



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 11.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 11th June 2020

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 11 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. M L Farrell BEM GMD RD JP *in the Chair*]

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

Swearing-in Ceremony of the Governor and Commander in Chief of Gibraltar, Vice Admiral Sir David Steel KBE, DL

Royal Commission

The Clerk read the Royal Commission:

Elizabeth the Second. By the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

To Our Trusty and Well - beloved Vice Admiral Sir David Steel, Knight Commander of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Deputy Lieutenant II. Greeting.

I. We do, by this Our Commission, under Our Sign Manual and Signet, appoint you, the said Vice - Admiral Sir David Steel to be Our Governor and Commander - in - Chief in and over Our Territory of Gibraltar, during Our pleasure, with all the powers, rights, privileges and advantages to the said Office belonging or appertaining.

And We do direct that your appointment shall take effect from the time of your taking and subscribing oaths in accordance with the Constitution of Gibraltar.

II. And We do hereby command all and singular Our Officers and loving subjects in Our said Territory, and all others whom it may concern, to take due notice hereof and to give their ready obedience accordingly.

III. And We do hereby direct that this, Our Commission, shall determine upon signification to that effect being given by Us through one of our Principal Secretaries of State.

Given at Our Court of Saint James's, this Tenth day of June 2020, in the Sixty-ninth year of Our Reign.

By Her Majesty's Command

COMMISSION appointing

Vice Admiral Sir David Steel, KBE, DL, to be Governor
and Commander – in – Chief of GIBRALTAR

Oath of Allegiance

Clerk: Oath of Allegiance.

The Chief Justice administered the Oath of Allegiance to Vice Admiral Steel as follows:

Vice Admiral Steel: I, David George Steel, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and successors according to law. So help me, God.

Oath for the Execution of Office

Clerk: Oath for the Execution of Office.

The Chief Justice administered the Oath for the Execution of Office to Vice Admiral Steel as follows:

Vice Admiral Steel: I, David George Steel, do swear that I will well and truly serve Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the second, Her Heirs and Successors in the Office of Governor and Commander in Chief of the City of Gibraltar. So help me, God.

The Port Sergeant presented the Keys of the City of Gibraltar to Vice Admiral Steel.

**Address by the Chief Minister,
Hon. F R Picardo**

Clerk: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, Chief Justice, Your Excellency, on behalf of the people of Gibraltar, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and as Leader of this House, I have the privilege of being the first to formally welcome you to your new home in Gibraltar. It is also a great privilege to welcome you to the new position you hold as the constitutional representative of Her Majesty the Queen. Under our constitutional settlement it is a singular honour that is bestowed upon you to represent the monarch.

No doubt it will take some time to settle into this new role, and I also have no doubt that the excellent staff of the Convent and Convent Place and the warmth of the people of Gibraltar will ensure that you soon acclimatise, for the people of this Rock are as warm as they are hospitable. We are as welcoming of new Gibraltarians such as yourself as we are fearsome guardians of this the home of the Gibraltarians. You will know this from your forays here in the Royal Navy; the Senior Service, which first identified the strategic significance of the rock that the Romans had called the Non Plus Ultra. It was the Navy that identified that beyond our Straits no one could pass without Britain's knowledge if they held Gibeltarik.

This British place is one that you will find is very different to other British places. You will find that we are not English and this is not England. It may sound obvious to you and to the many hearing me today, but it is not as obvious to everyone as it should be. We are not Scottish, nor Irish, nor Welsh. We are Gibraltarian in our style and form, the people of the Rock. And we are not better because we are Gibraltarian, but we are certainly also not worse. We are just different, British but different, as different as each of the British people of the great British

family of nations but no less British as a result, bound by history, custom and Constitution into a British way of being. And of course we are British in our own way, in our own style, with our own laws, and those laws and that Constitution are the key to your important but well and tightly defined role. It enshrines also our fierce loyalty to the Crown and it enshrines our commitment to the fundamental human rights contained in it and to the rule of law as a key part of how we see our Britishness. Our touchstone is that key factor, for nations not committed, governed and bound by the rule of law provide none of the communal and personal legal certainty and security to its citizens that we do in Gibraltar.

