by this Budget debate we have not seen the prominence given to the introduction yesterday, I believe, of electronic notes in the Gibraltar Health Service at last, which, by the way, is compliant with another manifesto commitment, a huge step forward for our community and something of absolutely huge importance. I am not going to say more about Mr Cortes in respect of the work he has done in Health and Utilities and all the rest of it, because a lot of the work he has done he has done with me, and what we have uncovered about Spark etc has been uncovered together.

But the Hon. Mr Netto talked about Gibraltar being a banana republic, Mr Speaker. I do not know whether he realised what he was saying, because in a banana republic we would not have had the problems we have had with Spark and with the report. These would have been dealt with in quite a different manner. We would never have got to this sort of headline in a banana republic. He needs to understand that his words will be picked up and that when we say things we have to be careful how we say them and why we justify them. I have showed them just how much disclosure they have. All the numbers they need are in the book. There is nothing hidden and no reason to call anyone in this place a person who is in charge of a banana republic. But if there were a reason to call Gibraltar a banana republic I am going to remind him of it.

A banana republic, amongst the many things that require that definition... and it is related, as he knows, to things that happened in South America and the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s. A banana republic is a country that goes to a lending institution and secures a loan on one premise fully intending not to comply with the criteria for lending. In other words a country that goes to a bank – for example, the Royal Bank of Scotland – and asks them for a loan for a power station, for example, and tells them in their business plan that the way that they are going to repay is by raising electricity charges by 5% a year, signs on the dotted line and secures that financing – as we were told was the case because we have been told that the contract was signed, the financing was secured – and then a Minister in that government says publicly that they had no intention of complying with their obligation under the contract. That is a banana republic, Mr Speaker.

He will be very happy to know that after 9th December 2011, having washed him away from office, he no longer secure borrowing in that way; but I am very grateful that he was honest enough, as he always is, Mr Speaker, to go on television and tell the truth. He, for a good reason, vomits his brains every time somebody puts a microphone in front of him, and I welcome that because he tells us the truth and he told us the truth on that ‘Viewpoint’ programme about having absolutely no intention as a government of complying with any obligations, and then at the Piazza, drunk on equality, he told us the truth about progress in Gibraltar on issues of social justice and equality in the time that we have been in power and the time that they were in power.

Now, Mr Speaker, it is tuna season. (A Member: Steady on!) Tuna season is the time when people go out big-game fishing, and they see the fish, with the hook caught in its mouth, struggling to get it off. Today we have seen two such tuna: we have seen the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition wriggling like no-one, but caught on the hook; and what we saw yesterday, when the hon. Member spoke and he had to spend about 15 minutes trying to get himself out of the truth that he had spoken at the bottom of the Piazza when he told us how much progress had been made on progressive the issues, was the other tuna – skipjack tuna, in fact – but he was not getting out of it. It was very clear that he had said what was true downstairs and was trying to say something which was not true during the course of his intervention.

The Alameda Gardens are better than ever, Mr Speaker, and nobody is going to persuade anybody otherwise, however much the hon. Gentleman might try and do so.

The fact that the GSLP did not train women civil servants and therefore they had to start was something that he went on about – and how we were bad for equality – in trying to justify his position. Mr Speaker, I do not accept that, but let’s take a leaf out of Mr Bossino’s book: if that was true in 1996 it must have been true in 1988 also, because they did not find any women promoted before 1988, who were the only women... He said there were no women. And why is it that he does not say Gibraltar had not yet started the process of training women and yet Gibraltar was changing, people were starting to get mortgages etc? He says Joe Bossano and the GSLP had not done it, which we do not accept, but why doesn’t he say Sir Joshua did not do it? Why doesn’t he say the AACR and the IWPB did not do it? Why? Because obviously he does not want to have political issues with others in his executive. He wants to pretend that the world started in 1988 and that then the New Testament started in 1996. If we are going to do things the way Mr Bossino suggested that we should and give credit backwards, we must also understand when there are problems

backwards. So if there was a problem in 1996 there must also have been a problem in 1988 – and I am making no comment about that, Mr Speaker, but I am just asking the hon. Gentleman to recognise that.

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman talked about the power station. He said there was an elephant in the room. Well, the elephant has been exposed today. Jaime is a good man, he is not just somebody who is going now with our best wishes, but he cannot talk about power stations and issues like this seriously. These are too serious an issue for somebody to be pretending that we can go from North Mole back to Lathbury, that Lathbury would have been ready, that the ESG is against... Has he even read what the ESG has said? The ESG has said it was concerned because of the Lloyd's report before they knew the reality of what was behind the Lloyd's report. I think the ESG are very responsible, Mr Speaker, and I said so yesterday on 'Newswatch', and I think when they see the reports that are available they will have a different view.

