



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10 a.m. – 2.49 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 18th July 2023

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 10 a.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: S C Galliano Esq *in attendance*]

Standing Order 7(1) suspended to proceed with Government Bills

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Tuesday, 18th July 2023.
Suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

5 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I beg to move, under Standing Order 7(3), to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with the laying of a document on the table.

Mr Speaker: Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

PAPER TO BE LAID

Clerk: Papers to be laid. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I have the honour to lay on the table the Revolving Facility Agreement for His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar with NatWest.

Mr Speaker: Ordered to lie.

Standing Order 7(1) suspended to proceed with Government Bills

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Clerk: Suspension of Standing Orders. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I now beg to move, under Standing Order 7(3), to suspend Standing Order 7(1) in order to proceed with Government Bills.

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Mr Speaker: Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Appropriation Bill 2023 – Debate concluded – Second Reading approved –

Clerk: We continue with the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2023.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

25

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In continuing my reply on the Appropriation Bill 2023-24, it is clear that one of the things we are doing is reflecting on what is, in effect, the end of the lifetime of this Parliament; we are heading towards a dissolution. And so, of course, because this is a state of the nation debate and it is the last state of the nation debate that we are going to have in the lifetime of this Parliament, I will have to make comments in respect of the widest of the issues that we have heard already ventilated in this debate by Members on this side of the House and hon. Members on that side of the House. I am going to reply, in particular, in respect of the points they have made relating to the public finances, and I am going to reply in particular to the points they have made in relation to the performance of the economy, and I am going to try to do that, this year, in a slightly different way. Instead of going through the speeches of each hon. Member one by one, I am going to try to take the themes that I detected were running through the statements that were made by hon. Members. I am going to go through those themes methodically, and because I have looked at the numbers and have done my research in respect of the things they have said, I have absolute confidence in saying that I am going to demolish each one of the theories they brought to the table – not with words, not with argument, I am going to do it with numbers. I am going to demonstrate empirically that the things they have said are unreliable when you look at the data, and then I am going to address the other things that they have each said individually.

Before I go on to those themes, I want to say something about the Chamber generally. I want to say something about Parliament and political life. There are some people in this Chamber across the floor from us who we started with in politics 33 years ago, so I want to start by thanking everyone for their friendship, for their personal regard. The fact is that we fight like cats in a bag to a very great extent in this place because it is what we are paid to do. The public expect us to defend our ideas, govern Gibraltar; they expect them to challenge us in the measure of what we do and hold us to account. That is what we are about. We have an adversarial system of government and opposition, and nobody should read into that that there is any personal animosity between Members in the House. In fact, in many instances there are great friendships across the floor of the House. There is great parliamentary companionship that we share, and hon. Members reach across, as I reach across to them, when they know that we have issues in our lives etc. So the fact that we fight hard to defend our arguments, that we are part of that adversarial system, should not be seen to represent any pugilistic desire on the part of each of us to destroy each other as an individual. What we are trying to do is get to the bottom of the argument, and today, when I do what I have to do to the arguments that they have put, I am not going for them, I am going for their argument, much as I fully accept that they did not come for us when they were putting their arguments.

I think it is important that at the end of a four-year cycle, that is just something that we put on the table, and as Leader of the House I am proud to put that on the table in front of our community. Indeed, our friendship transcends this debate and the differences that we have scratch the surface of the commitment of everybody in this House to this place that we call Gibraltar. We put the spotlight on those differences, we dance on the pinhead of our differences, but in great measure we are all here to defend Gibraltar. We have different views in that respect, and in some of those views we believe, on this side of the House, there is an inherent danger for Gibraltar. I want to go through those arguments now but on that basis, because our differences are about our ideas, ideas that we have to defend robustly. Indeed, Mr Speaker, if I may say so, when we agree with each other, as I have said before on many occasions, when the House is working together in tandem across the floor, looking at the detail of legislation together – one, just now, has the little giveaway on parliament.gi – the numbers fall way. The minute we start working together, people tend to stop watching; they, unfortunately, only watch when we are going at it hammer and tongs, gladiatorially defending our ideas. But it is never about denigrating each other, and I do not think anything I have done as Chief Minister in the past 12 years has been about denigrating anybody opposite, however tough I may have been on them. I may have talked about ability, I may have talked about aptitude, but I have never called hon. Members opposite unfit to govern. I would never call them that. I was called that – a demonstration that you can be

called whatever, it does not matter, the reality always trumps what you might be called. After 12 years, the people of Gibraltar having made the judgement three times over that I should govern, obviously the fact that I was called unfit to govern meant nothing. But I have never been called ridiculous before. I have been called many things but never ridiculous. I just want to be clear that I do not think any of them are ridiculous. I might think some of their ideas are ridiculous and I will go through them and explain why, but I have never called any of them ridiculous and I have never called any of them dirty.

So, Mr Speaker as we are going into the election year, having heard how Mr Clinton descended into calling me ridiculous and saying other things, what I want to do is call for temperance in debate, especially as we go into the election period. I know it is an issue that I will make common cause on with the Leader of the Opposition, who believes in temperance in debate and believes that we should be having a contest of ideas. I look forward to an electoral period, which is apparently fast becoming a two-horse race, where both of the teams in the election – us in coalition with the Liberal Party; hon. Members, who knows, either on their own or in coalition with what is left of Together Gibraltar ... I wonder how they are going to allocate seats in that respect. But anyway, I will have some fun with that in the future. How are they going to tell people of their long-serving executive who might want to be candidates that they cannot come in because a party that no longer has parliamentary representation is going to be a part of the team? He might square that circle. But as we go into that debate – which is, in my view, in reality going to be a two-horse race, even if there are three parties contesting the election – we must lead by example and we must have temperance in debate and not call each other ridiculous. I know that as the political prize of winning an election that once again feels to them, as I can sense, to be slipping from their less than firm grasp ... desperation may kick in, and I detected what I thought was an element of desperation or frustration in Mr Clinton in his address, but that is no excuse to start calling each other ridiculous or to start saying that we are dirty, in particular given that the things that led Mr Clinton to say that we are ridiculous are things that I will demonstrate he got wrong. So, if anything, that description did not just fit the person he threw it at; it might, by some, be deemed to be something that better describes not him – because I am not going to say that he is ridiculous; I do not think he is – but it better describes his analysis and the positions that he is taking in relation to this debate.

And so, Mr Speaker, let me start by saying that I thought hon. Members ... People will say that they were broken records and all the rest of it. I thought they played more repeats than BBC2 in their speeches. It was all about repeats. Mr Bossino is right, we do deserve better opposition, except of course it is much more important for us to do government, so we cannot go and do their job too, and we cannot field two teams in this General Election campaign, and we are not going to do opposition so that they can do government because if they do the job of government that they have done in opposition ... Goodness gracious, they would be more bothered about chickens than they would be about the issues of the day, as I will demonstrate. But it is clear and even Mr Bossino recognised that we even do opposition better than them, let alone government. And so it is clear to me that there are no – and those in the 1980s will remember this quote – Scorpions, there are no winds of change blowing in the town in relation to the Government, but one can certainly feel the wind of change blowing in the Opposition. Even though that may not be what this election is ostensibly about, it is very clear that this election – as I thought Mr Xiberras, may he rest in peace, said so effectively in 2003 – on the Opposition side is about grooming horses but not about changing the Government.

Why do I say that? Well, just look at what has happened in the past decade, in the past 12 years. Look at the baseline from which the GSD judges success. Look at how that has moved. Look at how the GSLP Liberal Government has moved the baseline of expectation from what *they* were able to deliver. They now demand that we do things that they were against doing when they were in government. Of course we were elected to deliver change, but we have delivered change in so many areas and will still deliver it in areas where we may not yet have been able to deliver it or may need to deliver it again. Gibraltar needs us to continue our reforming zeal, but we have

130 changed so many things, it is a badge of honour for this Government that we have even changed
 them. We have delivered so much change from Government that we have even changed the GSD
 Opposition. (A Member: Yes.) We have changed them to believe in what we believe, or at least
 they pretend to. There is now a GSD Opposition where two Members say, ‘Whilst Keith Azopardi
 135 is Leader of the Opposition, equality for all – at least whilst Keith Azopardi is Leader of the
 Opposition’. They now argue for what we argue and against what they did.

But, of course, on some issues they remain hopelessly divided, like the issue of equality, which
 I will come to. Some people on that side are virulently anti-LGBTQ+ equality, they are virulently
 anti-women’s reproductive rights, and if I may say so with respect to Members sitting opposite, I
 think those who hold those virulent views are the real spiritual leaders of that side. The one thing
 140 that we have not been able to change is how deeply hypocritical, politically hypocritical the GSD
 is when it comes to saying one thing and doing another, taking one position in opposition and
 doing the opposite in government. They know that that is true and they know it is also true that
 no Opposition has ever gone from holding anything other than the eight Opposition seats to
 holding Government. We can have the discussion about what happened in 1984 at seven in the
 145 morning, but no Opposition has ever gone from holding fewer than seven seats to holding
 Government. That is the political reality in which we are operating. So what is obvious, what is
 transparent, what the public know and what the public can sense is that they need to settle their
 civil war before they bring the battle to us. That is the reality.

Just listening them, every one of their speeches has been a real flop. Mr Clinton’s address:
 150 when I go through it, apart from the fact that it is delivered with a little less vehemence than one
 might expect given the seriousness of the issues that he says are bubbling under, you do not feel
 any passion for that seriousness that he is talking about. These were not the speeches of the
 Minister for Public Finance of a government in waiting. Where were the plans for what they were
 going to do? The only plan they seem to have is to have a Public Accounts Committee and wait for
 155 the value for money audit of the Principal Auditor, something I will come to later.

Mr Phillips’s address: although it was peppered with loud references to rhubarb, there was
 absolutely nothing in it. I will come to it in a minute, but it felt like we were seeing the delivery of
 a script for *It Ain’t Half Hot Mum* during the course of a Budget debate.

Mr Feetham’s address: I will go through it in detail, but I am still trying to work out whether it
 160 was Gaston’s valedictory – I will explain why I am calling him Gaston in a moment – or whether it
 was the first scene of *The Empire Strikes Back*. We are still divided, probably the latter. I am the
 one person he cannot fool in this place. We have a quasi-symbiotic relationship. We know each
 other as if we had given birth to each other, politically.

And Mr Bossino’s address: strong on fire, short on gas. You know what happens when you are
 165 long on fire and short on gas, yes? You are soon to be extinguished, because you run out of gas
 when you are burning really hot but with nothing in the tank. Former Leaders of the Opposition
 and obviously a future Leader of the Opposition – nothing else, in my view, so FLOPs all round.

And of course, the Leader of the Opposition today, also soon to be a FLOP – a former Leader
 of the Opposition – but not because he is going to move to this side, in my view. I do not get a
 170 sense that there is a feeling in the streets that Keith Azopardi is going to be the Chief Minister of
 Gibraltar before the year is out. I do not think I am so disconnected, and people around me would
 tell me: ‘The man is just, with his charisma, taking over the town. You will see him talking to
 everyone. He walks down the street greeting people from a distance. Fabian, your time’s up.’
 Perhaps they are telling him; no one is telling me. But look, the judgement will be in the ballot
 175 boxes. Let’s see whether people decide to put a gentleman who finds it difficult to raise his eyes
 to greet people in the street in charge of Gibraltar’s negotiating team to build relationships across
 the table with negotiating counterparts and establish relationships with the British political class
 to ensure the protection of Gibraltar, especially when I go through the things he has said about
 those things in the past. Let’s see, because the public will make the decision and the electorate is
 180 always wise. If they choose him, they choose him, but the winds of change that the Scorpions sang
 about do not feel, to me, to be the winds of change that the Rock scorpions are singing about. I

do not get that tune. I do not even hear *The Final Countdown*, which is my favourite tune of the 1980s.

185 It is not as if the hon. Gentleman is a stranger to being a flop. He flopped in 2003 when he asked Peter Caruana to step aside and let him take over. He flopped in 2007 when he led the PDP to its first General Election defeat. He flopped in 2011 when he led the PDP to its second General Election defeat. He flopped in 2019 when he led the GSD to its third consecutive General Election defeat. He is used to flopping. I just do not want somebody who is that much of a flop in charge of the affairs of Gibraltar, because I do not want Gibraltar to flop. It was their worst result in
190 25 years – since 1992, their worst result, no? Yes, so in 25 years: 19 plus eight is 27. It was their worst General Election result in 25 years, in a quarter of a decade, I am sorry to tell him. I am sorry if it is crystallised in his brain now that I have done the maths for him, but I think that is why Mr Feetham has such affection for him. I do not think it has anything to do with keeping Bossino at bay. I think it has more to do with the fact that the GSD had their worst General Election defeat
195 under Mr Feetham in 2015 *until* Mr Azopardi came and spared his blushes in 2019, *menos más*.

The GSD know that they are not a government in waiting. They know it, their party knows it and the public knows it. That is the reality. They are all opposition and no leadership, all opposition and no vision, all opposition and no plan for our people's future. Let's look at the themes they have tried to develop during the course of this week, in particular Mr Feetham and Mr Clinton.
200 They talked first and principally about their big idea by addressing the issue of Brexit and saying that of course the issue of continuity is not an issue because they are going to include us in their negotiating team. Oh, what a whizz, what a great idea, fantastic. They want a safe and secure agreement, just like us; they will only back a treaty if it is safe and secure, but we have missed all the opportunities that there were to do such a treaty. So they need to lead the team, include the
205 people in it who missed all the opportunities and then we will be fine. Let's look at some of the things they have said now and in the past, and then let's determine what the missed opportunities they say are, and let's determine what their positions on the issues which will make us safe and secure going forward are and have been. I want to be very clear: the things I am going to talk about are the things they have said. In other words, I am going to take the battle to them using
210 the things that they have said and they have committed to writing.

Let's be clear, success has many fathers and defeat is an orphan. There is no treaty. Whose responsibility in Gibraltar is it that there is no treaty? It is mine. Of course, with my Deputy Chief Minister, working together politically, it is ours. Of course, with the Government, it is ours. Of course, with the negotiating team, it is ours. But I make the calls with the Deputy Chief Minister and with the Government. It is *my* responsibility. The failure to have a treaty today in Gibraltar,
215 on the Gibraltar side, is my failure. I do not mind standing up for that failure because it is a failure I will defend in the absence of a safe and secure proposal that I was willing to bring back to the people of Gibraltar, because on the fundamentals we will never shift, *ever*. So I do not mind them saying that I have failed to do a treaty, because I know if I had brought the treaties that potentially
220 might have been on the table to the people of Gibraltar they would not be acceptable, and as I have said around the negotiating table, 'I am not prepared to agree this, not because I cannot sell it, not because the people of Gibraltar do not want it, I am not prepared to do this because I have been in politics for 30 years to say no when you came to ask for it.' That is my position at the negotiating table, not that it might not be sellable but that we will not do it because our position
225 has not changed for 30 years. In some instances, our position has not changed for 50 years. And our position will not change on the fundamentals, not because we cannot sell it, but because we will not do it, because we will not go through the needle. We will not go through the eye of the needle of any session on sovereignty – none, titular or otherwise – and I think there are people on that side of the table who agree with us; not even a titular session on sovereignty, not even
230 what might be described as a fig leaf to help the other side to do the deal. No, no, no. A socialist Chief Minister quoting Margaret Thatcher – no, no, no, because on the fundamentals we stand firm. Even titular issues of sovereignty are a step too far, and let whoever needs to hear that hear it, wherever they may be. They have heard it round the negotiating table, they will hear it here.

235 They will hear it wherever they have to hear it. There is no private position that we take which is different to our public position – all our positions are the same.

I even extend that, of course, to a potential status deal – in other words, a deal that goes beyond just an arrangement between the United Kingdom and the European Union on Gibraltar's future access on immigration and goods matters to the European Union – or a status deal *à la* modern Andorra, for example. We will not do a modern Andorra deal, which is to cede half the titular sovereignty of Gibraltar to a Spanish sovereign. We will not do that deal. I think there are people on that side who would not do that deal. I think there are people on that side who agree with us that Andorra, even modern Andorra, is joint sovereignty. I *think* there are people on that side ... Obviously, the issue for me is that, for me, this is the dividing issue on Gibraltar politics. If you believe that, you should be on this side, you should not be on that side. In fact, you should be with us whichever side we are on, because we defend the same position when we are in opposition as when we are in government. So let's be very clear: we on this side, on the GSLP Liberal side, will never recommend an Andorra-style solution to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum. We consider even the modern Andorra solution to be joint sovereignty. Even a Spanish titular sovereign would be unacceptable to us, and – I am surprised I even have to say this – it should not even ever be proposed to us. Not only would we not recommend it in a referendum, we will not say privately that we might accept a modern Andorra solution, and we are saying publicly nobody should come and privately propose it to us.

245 So why am I saying those things? Well, because they have said they want a safe and secure treaty, which does not go anywhere near a concession on sovereignty, and they have said that we have missed opportunities. Let's look at exactly what they said about those missed opportunities, and then let's look at what they have said about the key issues and let's bring those two things together.

Mr Azopardi, in his address in response to me, said this:

Before I turn to that financial analysis in detail, and as this is a state of the nation debate, I want to say something about the longstanding Brexit negotiations and the state of play of them. Our policy is and continues to be that we would like to see a safe and beneficial agreement concluded with the EU which establishes a new relationship with the European Union.

– so far, so good –

We do think there have been failures along the way and missed opportunities to secure lasting rights for residents of Gibraltar which could already have settled aspects of what we all want.

260 That is what he says to us of the people he wants to include in his negotiating team. Indeed, at different times Mr Azopardi has even said that we should have had our deal with the TCA. But then he went on to say:

the Chief Minister knows he can rely on us to make common cause with him against Spain as necessary for the defence of Gibraltar's interests. We would hope, likewise, that we could count on him on the fundamentals if there is a subsequent change of government in Gibraltar.

265 Remember, of course, that as I have referred the House to in my previous Budget addresses, Mr Azopardi was the Gibraltarian who said, in an article in the *Gibraltar Chronicle*, that one of the ways we should be looking at dealing with the future relationship with the European Union was that the President of the European Union should have responsibility for Gibraltar's external relations. I have quoted extensively from that article – it is in the *Hansard*. Imagine that. Talk about judgement. The Hon. Mr Azopardi was talking about giving the control of our external relations to Jean-Claude Juncker, who was then the President of the European Commission – Jean-Claude 'I have had one too many' Juncker in charge of Gibraltar's external relations. The European Commission is the entity that gave Spain that veto that we talk about, and we are talking about

giving them responsibility for our external relations. I think the result of the Brexit referendum in Gibraltar was 96%, but I do not think it would be 96% today, given the way people have thought that the European Commission has behaved in some respects – not in the negotiation, but in some respects with us during the period of the mandate etc. I do not think the faith that Gibraltar had in the European Union is there today, let alone agree with the Hon. Mr Azopardi that we should give control of our external relations to the President of the European Commission.