Our system is British also in its Westminster style, in the approach to the workings of this place. Our Parliament is not a carbon copy of the House of Commons but it is greatly derived from it. That means that we can also sometimes fall into the traps into which the Commons has sometimes fallen – the Punch and Judy style, the bear-pit nature of Question Time, although I do think that there are fewer punches flying and fewer bears hunting these days than in the past, a very good thing if you ask me, and in any event the theatre here has never been as loud as it is in Westminster, if only because even the most raucous assembly of 17 cannot conjure up the noise of 650 Members. Yet we have also seen some of what the best of Westminster offers: a system of government and opposition which has served this small nation well in the past 50 years since we abandoned the concept of the city council. Indeed, some of the oratory I have heard and read in this place, from Members here now and some no longer here, has nothing to envy some of the best oratory in Westminster. That is true of all the incarnations of this place from Legislative Council to House of Assembly and this now Parliament.

The adversarial style has obviously opened the door for many lawyers to seek to become involved in politics – no bad thing, if you ask me! Why? Because lawyers, particularly barristers, are trained to robustly test arguments in an adversarial environment – you know that, of course, as you have trained as a barrister also. We both share an Inn of Court in the Middle Temple, also with the Chief Justice and the Leader of the Opposition. Like us, the Chief Justice is also a Bencher of the Inn. Why is that even relevant in 21st century Gibraltar and in this ceremony now? For the simple reason, Your Excellency, that it demonstrates vividly how inextricably bound into the professional structures of the United Kingdom modern Gibraltar is, in its own unique way.

One person in this place who is not a lawyer and who illustrates the passion of the Gibraltarians in the defence of our homeland is the Father of the House. Sir Joe Bossano has now been a Member of this House for 48 years. He was first elected in 1972, the year I was born. He turned 81 yesterday and his energy, his enthusiasm and his entrepreneurial spirit are an example to all of us. He has been an elected Member of this House now for more than half his lifetime. I believe that he is likely to be, after the retirement of Kenneth Clarke and Dennis Skinner last year, the longest currently serving parliamentarian in the Commonwealth, a real mean feat. Indeed, he is inspiring and enterprising enough that one day the Members opposite entreat me to be more like him, to adopt those parts of his economic teachings which they used to criticise and now eulogise and which they, for their own purposes, argue that I have eschewed, and yet the very next day he will prompt into being incensed by a new initiative from him, leading them to condemn his economic policies and clamouring for him to be called to order by the younger, allegedly fallen, disciple. I think hon. Members will agree with me at least on this: here is a man who defies conventional definition, even by his opponents. What a mark of honour, particularly in his 81st year. What a lesson to all of us, on both sides of the House. And what an opportunity to record, on behalf of all of us here today, no doubt, our very best wishes on his 81st birthday. You should have seen his face yesterday when he walked into the Cabinet Office and we all broke into song, in a less-than-harmonious rendition of *Happy Birthday!*

You arrive here some eight months after our last General Election, Joe Bossano's 13th. Last October, our mandate for Government was renewed for a historic third successive time on the basis of a manifesto which is designed to deliver a number of key objectives. The three most

relevant of the objectives of our Programme for Government are the establishment of a green Gibraltar, first of all; secondly, the delivery of a new post-Brexit relationship with the United Kingdom, the EU and our nearest neighbour, Spain; and thirdly, the continued successful management of our economy and our public finances. All of this against the backdrop of more social justice, progressive social transformation and certainly more political and financial transparency and accountability than has ever been the case in the context of our democracy – although those who gave less information in the past, when they were in power, now ask for even more. Such is the nature of politics for some, I guess.

Our manifesto, however, was explicit and detailed in setting out our plans and we were on track to deliver against that ambitious agenda as we started this year. It was then that COVID-19 started to hit the international headlines and we all have to understand as a community that the work we have done, together with Opposition colleagues, has helped us to successfully navigate the health and economic aspects of the first round of this crisis.

The Government can report today that there are only five active cases of COVID-19 identified in our community, of which only two today are residents of Gibraltar. But a second round no doubt remains, and that second round may contain aspects which are related to public health. We may or may not see a second wave of the virus, but what the second round will certainly contain will be economic challenges the like of which we have never faced before as an autonomous, self-governing administration. Those will be challenges on which I hope we will see the same unity of purpose in this place as we have during the past months, because as the tide of the pandemic recedes we are left to see the shores of challenges to come. We will see on the seabed all of those things we put off as we were forced to paralyse normal activity to save the lives of our fellow countrymen and women. And as the virus recedes, our future challenges are again laid bare before us like a great Atlantis once again recovered from the ocean floor. On these things we will seek always to bring consensus in our work with Members of this House, as we have to date on our work on the virus. Indeed, I do hope we will be able to maintain that political goodwill and co-operation as we face the challenges and great opportunities that the establishment of a new relationship with Britain, the European Union and Spain can present to us. This will likely present a seminal moment in our history. We must be up to the challenge and ready to seize the opportunities that may present. Gibraltar always has been; as political leaders in this place, we must be too.