Mr Speaker, then he talks about *aqui no se pesca*. Well, that was never our slogan, but he wanted to make the point because he likes to make political points.

He said that the sewage plant was our failure. Well, Mr Speaker, he knows we are much more advanced in relation to the sewage plant than they ever were. We are on the cusp of signing something. He says that we have allowed La Línea to use the failure of a sewage plant here as the argument for the Western Beach faeces. Doesn't he remember that the Western Beach faeces problem started under them? And doesn't he know, because he does not follow it, that the European Commission has recently accepted that the Gibraltar problem with the sewage plant, which is leading to a pilot case which we hope to stop because we have granted the contract, is not the issue that creates the problem on Western Beach? I think he is only following half of the debate.

Mr Speaker, he has been an advocate for the rights of Moroccans for many years and I recognise that and praise him for it, but he cannot pretend that the problem for the Moroccans started again under the GSLP, because before 1988 there was the same problem and people were deported not to have children here; it was even worse.

A Member: If you fell pregnant.

Hon. Chief Minister: Exactly, deported pregnant, Mr Speaker.

So there were a lot of Moroccans in Gibraltar who had not been recognised nationality under the AACR, there were a lot of Moroccans who had their lot improved after 1988, there was more to go. You did some work in it in Government as a party, when you were in Government – not work that we thought was the best way to do it. But, Mr Speaker, can he at least recognise that we have done a lot of work and we have broken the back of the problem, and there is now no backlog of applications for British Nationality by Moroccan citizens.

I do not know whether he represents his party in that because the ex-chairman of his party was saying that we were wrong to have done it, and is on social media as saying that Gibraltar is too small and we should not have done it. But I am very proud of the fact that we have done it and we have got rid of the backlog and we have a vision as to what is happening with nationality. Then he went on to talk about the Joanna Hernandez case, and all this problem, and to say that we had denigrated Judge Parker, the President of the Court of Appeal – it is just absolute nonsense, Mr Speaker. And given that it is his valedictory, I am not going to get into the detail of it, and hope that he rides into the political sunset, happy with those things which he may have done, which may have been a positive contribution, and with everybody thinking that at the end of the day he is a good man with a good heart who has tried to do the best that he could.

But I will tell him one thing before he goes, Mr Speaker. (**A Member:** Yes!) If I needed to invest the money of savers in the Gibraltar Savings Bank, the remaining £600 million which they say we have not put in credit finance, up to the billion, I would buy shares in Jaime Netto for what they are worth and sell them for what he thinks they are worth – and then we would really make a pile for all the savers.

But well done, Mr Speaker, for spending 16 years of your life in this place, it is not easy – or 20 years – and although we have disagreed on just about everything, God speed for the future at a personal level.

One of the things that John Cortes reminded us of was our first visit to KGV – it was an absolutely horrible experience. I am very pleased that we have now opened Ocean Views and that we will soon be opening other facilities there for dementia and dementia day care. But one of the things that he said which stuck with me... and people sometimes in the cut and thrust of the debate, too often what makes the headlines is the minutiae of the argument between leaders but people do not sometimes realise just how much work is being done by other Members of the Cabinet. And he said that there are now more operations than ever, there are now less cancelled operations than ever, and the work on electronic notes, etc, has been done.

Mr Speaker, certainly I will give him one thing: the number of operations is certainly up. We have seen more people lobotomised – given from what we have heard in the past 48 hours than I expect it was possible in three and a half years! But anyway...

Mr Speaker, some of the work that I have done, I do with my long term political friend Dr Joseph Garcia, and if there is anybody who understands Dr Garcia's commitment to politics on the other side, then it is Mr Bossino, because we all started together. Ironically, I think, at the Rock Hotel, when his father was the manager, that we all managed to get together one fateful day there, and ended up in a political party, having expected I think to go for a drink and a television debate! And in fact I recognise that Mr Bossino Senior is here today and I want to echo the words that Mr Bossino Junior had here to say about his commitment to the hotel industry, and the fact that he was probably the first Gibraltarian appointed to the post of manager of the Rock Hotel all those years ago.