The next thing he said we had done wrong, the opportunity we had missed this time, was that we had allowed frontier workers to have freedom of movement before we had secured anything for us. Well, that is not true, as I have shown before. The Withdrawal Agreement preserves the agreement, the rights of everyone who is exercising European rights. Some frontier workers retain rights under the Withdrawal Agreement because it is a consequence of us not having had a hard Brexit at the time, but many of them no longer do. The churn of frontier workers is almost a thousand a year, more even, so of those who were in Gibraltar, who were exercising rights under the Withdrawal Agreement – probably about 10,000 – the Withdrawal Agreement came into effect in 2020. Thereafter, already half of them are likely to have gone without those rights. And yet he said that we should have done our agreement with the TCA. The TCA deals with issues which do not interest Gibraltar. I do realise that they are confused and they might say, ‘No, we have not said that.’ As I will show, Mr Speaker, they have said both that we should be included in the UK agreement and that we should not be included in the UK agreement. I will go through both, so hon. Members can choose which ones they prefer – which position they have taken which is diametrically opposed they would prefer today and which one they would prefer tomorrow, because they have taken both positions. Consistency is important to most people in politics, obviously not to them.

Look at what he said when he was the Leader of the Bar in October 2016:

As we have to take control of our own laws, the Government may also wish to consider retaining the ability of EU citizens to move freely, establish themselves, move capital and provide services into Gibraltar.

– in exchange for nothing, he was saying –

It may make reciprocal treatment easier going forward if we send the clear signal that, at least in Gibraltar, EU citizens will not lose the four freedoms.

So now he says that the missed opportunity is that we gave frontier workers continued freedom of movement, which is exactly in exchange for nothing, which is exactly what he was proposing in October 2016. Has he forgotten that? How dangerous to have somebody in charge of the Brexit negotiating team who forgets the positions he has taken in relation to Brexit. First of all, only three of the four freedoms apply to Gibraltar fully. The fourth freedom – freedom of movement of people, capital and services – applies. The freedom of movement of goods never applied to its full extent because we were not part of the Customs Union, and in any event this is to a very great extent, but not exactly, what happened under the Withdrawal Agreement, which he then brought his hatchet out to hit us about. So, at one stage he is saying have a different solution, also. Then he is saying have exactly the same solution as the UK.

Ironically, when I do some of my research for these things, I find gems that I do not expect to find. In exactly the same edition of the newspaper, also on the front page on 15th October 2016, the GSD, then led by Mr Feetham, also had a headline. The GSD were then saying we have to have exactly the same solution as the UK. *Claro, el integracionista*, the integrationist, wanted us to have exactly the same solution as the UK. They are even more confused than I thought. When I started to look in detail at what were the positions that Joseph Garcia and Fabian Picardo would have to kowtow to as part of the GSD negotiating team on Brexit, I found that one position was here and the other position was there, but that the negotiators were going to be there.

315 Under Mr Feetham we have to have the same solution, no differentiated solution. This is what Mr Feetham said on 15th December 2016 to Jonathan Scott in an interview on GBC:

To the extent that it is suggested by the Chief Minister or anyone else that somehow Gibraltar can negotiate a separate deal to that negotiated by the United Kingdom that involves more Europe, for example a special status within Europe, my position is that that is not realistic for Gibraltar.

Of course, his position changed to the complete opposite of that. Do not worry, I know that it changed. On 25th January 2017, he said this:

The GSD continues to believe that the best solutions for Gibraltar are that Gibraltar acquire the same rights as the United Kingdom in any future agreements that the United Kingdom makes with the European Union.

Same, same, same.

320 Look at this complete volte-face. By 26th July 2018 the GSD position on the most fundamental issue affecting this generation of Gibraltarians is to say that the interests of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar are diametrically opposed. Mr Feetham was saying this – this was in an address to Rotary:

Our interests are now so clearly unaligned with the interests of the United Kingdom that we would be foolish to make our negotiating strategy entirely UK facing. There is no point anymore in saying that we want the same deal the UK negotiates with the EU with an opt out.

325 Well, it was not us who were saying it, Mr Speaker, it was them. He might as well have said there is no point in us saying anything, because the only position that was being decried by the GSD was the GSD's position. The negotiation has gone on for 21 months up to now, right? This is a complete change of position in the GSD in 13 months. So in the space of the negotiating period they would have changed position from one end to the other. What sort of negotiators are they? I do not know. Joseph Garcia and Fabian Picardo do not negotiate like that.

Not only is there a real risk that there will be no UK deal, the issues that concern the UK are not the issues that concern Gibraltar.

330 Of course, the hon. Gentleman was saying, 'What about reverse Greenland?' Doesn't he realise that the consequence and effect of reverse Greenland is de facto what we are negotiating now? Doesn't he realise that? Well, perhaps he will, because his legal analysis of issues relating to sovereignty and to Brexit, which I will come to, is not as strong as one would have expected of a senior silk.

The interests that the UK wants to protect are not the interests that Gibraltar necessarily wants to protect. Their objectives are not our objectives. We are a finance centre that wants to be both EU and UK facing. We are a small community with little space that depends on frontier fluidity.

335 Mr Speaker, it is remarkable. I could go through the position that is put by Daniel Feetham a year after he put the opposite position and think it perfectly describes the position of the Government – perfectly. The incredible thing is that he took that position when? When we briefed him on what we considered to be the right negotiating position to take. He actually says to Rotary, 'Look, I am taking this position having considered these issues with the Government.' Having
340 considered these issues with the Government, yes; having been briefed and having done a complete volte-face on the thing which he said was the only safe position.

345 So what is the only safe position for the GSD? In 2016 it is to give our foreign affairs to the European Commission, to negotiate nothing other than the same deal with the UK – except, of course, Mr Azopardi is saying negotiate a different one – and then, in 2018, to negotiate something completely different. What is the position that we have to take in the Brexit negotiating

team when we go as part of their Brexit negotiating team? What is it? I am sure that even they do not know. On this fundamental issue the leaders of the GSD have gone from one side to the other, like a drunk meandering down Main Street at three or four in the morning not knowing which lamp post to grab and falling over.

350 Mr Clinton's analysis of Brexit, Mr Speaker ... Oh, no, he did not do one, so the Minister for Public Finance in the new GSD Government after the General Election, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for Gibraltar, does not address the key issue that affects the economy and, by dint of the economy, the revenue and the public finances of Gibraltar. Just that is enough to demonstrate that the analysis we heard from Mr Clinton is, in my view, not worth the paper it is written on – a

355 waste of paper, Mr Speaker.

In his analysis in this debate, Mr Feetham said this:

... Mr Azopardi, and his team are ready and willing to perform and do so well,

– 'his' team; that is to say no longer Mr Feetham's team, Mr Azopardi's team –

a team that has both experience of government and opposition, a team that contains Members who have formed part of negotiating teams with both Spain and the UK.

Well, actually, Mr Speaker, just a footnote. I do not think anyone on that side has ever negotiated anything with Spain. I do not think so. Mr Feetham was in No. 6 as Minister for Justice but did not negotiate the Cordoba Agreements, although he wrote extensively defending them. Mr Azopardi was outside the GSD, aggressively attacking the Cordoba Agreements. So unless somebody who we have never seen in any photograph, who negotiated with Spain at the time when they were in Government ... I do not know who it is that Mr Feetham was referring to. He

365 got even that wrong – unless they are telling us that Sir Peter is coming back, because I understand he was the only one who used to conduct the negotiation. And then he goes on:

And, of course, we have the benefit of their support from the Opposition benches when they lose the next election

– he is speaking to us –

because it is our policy to have one cross-party Gibraltar delegation when addressing international fora and negotiating our new relationship with the European Union.

A hell of an assumption there, Mr Speaker. It may be their policy; it does not mean that we have to go along with it. He went on to say:

It is absolute nonsense that they are the only ones who can negotiate a new treaty with the European Union, absolute nonsense.

370 A clear position from Daniel Feetham. Interestingly, Mr Feetham, I think, went on television, even before he had said those things, to say exactly the same things, but I am going to demonstrate to him and perhaps to others on that side, as well as to the general community, that actually there is a very good reason why we are the only ones who can negotiate with the European Union, Spain and the United Kingdom – the very good 'only Nixon can go to China' reference that hon. Members will know – because when he went on television he went even

375 further. He said this:

We all want the best for Gibraltar and I would assume that if we were to be elected into government

– 'assume', Mr Speaker: to assume makes an ass of you and me –

Mr Garcia and Mr Picardo would agree to form part of the Gibraltar delegation which we have invited them to form part of.

380 I have not even called a General Election yet, Mr Speaker. In their fantasy they have won it, they are sitting in Convent Place, ringing me up: 'Hello, dear Leader of the Opposition' – if I am, because I might not be – 'we want you to form part of a negotiating team. Ask that lovely Joseph Garcia to come with you, would you?' They are offering jobs and participation in negotiating teams even before I have said ready, steady, go to their General Election.

385 'And therefore,' he said, Mr Speaker –

Hon. D A Feetham: We are generous.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Feetham is saying, from a sedentary position, that they are generous. As I will show, they are not just being generous. I will show during the course of my address that 390 they are also threatening company directors and they are threatening others even before the General Election has been called. I will show them where they have done that.

He went on to say, on GBC:

Therefore, there will be continuity in the negotiations because what we are not going to do is what the Government have done over the last four years, which is go it alone, completely ignore the Opposition, not have the Opposition on board.

395 But we have never done that, Mr Speaker. We have briefed them consistently. When we have briefed them, we have asked them whether they had any ideas that they wanted to put to us, whether there was anything that they felt we had not put which should be put. Did they ever suggest anything? No, nothing, zilch. And indeed, past experience that we have of working with the GSD, when they were in government and we were in opposition, was that even on joint sovereignty they did not want us involved, because obviously it was a battle that was going to be won and the former Chief Minister knew that thereafter there was a General Election and he 400 wanted all that glory. But Joe Bossano got up in this House, in what I consider to be a memorable moment which should be highlighted in the annals of our political history, and said to Peter Caruana, who was not including him in the team to fight joint sovereignty, 'Don't worry. Before they get to you, they have to get through me.' They will have that from us, but they will not have us as part of their negotiating team. Peter Caruana conducted the Cordoba negotiations without 405 any Member of the GSD being with him, let alone any Member of the GSLP or the Liberals being with him. That is typical of the GSD, saying one thing in opposition and doing the opposite in government.

410 And what opportunities is it that they say we have missed, Mr Speaker? To use frontier workers like a bargaining chip, which Mr Azopardi says one day and then forgets, having said the opposite on another? That we form part of the TCA and then realise, as we have been telling them, that the TCA has nothing for us? These are not serious people to put in the context of the negotiation as political representatives of the people of Gibraltar who know their position on Brexit. These are not serious negotiators. Without being pushed in a negotiation, without pressure, I have already demonstrated they have changed their position on whether we should be part of the UK 415 agreements, or not. I have already demonstrated he has changed his position on whether we should use frontier workers as bargaining chips, or not. So Mr Feetham was wrong in the assumption that he made. We will not form part of a GSD Government's negotiating team of a Brexit treaty. We will not, and for very good reason. Indeed, by the time I finish going through the part that I am going to go through now, I do not think anyone in Gibraltar who joins us in our view 420 of sovereignty, and indeed some people on that side who join us in our view on sovereignty, none will want a GSD negotiating team to lead on Brexit, none, especially if you care about British exclusive sovereignty over Gibraltar – real, substantive and titular – and British exclusive sovereignty over the waters around Gibraltar.

425 I have still got to do a little bit more before I get to that good bit, Mr Speaker, because I have to go through another thing that was said during Mr Phillips's rhubarb-rhubarb style address. I am surprised he is not here to hear me with his army of blue and yellow soldiers ready to take me on. He said this:

When Mr Isola romantically [...] waxed lyrical about the Hon. Chief Minister. He said the GSD could not be trusted with the public finances and the crucial Brexit negotiations.

– quite right, too –

Of course, as always, he is completely wrong, Mr Speaker. I will tell him something for free:

– in fact, I am going to do it like Mr Phillips did –

he talks about only one man being able to take us forward, but we have an army of yellow and blue men and women in the GSD ready to balance the books, reduce the debt, restore public services and get Brexit done. Compare that to a record of the one man [who has failed to] get the deal done before [a crucial] Spanish General Election.

430 Well, Mr Speaker, I can remember an English blonde political bombshell who talked about getting Brexit done – and it is not just Mr Phillips I am thinking of – and look where that got the United Kingdom. Let's compare my record with Mr Phillips and let's see what he and his blue and yellow army can do. Let's concentrate on the yellow, which is the colour of cowardice, let us be always clear.

435 Mr Bossino – who I also have to deal with – also replying to Mr Isola, who seems to have drawn so much of their fire just for telling it like it is, said this:

Deploying [...] what are inelegant references to us by suggesting that we do not have a clue [...] that we do not understand diplomacy and that the Gibraltar public will understand this and re-elect them into office [...] Quite apart from the fact that we do have a competent team to lead the negotiations to a final conclusion ...

440 Seriously? I think even Mr Bossino is embarrassed when I am talking about the different positions they have taken and whether we should be part of the same deal as the UK or not, whether we should use frontier workers as bargaining chips or not. If they flip-flopped on these issues, issues where I think Mr Bossino's position is aligned with mine and with the Deputy Chief Minister's ... I do not think Mr Bossino believes that frontier workers should be used as bargaining chips and I do not think he believes that we should have formed part of the TCA, which does nothing for immigration or movement of goods. But they do realise now, I hope, that they obviously do not understand diplomacy, because you cannot go into a diplomatic exchange having taken so many different positions, especially on the most important issue of our generation.

445 The truth is that the Hon. Mr Azopardi has no longer pursued the idea that we should hand over control of our external relations to the European Commission. Perhaps he realised how dangerous and ridiculous it was when that was one of the things that Sr Margallo suggested should be the case. Sr Margallo, in his first post-Brexit proposal, said one of the ways to deal with this is that the external relations of Gibraltar become the responsibility of the European Commission, and of course there it would be Spain that would be responsible for those issues. I think after that I have not heard Mr Azopardi say the thing that he had said before, which Sr Margallo picked up as one of the things that he agreed with.

455 And so we cannot form part of a negotiating team that is not putting a clear position, that is taking positions which are contrary to ours – on those issues of the TCA, the frontier workers, the European Commission President having control of the external relations of Gibraltar – just as we cannot go to the United Nations with them, because we have a different view as to what the effect of the Constitution is and whether we should attend the C24. And because we are not going to form part of the team, of course, if people want continuity they need to elect a GSLP Liberal

460 Government that will put Fabian Picardo, that will put Joseph Garcia, that will put this Cabinet in charge of the negotiations, because they are not going to get continuity unless they vote for us.

The deepest irony that I have detected in all of this is that when they have seen the reality, which of course they have understood too, the public will not want to change the poker player at the table before the last round of cards is dealt, when the poker player knows everybody else and knows how they feign when they have cards or do not have cards; that Gibraltar is not going to change the generals in the last week of the war. They are not going to change Norman Schwarzkopf just as we are about to topple the regime. But do you know what the irony is, Mr Speaker? That having realised, as they have, that the Gibraltarians are far too clever to fall into that trap, what do they do: they take the opposite position they took in 2011. In 2011, they had a newspaper which they gave £100,000 of taxpayers' money to in one year, and the headline in that newspaper was 'Careful, warning, vote Picardo but you get Bossano.' That was the warning. Now it is the opposite. It is 'Vote Azopardi, but don't worry, you'll get Picardo.' It is ridiculous. They are not ridiculous but their positions are ridiculous. They are saying to the general public, 'Vote GSD and we will deliver a GSLP Liberal negotiating team in the Brexit negotiation.'

475 It is remarkable. How low has the proud GSD been laid? It is an admission, in effect, that they cannot run the negotiation. And why would we want to work with people who have been criticising our decisions all along? They have criticised the MoUs, they have criticised the Tax Treaty, they have criticised the Withdrawal Agreement, they have criticised the New Year's Eve Agreement. The New Year's Eve Agreement is the foundation of the negotiation that we are doing. How can they be the negotiating team that goes to turn the New Year's Eve Agreement, that they criticised, into a treaty between the European Union and the United Kingdom? Without the New Year's Eve Agreement there is no negotiation for a treaty, without the MoUs there is no New Year's Eve Agreement and without the Tax Treaty there was no Withdrawal Agreement or New Year's Eve Agreement. So Mr Feetham's assumption is wrong. We are not going to form part of the negotiating team. We are not going to be part of the political stunt that they are trying to pull, which is to pray in aid the Opposition to support their Government should they ever form it. If people want continuity in the negotiation, they will have to vote for the real thing: for the GSLP Liberal team.

490 The key issue is sovereignty. That is the key issue because when you look at what GSD policy is on sovereignty and you do a cold analysis, there is a thread that runs through their positions and it is a rotten thread. I am going to show how rotten it is and how it pervades the past leadership of the party and the current leadership of the party. Their position is that the modern Andorra is not joint sovereignty. They are the party of the potential recommendation of modern Andorra to the people of Gibraltar. They are the party that somehow did not see that joint sovereignty was what could come if you talked about Andorra.

Let me just be very clear. I believe I have, with my Government, the best relationship Gibraltar has had with the United Kingdom for generations and for decades. If an official – I know none at the moment who would do so, because they are close friends and supportive of Gibraltar – or a Minister – I know none and have met none who would do so, because they are close friends and supportive of Gibraltar – were, in the future, in my presence as Chief Minister, ever to say the words 'joint sovereignty' and fly a kite, I have a message for whoever is in government in the United Kingdom at the time. Not only would they be told immediately to stick it where the sun does not shine, I would guarantee that Minister or official that if they took one step forward I would not make it my business to defeat an attempt to cast joint sovereignty again as a pall over the people of Gibraltar, I would make it my business to bring down that government in the United Kingdom. It is that simple. I would mobilise everything Gibraltar has, every resource I have to bring down a government in the United Kingdom if they dared to give traction to joint sovereignty over Gibraltar. And do you know what? With the ability of the Government of Gibraltar and the people of Gibraltar to mobilise public opinion in the United Kingdom, I dare say we could achieve it.

510 What you cannot do in 2023 is forget the history of the past 20 years, because the people sitting in the negotiating room are not going to have forgotten the history of the last 20 years,

515 they are going to have read up on it, and what we are not going to do is form part of a negotiating
team under a GSD Government led by Keith Azopardi that has sent the most conflictive signals on
the issue of sovereignty. If Keith Azopardi becomes Chief Minister of Gibraltar, if Keith Azopardi
520 leads the Gibraltar negotiating team, like I have led it as Chief Minister with the Deputy Chief
Minister, then instead of having opposite them in the Spanish Foreign Ministry, in London in the
Foreign Office or in Brussels in the Berlaymont the man who said, 'Wake up and smell the coffee,
Gibraltar will never be Spanish,' or the man who wrote the book about the identity of the people
of Gibraltar, a hawk's hawk supported by the hawk of hawks ... Instead of having that opposite
525 them, they would swap our rock-solid position for the position of the man – Mr Azopardi – who
said in print that the Andorra solution is not joint sovereignty, and a joint negotiating team
proposed by the man – Mr Feetham – who, in the thick of our difficulties with Sr Margallo in
August 2013, said that he was prepared to come back from France to help me with the issues
affecting the artificial reef and potentially to remove the reef. Imagine when Sr Margallo read that
530 the Leader of the Opposition in Gibraltar was taking a completely different position to the position
being taken by Picardo, which was we will never move the reef, it is in BGTW, and the other guy,
the Hon. Mr Feetham, was saying, 'I will come back from France and, if necessary, I can see
circumstances where we will remove the reef.' We are not prepared to sit opposite the
negotiators for the Ministerios de Asuntos Exteriores with the guy who said Andorra is not joint
sovereignty and the guy who said they would remove the reef, so we will not agree to form part
of this negotiating team.