We have faced great challenges before. Eighty years ago this month, the evacuation from the Rock of Gibraltar women, children and some men began. As the Second World War raged they were shipped first to Africa, then to the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, Madeira or Jamaica. In that year, the first detachments of men who were to form our Gibraltar Defence Force were formed as Gibraltarians joined up to play their part in the war against Nazi fascism and the Axis forces. Our magnificent Royal Gibraltar Regiment are their worthy successors. The motto of our regiment is well earned: *Nulli expugnabilis hosti* is their theme. In keeping with that motto, Gibraltar did not fall to the violence of the Second World War, or the politics since then. Our evacuated people were not kept away from their home. They returned through the industry of a young stubborn lawyer who was to become our first elected leader, Joshua Hassan. But they returned not to an easy existence; they returned to homes that needed rebuilding and they returned to become the obsession and vice of the last fascist standing after the end of the war, General Franco. He was to put good people through a torrid time, but the Gibraltarians would not bend to his will. With the deadly weapon of democracy and the ammunition of pencils and ballots, we chose to remain British in our Referendum in 1967, and in 1969 the last full siege of Gibraltar began when Franco closed the Frontier. Then, Bob Peliza was Chief Minister. And did our people waver? Never, because facing challenges, facing down adversity and standing up to injustice is ingrained in the Gibraltarian spirit.

We did not flinch in the face of fascism and we will not blink in the light of the challenges we are facing now; like Joe Bossano did not flinch when the Ministry of Defence closed its stockyard facility in Gibraltar in the late 1980s – what should have been an economic debacle became a

renaissance where we added one third again to the landmass of our small nation, one third and in less than a year to boot; and like Peter Caruana did not flinch when the British government was disgracefully prepared to entertain sharing the sovereignty of Gibraltar with Spain in 2002. It is just not in the nature of the people of the Rock and our political leadership to cower away
140 from leadership. Such are these hardy yet warm and kind people you now come to live amongst. So, in our time and generation, as the baton has passed to a new generation of political leadership on all sides of this House I have no doubt we will not let Gibraltar down. We will seek to work closely together, insofar as possible, as we face the visible and invisible challenges of Brexit and its aftermath, and we should do so as effectively as we are working closely together
145 to face down the invisible challenge of coronavirus that remains amongst us but has to date failed to take the life of any resident of Gibraltar in Gibraltar.

In respect of our future relationship with the European Union, a Select Committee on Brexit has been re-established after the General Election and will be briefed as their views and advice are sought, as negotiations continue, as we did so successfully during the negotiation of the
150 Withdrawal Agreement.

I hope we will also be able to work together in the House on matters related to our environment and pollution. In that respect, we have proposed the establishment of a Select Committee of this House on the Environment. In a radical move I have also proposed that, for the first time in the modern history of Gibraltar, the Select Committee should be jointly chaired
155 by me and by the Leader of the Opposition. I do look forward to the work that we will do together in that Committee. We will seek to build on the bold work already being done by the Minister for the Environment and successive Ministers for Transport in this Government, not all of which is popular but all of which is necessary if we are genuinely committed to making the changes that are essential in the light of the Climate Change Emergency that this House declared
160 in the lifetime of the last Parliament. It is, of course, no use professing support for radical change to reduce pollution and to protect the environment and then not be ready to take unpopular decisions on traffic flow and parking and instead side with those myopically opposing change. I am sure hon. Members will not fall into the open trap of such obvious duality.

This House will also soon be meeting in a Select Committee on Constitutional Reform. This will be an exciting opportunity to continue the work of constant evolution and renewal of our current principal and overriding enactment. There are some who have argued that the 2006 Constitution was *the* possible maximum level of self-government short of independence that might possibly be achievable. We have maintained that it is potentially just one particular modality of such a status, but there are undoubtedly others and there are undoubtedly good
170 reasons to review and refresh parts of the Constitution. Not least of these is the fact that Gibraltar has not yet been removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories maintained by the United Nations Committee on Decolonisation. That remains a key objective of the GSLP and Liberal parties which we represent on this side of the House and one I believe is shared by all Members of this House.