But if anybody understands the commitment of Dr Garcia – another GP in many ways who sorts out problems in my Government before they get to me – it is Mr Bossino and me. And it has now been many years that Dr Garcia has been involved in politics, many of them completely unremunerated – not that he is in it for remuneration – and many of them with people not realising the value that he would bring to the administration of the affairs of our nation if he became a Minister. I think people do now realise that, and the work that he is doing with me internationally, in Europe in particular and in Washington, I think is really shining through. (**A Member:** Hear, hear) (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker, I have said something about Paul Balban and the work he has done with me on the ID cards, although he is not here, but I think I said that during my main intervention; and I think I have thanked Albert Isola for the work he has done with the Gibraltar International Bank; and Gilbert Licudi for the *fantastic* work he has done creating a university, two new schools, a marina, the new Ministry of Information Exchange which has been created in the time that he has been here – all whilst continuing to be Minister for Justice and for Education, amongst so much else. And Joe Bossano I have spoken about in such glowing terms, that I am prevailed upon by him not to do so again, let alone during the course of this debate.

Mr Speaker, it was not me who said that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition is not of GSD stock, but if we ever needed any evidence of it we have seen it this week. What we have opposite us is not the GSD any more: he has single-handedly managed to destroy what that party stood for. It is now, Mr Speaker, really the 'nasty party'. He complains that we have an investment in Bayside: well, haven't we invested already in the two schools that most needed it? Did he ever go to KGV?

It was *them* that developed the airport before developing the two new schools that we are developing, before delivering a new KGV, before doing *any* of the things that we did. They delivered an airport and courts and the new prison instead of delivering a new Bayside. Doesn't their conscience turn on that?

Well, the hon. Gentleman is really exceeding himself in the way that he is conducting his affairs. He knows he is not going to win the election because of his existing and continuing lack of credibility, so he is doing what those of us know he does in exactly that situation: cornered like a rat he just raises the stakes further and further, double or nothing.

On the Savings Bank, pretending that we are exceeding debt; pretending that there is off-balance sheet on lending when actually all of those amounts are in exactly the same balance sheet. On the issue of the liquefied natural gas facility, Mr Speaker, well the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is a political fraud. He is a political fraud who has been found out on the economy. He is a political fraud that has been found out on public finances and he is a political fraud, the layers of which I am really going to relish peeling off in coming weeks and months so that the public can see how he has tried to corrupt the political process. How he has corrupted his party and now how he has tried to corrupt this parliament by taking Russian and Gibraltarian monies to finance his atrocious campaign of defaming our professionals, undermining the GEA, and undermining the professionals who make it up.

Mr Speaker, this is an axis of greed, an axis of cynicism, an axis of conspirators against the good of Gibraltar ready to do anything to advance the unholy alliance between their commercial and political interest. This is ambition on steroids, combined with business on speed.

People will want to disassociate themselves politically from him forever, after the events of this week. When I was Leader of the Opposition their previous Chief Minister during the course of this debate said that I was not fit to govern, Mr Speaker. That was not for him to say and is not for me to say – it is for the public, it is not for this parliament to decide who should be in it and who should take what post in it. That is for the democratic process. I will leave it to people to decide who should be fit to govern and who becomes the next Chief Minister of Gibraltar; and I trust that Members of the Opposition will actually do the right thing in relation to the Lloyd's Report, if only after they have exhausted all other possible options.

There are many good people in the GSD, Mr Speaker, many of them are telling us that the spirit of the party they joined is dead. They see the party that represents wholesome Gibraltarian ideas now as the GSLP, which always has. They see today how we represent the older and younger generations' aspirations. We represent hard work and their old insignia represents opportunism. There are people in the GSD who are worried about finances because of the things their leader tells them – and they do not want it to be true, even though they do not accept our version of events. And there are those who are so bloodthirsty for

power, who really hope that we are skint, so that it might bring down the Government, so that we might fail.

They do not care that Gibraltar might fail, they do not care that the whole Gibraltar edifice might teeter, just to say that they saved it, or rebuilt it. And this is not what the GSD used to represent. I have never agreed with them but this is not what they stood for. At a time in our history when some people felt that we were wrong, although we did not believe so ourselves, they acted not out of ambition but out of genuine concern for our community – wrong though we believe they were. However ill-founded they were then, the party of Peter Montegriffo and the party of Peter Caruana is not the party that we see opposite us today.

For all the reasons that I have indicated already, it is clear that if hon. Members are going to be honest to the things that they have said during the course of the debates so far in and out of this House in the past three and a half years, they must vote against this Bill or they are voting to allow us to spend another half a billion pounds. We have governed for all of Gibraltar, Mr Speaker, in the past three and a half years and if we are elected again after this election we will do so again – without discrimination based on partisan support. Everyone who brings something good for Gibraltar we will work with, and we have demonstrated that. All talent will be harnessed for the good of Gibraltar.

Louis Montegriffo who was a member of the executive committee of the GSD and who now is in private practice as an estate agent, wrote in the introduction to one of his business magazines, in the March edition of this year, the following:

‘I really wish that I could tell you something different and throw caution out there, express concerns etc, but I just can’t, it’s simply not the case.’