Mr Speaker, I am not being ungenerous. I am doing a cold, legal analysis. It is there on
pages 369-73 of his doctorate book *Sovereignty and the Stateless Nation*, a very interesting read.
I do not agree with the premise. It is an important work of scholarly analysis which is hugely
535 relevant to this debate, and it will not just have been read by me. When he launched he knows I
congratulated him on it, and I read it and I remember what I read.

More controversially,

– he says in the book –

some commentators have referred to an Andorra-style model for Gibraltar. This has proved controversial only
because of the current constitutional status of Andorra is often misrepresented in the Gibraltar media as a form of
joint sovereignty. A solution based on the Andorra model would be a hybrid formula that would not fall under this
heading.

– his words, not mine –

Andorra was not a suitable precedent for the joint sovereignty model put forward in 2002 because, as a result of its
1993 constitution, Andorra had become an independent state and not a territory whose sovereignty was held jointly
by two other states. However, the Andorra model does provide an interesting example of an imaginative way of
addressing the sovereignty issue. The Andorran constitution recognises, in accordance with the institutional
tradition of Andorra, that the Co-Princes are jointly and indivisibly the head of state of Andorra, the Co-Princes are
a historical institution and are, in their personal exclusive right, the Bishop of Urgell and the President of the French
Republic. The Co-Princes perform normal constitutional functions as head of state within the Andorra system. They
also have functions in relation to certain categories of treaties or may initiate a process of constitutional revision
that appoints some members of the judiciary. It seems clear that the Andorra model is not one of joint sovereignty
but rather a model based on sovereign independence of Andorra, where the people of Andorra, who are sovereign,
have consented to the Co-Princes performing government. The Co-Princes are not sovereign in Andorra. Those who
are sovereign, namely the people, are the representatives of Andorra. To that extent, and while it is possible to
speak of the Co-Princess having the titular sovereignty in Andorra, even that is a slight misnomer which does not
accurately reflect the constitutional position, in that it insufficiently describes the sovereign legitimacy of the people
of Andorra.

It is a moot point whether Spain would accept an Andorra-style solution. This could be the quid pro quo for Spain
accepting that it cannot acquire sovereignty and that the people of Gibraltar are the key repository of that
sovereignty. Indeed, the parties may wish to enter into a tripartite agreement or treaty to replace the Treaty of

Utrecht, to which the EU may become a fourth party if it is to have some involvement in the resolution of the conflict. Such a treaty could provide for the vesting of sovereignty in or for the people of Gibraltar on trust.

540 Everything I have read is a direct quote from Mr Azopardi in *Sovereignty and the Stateless Nation*. I respect that that is his view. It is his legal view. I am not making anything up, I am reading from his text. I am not being nasty, I am not calling anyone names; I am simply disagreeing with the analysis that he has done and pointing out to my fellow Gibraltarians that this is what our negotiating counterparts will know is Mr Azopardi's position. They know for us they cannot even say the words 'joint sovereignty' or the word 'Andorra' – we walk out of the room. They know for
545 him it is the sort of thing he said the Spanish might accept that may form part of a tripartite agreement to replace the Treaty of Utrecht, that it could be quadripartite with the European Union. How can we sit that man with these views opposite the negotiators for Spain in the context of this negotiation? I am starting to think that the only hawk left on that side is Mr Bossino. Look, we are all Gibraltarian patriots. I do not think Keith Azopardi wants anything which is bad for
550 Gibraltar. We are all Gibraltarian patriots but I have a different view of what modern Andorra is, and the people sitting opposite me in the negotiation know that, the people sitting in London know that and the people sitting in Brussels know that.

What does talking about modern Andorra do to the uninitiated – that is to say a person who has not done a PhD on the subject? Let's look at what Peter Caruana said in Seville in 2010. I can
555 say this without fear of contradiction because a press release was issued by the GSD Government on 1st December – it is Government Press Release 319/2010. There was a question put to the Chief Minister and this is what the Chief Minister answered. Eduardo del Campo of the daily *El Mundo* asked what would be the best final status for Gibraltar, to maintain the current status quo, or not? This is the answer that the former GSD Chief Minister gave in 2010:

The current status quo does not displease us, it pleases us, but is it the final status for Gibraltar? I personally think that it is not. The answer to the question is simply this. My obligation as Gibraltar's political leader is not to indoctrinate Gibraltarians as to what they should think and not think about a possible future solution to the problem. That is not my obligation. My obligation is to protect their right to choose and not to be victims of imposition, which is what I do. So what if there should be proposals? Any would be good, provided that they are freely accepted by the people of Gibraltar. For example, I have many times said that a proposal which I do not think Spain would make, is not minded to make now or perhaps ever, a proposal for a possible solution to the Gibraltar issue, which to a certain extent is problematic for everyone, would be, for example, a status like Andorra, which is a situation in which, well you all know, the Andorra posts its new Constitution of 1993, obviously not the one before. Well, if that were viable, I would say that, well, let's put that to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum.

560 – GSD policy 2010 –

I would even not see it as impossible that I might recommend it to the people of Gibraltar.

GSD Policy 2010. GSD leader 2009, *Sovereignty In the Stateless Nation*: modern Andorra is not joint sovereignty. But in the end, the people who will have to decide will be the people of Gibraltar and not Peter Caruana or Peter Caruana's successor. I am not making anything up. In 2009-10 the current leader of the GSD is saying that modern Andorra is not joint sovereignty and the former
565 leader of the GSD is saying that modern Andorra is something we would be prepared to recommend in a referendum if Spain would put it. And we are going to put these people opposite the Spanish negotiators?

What happens when you talk about Andorra to the uninitiated, the question I posed before? Well, we know what happens. We have an empirical record of what happens. In his book *Outside
570 In*, Peter Hain talks about his conversations with Peter Caruana. He says this:

Emyr Jones Parry, then the Foreign Office political director and later NATO and UN ambassador, whom I trusted implicitly, advised me to meet on a one-to-one basis and ask Caruana what he thought a final settlement might look like,

– exactly the same question that the fellow from *El Mundo* put in 2010 –

so I did just that.

– in other words, Peter Hain tells us in his book he did exactly in private what the *El Mundo* guy did in a press conference –

Caruana gave an intriguing, thoughtful and encouraging response: ‘An Andorra solution would be worth looking at’, he said.

I am now going to quote from Peter Hain’s book, Mr Speaker:

Andorra’s status is essentially one of co-sovereignty between Spain and France, expressed through the King and the bishops, though it has its own autonomy and its own representation to the United Nations and in the European Union. I responded enthusiastically and we had a productive discussion in which he was, however, at pains to stress the need for caution, insisting that there had to be a long and familiar list of confidence-building concessions from Spain, such as freeing up border controls in their access, matters which had for so long caused such antagonism towards Spain.

When I later saw the former Chief Minister and Labour Party Opposition leader, the crafty but likeable Joe Bossano, he also gave me a long lecture about never selling out, an old-class warrior, he was somebody who you sensed would never change. We had a good-natured discussion, which included his experiences when living in London as a Labour activist.

Joseph Garcia, leader of the smaller Liberal group, was more extreme than Bossano.

575 – (Laughter) –

A few weeks later, I decided to go to Spain for further discussions with Ramón de Miguel and his team, hosted by our Ambassador Peter Torry. Having again talk to Emyr Jones Parry beforehand, I decided to surface a co-sovereignty proposal. Essentially, I explained to the Spanish, it would mean Britain and Spain sharing sovereignty, with Gibraltar having much more autonomy, getting rid of all the colonial nonsense and also overriding all the obstacles that affected normal daily life – border controls, restrictions on telephone access etc., the lack of easy diversions to Malaga of incoming plane flights to Gibraltar Airport in bad weather, and so on. Having broken the sovereignty logjam, the Spanish were really up for all sorts of ideas and were no longer obstructive on any of Caruana’s confidence-building measures. My officials concurred that this meeting proved to be a dramatic breakthrough.

Shortly afterwards, I briefed Peter Caruana on the Madrid meeting, telling him, ‘Gibraltar gets more power, more sovereignty in terms of your own decision-making structures, things you’ve wanted for a long time, and you, as Chief Minister, become a more powerful figure by obtaining powers currently determined by the British Government acting on behalf of London. All the frustrating obstacles and the intimidation preventing normal life from the Rock will go, but the co-sovereignty has to be a part of it. If it isn’t, then we are stuck with the status quo. I want you to be part of negotiating all the detail. You can shape the outcome and protect all your interests.’

Caruana listened politely, then all the creativity and flexibility he had first demonstrated in our productive lunch a month earlier expired in a puff of traditional Gibraltarian obstinacy: ‘There is no prospect of me doing that, no prospect of me agreeing with such an approach,’ he said. But I reminded him he had set me off on the co-sovereignty model through his Andorra idea. ‘Well, I might be willing to go along with something like that, but only subject to all sorts of conditions,’ he conceded, explaining with passion that he had to maintain the confidence of his electorate. He could not go out on a limb.

And then we know what happened. José María Aznar wobbled at the last minute. Ironically, it was Aznar who saved us from joint sovereignty. In fact, Peter Hain later says that he was deeply disappointed:

And so was Ramón de Miguel. We had negotiated toughly and in good faith. He soon phoned, embarrassed, apologising profusely. Several years later, he said ruefully to me,

– talking about Ramon de Miguel –

shaking his head, ‘Aznar and Piqué, rest in peace, made a huge mistake of historic proportions.’

580 – he appreciated the supreme irony that it was Madrid that came to the aid of Caruana –

I do not regret what we did

– says Peter Hain –

or the personal flak that I took in ensuring that, at the very least, co-sovereignty will always remain part of the future political architecture for Gibraltar. In time, I believe serious thinking on the Rock will come to see it not as a threat but as a liberating opportunity.

I suppose some have, Mr Speaker, serious thinking on the Rock.

I want to be very clear that Peter Caruana denies the version of *Outside In* which Peter Hain wrote. In the leaders' debate in 2011, with Mr Azopardi there, Peter Caruana asked me whether I preferred his version of what had transpired or Peter Hain's. I said that I would choose his version every time over Peter Hain's. But of course the one thing that Peter Caruana cannot challenge is what he himself said in public in Seville, which Peter Hain says he said in private at the Waterfront, and the answer that Peter Caruana gave in public in Seville is the same answer that Peter Hain says he gave him in private at the Waterfront. Sir Peter has never denied it, and in fact it was in Government Press Release 319/2010.

So that is what happens when you talk about a modern Andorra solution being acceptable. You open the genie. You let out the genie of joint sovereignty. Peter Hain has explained that. The whole genesis of joint sovereignty comes from talking about an Andorra-style solution being acceptable, and an Andorra-style solution being potentially acceptable is the basis of what I have read hon. Members from Mr Azopardi's book. He considers it is not joint sovereignty, but look, others do and they want to go down the route of a modern Gibraltar constitution, which is joint sovereignty with Spain – and those are the people that, if the electorate were to decide should become the next Government of Gibraltar, will sit heading the Brexit negotiating team, sitting opposite Spanish negotiators and European negotiators alongside Foreign Office negotiators. That is not safe for Gibraltar.

So it is clear that to keep Gibraltar safe you have to vote for the continuation of the negotiating team that you have now, led by the GSLP Liberals with me and Joseph Garcia representing us, and the Cabinet with Joe Bossano in it. It is that clear, and that is why, having done that forensic exercise, I tell the GSD we will not accept their offer to form part of their negotiating team because just the fact that they form a negotiating team is dangerous for Gibraltar, is bad for Gibraltar and puts our sovereignty at risk, especially with a potential Partido Popular government around the corner already saying that what they want is to put the joint sovereignty proposals on the table, as you will have read in some of their pronouncements in public.

Give Spain no hope, and you do that only with a GSLP Liberal team. We are the ones who keep Gibraltar safe. Put *them* in the room and we are toast. Of course they had to defend Gibraltar against joint sovereignty in 2003 successfully, but only because they lit the match. They lit the match, it is clear, and his book is the bomb at the end of the match if he becomes Chief Minister of Gibraltar. Even with PSOE in government, having him opposite would be a boon to the negotiators. We will not send those signals, ever. We will have no part of that, ever. We will not form part of any such negotiating team. I want to be clear: I do not want, I will not seek, I would not obtain agreement, leave or consent for my party to negotiate any Andorra-style solution and I will form no part of any team that includes people who have proposed that as something which is acceptable, let alone – if Mr Feetham were to decide to be a candidate – form part of a team sitting opposite Spanish negotiators with a man who said he was prepared to come back to Gibraltar to help me remove the artificial reef as the way of resolving the crisis that we had in 2013. Where is Margallo now, and where is the reef? Where it has to be. And one of the blocks in the headquarters of Vox in Madrid is a painful reminder to them in particular that those are British waters and that the reef remains where it should be.

If they win the General Election because the people of Gibraltar decide that they should win, before they get to them they will have to get through me, but I am not going to go and sit alongside

630 them and be part of their negotiating team, absolutely not. We will make our opinions known on what they come back with, just as they have, because it is one thing is to help them in the negotiation, give them our views etc., it is quite another to end up with Andorra splattered all over our faces like we ended up with Cordoba splattered all over our faces without anybody knowing what was going on in the negotiation there.

To think that Mr Azopardi said in December 2019 that I, the Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, was not the right person to negotiate Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU – well, it is a good thing that the public disagreed in October 2019. We delivered, after that, the New Year's Eve Agreement, we delivered the Withdrawal Agreement. Imagine if we had not had those things. We would not be negotiating an EU treaty now. But what is clear to people sitting opposite us is that we have what it takes to say no. *We have what it takes not to blink. We are very clear that Andorra is joint sovereignty and want no part of it. We have what it takes to take the tough decisions. We have what it takes to say no to an agreement if it is bad for Gibraltar, and they are the party that had a policy in 2010 of potentially recommending a modern Andorra-style solution to the public.* They are the ones who carelessly unleashed the genie of joint sovereignty. They are the risk Gibraltar cannot afford to take. We are the option that keeps Gibraltar safe, and that should be the end of this debate because more than whether the deficit moved or the surplus moved, whether or not there was £¼ million more for scholarships or not, that is the defining issue of Gibraltar politics and on that their key position in this debate is not one that can survive today because they now know we will not form part of the negotiating team. There will be no continuity because we will not be there and the public know how dangerous it will be to put *them* at the head of the negotiation.

650 But let's look at the numbers, because the next theme they developed was that the surplus is a hopeless fiction, so let me look at the rest of the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition in this debate. He had the two key things: Brexit – 'they will come as part of our team'; then 'the restoration of financial stability is not true, the surplus is a hopeless fiction'. There is a hopeless fiction: the hopeless fiction that the Opposition, the GSD, is somehow dependable in the way that they do an analysis of the figures; the hopeless fiction that the GSD is going to form Government after the next election, which I suppose they need to keep going so at least they have 20 or 30 people to distribute their leaflets. Do not worry, we will always feed them at the polling stations because our people are like that and we like to share what we have. But otherwise, if you do not keep the hopeless fiction going, you do not even have the people to give *la papeleta*. The blue and yellow army is not so extensive, there are not that many in it. They might have to call Wagner in support if they start to run out of the blue and yellow soldiers they talk about.

660 We leave the decision as to who is going to govern Gibraltar to the people. We take absolutely nothing for granted on this side of the House, let alone the support of the people of Gibraltar, but the analysis that I have just done and the commitment to writing by him of an Andorra-style solution being not joint sovereignty I think is going to probably ring the death knell of any chance they may have thought they had of forming government. That is the only hapless – not hopeless, hapless – fiction. But what is really unacceptable is for them to try and leverage their way into No. 6 Convent Place by saying that we have massaged figures, by saying that we have somehow prevailed over the Financial Secretary – who is an official, not a magician – and all his team, to produce numbers which are untrue, and then, in order to make that fiction apparently true, massaged the figures themselves. There is a pattern developing. They do not like these numbers, and when they do not like a number they say it is not true or they say something is missing.

675 They do have some very strange bedfellows, Mr Speaker, really strange bedfellows. When it comes to taking down the Pride flag, the curtailment of LGBTQ+ rights, being anti-abortion and saying that the nation's Budget is not true, there is the GSD, Partido Popular and Vox. It is exactly the same position across the board. So when people look at what is happening in Spain on their television screens, if they look at Spanish politics and they see the things that are being said by the right wing there, they just need to click on to here and watch them doing exactly the same thing, at least some of them: Mr Bossino when it comes to abortion and LGBTQ+ rights, and

Mr Azopardi and Mr Clinton when it comes to numbers. Put them in a blender and you end up with Feijoo, Partido Popular. It is remarkable. What next? Are they going to stop banning Virginia Woolf plays, as is happening in Spain in the areas where Vox is governing with Partido Popular?

Mr Azopardi said this: 'The projection of the surplus does not stand up to scrutiny. It is a fiction, it is a convenient narrative. The Government is rewriting its financial record, pretending things are better than they are, not taking a responsible approach. The reality is people should be told how serious things are. We refuse to tell our people electoral fairy tales.' Well, we have told them how serious things are.

Then he said: 'When the Chief Minister gave his speech about financial stability being restored and the surplus, there was a stunned silence at the Chamber dinner.' Was there? No, Mr Speaker, there was a very respectful silence from the minute I started talking to the minute I ended, but it was not a stunned silence. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman understands what he says. A stunned silence is when suddenly everybody goes quiet, but when everybody is quiet and continues to be quiet, there is respect in the room for the speaker. So how could he talk about a stunned silence? I will tell you why: he was not there. The Leader of the Opposition did not attend the Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner in an election year. He was not invited, he says. I have not been invited to Chamber dinners when I have been Leader of the Opposition, and I have paid my way. The party buys a table or the law firm buys a table. He was not there in his capacity as a lawyer, he was not there in his capacity as leader of the GSD, he was not there in his capacity as the Leader of the Opposition. It is an important thing. He then comes here and quotes the Chamber report as if it were the gospel. Well, why didn't he go to mass that day, for goodness sake? Why?

He said that the Estimates Book was a stunt prop which sets out a financial miracle, a feast of financial recovery years ahead of time. 'What a magician,' he said – I am surprised he did not call me David Copperfield, (*Interjection*) (A Member: Paul ...) Paul Whatshisname, Mr Speaker, Paul Daniels – 'a surplus built on deeply massaged figures.' Well, here is the happy ending, because these are not massaged figures, these are real figures. Mr Clinton did a similar analysis, but then actually subject what they have said to rigorous analysis, not just what is going to sound good – 'What can I say to damage Picardo politically?' – because you can say whatever you like to damage somebody politically. I can say anything I like about hon. Members, try and justify it and it is worthless, but when you subject things to rigorous analysis – which is what this debate is about; it is a debate about numbers, especially when you are talking about the surplus – what happens?