Brexit may even make constitutional revision inevitable, given the drafting of some sections did not envisage – perhaps understandably at the time – that Gibraltar might one day not form part of the European Union. Section 47(3) of the Constitution in particular sets out that ‘Without prejudice to the United Kingdom’s responsibility for Gibraltar’s compliance with European Union law, matters which under this Constitution are the responsibility of Ministers shall not cease to
180 be so even though they arise in the context of the European Union.’ That section is silent as to whether those provisions are somehow designed only for periods of membership of the European Union. Ironically, the section in which that paragraph appears is the section which defines the Governor’s special powers. I have no doubt you will already be quite familiar with it. External affairs, defence and internal security, as well as other powers provided for specifically in
185 the Constitution, are the ambit of the hugely important responsibility that you are now tasked with. On external affairs we are entreated to work together.

190 Additionally, it is worth remembering that section 49 of the current Constitution provides that the Governor will keep the Chief Minister fully informed of the general conduct of those matters for which you are responsible, and section 52 provides that the Governor and the Chief
195 Minister – that is to say you and me, at least for now – ‘shall confer on a regular basis and the Chief Minister shall brief and keep the Governor informed about the policies of the Government and the public affairs of Gibraltar’. We are clearly about to get to know each other much better. I, for one, very much look forward to it and the work that we will no doubt be able to do together in the public interest of Gibraltar. I have no doubt that we will and that we will enjoy
200 doing so, and we will establish a strong partnership and rapport as we do. On that, and on all the other areas, we will do more for Gibraltar together than we ever could apart. As I reflect now on the relationships I have enjoyed with your predecessors in post in my time in office, I can identify in the relationship between Chief Ministers and Governors the clues to the success of the strong relationship that exists today between Great Britain and Gibraltar: partnership, co-
205 operation and strength in building an alliance of purpose born from a confluence of goodwill in our approach, good-natured industry in the cause of the defence of our ideas, and good government for our people. That rapport will be what serves the people of Gibraltar best. It is them that we must not fail, and we will not.

205 Your Excellency, this is a time of great challenges, sure, but it is also undoubtedly a time of great opportunity, a time therefore for courage and clear determination: determination of purpose and determination of action. It is in this time and generation that you are called upon to serve alongside all of us here in our respective roles, and I have no doubt that you will be our ally in high ambition, a partner in delivering progress and a friend, above all else, through it all. Welcome to Gibraltar, the Rock with a heart of gold. (*Banging on desks*)

**Address by the Leader of the Opposition,
Hon. K Azopardi**

210 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Your Excellency, Mr Speaker, Chief Justice, I too want to welcome you on behalf of all Members who sit on this side of the House. We hope that you will have an enjoyable and stimulating time during your tenure as Governor.

215 Before I launch in to my speech I also want to endorse the comments of the Chief Minister on the 81st birthday of the Father of the House. I say nothing, of course, about the remarks about his economic policies, or indeed the Chief Minister’s economic policies, because I do not want to spoil the birthday party! (*Laughter*)

220 Your Excellency, in Gibraltar we treasure our historic links with the British Navy. We have a long history in this part of the western Mediterranean and we are therefore glad to see someone from a maritime background once again in post. As a man of the services you are schooled in conflict. You will find that our people have also, for many years, evolved against a backdrop of political and military conflict. Sunday is the 38th anniversary of the end of the Falklands War, a people whom we feel a kinship with because of their own struggle for self-
225 determination, and as someone who served in the Falklands War you will appreciate that more than most.

230 Your Excellency will find, in months to come, that we have a small yet vibrant democracy where issues are robustly argued and tested. You will see that there are plenty of differences in style, policy and approach between the various political parties, but you will also find that as a people we have known when to come together to weather the storm or the siege over the years. You join us at a particularly challenging time in Gibraltar’s history where a number of economic, social and political issues lie ahead. We expect change over the next three years.