Mr Montegriffo is to be thanked for his honesty. The reality is that none of the issues that the Leader of the Opposition is raising cause real concern to those who understand the issue, Mr Speaker.

The mission we decided to accept when we became the Government of Gibraltar was – it was said by Members opposite – impossible. They said it was absolutely impossible, that we had embarked on a ‘mission impossible’. But with true Gibraltarian grit, with hard work and with the determination of members of this Government on my side of the House and the hard-working people in our economy, impossible is nothing, Mr Speaker. Today, I can proudly boast for my colleagues and on behalf of my Government, that what they said was impossible is today a mission accomplished in many areas.

Rounding up now: the Gibraltar that we inherited in 2011 was one of a golden legacy, apparently, of undisclosed loans to developers, £4 million lent to OEM of legal actions coming out of our ears, leaving Gibraltar with only £2 million of usable cash reserves. How dare any Member Opposite raise the spectre of bankruptcy or an illegal debt ceiling as the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has done. The spectre of bankruptcy is sitting on the benches opposite. They were the ones who were going to come here to raise the debt limit, or not be able to pay for what they were doing.

This is a rotten legacy of legal claims. We have won against OHL but we still have the Bruesa case to go on. But in any event if, when we win cases which relate to the time that they were in office, it is because they did things well when they were in office then they should at least recognise that they have won the Harbour Views litigation because we had done things right when we were in office – something that they have never done.

But I want to doff my hat to Members Opposite for a particular reason, they are garnering support. It is true that they are garnering support, we should not pretend otherwise, because the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has gathered unto himself all the disaffected who want and did not get an *enchufe*. All those who wanted something they did not deserve and did not get it because they did not deserve it are flocking to him. All those who were given feedback about the reasons why they did not get a job, which shows that they did not get it because they did not deserve it and they were not best for the job, they are all flocking to him now. All those who could not accept the truth about their own abject failure and wanted jobs and promotions they did not deserve. All of those, Mr Speaker, I now see are close to the GSD and the hon Gentleman.

Even those who wanted and expected the bloodbath after the election, and their blood thirst was not satisfied, they are flocking to him – because he hath gathered unto himself with the clarion call of an end to the culture of entitlement everyone who believes that they are entitled to something and did not get it. (Laughter) That is what he is playing on his flute as the Pied Piper selected to lead the GSD into the political oblivion to which they are confining themselves.

Mr Speaker, four years ago during the course of this debate it was said that I was unfit to govern. I am very happy to say I have proved them wrong. Four years ago they said our manifesto could not be delivered and we proved them wrong. Four years ago they said that they would win the election: the general public proved them wrong. This year will be no different. They are wrong about debt, they are wrong about gas, they are wrong about the Savings Bank and I, we, and the public will prove them wrong again.

1730 I am pleased that we have endured the debate that we have had. It demonstrates that the party opposite is clearly riven with divisions – clearly torn apart by competing ambitions and clearly not able to aspire to taking the reins of our great nation’s affairs. Mr Speaker, this is not the ‘GSD B-Team’ sitting to your left, it is the ‘GSD D-Team’ – shorn of talent, devoid of credibility, lacking in substance exposed as a fraud, dangerously ambitious and politically finished.

1735 I have heard nothing which was remotely the type of analysis one might have expected to hear from an alternative government; whilst we said we would change things – and we have. We said we would govern as a team, as a Cabinet – and we have. We said we would have parliament meet monthly – and we have. We said we would lower our debt and grow our economy – and we have. We have done what we said we would.

1740 This is the history of our time in Government to date. That is why we deserve the trust of the Gibraltar people. That is why we have *earned* the trust of the Gibraltar people. And, Mr Speaker, I have heard nothing in this debate from the few members of the Opposition who have turned up and spoken to persuade me that this Bill should be anything other than commended to the House and our community as a whole so that we can now move on to laying even stronger foundations for our nation’s future. (*Banging on desks*) (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.)

1745 Mr Speaker, I would move that the House do now recess until – (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker: I have to put the question.

1750 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Oh, you have to put the question? (*Laughter*)

Mr Speaker: 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 the 31st day of March 2016, and further sums of money to the service of the year ended 31st day of March 2014 be read a second time. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

1755 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Sorry, Mr Speaker...

Mr Speaker: Clerk.

1760 **Clerk:** The Appropriation Act 2015.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Chief Minister.

1765 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, for the blessed relief of being able to have a lunch, I propose that the House do now recess until 4.30 this afternoon.

Mr Speaker: The House will now recess to 4.30 this afternoon.

The House recessed at 3.02 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 4.36 p.m.