Let's look at the estimated surpluses of the past 12 years, the time that I have had the honour and privilege of being the Leader of the House and Chief Minister. Let's look at what I presented as estimates and what I presented as outturns. In every instance, every surplus I have predicted has been exceeded except for the two years when COVID hit – obviously, it destroyed everything because we started to spend the money that would have been the surplus. The lowest level of underestimation was £21.9 million – £22 million – in the year 2015-16. In other words, in 2015-16 we exceeded our estimate for the surplus by £22 million, so if this year were 2015-16 the £2.5 million would have become, by the end of the year, £24.5 million. The highest level of underestimation is £66.4 million, which happened in 2013-14, so if this year were 2013-14 and we have an estimate of £2.5 million, it is likely that we would have ended up with £68.9 million – that is to say £69 million of surplus. That is my record, not that I predict £2.5 million and I end up with a deficit. So the least well we have done over budget is £22 million. The most over budget on the surplus we have been is £66.4 million. It is consistent, at least, if you look at the trend that we always underestimate the surplus because we always underestimate revenue, which is the prudent thing to do. If you exclude the COVID years, the average underprojection for 10 out of the 12 years is £44 million a year underestimate on the surplus. That is to say if this year we were to perform to the average underestimation of the surplus, the surplus, instead of being £2.5 million, would be £46.5 million. That is not some fluke event, it has happened every year except the COVID year. That is why the argument about the £2.5 million being a hopeless fiction is a hapless fiction. It is completely nonsensical. Just look at the direction of travel. And then he

730 will say, ‘ But you overspent. I will show him that we overspent less than they overspent in each year and we still got the surplus.

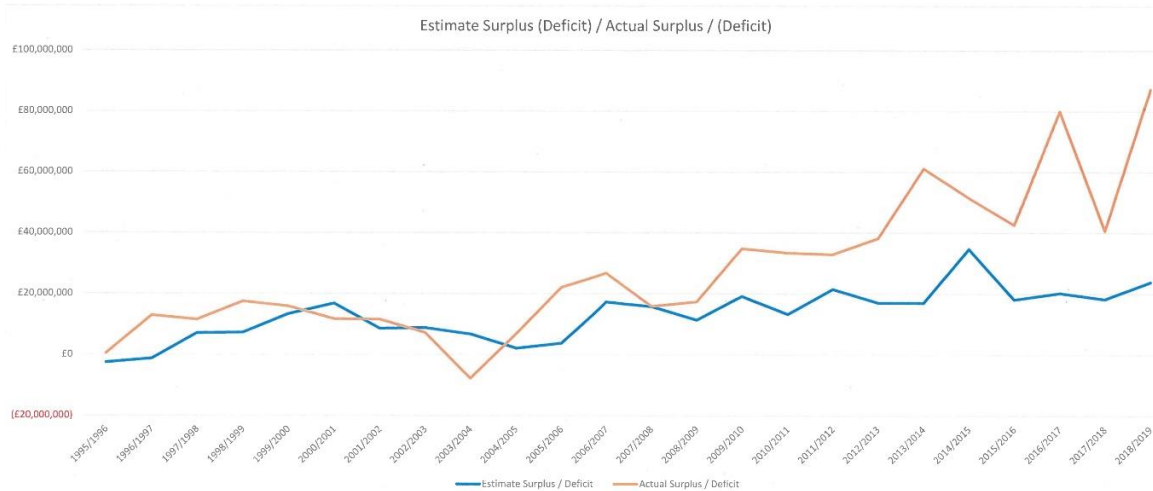
This year that we are reporting to, the last financial year, 2022-23, we did better by £30 million. So doing better on average by £44 million – at least by £22 million, maximum by £65 million – has been borne out even in this year, because this year we have done £30 million better than we
735 expected to. It was not enough to get us into surplus, but it pulled us from a £45 million deficit to a £15 million deficit, and that is despite giving £30 million to the companies structure of the recurrent. So if you took the £30 million out – and why would I say that we should take the £30 million out, because they did not give it to measure our surpluses like they measured their surpluses – this year we would have had, for the year that we are reporting, not a deficit of
740 £15 million, we would have had a surplus of £15 million, but we gave £30 million to the companies in order not to have a £100 million hole the companies, like we found when they were there. That is the reality, and if you do not give £30 million to the companies next year – which you do not have to give; we give it because it is our policy, they did not give it – the surplus will not be £2.5 million, it will be £32 million already.

745 But look at this, Mr Speaker. The trend is there. In 2012-13 we underestimated revenue by £32.1 million. We had an estimated surplus of £17.1 million. We ended up with a surplus of £37.2 million, £20.1 million better than the estimate. In 2013-14 we underestimated revenue by £66.4 million. We had estimated a surplus of £17 million. We ended up with a surplus of £50 million, which was £33.3 million better than the estimate. In 2014-15 we underestimated
750 revenue by £25.4 million. We estimated the surplus at £34.6 million. We ended up with a surplus of £51.2 million, which was £16.6 million better than the estimate. In 2015-16 we underestimated revenue by £21.9 million. We had estimated a surplus of £18.1 million. We ended up with a surplus of £38.8 million, which was £20.7 million better than the estimate. In those years you could add £25 million, if you wanted, to each of those figures because we were giving £25 million to the
755 companies, which they did not give. So we are denuding our surpluses of £25 million, which would have flattered their surpluses if we had calculated our surpluses in the way that they do.

Let’s keep going. In 2016-17, we underestimated revenue by £64.9 million. We had estimated a surplus of £20 million. We ended up with a surplus of £75.8 million, which was £55.5 million better than the estimate. In 2017-18, we underestimated revenue by £23.1 million. We had
760 estimated a surplus of £18.3 million. We ended up with a surplus of £36.1 million, which was £17.8 million better than the estimate. In 2018-19, we underestimated revenue by £56.5 million. We had estimated a surplus of £23.8 million. We ended up with a surplus of £82.8 million, which was £59 million better than the estimate. And then the pandemic hit and there were no surpluses, but what a direction of travel.

765 Mr Speaker, I wonder if the Clerk would please call the usher and distribute to all Members, on this side and that, a graph that shows how we have exceeded our estimates compared to how they exceeded their estimates of surplus. Indeed, in some instances their surpluses did become deficits. There is no reason to think that our surplus is a hopeless fiction. Far from it, there is every reason to believe that we will exceed our surplus.

Table 1



770 This graph is headed ‘Estimate Surplus (Deficit)/Actual Surplus (Deficit)’. Members can see how
it starts in 1995-96 and how it goes, and Members can see that Mr Azopardi has tried to pretend
that this does not exist, that in fact the blue line will go through the beige line and we will go to
deficit. No. All of the data, all of the trend shows the opposite with the numbers that I have given
him. No evidence to the contrary, no reason to talk about a hopeless fiction, far from it. He is as
775 wrong about that as he is about Andorra not being joint sovereignty. This is not a hopeless fiction
of a surplus. This is a hopeless argument and it is put forward by hopeless advocates of doom and
gloom, hopeless merchants of doom hopelessly having failed to check their figures. The figures
speak for themselves. The numbers do not lie and they are based always on the Treasury’s
conservative figures about revenue and expenditure – we always look at overexpenditure, in some
780 instances – and surpluses.

They put a negative gloss on everything. They give a negative spin to every single aspect. They
want to talk the Treasury down, they want to talk our nation’s economic performance down, they
want to talk the public finances down, as long as they are not the ones in charge. It is predictable,
it is unfair and they are wrong, always wrong. Of course, everything is subject to performance. We
785 could have another instance which is dramatic. We could have another pandemic – please, God,
that will not happen. Many other things could happen, but the trend, except for the two years of
the pandemic, is there.

Why do they do this, Mr Speaker? Why do they think that we are not going to keep to our
surplus estimation? Well, because perhaps that is what they did when they were in government.
790 That is what happened, in effect, in some years after what Mr Clinton called their glorious march
up Main Street in 1996 when they felt like they were liberating Gibraltar, he said.

In 2000-01, with Mr Azopardi in the Government as a Minister, they had estimated a surplus
of £16.8 million. They ended up with a surplus, yes, but of £9 million. They were £6.8 million worse
off. That year, their estimate of their surplus was a hopeless fiction. In 2002-03, with Mr Azopardi
795 in the Government, they had estimated a surplus of £8.8 million. They ended up with £5.2 million,
£3.5 million worse off. That year, their estimate was a hopeless fiction. In 2003-04, the election
year, they threw the kitchen sink at the electorate. There were so many goodies thrown at the
electorate that people were knocked on the head as they walked down Main Street and past
College Lane. They estimated a surplus of £6.7 million. They ended up with a deficit of £1.3 million,
800 £8 million worse off than their estimate. That was a hopeless GSD fiction, a hopeless fiction which
turned a surplus estimate into a deficit. In 2005-06, they estimated £3.7 million. They ended up
with a surplus of £2 million, which was £1.7 million worse off.

In 2008-09 they had estimated their surplus at £11 million. It came in at £17.4 million. They did
better that year than their estimate. You are thinking to yourself, ‘He has been on his feet for too

805 long. Why is he making this point? It is good for them. Why is he making this point? Well, Mr Speaker, it is because in that year, when they had predicted a surplus of £11 million and they ended up with a surplus of £17.4 million, that – Mr Bossano should calm himself now – is the year they took £19.3 million, which was in the Savings Bank Reserve, into the Consolidated Fund. They plundered the reserve of the Savings Bank on 31st March – this is real alchemy – to turn a deficit
810 of £1.9 million overnight into a surplus of £17.4 million, because otherwise they would have been £13 million worse off. *That* is the sort of fiction that we had to accept we were subjected to when they were in government.

Of course, if that is how they behave, perhaps they think that is how we behave, but I have shown them that the trend is completely different. It is quite the opposite. Judge us by what we
815 do, not by what you would have done. The only time we have failed our estimate targets for the surplus is in the pandemic. Even last year, already £30 million up. But I bet whilst he is sitting there he wishes that before coming up with this nonsense of a hopeless fiction as his theme and Mr Clinton's theme he had done the research, because he sits there now with economic egg splattered all over his face. I have even plotted it in a chart, because a picture is worth a thousand
820 words. I have done the work for him with the team at the Treasury. I have asked them to put it on a graph. All the numbers are there. In fact, all the Estimates Books are now online, so he can go and look at them and verify the figures. No insults, not calling anyone ridiculous, just the difficult facts that make their arguments unsustainable and demolish the proposal that they were making, unsound arguments that they put and they took to the people of Gibraltar here and in interviews
825 outside of here, all falsely representing a position which was not the case.

All of those excesses of the surplus we have done, as I have said, whilst contributing to the companies. So we calculate the surplus after we have taken £25 million out for the companies for about 10 years; now £30 million every year. The total amount of recurrent contributions to the companies structure is £311 million. Mr Clinton says he knows nothing about what we pay back
830 and what we do not pay back. It is all there in the Book. He just wants us to do it for him. He does not tally it. The capital contributions that we made to the companies, £162 million; a total of £473 million contributed to the companies structure in recurrent contributions and capital contributions. In the period between 2002-03 and 2011-12, the GSD only put in £49 million to the companies. That is why it had a hole of £100 million in it. That is how we fixed the hole,
835 Mr Feetham, by putting the money in to plug the hole. No magic, just proper accounting for the people's money, and that is not including the £65 million that we contributed to another government company, the new International Bank, which is a company: £65 million. So, in total, £538 million, more than half a billion pounds contributed to the companies structure. It is there for all to see, and our surplus, therefore, is very real, very deliverable, we hope will be exceeded,
840 not turned into a deficit, and in fact is very likely understated compared with GSD surpluses, despite us paying into the companies structure.

But all of that could fail if spending is uncontrolled under us, because we are so profligate in the way that we spend, we are so extravagant with what we spend. It is the theme that they have been developing constantly. As they say, if you repeat something often enough it will eventually
845 catch, and they have been repeating it now for 12 years. Mr Azopardi and Mr Clinton both said that we are an out-of-control Government. Mr Azopardi said, 'He should have kept to the Budget, but he overspent by £90 million last year and this year.' Well, we have dealt with those £90 million etc. He said that the estimates were the 'promises Mr Picardo does not keep'. He says that we estimate one sum, but in fact we spend more. Again, he cannot have researched those points
850 before making them, he just must have thought that that would be what sounded good in an election year, because if you research it, whatever period of 10 years you take in the time that they were in government – he was in there for eight, so let's take those 10-year periods – every 10-year period they averaged a growth in expenditure of 114%. That is to say if you take 10 years, in any 10-year period they doubled the budget and 14%. In any 10-year period under us – and we
855 are dividing the COVID year by two because it is a double year, so just divide it by two – we have increased cost by 65%. Let me just be clear with them in case they have not got it: 114% is more

than 65%, so if cost growth is uncontrolled under us, it was running wild under them, obviously. In the six years, just six years, between 2006-07 and 2011-12, just those six years, their expenditure grew by 68%. In six years, they grew more than we have grown in 10 years on expenditure. So who is uncontrolled, and why didn't they bother to do this exercise before training their *pistolete* gun on us, because this is what they are going to get back? How are you going to put these people in charge of the Brexit negotiation? They are going to say something and they are going to get cannoned back. So who was uncontrolled? They were at least double-uncontrolled as we are, in particular in the period when he was a Minister.

865 He said we were trying to hide the reality from the public and that he had warned that the GHA had to be realistically estimated. Are they serious when they make these points? Genuinely, I am asking whether they are serious because again this was remarkably under-researched. GHA expenditure under the GSD went from £22.4 million estimate in 1997-98 to £87.245 million actual in 2011-12.

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Minister for Social Security, Economic Development, Enterprise, Telecommunications and the GSB (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): They boasted it was a good thing.

875 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes. That is an increase of 290%, Mr Speaker. In our time it has increased by 74.7%. So they increased something by 290%, we increase it by 74% – and we are the ones who are out of control.

880 They overspent in 1998-99 by 5%, in 1999-2000 by 8%, in the next year by 5%, in the next year by 4%, in 2002-03 by 15%, in 2003-04 by 9%, then 7%, then 4%, then 4%, then 6%, then 9%, then 5%, then 7%, then 10%. That is their overspend. In the COVID years we overspent by 17%, but our average spend is much lower. In fact, in the first year we underspent by 0.46%, then we overspent by 5%, 7%, 8%. Yes, as a year we overspent by 13%. But that is less than their overspend of 15%. Then 8%, 5%, 5%, 5%. How can it be a mortal sin when we overspend on the GHA, which is demand led, and yet a gracious virtue when they overspend? When they overspent in the GHA, when he was a Minister for Health, it was all about investing in the health of our community. When we overspend, it is uncontrolled expenditure that is going to undo us and makes the surplus a hapless fiction. Does he really think that the people of Gibraltar do not see the reality, that they will fall for the fiction?

885 How could it be, Mr Speaker, that if we spend in the GEA the amounts that the fuel costs – we are spending more, we are spending the amount that the fuel costs as the fuel is invoiced – it is terrible and 'you have no control over expenditure', but when they do it, it is perfectly okay because they have to keep the lights on? Why do they ask me if I have a crystal ball to talk about the price of fuel and not lend me the crystal ball that they must have had when they were in government if they got their estimates bang on? Of course they did not. The price of fuel fluctuated wildly. What could you do, not buy the fuel?

890 But this is not just about the GEA and the GHA, Mr Speaker. Before I move on, I want to look at other areas of expenditure. The GHA capital expenditure: they overspent on the GHA capital expenditure in 1997-98 – I hope they are making a note – by 52.4%, the next year by 37%, the next year by 24%, the following year by 38%. In 2006-07, they overspend the GHA capital expenditure by 73%, in 2008-09 by 11%. And of course their *pièce de résistance* – election year – in 2011-12 the GSD overspent the GHA capital budget by 99.7% ... Sorry, no, 99.8%. We underspent the GHA budget in most years. In 2015-16 we overspent by 18% and in the COVID years by 9%. Every other year, we have underspent the GHA capital budget. Whose expenditure in the GHA is uncontrolled? Why doesn't he research the point? Why does he make me embarrass him by showing him that the point he has made is not a bad one, it is an almost crooked one? It is remarkable. But actually, in some of these years they were already spending even more under the hospital loan, the off-the-books loan agreement. So how can they criticise us?

905 And then – I am embarrassed for him – he went on to criticise us for the GPMS overspend. He was Minister for Health. He should have known not to do this. Why is he making me do this,

Mr Speaker? In 1997-98, they overspent the GPMS budget by 11%, in 1999-2000 by 9%, the following year by 10%, the following year by 16%, the following year by 10%, the following year by 13%; the following year, 2004-05, by 19%; in 2006-07 by 5%, then by 8%, by 7%, by 7%, by 8%, by 5%. In 2012-13, we kept it at zero. We then overspend by 9%, 9% and 2%, and then we do not overspend again until 2022-23, by 18%. How can he say our GPMS is overspending and it is a problem when I have shown him that when he was Minister for Health it was overspent by more? In that period, they increased the estimate by 111%, or 96% from the first estimate to the actual. We increased it by 10%. Fourteen years of excesses out of 16 in the GPMS budget. Of course, this is demand led. We defend the spending. But of course you also have to put up the Social Insurance to pay for it, so that you get it closer. And they attack us and say that we cannot budget? They do not even look at the numbers before they go on the attack. It is just painful, Mr Speaker. No insults, I am not calling them any name. I am just giving them back the facts, the painful, killer facts that demonstrate that everything they have said is absolutely wrong and unreliable.

On sponsored patients they overspent every year except for four, and their maximum overspend was 34%, 35%, 20%. We overspend in some years, yes, because it is demand led – what can you do? But how can they say that we are not good arbiters of the purse strings when they overspend by more than us? Come on, be fair. And if you cannot be fair, well, at least find something on which you can attack us and not something which is tantamount to spitting upwards as a team and staying there to actually collect it on your foreheads, for goodness' sake. Do the research. The public needs to look at them and feel that they can have some semblance of an alternative government in Gibraltar, not this shower that cannot even look at their own numbers in government before attacking the person who is standing opposite them. And these are the people who are going to sit opposite the negotiators? What research are they going to do? Well, maybe this research, Mr Speaker. As ever, their record in government is worse than ours. How did they think they were going to fix all these things? How did they think it was all going to be resolved? In 2004 when Mr Azopardi left the Ministry it was all going to be resolved by the appointment of David McCutcheon, on £106,000 a year, a 104.6% increase over the salary of the person he was replacing. *Toma tela*.