Sometimes in politics challenges arise as a consequence of policies that are deliberately embarked upon. In that sense, and when you control your own destiny, self-created challenges are part of the course, but sometimes challenges arise from situations that a place did not desire or create. How we steer a course through troubled waters caused by sudden storms and how we ensure the continued sustainability of this small country of ours is what will mark us as a community. So much is true for the two main challenges that we have encountered at the start of 2020.

The first was a bolt from the blue. The COVID pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge in modern times for the entire world. It has stolen lives worldwide, afflicted loss on many families, shaken the global economy and has put many people into a cycle of economic hardship. Here in Gibraltar we have, so far, bucked the international trend and, with careful collective action worked on by Members on both sides of the House, we have thankfully been spared the most severe public health ramifications of the crisis. But, as we have kept saying throughout this pandemic, it is not over yet and the rules of human behaviour, those new rules, must remain for a while. Gibraltar will need to continue to work hard to ensure that we emerge from that crisis with the fewest possible public health effects and in the best possible economic shape. The economic dimension and repercussions of this crisis will be deep, and felt over a long period.

The second challenge, Your Excellency, is an inevitable result of the undesirable departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union that we neither sought nor supported. Even so, it is a political reality and one that must be grasped fully. Over the last couple of years we have had our differences with the Government on the Withdrawal Agreement, the MoUs negotiated with Spain and indeed the Tax Treaty, which will be debated again this month in this Parliament, but clearly the need to now negotiate a new relationship with the European Union is, however, not only a reality but, seen more positively, can be an opportunity to see a recalibration of the dynamics between this micro-territory and both the EU and our neighbour.

In respect of the latter, much remains to be seen but we hope that the chance is taken by Spain to accept a respectful, modern European relationship with Gibraltar, one where our rights are recognised and respected and our people enjoy freedoms of movement across the border. We are, after all, Europeans by inescapable geographical destiny, and in that opportunity we should be bold and imaginative in mapping out what we want as a people. I said as much in an article in early 2017, in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum. I repeat it today: let us not just drift on the agenda of others, let us set our own ambitions and ambitious set of goals. We are all in this House united in a belief in our self-determination and that the future of Gibraltar can only be decided by its people. In that sense, the decades-old campaign of previous generations to the right to our land has echoes in modern Gibraltar, where we feel too that this is our land and sovereignty rests in our people, who confer democratic legitimacy on our laws and institutions. What else does that mean, other than that our agenda for the future should be as ambitious as possible in recognition of those rights to self-determination and the fact that the future is ours to decide and no one else's?

We are proud of our history, Your Excellency, and our links to the Crown and the Commonwealth. We will jealously guard our self-governance. Your role as the representative of Her Majesty is a part of our constitutional architecture. Your Excellency occupies your office on the appointment of Her Majesty and by the consent of the people of Gibraltar. In 2006, in a referendum, we approved our third Constitution in an act of democratic legitimacy. It is that constitution that is the supreme law of Gibraltar and which sets out the parameters and limitations of your role. Under that Constitution, Her Majesty is, together with this Parliament, the legislature of Gibraltar. Additionally, the executive authority of Gibraltar is vested in Her Majesty. By section 45 of the Constitution, the Council of Ministers and Her Majesty constitute the Government of Gibraltar. You are, of course, Her Majesty's representative in Gibraltar and her delegate insofar as the limited responsibilities that remain in your name under the Constitution.

285 I say all that, Your Excellency, because in coming to Gibraltar and accepting this appointment
it is important not to lose sight of the constitutional role and where you fall. There have been
instances in the past, sometimes significant, where the interests of the United Kingdom have
differed from those of Gibraltar, where the two distinct governments of Gibraltar and the United
290 opposite side of this House there was an open political warfare between the Gibraltar and
British governments on the thorny and disgraceful issue of joint sovereignty. Your service now is,
without constitutional doubt, to Her Majesty in right of her Government of Gibraltar. If I can put
it this way, Your Excellency, you are now the non-executive chairman of this club and don our
colours. There is an expectation by Her Majesty that you may have to bat for Gibraltar, if called
295 upon. You will not be expected to be one of the opening batsmen, or indeed will not even be
required to occupy the crease very long, but if necessary you may have to step on to the field of
play for the red and white team and the people of Gibraltar. Your Excellency will also be
required to walk the constitutional tightrope between the competences of Ministers and his
own limited duties with the skill of a ballerina and always in the interests of the people of
300 Gibraltar, and sometimes issues will arise.