Anyway, what would he do? He has been a former Minister for Health. Did he gently give us advice? Did he say, 'Cut the number of nurses,' or 'You have too many doctors'? I think we have doubled the number of doctors since they were in power. Maybe he would say, 'Cut the number of doctors, cut the number of nurses, you've got too many of them. Don't send so many people for operations, or make them wait a little longer so it straddles the financial year *y te ahoras un poquito de dinero*, Fabian.' No. Would he stop repatriating services to Gibraltar? No. He does not say any of what he would do to control the costs. Or is it that he would say they would spend more in Health, that he would give them more? And if you give them more, they will spend even more, of course, yes? So is it that he is saying we are spending too much and he is going to cut, cut, cut; or is it he is going to give them more, more, more, which they say we have not got to give? But certainly on health they come here in their political glasshouse to throw stones, knowing what the consequence of that is: cracked windows, because the stone comes down.

'But', he says, 'the biggest offence is in temporary cover in the Department of Education.' Well, Mr Speaker, if you look at our time in Education, we have overspent on temporary cover by 10%, by 31%, by 9%, by 1%, by 10%, by 43%. We have underspent by 42%, by 2%, by 2% and by 0.7%. In their time, the thing that he said was where the overspending was worse they grew by 325% in the cost of temporary cover. Let me take them through the years they were in office, starting from 1995-96 all the way to 2011-12. This is the overspend per year: 8.3%, 23.4%, 34.2%, 25.9%, 26.6%, on budget in 2000, 22.1%, 23.7%, 25.1%, 12.5%, under budget in 2005-06, 12.3%, 7.6%, 67.44%, 7.3%, 13.8%, 2.5%. Well, if overspending on temporary cover in the Department of Education is something that demonstrates that you cannot control the purse strings, the GSD wins the bout hands down. We are knocked out. We have never managed to overspend by 67%. Do not try it, by the way. *(Laughter)* They win, they are the biggest overspenders. Congratulations, you won the prize – except it was the thing you were attacking us with. They were attacking us with this. Of

course, when they do it, it is an investment in the education of our children; when we do it, it is a disgraceful vice because we are out of control.

And what about scholarships? They overspent on scholarships by 9%, by 16%, by 9%, by 14%, by 17%. When they do it, it is an investment in education. When we do it, we cannot estimate, we do not know how to count. It is a vice in our hands – a virtue in theirs, a vice in ours. Of course it is, because that is political hypocrisy. When you do one thing and you say it is great, and you see your neighbour do it and you say it is terrible, that is hypocrisy. It is also an attempt to pretend to the public that you are the opposite of what you are. So when we do it, it is a failure to control runaway expenditure, and yet this is the serious politics that our community expects at the end of a lifetime of a Parliament – an Opposition that attacks on the things on which they are worse performers than the Government that they are attacking.

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman and his arguments are toast. When you subject his arguments on the surplus, you subject his arguments on expenditure and you subject his arguments on safety and security of sovereignty in their hands, all of his arguments are toast. They multiplied the health budget by four from £20 million to £87 million. We have not even doubled it yet. How can they make it an issue? Well, I suppose they can make it an issue because they do not prepare, and, because they do not prepare, they come here and say things that they are unprepared to realise are going to damage them. So when you do the analysis and look at the reality of what the Budget represents and of what they have represented in government, what happens is that you gut his suggestion that this is an unreal projection based on hopeless fiction. You end up realising that if there is one Estimates Book that you can trust, it is a GSLP Liberal Estimates Book, not a GSD Estimates Book. And that is just looking at the heads that he decided to take me on. If you look at all the others, it is exactly the same.

And so, Mr Speaker, I turn now to my analysis of each of their contributions individually, in particular the analysis of the Leader of the Opposition. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition needs to realise that when he criticises Sir Joe, it is a little unfair when he is not here to listen to Sir Joe. He missed a part of what Sir Joe was saying. I will tell him why I am saying he is criticising him. What sort of a Leader of the Opposition has Keith Azopardi been – not since he became leader of the GSD but not Leader of the Opposition, since he became Leader of the Opposition in 2019? Has he done 80 hours a week, like I was doing as Leader of the Opposition because I left my practice in April 2011 when I became leader of the GSD? Is he doing 120 hours a week, as the Father of the House was doing and did as Leader of the Opposition, if not more? I may be undercounting there, right? No, he has not been a full-time Leader of the Opposition in the run up to a General Election, he has been a full-time lawyer who has done a bit of opposition on the side. He has been in what Mr Clinton describes as our plush offices – lawyers' plush offices – being a lawyer, a King's Counsel, and a very good King's Counsel he is too. I do not doubt his professional ability. I know they always question my professional ability; I never question theirs. He is doing his work as a King's Counsel in his plush office, earning big money, right? Indeed, such big money that when the time came to negotiate with me the possibility of becoming my Solicitor General, he wanted £400,000 a year. We were not ready to pay it, not because he is not worth it – because I do not denigrate them professionally. Of course he is worth £400,000 a year, but the Government is not going to pay £400,000 a year for Keith Azopardi to be its Solicitor General. He did not have such concerns about the public finances then, did he?

The only moment I have seen a smidgen of passion about him was when he started to talk about 1996 and all that. And so, as I will say to others, when Mr Isola spoke about 1996 it was not that Mr Isola was disgracefully going back to 1996, it was that Mr Isola was replying to Mr Azopardi having gone back to 1996. Why? Because I said I remember a Gibraltar in 2011, of course, the change of government, not two changes of government ago.

And then he attacked me for saying that I want to win an election to be Chief Minister just one more time. Well, what is wrong with that? I understand he only wants to do one term. He is alleged to have offered people the ability to become his deputy – this is all allegation, I put nothing by it – on the basis that he is going to go quickly. He just wants four. He just wants to see the words 'Keith

1015 Azopardi' etched into the woodwork at No. 6 Convent Place, with his name under mine. Maybe
just one more time, like the final sighs at the end of *Careless Whisper*, Mr Speaker. What is wrong
with wanting to win just one more time – to finish what we have started, in my case? Twenty
1020 seven years ago was 1996, seven elections ago – not the last change of government, two changes
of government ago. He was 28, I was 24. How is 1996 relevant? Of course, I am talking about the
Gibraltar I found and how I have changed it when I am saying 'I remember Gibraltar when ...', but
when I did that analysis I was very careful and respectful because I said Gibraltar was not a
wasteland in 2011 but there were things that I wanted to change that were my policy, that were
1025 the policies of the people who made up the executive committees of the parties that fought the
election to win it, that are the policies of the people who make up the Cabinet from 2011. Those
are the things we wanted to change. That is why I could say, 'I remember when ...' in 2011. But in
1996, come on.

1025 Remembering the fast launches – hasn't he seen that we had a mea culpa in our manifestos
and we said there would never be a return to the fast launch activity, and people voted for that?
And there has not been a return to fast launch activity. But Gibraltar was not a wasteland in 1996,
and as I said in my original address, Gibraltar was not a wasteland in 1988 either. There was a
change of government that wanted to do things in a different way, very successfully after 1988,
1030 successfully in many respects after 1996, very successfully after 2011. But to say that it was a
wasteland for young people and that the GSD had to give people opportunities is utter nonsense.
It was only before 1996 that you had investments like reclamation, which they were selling until
their last term – fibre put into Gibraltar, affordable housing, all of those things.

1035 He says, 'When did I attack Sir Joe?' Well, in your soliloquy on 1996 when you said that
everything was terrible and you had to fix it, and the 'terrible Gibraltar' – the words that he used –
and the liberation from tyranny that is what we have been told had to happen. What opportunities
did his Government create, when he was a Minister after 1996, for young people? Scholarships?
Affordable housing? I will give them one: the bowling alley in 2008. I remember a Gibraltar in
1040 which every young person who was interviewed said the only thing missing here was a bowling
alley. They delivered the bowling alley, fair enough, but the scholarships, the housing for when
they came back, the jobs did not happen after 1996. It happened during and because of 1996.

1045 I thought, however, it was particularly ungenerous of him to attack Sir Joe in his soliloquy on
1996 and I thought it was particularly ungenerous of him to attack me because I became
emotional. He has known me for long enough to know that I wear my heart on my sleeve because
I cannot hide it, however big a coat I try and wear on it, and I cannot talk about family without
getting emotional. I can talk about everything else, I can defend myself against him, against
1050 anybody who comes on any issue, but when I talk about family I become emotional. It was
particularly ungenerous of him to say that I was acting when I became emotional, ungenerous and
unfair, and he knows in his heart of hearts that that was just completely cheap.

1050 He has spent his time here as Leader of the Opposition complaining about the fact that we got
contributions for Campion Park – terrible that we could not even pay for Campion Park. But he did
not make any such complaints about Commonwealth Park. We got a huge contribution from
another charitable trust for Commonwealth Park. They did not make any complaint then. So we
get money to develop Commonwealth Park, no problem; we get money to develop Campion Park,
1055 'Ooh, terrible.'

And how can they say that they are better managers of debt when we have reduced the debt
due to the Government under the Central Arrears Unit and they grew it because they got rid of
the Central Arrears Unit?

1060 They no longer attack us for the tax refunds because we are paying more tax refunds than ever
before. Indeed, our surpluses are unflattered and reduced by the amount of refunds that we pay –
about £10 million a year, which we add more to; £14 million this year. Indeed, last year – forget
not giving the contribution to the companies – we ended up in a deficit of £15 million when we
gave £14 million back to taxpayers, which they never did when they were in government. We
could have hung on to it in an election year to show that we are taking it to a deficit of minus

1065 £1 million. Indeed, then I would have had a serious conversation with Sir Joe Bossano and said
'Mira Joe, este año dejate de darle 30 millones a las compañías' and I would have declared a
surplus this year just ended of £29 million. But no, we pay the taxpayer back, in particular in
difficult years, because the taxpayers need their money back.

1070 So in all of that, with the affordable housing that is being delivered at Hassan Centenary
Terraces, where the snagging is going so well I understand there is nothing to snag and people are
delighted with the homes they are getting and are going to get in phase 2; with affordable housing
being the foundation of people's wealth, not with the sorts of problems that people have in
Bayview and Cumberland, which *they* developed, where we are going to have to bail them out at
1075 Cumberland because parts of the floors are sagging and falling, Sally and John that he talked about
actually feel a lot better under this administration than they would under a GSD administration,
not least because they are confident that we do not believe that Andorra is not joint sovereignty,
but anything they buy from us will multiply as an investment. Sure, we are late on delivery, but
isn't it better that we deliver late but at the right quality than they have to spend a lot of money
rectifying because we rushed to finish on time?

1080 Mr Speaker, I put it to you that if this were not a Parliament, if this were a court, I could sit
down now and if you had to deliver judgment on the public finance issues, on the economic issues,
on the political issues and on the sovereignty issues, knowing the judge that you are, of good
character, I am sure that you would deliver a judgment entirely for the Government with costs on
an indemnity basis against the hon. Gentleman.

1085 The Gibraltar team at the Island Games is back. They have broken records. They *are* a broken
record. All we have heard is exactly the same every year. How much contempt can he have for the
people of Gibraltar to go back to 1996, as if that mattered with this electorate? The worn-out
mantra that they tried to make stick, the character assassination of Joe Bossano which they then
regretted because they decided that they had to play him against Picardo. Vote Picardo get
1090 Bossano, in 2011, as a bad thing. Vote Azopardi get Picardo, in 2023, as a good thing. What hope
can anybody have that the GSD is led by a man with vision, by a man with imagination and by a
man with dynamism? It is not. It is a party with no energy, it is a party with no capacity to govern
Gibraltar, it is led by a man with no imagination, no vision and no dynamism in the political sense.
I make no criticism of him professionally or personally.

1095 Mr Speaker, I feel almost as if Mr Azopardi is trying to create a local Gibraltar version of MAGA:
Make Azopardi Great At Last. This is not about Gibraltar, it is clearly about personal ambition, but
the electorate can see straight through it. The electorate have a clear unease in their gut that they
do not have an alternative government, that they are looking at a lack of ideas in the GSD, a lack
of energy, a lack of commitment from Members opposite – that is very clear, a complete lack of
1100 commitment. In fact, it is about time that hon. Members started to give back to this community.
It is time that the GSD got something done – a GSD acronym as well: Get Something Done. Come
on, get something done. The least they can do is organise and really put the battle to us, because
in this two-horse race our democracy needs a serious contest of ideas and they are not up to it.
They cannot do this whilst being in the Court of Appeal, whilst being in the Magistrates Court,
1105 whilst being in the Supreme Court, whilst giving an opinion, whilst making so much money, whilst
sending the Bill, whilst collecting the fees. They cannot do it. They are getting money to be the
political representatives of people of Gibraltar, and that should be their salary and that should be
what they run on. But they have not done it. The election is now around the corner. They cannot
give this the time it needs. They are taking people for a ride.

1110 In the last meeting that we had – we have not finished Questions yet – the Leader of the
Opposition of His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, seeking to become the Leader of the House
and the Chief Minister, seeking to lead Gibraltar's negotiating team in the Brexit negotiations,
asked a question about chickens. I get it that it matters to people with the noise, but is that really
a Leader of the Opposition's question? Seriously?

1115 And do we know how much each question costs? If you take their salaries and divide by the
number of questions they put this year so far, Mr Reyes – wakey, wakey – costs £568.76 per

question. He is obviously the senior partner in the organisation: £568 per question. Mr Phillips, £212.34 per question – obviously the junior in the organisation. Mr Azopardi, £315.37 per question – senior-junior or junior-senior? Mr Feetham, *más baratito*, £256.86 per question. I would not pay him that for his legal advice an hour, he might want to know. Mr Clinton, £241.29 per question. That is what they cost per question. The question on the chicken cost us £315.37. I congratulate Mr Bossino for being value for money: £151.67 per question. That is more than I charged when I started practice, per hour, but a decent fee for an hour's work by a junior lawyer these days. I think it is a bit expensive per question. But this demonstrates that the value for money audit that we have done shows they are not value for money for the people of Gibraltar. It is a scandal. The total average per question is £291.05 per question. Each question is costing the same as an hour of a middle-ranking lawyer's time. It is a joke. If Mr Clinton wants to talk about value for money, he had better start looking at himself. If he wants to talk about ridiculous, do not look at himself, because I am not going to call him ridiculous, look at the ridiculous cost per question.

And we are not taxing the people more, Mr Speaker, even to pay for their questions. We are making sure that the cost of COVID is being spread as it should, and in fact we have been able to lower the cost already. We are taking tax down this year. I gave him three hours between my speech and his. How could he come here and talk about us taxing people more? I suppose because he thought we were going to stick at the 2% for two years. Didn't he want to at least amend his speech a little bit? He said if they were in government, taxes could go down more quickly and salaries could go up more steadily. If they spend most of their speeches telling us that the public sector costs too much, and then he talks about putting their salaries up more steadily, do they think they are going to believe that? Don't they know in the public sector that they are coming either to cut the cost by reducing services and reducing the headcount, or cut the salary bill, or else they are misleading everyone?

He was the one who said I was presenting a false picture of solvency and financial health to the people. I am not. I can demonstrate, as I have, that our surplus estimations are reliable. He is the one presenting a false suggestion that our Budget is a hopeless fiction. He is presenting a false suggestion that there will be tax cuts and public sector pay rises under them, because both positions cannot be true. He is literally doing the opposite of what he said. He is not telling our people the hard truth. He just does not want our people to be told our good news, the good news – now there is a reference to the Bible – because what he is trying to do is literally feed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. It would be a miracle if he were to do it – down taxes, up salaries, all magic, or sleight of hand, or either Mr Speaker. He knows we do not just have five loaves. He knows we are accurately reporting the numbers. He knows he cannot give the pay rise he is hinting at. He knows he cannot give the tax reductions that he is hinting at. It is either one or the other. He knows either that our numbers are correct, or he knows and he does not mean it when he is saying that he will give tax reductions and pay rises; or, option three, he thinks that he can emulate Christ and feed the 5,000 – or, in this case, the 32,000 – with five loaves, two fish and a deficit, because that is what he is telling us we are going to produce. He is saying there is not a surplus, he is saying there is a deficit because the surplus is a hopeless fiction. Well, of all the people sitting opposite that I am looking at, I did not have him down for Christ, I can tell you that much; I did not have him down as a miracle worker. As Mrs Thatcher said, I say of myself in the eyes of him. If the GSD saw me at Eastern Beach walking on water, they would issue a press release saying it is a disgrace that the Chief Minister does not know how to swim.

'Where in the I&DF is the wastewater treatment plant? It is disgraceful. You are not committed to it because it is not in the I&DF.' Well, it is not in the I&DF because we are not going to pay for it. It is going to be produced by a third party. The tender actually provides for them to produce the plant. We will provide the sewage for the operation of the plant. That is why it is not in the I&DF, because there is no capital cost to the Government.

Then he called us 'the most secretive administration in our history ... hundreds of millions of pounds in off-the-book transactions ... we do not know where it has been spent'. Now it is more

1170 than just a simple web of companies – a ‘jungle’ where we have stashed the people’s money away.
I will address a little bit of that in my reply to Mr Clinton, but to him and Mr Clinton the idea that
we have to explain to them what the beach sheds are for and what they are intended to do ...
Well, Mr Speaker, I will dissent to particulars. The beach sheds are for people to put away the stuff
they take to the beach without having to take it home. The purpose is to receive cash when we
sell them or rent when we rent them and therefore produce a profit. I would have thought it was
1175 pretty basic. This is not a complex financial transaction. This is *para mete la barraca, la sombrilla
y la silla*, and as Mr Bossano has said, we have been oversold, there is more interest than there
are sheds, but even that they need explained to them. I suppose this is the same level of quality
of analysis about the beach shed and what it is for as you are asking questions about chickens.
Really a tasty bite of a question, I must say. I really got my teeth into that one. I would have
1180 thought it was obvious.

And then he quotes from the Chamber report, talking about uncontrolled expenditure, as if it
were the King James Bible, but he does not go to their dinner to hear them say at the dinner that
the Government is doing very well and to hear my analysis of why that part of the Chamber’s
editorial was wrong. Maybe if he had come he would understand.

1185 And what about the homeowners who are having to pay their mortgages against higher
interest rates? What about the deal that the GIB is doing to keep those interest rates down? How
can he talk about the negative without reflecting the positive thing that the Government has done
to ameliorate the cost for John and Sally that he talked about?

What about the schools their children go to, the magnificent schools that children now go to
1190 in Gibraltar? Or is it that he thought it was okay for the children of the Upper Town to go to
St Bernard’s, which was a Victorian school under Mr Reyes as Minister for Education, because the
children from the Upper Town matter less than the children from the South District? Is that the
reality? Maybe that explains why they are not so welcome when they visit the Upper Town at
election time, because the children of the Upper Town matter as much to us as the children of the
1195 South District, the North District and everywhere else in Gibraltar. That is why every school in
Gibraltar has to be fit for purpose and to a standard, and that is where you have to judge the
Gibraltar in which we live. That is a point I make to all of them, Mr Speaker. Talk about the Gibraltar
in which we live being anything other than a quality Gibraltar.

And remarkably, having said in the first part of his speech that he was going to deliver tax cuts
1200 and he was going to raise salaries more quickly, he then said to me that the tax cut I am proposing
is not affordable, and then he said that the lump sum that we are going to pay to the public sector
as a result of our negotiation with the unions is not affordable. How can you, in the same speech,
say, ‘With me, taxes down, salaries up; with him, the 1% tax cut is not affordable and the lump
sum non-consolidated amount is not affordable’? I despair, Mr Speaker. Please can I have a serious
1205 Opposition? The public deserve a serious contest of ideas. Where is Sir Peter now? I disagreed
with him profoundly in everything, but the quality of the argument was much higher than the
quality of the argument today.

And it is all a bribe, they say, because it is going to be paid at the end of September. Well, the
unions are negotiating with the Government in the run up to the Budget. The Budget is in
1210 June/July. We agree to pay something at the end of the second quarter, the first half of the year,
and it is a bribe because they think it coincides with the election. At the end of the day, their
predictions on the election have been as bad as their predictions on the estimates. Mr Clinton was
predicting an election in February 2022, and then when it did not happen he said March, and then
when it did not happen he said May, and then when it did not happen he said before the summer,
1215 and they he said in the autumn, and then he said in the winter, and then he said in February, and
then he said in March, and then they said in May, and then they said pre-summer. You cannot rely
on them on anything. The date of the election has been obvious for all to see if they follow the
instruction the Father of the House gave me many years ago when you look at the options. They
are not even reliable when it comes to looking at the calendar.

1220 Then, when he attacked me on the delivery of affordable homes, I thought the man has taken
leave of his political senses. I am not going to do the analysis now, I am going to do it when I deal
with Mr Bossino, but how can he attack me for a failure to deliver affordable homes when already,
having failed to deliver all of the ones that I promised, I have delivered more than they delivered
1225 in 16 years? Anyone who delivers one apartment delivers more than he delivered in the eight
years he was a Minister, because they delivered zero.

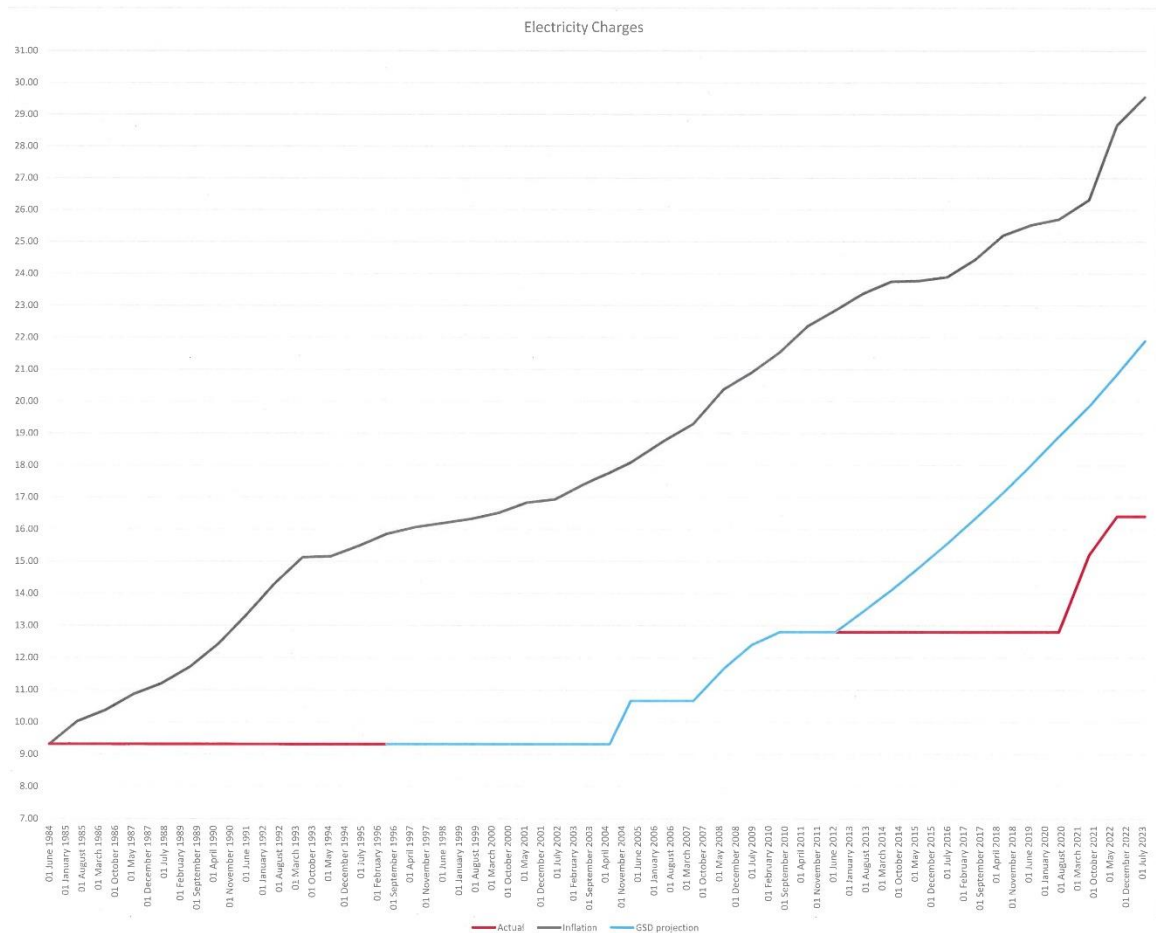
When it comes to rainy day funds, I would say that the hon. Gentleman should take advice
more from Sir Joe Bossano than from Roy Clinton, because when it comes to Community Care and
the Savings Bank, those are much better under the stewardship of Sir Joe than they are under
anybody else. I will prove that to him, too.

1230 He said I wrote an electioneering headline that I wanted, which was that financial stability has
been restored. I do not want that to be an election headline, I want that to be reality for my
children and for his. I want it to be reality for everyone in our community – for the patients who
need care, for the magnificent public sector workers who need to be paid. I do not want to restore
financial stability to win an election. I would happily, if the Devil were to come and put on the
1235 table ‘restoration of financial stability but you lose the election’, I do the deal with the Devil, I
shake his hand, I lose the election, but I take the restoration of financial stability for our people
every time. This is not an election headline, this is the deepest desire of the Government, which
includes the man who said the road to self-determination is paved by self-sufficiency. That is what
we believe. This is not writing a headline, this is actually delivering a strong economic performance
1240 despite COVID, despite the aftermath of Brexit, and it is doing what we need to do. But he
obviously decided he was going to write his speech when he saw the news report of what I had
said at the Chamber dinner, which he was not at, because he is supposed to be responding to my
analysis. He did none of that. Lazy politics. That is what we come to expect of them – a few hours
of work as Opposition leader a week, and from there you win the election. Not quite. The people
1245 of Gibraltar expect more than part-time politicians.

And no, the people are not bailing out the Government with their taxes, the people are paying
for COVID with their increased taxes in an *esprit de corps*, a feeling of solidarity that everybody
understands and should not be exploited in a Trumpian fashion by those who now want to suggest
that we are being bailed out. What is being paid for? Everything that happened in COVID. And
1250 what else? The schools for our children, the scholarships for our children, the care for our patients,
the domiciliary care for those who are home so that we have beds available in the Hospital. And
when we did the COVID things, we did them with their full support, so if anybody is being bailed
out, it is the whole House that is being bailed out because they agreed that we should do the
spending and incur the debt that we had to incur.

1255 And then he says all of this has been paid for by higher electricity charges. Seriously, higher
electricity charges? If the hon. Clerk could get the usher to come, Mr Speaker.

Table 2



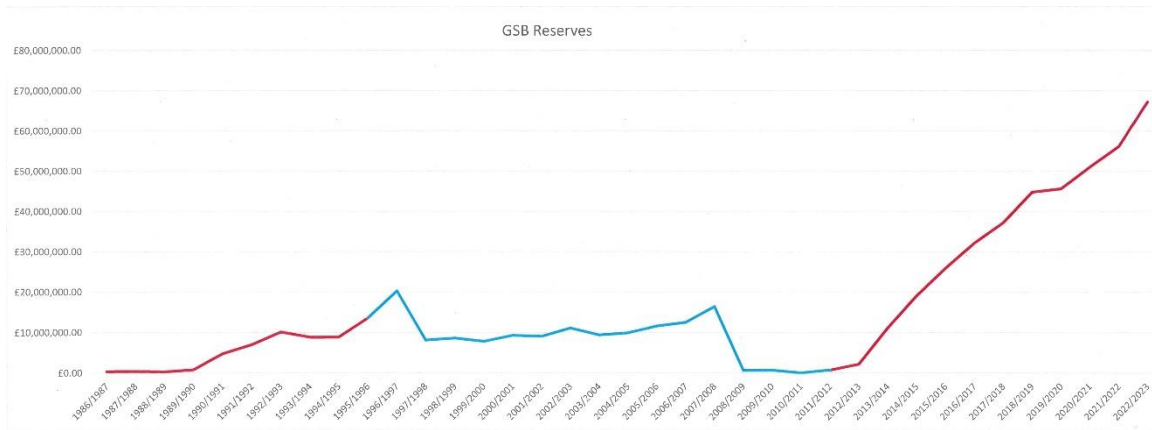
1260 This year, we have once again frozen electricity charges. The price per unit at the moment is
 1265 £16.40, and we are not putting it up, even though we said it needed to go up because the cost of
 fuel has gone up. We are not putting it up because we understand that there is a cost of living
 issue. But do hon. Members forget what the cost of electricity would be if they were in
 government? I have plotted it, Mr Speaker. The red line shows how water and electricity charges
 went up under the GSLP administration between 1988 and 1996. The blue line shows how it went
 up under the GSD and the red line shows how it has gone up under us. We had to put it up because
 the cost of fuel was going up. Look at the cost of fuel, which is the black line. We stopped it going
 up.

1270 Hon. Members will see that the chart shows two lines moving forward from 2011-12, not one.
 There is not just a red line, there is also a blue line. Do hon. Members remember the reason for
 that blue line? They can come here and say it is terrible that I put up electricity charges in the year
 that that electricity production costs have gone through the roof, but do they really think the
 people of Gibraltar will forget that when we entered government they had signed an agreement
 with RBS which included a legal requirement on them to put up electricity charges 5% a year for
 20 years? I have not plotted it for 20 years, but 5% per year for 20 years is 100%. I have plotted it
 to where it is now. If we had a GSD government, the cost of electricity would be much higher. It
 would, today, be 21.9p. So how can he attack me for having to put up electricity a little bit? Does
 he not think of these points when he makes them? If somebody has an obvious response to you,
 do not make the point, because you are going to get it back.

The political maturity of Gibraltar today is such that we put up tax by 2% for two years when
 we have to, we can bring it down sooner than we expected to, we pay our way, we have the
 support of the United Kingdom with a sovereign guarantee but not a handout, and all of this also

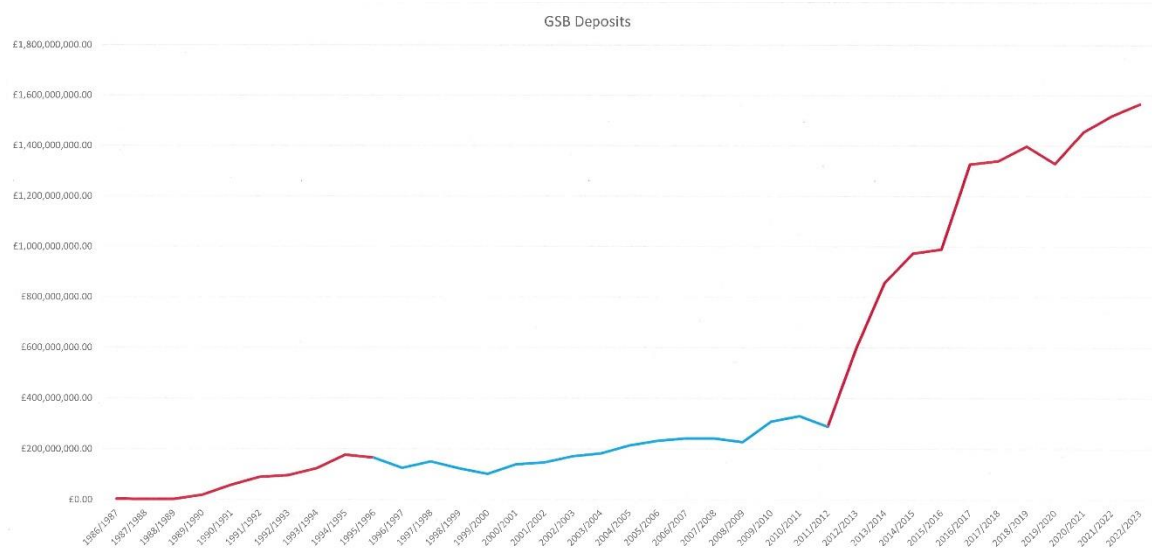
1280 with a cash reserve, a cash reserve in the Savings Bank and the cash reserve that exists in Community Care, so that we do not have to give Community Care donations when the rain comes. Mr Clinton says, ‘Why don’t you use the rainy day funds?’ Well, to an extent, Community Care was seen as the rainy day fund. We are using it because we are not giving it money and they are paying using the money that we have given them.

Table 3



1285 But look at the deposits in the Savings Bank. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Table 4



1290 Mr Clinton and Mr Feetham say that they do not like Joe Bossano as the arbiter of the Savings Bank and what it does, that there is no board, there is no real decision-making there. Well, look at how the Savings Bank deposits shoot up when Joe Bossano is in charge. Look at that. The public do not agree with Mr Clinton or Mr Feetham, or with Mr Azopardi. Look at how the cost of electricity would have shot up if the GSD had been in government – the second blue line, over the red line, 5p per unit more expensive, a quarter more. And what does that increased level of deposits in the Savings Bank do? Look at the reserve of the Savings Bank. Yes, the blue line goes down to zero. As I said when I did the analysis of their surplus, they snuffed the £19.3 million in the Savings Bank reserve to take it to the Consolidated Fund to flatter their deficit into surplus.

1295 And yet look at what it does: it goes up massively under Sir Joe. And finally – all of these things that they talk about that they do not seem to give thought to – look at Community Care. Look at

how it goes down to zero in 2011 and look how it goes up. And now it comes down because we are allowing them to use their rainy day fund so that we do not have to give them more in this period.

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How could it be clearer? Sleight of hand and massaging of the figures, seriously? We took a deposit balance and more than multiplied it by five. The deposits in the Savings Bank in 2011-12 were £288 million; they are now £1.5 billion. The public do not agree with them that Sir Joe is not a good arbiter of where their money should be put. In 2010-11 there was £1,000 in the Savings Bank, £1,444. There is now £67.1 million of reserve. That is the reality. There is no sleight of hand here and massaging of figures. This is the uncomfortable truth, and that is why everything the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition tried to do was an entirely hopeless fiction. Indeed, if he turned up with that speech to me, as a publisher, I would tell him to get lost because it is not a book that is going to sell much the minute the critics get a look at it.

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Mr Speaker, I think that careful analysis demonstrates to anybody who may be watching that there is absolutely no reason to believe that Mr Azopardi would better prepare himself to go into the negotiations on Brexit, that he would better prepare himself to present an Estimates Book next year than he has this year when he is allegedly doing the job of Leader of the Opposition, and therefore very good reasons to reject his candidature to take the top job in Gibraltar politics – that is to say not to make him Chief Minister after the next General Election. But if he had a strong team, that might avail him of some support, which might at least carry him into No. 6 Convent Place. Unfortunately, as I now move on to deal with the rest of them, it is pretty obvious that he has not got a very strong team.

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His strongest support, I suppose, is allegedly Mr Clinton. A lot of what I have done has already dealt with much of what Mr Clinton said on the issues of expenditure and on the issue of the surplus. I want to start with Mr Clinton by telling him that he was right, in my view, about one thing, that when we worked together in the winter and spring of 2020 it was our finest hour. Absolutely true. There was a gathering storm and we got together and worked together, and nobody will ever be able to take that away from us, not even any one of us in the subsequent unfair and ungenerous criticism that he might seek to do of the effect of what he agreed to do in the winter and spring of 2020.

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For all the reasons I have set out about the tenor of my address today to them in respect of their arguments, I am actually very pleased that he is here and he is healthy and that the scare that his ticker-ticker gave him last year is in the past, that we will, I hope, continue to enjoy his analysis during the course of what is left of the lifetime of this Parliament and that then he will be roundly rejected by the people of Gibraltar and be one of the ones who is not elected. I wish him all the worst politically and all the best personally, as he knows, but it was absolutely right that he should reflect – and I thought he did that generously – that it was our finest hour. But to go from that to saying that Joe Bossano has a parochial, small-town vision just does not seem to me to be something that you can reconcile. That is what he is saying. He is saying we have parochial, small-town visions. He is saying it to all of us, to him. We have already extended the three loan guarantee to Gibraltar agreement with the banks, the loan. The UK loan is subject to the final sign-off by Parliament – it has to go to Parliament to be laid, it is an exercise that has to be done – and we will be able to draw down on the moneys on the new loan when the old loan expires. The old one expires in December, the new loan kicks in after that, and the 14 days in Parliament in the UK will have expired in good time for that. So that is done. I have laid it today because it has been signed and I have to lay it as soon as it has been signed – and I am sorry for a bit of a rush there, but it was being signed and I thought he would believe it was right that I should bring it as soon as possible. He can now look at the terms of it. He will see that they are the same terms, something which he thought would not be acceptable.

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And then he goes on to talk about the ‘jungle’. Well, we are all in the jungle, Mr Speaker, the mighty jungle, but he has made the mistake of waking the lion that was sleeping. Sir Joe already replied in the analysis that was shared by Gilbert Licudi on how they got it wrong on departmental expenditure. But look, we are running an organisation with an income of over £700 million, with

1350 expenditure in the region of £500 million to £600 million. Of course the accounts are complex. This is not a salary coming in, paying for the mortgage, paying for the car and paying for the baked beans. This is an extraordinarily complex beast now. That is why there are a hundred more pages to our Estimates Book. Of course, if you do not understand that, you think it is a jungle, but all of the information is in there.

1355 But you know what, Mr Speaker? It is also true outside of this place, beyond the Frontier. It is a jungle out there with the law of the jungle and Gibraltar has to be fleet of foot and needs to be able to defend itself, and in some instances cannot afford to lay *Hansel and Gretel* like clues to others as to how we do things, or they would seek to stop us from doing it. There are people out there who wish us harm, and we are not going to give those people a route map to how we are going to ensure that our people survive.

1360 I thought, Mr Speaker, as I said before, it was particularly ungenerous of him to call me ridiculous because we were doing a bit of heckling. They were doing a lot of heckling during our speeches. We did not call them ridiculous. We may have said they were nervous. But I think on reflection, given the things that we say to each other personally – not politically – he could have called me many other things, political things and not ridiculous, because he confirmed again that he is not an economist and so I assume that he will be content when I say that I am, therefore, less than impressed by his economic analysis. Yes, you did. The hon. Gentleman says he did not do any economic analysis. He said that he did not think that interest rates would come down. That is an economic analysis. He must be the only banker in the world – because he is not an economist – who thinks that now is a prudent time to fix for 25 years, because he was saying it is terrible that we had not fixed for 25 years and we had only fixed for three. I explained why we had only fixed for three, because we think in three the rates are going to be down. We may or may not be right, we do not have a crystal ball, but he seems to think the opposite. The front page of the *Sunday Times* section on money this weekend was all about the fact that it is very likely that interest rates are going to come down in three years, and it is giving advice – which may be wrong, it could go up or down – to people who are taking mortgages or going to floating or going to fixed to hold for three years. Who knows? Nobody has a crystal ball, but neither does he. So he cannot say that we are wrong to have fixed for three and wait to try and fix for the remaining 22 either. The prevailing wisdom, so to speak, is that interest rates are likely to come down, and if you look at what Rishi Sunak has done in saying to the Bank of England that they must tame inflation, that suggests that interest rates are going to go down very sharply before a British general election and then drop as they try to get inflation down. We may or may not be right. If we are not right, we will have to fix for another three and then find the right moment, a sweet spot, to try and fix for the 22. We will see.