Your Excellency, scarcely 24 hours before your arrival, the Commissioner of Police stood
down from his role at least two years ahead of his time. This was a man who ostensibly had all
the hallmarks of someone who had energy and zest for his role. His departure was sudden and
not signposted by anything he had said or done publicly. There has been, before his departure
305 and thereafter, in some quarters of the press and on social media, speculation as to the
discharge of his functions and the circumstances of his departure. In a small community like
Gibraltar there is much chatter. Your Excellency, there is a Spanish saying that when the river
sounds, it carries water. We have had occasion already to observe that the circumstances were
curious and at the very least raise questions that deserve answers. In a small country like ours,
310 the need to ensure that the institutions and authorities are beyond question and that the
constitutional checks and balances are strong is crucial. It is also not helpful for anyone, or for
democracy, for the speculation that already exists to be left to lie festering. If there is no
foundation to the speculation, let it be said. To that extent, Your Excellency, when the Convent
issued a bland press release noting the Commissioner's request to retire rather than decisively
315 clarifying matters, it did the opposite. It will, in our view, not do, and that is why we think there
need to be clear answers one way or the other. I am not someone, Your Excellency, who
encourages or desires the Governor to have anything but a ceremonial role in our affairs, but the
Constitution and the present checks and balances or limited responsibilities being what they are,
we hope that you will reflect on this matter in accordance with the provisions that bestow duties
320 upon you in the Police Act. Beyond that, as we have already said, we will pursue questions in this
Parliament. Your Excellency, we were elected on a manifesto of seeking further constitutional
reform to ensure better checks and balances, parliamentary and electoral reform and greater
self-governance. The people on behalf of whom the governance structures are run seek and
deserve that those institutions be protected and that we improve our local constitutional
325 safeguards.

Your Excellency, there is much to be done over the next three years as the political, economic
and social challenges that arise are tackled. The ones I have already touched upon sit alongside
the need to tackle the traditional issues of health, housing, transport, social services or the
environment, on which there is much progress to be made. Her Majesty will find that the
330 Members of her Loyal Opposition will work tirelessly to improve the quality of decision making,
policies and the life of the people of Gibraltar.

Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

**Address by His Excellency the Governor,
Vice Admiral Sir David Steel**

Clerk: His Excellency the Governor.

335 **His Excellency the Governor:** Mr Speaker, Chief Justice, Chief Minister, Leader of the Loyal
Opposition, thank you for your warm and very generous welcome for me today. I am honoured
to be here in your Parliament and can only apologise for my delayed arrival in Gibraltar. That
delay has, however, only made me even more eager to get down to work, to fully immerse
myself in the life of Gibraltar and to play a positive and constructive role in its future.

340 More years ago than I really care to remember, I joined my first ship in the Royal Navy as a
fresh-faced, very eager young officer keen to make his mark. The ship was undergoing an
intensive period of operational sea training with fires, floods, attacks by all types of enemy ships,
submarines and aircraft – a sort of controlled mayhem being there to test us to see if we were
going to be ready operationally for what lay ahead. I rushed into the engine room and asked an
345 old and bold fleet chief petty officer what I could do to help. He looked me up and down in that
measured way that indicated that he had seen the likes of me before, and said quietly, ‘Just sit
down, watch and listen. One day, young sir, you may be useful.’ Those words are ringing in my
ears now and I suspect that many here would, in a very kind and considerate way, be thinking
the same of this new, although now not so youthful, Governor.

350 Mr Speaker, in preparing to assume this appointment I have indeed been watching and
listening from afar, but I know that nothing can compare with hearing from the people of
Gibraltar themselves. Current circumstances may not allow the close engagement I would wish,
at least not initially, but I am determined to listen and to be useful, not one day but as soon as
possible.