1385 But then he makes inferences, in the way that he addresses us, which are very ungenerous. He says he is not there for the knighthood, he is not there to represent any sectorial interests, he is only there because he is worried. I have no doubt that he is there for all of those noble reasons, but why is he saying it to us as if we were here for anything other than the same noble reasons? Is it that he thinks I am here for the knighthood, or that Joseph Garcia is here for the knighthood, or any of us? Certainly we all know that Sir Joe Bossano was not here for the knighthood, but why must he think that the rest of us are somehow here for a knighthood or a gong? Maybe it is one of these excuse qui s`excuse s`accuse, one of those things where you do not see the mote in your own eye, where you are saying something to someone that you actually mean about yourself, because it is what you would be doing. I do not know whether it is that.

1395 He did not understand that I was a man of depth, he said, who could quote Shakespeare, and that he was very impressed by that. Well, maybe he needs to look at himself a little bit. Maybe he has some of that 'ambition, which o'erleaps itself and falls on th'other', which is from *Macbeth*. Or maybe there is something dark inside him that wants a gong or wants a knighthood. Maybe the more apposite quote is 'stars hide your fires, let not light see my dark and deep desires', also from the Scottish play. Maybe those are the things that are playing out inside him.

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For me, this is a vocation. I am here because I love politics. I think Keith Azopardi and Damon Bossino are here because they love politics, because they started in politics with Joseph Garcia, with Vijay Daryanani and with me. I think the others are also here because they love politics, because we love Gibraltar. We love politics because we love Gibraltar. I have just told him in the analysis I have done before that I am prepared to do everything it takes to bring down the British government if they talk the words 'joint sovereignty' in front of me. You think I am here for a knighthood? I would not get, perhaps, to see the end of the night if I try and take them on, but I take them on – let alone the knight and the hood. So it is wrong to make inferences that suggests that he is here for noble reason and we are not, with respect to him.

On the issue of the reconcilable £26 million, he spent a large part of that saying how can we go from a £45 million loss to a £50 million loss? He explained how part of the revenue is made up of the additional employment and the additional 2% and he showed us exactly where he is able to find these things. Why is he doing that? Why is he showing us his working out, just to demonstrate that his main thesis is wrong? If he says, 'Look, I have worked it out because the 2% here is the employment' and shows it is all in the Book ... You can work it out in the Book, but knowing that Gibraltar has to refinance he takes every opportunity he can to try and denigrate the book, which is what people will put reliance on when doing an economic analysis. Well, the real experts in HM Treasury in London and the real experts in the lending banks have taken a different view. That is why I have been able to lay this document today, but he says he cannot reconcile this £26 million, and he says it must have been done, therefore, by some sleight of hand. Of course, because if he does not know how it is done, it cannot be done. If he does not know how it is done, then it must be a trick. If he does not know how it is done, then it cannot be correct. To an extent, the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that that is pure, unadulterated political arrogance – 'If I cannot do it, if I cannot see how it is done, then it cannot be done,' – and in that, he reminds me a little bit of Iago in *Othello*. There: more depth, Mr Speaker. He took the easy reference, the Cassius reference, 'Yon Cassius' with 'a lean and hungry look' – him ... mean and hungry, compared to me these days ... Believe me, Mr Speaker, I am the hungriest person in this place with my intermittent fasting, *very* hungry; I hope not mean. Albert Isola can be described as many things – charming usually, mean never. So, frankly, I think he is getting his Shakespeare wrong. In Iago we saw someone who used to say 'I am not what I am' because he hid something, and so when he got up and said, 'I am not here for gongs, I am not here for knighthoods, I am here for a noble purpose,' I was almost reminded of that other Iago quote: 'I know my price, I am worth no worse a place', which was Iago saying that he actually was better than everybody else, which is a little of what he says that he is.

And then, of course, when we ask him about any issue, he says, 'No, you work it out,' and then he complains when we tell him that, too. I am very clear that there is no sleight of hand here. He gets documents from us confidentially, which we agreed to provide him as part of the COVID process, which give him some information, and yes, as a result, I am surprised that he comes here and says we are not transparent. We are actually giving him a lot of information confidentially.

And, yes, there is an uptick in March 2023, but he does not do what a fair-minded person would do, which is perhaps to ask me, or think maybe this forms part of the February receipts. No, he does not pose a question. He comes here with a warped theory that, in my view, says more about him than it does about us. His questions assume we have done something underhand, which might be somebody not seeing the mote in their own eye. The answer is actually that the numbers were just banked in March for February as they always come in at the end of the month, and actually, contrary to his narrative but consistent with ours, revenue payments on account are up. Hopefully this signals the shoots of recovery out of COVID, but of course that does not work for Iago's narrative, because despite knowing that we had to renew with the banks, he was still thumping and thumping and worried and worried – but not so worried that he did not want us to ensure that we take the full £500 million possibility because he wants to have the £75 million in the unlikely event that he is elected into office. He wants to know he has got that £75 million. Is it for

tax cuts? Is he borrowing for tax cuts, like Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng? Is he borrowing for pay rises? Is that how they are going to fund it?

1455 I have just laid the document. The answer to his questions is this. We did receive £24 million from state aid recovery in September 2022. There was some doubt as to whether this will be challenged. As a result, it has not been taken into revenue to flatter the figures, but rather it has been kept on deposit, despite the fact that it is very likely that we will be able to keep the lion's share of it. So we did not flatter the income tax receipts in March by generating excessive government tax company payments. Gibraltar Commercial Property Company Ltd, GSBA Ltd, 1460 Gibraltar Carparks Ltd and GSTR Ltd met their statutory obligations to tax by making their total tax payments, and this is in line with their obligations. CFCL did not make a payment as there was a credit balance held at the Tax Office. Again, perhaps the above points to what he might have done differently if the situations were reversed.

1465 It seems to me that he thinks he can just grab the Book and other Books and have his reports and sit in his office, which I assume would be somewhere in Convent Place as Minister for Public Finance, and just review reports, like Warren Buffett, and in that way control expenditure and control everything. He is not the Oracle from Omaha. God help us if he had not heeded Buffett's advice, because we have, and when the tide went out we were not caught without our bathing costume. Even now, with the tide coming back, we still have our full reserve in the Savings Bank. 1470 If we had followed his advice and put all our indirect borrowing on balance sheet, we might not have got the borrowing that we needed when we needed it.

How deluded is he when he asks for these value for money audits as the way that he will identify waste? First of all, the Principal Auditor, for no reason connected to the Government, is delayed. The last value for money audit that the auditor identified pointed to £2.5 million of expenditure as being something that needed to be addressed – of course, not the whole 1475 £2.5 million. So what is he saying, that his job as Minister for Finance will be simply to wait to receive the Principal Auditor's report on value for money and then address that, which of course should be addressed? That is what he is going to do? So the estimates process with Roy Clinton is the same again as last year, except the bit where the Principal Auditor has said we need to look at value for money? Well, he will be a much less effective Minister for Finance than this Minister for Finance, or indeed the former Minister for Finance, because I sit down and I go, with my team, through the estimates line by line trying to identify any area where in a new year we could cut costs. He is not going to do that. He is just going to wait for the Principal Auditor's report. I put it to him that he will not be very much value for money if that is what he is going to do as Minister 1480 for Public Finance.

Of course interest rates have gone up and our interest rate costs are higher. Everybody knows that. How can that be a point that he makes as if it were a salient, important new point to make during the course of this debate? That is why we have not fixed for longer than three years, because we are doing the right thing and I value more doing the right thing and fixing for a shorter 1490 period, even though as a result I have not been able to come here and say, 'There, fixed for 25 years.' It would have been a great political boon to come here and say fixed for 25 years. I could have done it at today's rates. I had the offer. I will tell him I had the offer to fix for 25 years at today's rates. I chose not to. I made what I think is the right call for my children and for everybody's children, because otherwise, in 25 years they will still be paying today's rates when it is very likely that if they fix for 22 years, in three years they will be paying lower rates. We do not know, but it is the right thing to do for Gibraltar because all of the thinking suggests it is going to be going down, but it is very unlikely to be higher and all the advice I have from economists, from banks, tells me that it is very likely to be lower. So I have taken that advice in the interest of Gibraltar. I will have him out for a beer three years from today. Whoever is Chief Minister, whoever is Minister 1500 for Public Finance – none of us might be by then – if the interest rate is higher, I will pay for the beer. If the interest rate is lower, he will pay for the beer. Mine is a Peroni.

Anyway, it is very clear to me that if all he is going to do is look at reports and look at the auditor's value for money audit, he is going to be an armchair general, as he is today, even when

1505 he is on the front line. He is going to sit in No. 6 Convent Place waiting for reports to read, and that is it. He is not going to be on the front line. He is not going to be sitting with the Financial Secretary going through, line by line, with the controlling officers etc. Always behind the report, never on the front line, never in touch with the issues in the GHA, never in touch with the issues in the GEA except when finally the lights go out. When they come in and bring him his mug of tea made with cold water and they call him Chancellor, as he no doubt will require his secretary to call him, and she says, 'Chancellor, your tea is cold,' and he says, 'How dare you bring me cold tea?' and she says, 'Chancellor, you have not paid for the petrol for the generator,' he will realise that you have to have an eye to what is happening on the front line and not just sit behind a report and think that you can run Gibraltar from a report at No. 6 Convent Place.

1510 All of this is all about Project Fear. We have seen it today. They have taken a complete part of the Tory campaign machinery: Project Fear on finances; Get Brexit Done if you vote for them. My goodness! Of course their mission is to hold us to account. I get it, I have no rancour in their trying to hold us to account, but that does not mean just criticising us. They have to understand we have a mission too, and it is a critical mission. Our mission is to lead, and lead we do, and when we lead, we do the things that we have to do to ensure that the tunnel is finished; that we close the Eastside deal; that we do not project for further borrowing if we can avoid it; that we finish the affordable housing; that the dockyard is turned around with a new operator, where we drive a hard bargain on the lease but we get what we want there and we see them succeeding; where the banks have agreed to a three-year extension on the same terms as before, with the 22 years to come afterwards, where we work with the United Kingdom to have approval for this extension of three years with a sovereign guarantee, with more to come for 22 years, I am confident; 30 new companies in the gaming centre; continuing to grow financial services; 747 more jobs. That is how you lead, not by sitting behind a report and looking at a value for money audit sitting in Convent Place. That is what we are doing.

1520 We are not saying that with the 10% of the surplus we are going to pay for the loans. It is £500 million. We are not saying that is how we are going to pay for it. We are saying that we are committing 10% of the surplus to go towards the surplus to reduce it, and then we pay the surplus at the end. It is payable in a bullet at the end. That is what we are talking about. But look, if we have a GSP Liberal Government with an average surplus of £44 million, in 10 years we will have paid £40 million towards the capital, which will reduce the interest. What we are doing is giving a commitment on 10%. We are not saying that is how it is going to be paid. If we have a surplus of £100 million, we can give £50 million to repay the debt. If we have a surplus of £25 million we can give £10 million to repay the debt. What we are saying is we are committing to *at least* paying 10% from the surplus. But of course they think we are never going to have surpluses. If we choose them, the surplus will always be lower because I have done the analysis that demonstrates it.

1530 The expenditure part of the Book that he criticised us so greatly for, I was surprised to see he was suggesting was somehow wrong. I have done the analysis already with Mr Azzopardi. Our expenditure grows by 65% in any 10-year period, theirs by 114%. How can they criticise us? In fact, their average is 114%. It is a maximum of 134%. In the six-year period between 2006-07 and 2011-12 they grew the expenditure by 68%. That is what the numbers objectively show. When they had control of the purse strings, when they were not just sitting there criticising, when they were in No. 6 doing, they were worse at controlling expenditure. They grew expenditure more.

1540 And he was wrong in his analysis to think that there was anything wrong with our revenue, absolutely wrong. For the reasons I have shown and demonstrated with graphs, our revenue is more reliable than theirs, our surpluses are more factual than their fictions, because the one that they had to raid the Savings Bank reserve for was a fiction.

1550 And then he says, 'You bandy GDP about. Don't you realise' – listen to Sir Joe – 'GDP has nothing to do with public finances? Of course GDP has nothing to do with public finances.' It has the same to do with public finances when I mention it as when Sir Joe mentioned it in his speeches and when Sir Peter Caruana mentioned it in his speeches. Those are the economic indicators. So you talk about the economic indicators ... He had better perk up because if there is the slightest

chance that he is going to win an election after the autumn, he needs to design a Budget speech because he is the Minister for Finance. There is a section in the Budget speech delivered by everybody who has delivered a Budget speech, whether it was the Financial Secretary or, thereafter, Bwana, as Brian Trainer referred to Sir Joe when he took over. That section is the economic indicators, and there you give the GDP, you give the numbers for employment etc. That has nothing to do with public finance, which is what this debate is about, but it is an economic indicator because this is a state of the nation address.

So why is it wrong that I talked about it in exactly the same ways as Sir Peter talked about it? Sir Peter would go on about GDP for a lot more than that. I never linked the GDP to wages. I never did that. It was Unite the Union that did that in their report, but I am grateful because I think it is foolish to link GDP to wages. He agrees with me, therefore, that the reports of Unite on wages in Gibraltar is based on a false premise, although the hon. Lady went on to rely on it greatly. When the GSD Chief Minister refers to the GDP, it is magnificent, it shows the growth that they are presiding over; when I refer to the GDP, I should listen to Joe Bossano and not talk about it, although Sir Joe Bossano talked about it when he used to be Minister for Finance. These people tie themselves up in so many knots that they are completely unreliable. The public must be saying, 'My goodness, why are they putting poor Mr Picardo through this, having to explain this to them? It is remarkable.' Of course the GDP is not public finance, it is a measure of growth of the economy. Those two are different. There is not a linear connection between them, but as the economy grows, usually public revenue also grows because there is more economic activity, more interaction for the Government, more payments of taxes, more payments of all government fees. That is why it is relevant. And as the GDP grows, also our kitty grows, usually. It is not linear, it is not connected, but there are some non-linear connections.

When he talks about us taking on unseen debt, he seems to think that he can conveniently completely ignore the companies under which they borrowed, not just one: GCP carparks, the borrowing on the Hospital. They have all said ... the new GSD all say that the Hospital was hidden borrowing, even the person who was Minister for Health at the time.

And when it comes to Sir Joe saying it is just an estimate, as if that were irrelevant, it was not Sir Joe saying that. Sir Joe was quoting Sir Peter Caruana, the man one of their number has described as the greatest Gibraltarian of all time. (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Our time.) No, you said all time. (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Our time.) You said all time. Anyway, (*Interjection*) he dropped the Book to say, 'This is a worthless waste of paper.' Mr Speaker, do you know what he should do? I have not brought it, because I think it is a bit childish, but he should drop the last GSD Book, the 2011-12 Book, and listen to the thud it would make, and then drop our Book and listen to thud it would make, because ours has a hundred more pages. It is like comparing my manifesto of 2015, the 'Strongest Foundations' manifesto – boom! when that fell – with the pamphlet that the GSD delivered in 2015. It did not quite sound the same. But look, there is something in it. We have got a hundred more pages. How can you say there is not disclosure of the facts of the finances of Gibraltar with a hundred more pages? It is remarkable, Mr Speaker. By the way, he needs to remember it is not LIBOR anymore, it is SOFR.

I am not going to sing to him *Welcome to the Jungle* from Guns N' Roses, but it is a jungle out there, and therefore having a National Economic Plan that is assisting the Savings Bank in its own growth and assisting with the growth of the economy is a very good thing because the jungle out there could get a lot more dangerous for us in coming years. So whether it is sheds on the beach or any other positive, profitable economic activity, the Hon. the Minister for the Savings Bank has the full support of the whole Cabinet in what he is doing there, and, I think, of the whole of Gibraltar.

When he talked about *The Jungle Book*, I was surprised that the hon. Lady actually smiled and they were a little positive to each other about it, because *The Jungle Book* was written by Rudyard Kipling. When I quoted Rudyard Kipling's Magnificent *If* last year, I was told in response it was terrible that I had done so because Kipling is now seen to be responsible for anti-Semitic tropes, and if that is the case, Mr Speaker, I will not be quoting Kipling, but I was surprised that despite

1610 having heard that, he went down the route of quoting *The Jungle Book*. I am not going to go down
the route of *The Jungle Book* quite yet, but if this is a jungle ... I may be Tarzan but he is no Jane.
He is more like Cheetah, monkeying around with the Estimates Book, throwing it around –
amusing, but not serious. If we are dealing with *The Jungle Book*, then maybe he is more like King
Louie, the man who sees himself as the king of the swingers, the jungle VIP, the one who wants
the gong, the knighthood – he has reached the top. But what is to stop him going further? I can
1615 hear him singing to me, Mr Speaker, ‘the king of the Swingers, the jungle VIP. I’ve reached the
top’ – of the Opposition – ‘and had to stop and that’s what’s bothering me. I want to be a Minister,
Minister cub, and stroll right into office, and be just like the other Ministers, I’m tired of monkeying
around.’ Is that what he is saying? Is that why he sees it all as a jungle? Is that why he is talking
about gongs and knighthoods? Is he just tired of being an accountant and he wants to be a
Minister instead?

1620 His idea that he is going to completely flatten the jungle is not one that is met with support
from the Minister for the Environment. Taking down jungles is not a good thing, it is the root of
all evil affecting the planet, as is the sort of politics that is done by people like Trump and
Bolsonaro, where they get up and threaten people. The hon. Gentleman got up and said that the
directors take that into consideration in their plush offices when he was talking about the charities
1625 that make up the National Economic Plan. So already, without the election called, they are
threatening people. The hon. Gentleman – I am very grateful – is nodding his head, and I am
grateful if *Hansard* would reflect that when I have said that the hon. Members are threatening
people, the hon. Gentleman has nodded his head. It is remarkable. We are back to the same old
GSD with a blacklist of people whose heads they are going to cut off when they are elected, if they
1630 are elected. That is not the Gibraltar that we want. That was not about leading a liberation up
Main Street in 1996.

And then he says that the burden of tax has increased on the ordinary worker. Has it? I have
just taken it down 1%. The ordinary worker is paying with everyone. I have put up tax, where they
had it at 5%, to 27%, not on the ordinary worker but on people earning hundreds of thousands of
1635 pounds. And then he says, ‘You should tax property developers.’ Did he miss the measure I
announced in respect of taxing contracts?