355 One thing I will not need to be told is how special Gibraltar and its people are. Winston
Churchill once said a country which forgets its past has no future, and it is already clear to me
that Gibraltar’s history has fashioned a people with a special character and an ambition for
themselves and this very unique place. Typical of that character has been the way in which
Gibraltar has demonstrated to the world an amazing proficiency in denying the coronavirus a
360 strong foothold here on the Rock. However, my heart goes out to the people of Gibraltar, those
whose home has always been here and those more recently settled or just here for a temporary
period, who have suffered with this awful virus. The Government of Gibraltar needed to take
tough decisions to protect public health, and if I may be allowed I commend the Chief Minister
and his Government for the way in which they have confronted this threat and the way in which
365 this Parliament has been as one in ensuring a timely and proper response. As ever, everyone
who lives on the Rock, and indeed those who daily come here to work as part of the essential
and magnificent public services, have rallied together to ensure that Gibraltar has remained
strong in the face of adversity. We can all hope that this is but a dreadful moment in time in
Gibraltar’s rich and varied history, but it is one which reflects once again the personal and
370 collective strength of all who reside and work here and their ability to work together to
overcome any challenge. The world will be a somewhat different place when we eventually
emerge from the grip of this pandemic, and I hope very much that the recent necessity for
distinct national action will soon become an international collaborative approach to economic
and social rebuilding.

375 Gibraltar will face new challenges and new opportunities. If, therefore, I wanted one phrase
to summarise the priority I set myself for my time as Governor it would be to be forward
looking. Gibraltar honours its past, lives the present and focuses on a prosperous and inclusive
future. From my home a thousand miles away, I watched Gibraltar lower the European Union
flag and raise, in its place, the flag of the Commonwealth. I look forward to helping Gibraltar to
380 reach out to all the countries and territories of the Commonwealth to forge new and exciting
trade and economic partnerships, but there are also opportunities in the wider world and it

seems to me that Gibraltar is set fair to seize them. Meanwhile, it goes without saying that Gibraltar, like the United Kingdom, will retain the closest possible economic and social relations with those nations closest to us within the European Union and, of course, across the Straits in North Africa, for the mutual good of our economies, our security and our society.

385 None of what I have said undermines the importance of the United Kingdom's assurances on sovereignty underpinned by the Gibraltarian people's right of self-determination. The constitutional commitment of the United Kingdom is clear: Her Majesty's Government will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. Furthermore, Her Majesty's Government has also declared publicly and repeatedly that it would not enter a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content.

390 Mr Speaker, if I may, I would like to say a few words on what being Governor and Commander in Chief means to me, personally. As a naval officer, I am of course very mindful of the welcome and sanctuary that Gibraltar has provided to sailors serving under the white ensign, for many years, and the support Gibraltar has given to the fleet. The strategic importance of Gibraltar never alters and while the number of servicemen and women who are stationed here has fallen, the welcome given to those in uniform never changes. As you know, my two predecessors were Royal Marines, and while I fully appreciate the close bond between the Corps and Gibraltar, marked perpetually in the cap badge worn on the green beret, I am incredibly proud that a representative of another part of the naval service is this time about to make his home in the Convent; more important, the good-natured rivalry between the services.

400 The appointment I am privileged to assume indicates, in a way no other appointment can, the strength of relations between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. I recognise my new office as the clearest possible symbol of friendship between people geographically separated but no less bound tightly together. The office represents everything that is good in mutual understanding and support, our shared loyalty to democratic principles and the rule of law, our shared values and a selfless ambition in a dynamic and often insecure world, for the benefit of the people of Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. The office represents a guarantee of friendship and partnership.

405 The role is also a vehicle through which to effect change where it is beneficial to all. Gibraltar's Constitution provides for a modern relationship between mature democracies, both relying on each other in so many ways. As an individual so very fortunate to be invited to represent Her Majesty the Queen in Gibraltar, I will do my utmost to make sure that nothing can undermine the strength of partnership that has existed for many hundreds of years between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. I know that the relationship will be tested at times, as are relations in the closest of families, but by use of a common language, and through shared values and shared strategic intent, I am in no doubt that such challenges can be overcome. I have already noted that the cannons in front of No. 6 point directly at the Convent, and one of my foremost aims over the course of my residence in that place is to ensure that no one ever feels inclined to use them against me!

415 Mr Speaker, I will watch, listen, learn, and will make sure that the voice of Gibraltar is heard and understood where it needs to be. I hope to be more than just a symbol, playing my part in the most positive way in the daily life of Gibraltar and, where my abilities allow and is permitted to me under the Constitution, to help this Parliament in the work that it has to do. In those ways and in others I commit myself to the service of Gibraltar, its people and its Government, and I hope that in a very short order I will indeed be useful.

420 Mr Speaker, I am delighted to be able to conclude with a message from Her Majesty the Queen, who has asked me to convey her continued support and admiration for the people of Gibraltar and her very best wishes at this very challenging time.

430 Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

The House adjourned at 12.00 p.m.