And then he says what we have to have is a Finance Bill, because everything is about going
back to the old ways and how things were done. He is the Jacob Rees-Mogg of this Chamber. He
just wants to go back. If he were in the *Mr Men*, he would be Mr Victorian. He just wants to go
1640 back to the way things used to be done.

The one thing that he was very clear about, which I am grateful for, was when he said that we
should only have given the pay rises to those earning £34,000, or the lump sum. At least he is
clear. The GSD’s position, the position of their ‘Chancellor’ is the measure of payment of the lump
sum, or the pay rise, should be only for those earning £34,000 or less. That is a very clear position.
1645 I am very grateful that he has put it, and the unions and all public sector employees should know
that they would have given a pay rise to those reaching up to £34,000. (*Interjection*) Okay. But
then he reads the bulletin from Unite and says it makes sense with the second limb. So he agrees
the second limb. He agrees this limb and the second one. (*Interjection*) It is remarkable that he
should challenge one but accept it with the other. I just do not understand it.

1650 And then he talks about the billions that we owe. The calculations that he does are always
completely wrong, just trying to pick up any figure that appears to have been borrowed without
taking into consideration all the amounts that have been paid – for example, the £500-odd million
that I have told him has been paid into the companies structure. He talks about these billions
owed to try to scare people about debt, but he never talks about the asset side of the balance
1655 sheet. If you are going to talk about the fact that we owe so much, talk about the billions of value
that the Government of Gibraltar owns. The Government of Gibraltar owns billions of pounds of
assets, many more billions than even in his worst calculation he can suggest we have in debt, and
so there is absolutely no reason for people to be worried, no reason for people to have to be
concerned.

1660 Then he told me that I had not done much for the private sector. What does he want me to do,
reduce the revenue more? By doing things for the private sector, what he is asking me to do is
reduce taxation or reduce charges, or give handouts. He is telling me on the one hand that we
1665 have not got money to even do the payment to the public sector because that is going to wipe out
the surplus, and then he turns his tongue with the fork that he has nailed it into to say give more
to the private sector as well. In other words, not just to 6,000 people, give to 31,200 people. I
know he is not an economist, but can he count? It is remarkable.

Mr Speaker, on the Public Accounts Committee, can I just make it very clear to him if he goes
with a policy on the Public Accounts Committee to the general public in his manifesto he must
know that he is going to be misleading them, because the Opposition, if it is the GSP Liberals, will
1670 not form part of a Public Accounts Committee. We said it before, we said it in 1996, we will not
form part of ... We think it is a bad thing for an economy like Gibraltar to have the Public Accounts
Committee process. We think it is a bad process. We said it in 2019, we said it in 2015 and we said
it in 1996. So if he goes with a policy that says there is going to be a Public Accounts Committee,
he needs to understand it is not going to become a reality in the nature of how Public Accounts
1675 Committees are organised in other parliaments.

Then he talked – again, when he got most animated – about 1996 and how people were
liberated from the tyranny of the GSLP. In other words, the great Sir Joe – whom he worships, who
he thinks is great, who he thinks is magnificent – was a tyrant in 1996 who we all had to be
liberated from, to bring in the person who then went on to spend more than all of the estimates
1680 he had ever proposed; in other words, the person who committed all of the sins that Mr Clinton
is attacking me about. But 1996 was not about a new hope – 1988 was a new hope, 1996 was *The
Empire Strikes Back*, as I told them before. They were not marching in liberation, they were
marching as the emperor finally got the place in his grasp, because – I do not want to mix my
metaphors, Mr Speaker, and my issues – by the time we got to 2010-11, senior politicians in
1685 Gibraltar were giving interviews to Spanish television about issues affecting life in Gibraltar, which
would not be carried locally, and not just Sir Joe Bossano on the Dr Giraldi Home but also Keith
Azopardi, who also gave an interview on the Doctor Giraldi Home. The liberation of 1996 was a
little like the liberation of Warsaw or the liberation of East Berlin, which was a momentary
liberation before the Iron Curtain came down. That is the reality, and indeed the leader of the GSD
1690 today, as leader of the PDP, was talking about tyranny in Gibraltar in 2011 and the undemocratic
nature of what Gibraltar is – although Mr Clinton is right, at least he stayed in the GSD.
Mr Azopardi walked in liberation in 1996 and then walked back in 2011 saying that it was all
tyranny again.

How can he say with a serious face that we want to rule by decree? We have curtailed the
1695 Henry VIII style measures that have been implemented in Gibraltar considerably from the
Henry VIII style measures that have been proposed in Westminster. We have curtailed them a lot
more. We have agreed them with hon. Members opposite. So what ruling by decree?

Mr Speaker, this was a complete joke of a speech. He says we do not want to come here to
answer questions. We answer more questions than they ever answered. We have monthly
1700 meetings of the House when we can. A demonstration of that is that we had them monthly before
the referendum, and then afterwards it has been very difficult but we tend to have monthly
meetings, and then COVID got in the way. How can he say these things and think that we will not
think what he says is a joke to such an extent I thought I was watching ‘Carry on Roy’, which was
not as funny as *Carry On Cleo* and much more in the nature of *Carry on up the Khyber*, which was
1705 a depiction of the Charge of the Light Brigade by the *Carry On* squad?

Starting to end his contribution by saying let in people who care is once again supremely
ungenerous because he suggests that the people who are here do not care. Does he really think
that we do not care, that I would have lost what I have lost, that I would have done what I have
done, that I would have given what I have given if I did not care, that all of us would have done
1710 what we have done, lost what we have lost, given what we have given in the time that we have
been in government if we did not care? Come on. You let yourself down very seriously when you

make statements like that. Be serious. Although I am prepared to accept that he did not mean it, that remark was cruel and it was unnecessary, especially after this term and everything we have given in this term. When he reflects, I hope his conscience will tell him he was wrong to suggest that we do not care.

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Mr Speaker, Dick the Butcher will have many supporters, he said, for his ‘Kill all the lawyers’ refrain. More eyebrows were raised on his side of the House than mine when he said that. I suppose that in saying that he was just confirming that he still wants to be leader of the GSD, that ‘Vote Roy’ is not a campaign that we have seen the end of. So much for ‘Bossino 27’. It may not be such an easy attempt as Mr Bossino might have thought.

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For somebody who wants to lead a political party in Gibraltar to say that he thinks access to Downing Street and having the opportunity to speak to the Prime Minister on the issues that relate to Gibraltar does not matter and is just a photo opportunity is really not sensible because it is hugely important to be able to put the case of Gibraltar to the Foreign Secretary directly, to the Prime Minister directly. Those are hugely important and it means that I am not the new dawn false prophet, it means he is, somebody who fails to understand the basics of politics and the politics around him.

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He says, ‘Where are the new schools that you are delivering this year in the Book? Where are they?’ Well, one of them is rented, so it is not going to be there, and we have told him we will be able to determine the rent when we have finished the conclusion of the agreements; and two are being paid for by the TNG Foundation. He knows that, doesn’t he? We made a public statement about it. In lieu of the premium for Bayside agreed at £21-odd million, they are building the schools. So they do not have to be in the Book. It is that simple, so what was so remarkable? One of the key themes he was developing: they do things that are not in the Book. Hidden, hidden, hidden. It is all out in the public statements and the information we have given them. It is remarkable, but to say that the Book is just a waste of paper is a demonstration that with friends like him Gibraltar needs no enemies. We do not need Peter Hain to say that the things being done in Gibraltar are a scam if we have Mr Clinton to suggest more or less the same thing. Before, everybody in this Chamber would at least defend the work of our civil servants. Now the GSD attack the work of our civil servants, and the GSLP Liberals defend the work of our civil servants.

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We are not seeking a blank cheque from the public. We account for every penny we spend. That is the reality, even if he cannot see it because he is not good enough to understand the Book because, let’s face it, he is sometimes not able to work things out. When we tell him they are in the Book and show him what they are, he says, ‘I look forward to the closure of the COVID Fund formally by the Chief Minister.’ Well, actually, it is not the Chief Minister who can close the COVID Fund. There is a reference in the rules to the Chief Minister closing the COVID Fund, but the law says it has to be closed by the Governor, so he is wrong about that as well.

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He says people should know only 33% of the COVID Fund was used to pay BEAT, 77% was used to go to government revenue, which enabled the Government to pay everything else – the salaries, the GHA etc. – and we should have used the rainy day funds when it was pouring. Well, look, I have just shown him that we have permitted Community Care to run down its reserves – that is to say, to use that reserve. But we have been able to get through and restore financial stability – as I have shown him, we have and we will, as I have shown them in the charts – without touching the reserve of the bank. It is a very good thing that we have done it without touching the reserve of the bank – and not what they did, which was to take the £19.3 million in order to be able to still have some element of a surplus – without leaving the Savings Bank reserve at zero or Community Care at zero, which is what they did to us.

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And yes, I do think that the hospital deal is wonderful because it means we are going to pay much less interest and we are going to have much more left over for the use of the general costs of healthcare.

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Finally in relation to Mr Clinton, I do think that at one stage the device of throwing the Book was the only way he knew he could keep people awake for the rest of his speech, so I forgive him

it, but I will never forgive him saying that we have to be replaced by people who care, as if we did not.

1765 Mr Speaker, I move on now – with a little left, but I hope to be finished by two – to deal with Mr Bossino. Mr Bossino has been called many things, principally by the people who sit with him. He has been called Slim Shady ... all of these things that the people sitting next to him call him. I am not going to call him anything of that sort, I am just going to do him the honour of referring to him in the same way as Mrs Thatcher referred to Geoffrey Howe after he had retired, because
 1770 listening to him really was, when it came to attack, like being mauled by a sheep – Shaun the Sheep, actually, because he looks a little like Shaun the Sheep with that beard that he has left – and an intellectual sheep at that, because none of his arguments could actually fly. They were all grounded by the facts. I give the same economic analysis every year. I was not giving it because Vijay Daryanani is Minister for Tourism. I go through those economic indicators every year and
 1775 the economic indicators showed that all the things that he had been saying about the terrible Minister for Tourism were, actually, untrue. Everything has to be set in its proper context.

Before I come to that detail, I have heard the Hon. Mr Azopardi and the Hon. Mr Feetham say so many times now, ‘Whilst Keith Azzopardi is leader of the GSD, there will be no way back on equal rights for LGBT+ people and women’s rights,’ but I think it is important that I translate, for
 1780 the general public who may be watching today, what that means. What Mr Feetham is saying in code and what Mr Azopardi is saying as both a sword and a shield is that when they fall, *après Keith, le déluge*. In other words, once Keith is gone, it is Damon, and when it is Damon it is an obligation, for reasons of conscience, to undo the amendment to the Crimes Act on women’s reproductive rights – that is to say abortion – and an obligation to undo or have no more progress
 1785 on matters relating to equal sexual rights etc. As the hon. Lady said – I do not know whether he was here to hear her – he represents the sort of politics of Uganda, the politics of Vox, of taking down the Pride flag, of not having a Pride cavalcade down Main Street. He is to be seen down Main Street every Saturday taking his picture with whoever happens to be out in town organising anything public. He captures political COVID on the day of the Pride parade down Main Street
 1790 every year. I say political COVID advisedly because I think if he did have to go down Main Street, he would probably wear a mask in case he caught anything – in case he caught L, G, B, T, Q or +. It is remarkable. *Après Keith, le déluge*.

So you see, when I talk about GSD austerity and when I talk about GSD cuts, what the general public need to know is that I am not just talking about cuts to services, to salaries, to the
 1795 headcount of the Civil Service and the public sector; I am talking about cuts to rights, cuts to progress, austerity in the rights that the people of Gibraltar have acquired to love who they want to love, to marry who they want to marry, to have a termination if their circumstances so require and are in keeping with the rules that this House has set out and the public commenced. Austerity – not just in the financial, austerity of rights. There is a constituency for that, Mr Speaker,
 1800 of course there is – we did not win the referendum on abortion by 100%, we won it by 70-odd per cent. If he wants to represent that constituency and the GSD want to represent that constituency, of course they should – that position should have political representation – but you should stand up and say that you stand for that. He is not shy of doing so, and I encourage him to do so, to say that except on the sovereignty of Gibraltar, where I consider him a hawk rather than a dove, he is
 1805 Vox. Opus, Vox, you name it, we all know what he is. He knows what he is and he is not shy of it, and it is good that he is not shy of it. He defends what he is and that is absolutely right. He should not allow the others to camouflage who he is and who his party are ‘whilst Keith Azopardi is leader of the GSD’. And then what?

He talks about Parson’s Lodge and the Moorish Castle. It is almost as if he wants us to refurbish these places, which would entirely undo their heritage value. As if we were bad managers of that.
 1810 With £10 million the GSD gives you a hole in the ground where there used to be a theatre. With £1 million the GSLP gets you a UNESCO site. With £1 million a year the GSD did not even have to start with the foundations of the Theatre Royal.

1815 When it comes to being managers of our heritage, Mr Speaker ... I was reading this article by Keith Azopardi on 21st September 2006, warning against the GSD's Cordoba Agreement:

Azopardi warns against sharp-toothed wolf in sheep's clothing.

I do not think he meant Shaun the Sheep, he meant Spain, I think, then, because it was before he had written his treatise on modern Andorra not being joint sovereignty. I am always fascinated by the articles I find around what I am reading:

PDP executive tanks lead way for new members. The GSD's management of one of our prized heritage assets, the tanks that contained the water, that victualled the Victory on its way to victory at Trafalgar, were destroyed.

1820 This is what the PDP, led by the now leader of the GSD, said. It was the tanks that drove more people to become actively involved in the PDP. So the leader of the GSD was leading a party then that thought that the management by the GSD of the heritage assets was so gross that it was driving people into the party that led to the GSD losing the election in 2011. Thank you, Mr Azopardi. I never thank him enough. We won by very little margin in 2011. If it had not been for him, the GSD would not have had its vote split and they would have won the election. We won
1825 it thanks to the current leader of the GSD. I think we are going to win in 2023 also thanks to the current leader of the GSD and his position on sovereignty and Andorra, so I have to thank him for 2011 and for 2023.

1830 But on the management of heritage, Mr Bossino needs to think a little bit more. What about the large-scale projects that we have done at Wellington Front, the ongoing work at the Northern Defences, the Mount, the Lime Kiln, the Upper Rock, the Almond Tower at the Moorish Castle?

1835 He also wants to bad talk the Museum and Knightsfield. He wants to talk it down. He says his key compromise, his key position, key policy, fundamental ... 'When I am elected, I will publish the Knightsfield contract.' I think it contains a confidentiality clause, but okay, if he were elected perhaps he could negotiate his way out of it. But it is not a contract that we negotiated, so the great reveal that the GSD will do when they publish the Knightsfield contract will be to publish the deal that the GSD did with Knightsfield. The great disclosure is of their allegedly now not-so-good activity in government, if that is what he is saying, because we did not do that deal.

1840 And then he says that Environment and Heritage do not talk. Has he realised that Environment and Heritage are the same guy in this room, the same Minister? Of course they talk, of course they are in contact. And that he has no idea, no vision, the Minister for the Environment, Oh, yes? We brought the Antiquities Act to Parliament, we set up Heritage Vision, we work with the Heritage Trust. And when he says that we do not co-ordinate between Environment, Heritage and Tourism, the National Park Co-ordination Board was created by the National Parks Bill, which they voted against. You could not make this up. Has he seen, since 2011, the number of projects that John Cortes has led on when it comes to heritage etc.? Has he been to the Upper Town? I go very regularly. I love the Upper Town. I was born in the Upper Town and I lived in the Upper Town, in Calpe. Albert Isola, whom he denigrates, used to live in Bell Lane. We are Town people, not South District people just like him. I was not lucky enough to live in the Rock Hotel, I lived in El Calpe. When I go out with my bike, I come down and go through all of that area. Has he seen how good
1845 the area around Old Police Barracks is, the refurbishment of the Moorish Castle Estate, the refurbishment of Police Barracks Estate and Old Police Barracks, the new schools at St Bernard's? Has he seen how good it looks? Is it perfect? No. Is it better? A hundred per cent better.

1850 And how is it that when we talk about the air terminal costing three or four times what it was anticipated to cost, that is talking about old chestnuts, but when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and gives a soliloquy on 1996, that is talking about contemporary issues? Seriously? Mr Bossino
1855 has demonstrated that he, too, is soon going to be no more and no less than a FLOP. He is going to be a future Leader of the Opposition, but that is it, it is clear, a future Leader of the Opposition.

1860 On airlines, we now have 39 flights a week. The flights are full. We have BA operating three flights, 22 Saturdays this summer, the first time for our Airport; a daily flight to Manchester since last summer, also a first, with capacity increased. You look at the facts and it is better under Vijay Daryanani than it was under Joe Holliday, despite Joe Holliday being called Holliday. But he does not want to listen because he wants to attack. He does not want the facts, he wants to make it up.

1865 And then, Mr Speaker, you have a guy like Vijay Daryanani, who – despite it all, because this is the theatre of gladiatorial conflict, has to listen to him saying the things that Mr Bossino says, despite the indicators all showing the magnificent performance – sent him a letter on 17th February, maturely:

Dear Damon

– I know that they have been friends before –

During the question and answer session in Parliament earlier this week, I extended an invitation to you for a meeting in my office, where I would brief you confidentially on Royal Caribbean International's decision not to call at Gibraltar during 2024. I once again extended an invitation during last night's *Viewpoint* debate.

As I have said publicly, we are dealing with a publicly listed company and consequently there are matters under discussion which are commercially sensitive. It is not appropriate to air these in public. Gibraltar is a serious, reputable jurisdiction and the Government is of the view that further public statements will harm Gibraltar.

Now that the *Viewpoint* debate is over and your concern of being muzzled for the debate is no longer an issue, I once again make myself available to brief you confidentially and answer any questions you may have. Our offices can arrange a mutually convenient time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes.

Vijay Daryanani.

1870 What has the response been, Mr Speaker? Tumbleweed. He has not replied. He is laughing from a sedentary position. A mature person in the shape of the Minister for Tourism inviting him to a discussion to deal with issues: no reply. He pretends to be mature. He then does not behave as if he were mature. He has not got a moment to reply to the Minister, to write and say, 'Dear Vijay, of course we should work together on everything that we can, but I consider this to be a highly political issue. I want to exploit it to the maximum. I do not care about Gibraltar. I just want to make the most of it for my own party political ends. I am not coming to see you.' Nada, zilch, not even an acknowledgement. That is not maturity.

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1880 A number of new cruise lines are coming to Gibraltar. Royal Caribbean is coming back in 2025. What are the issues? There has been a lot of repositioning. They have changed where they were. He says we need a strategy, as if we did not have a strategy. We are already down no more and no less than the rest of the world is down on cruising and with more new cruises to come. Pure spin. And when you look at the indicators, when you look at the numbers and you look at the money coming in, it shows that it is all pure spin – spin delivered with the usual charm and charisma and gusto, but God bless us should we end up with him running Gibraltar with just charm and charisma, because it does not get you very far. At least the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition does not rely on that, because he has no charm and charisma.

1885 And then he calls us a shanty town. How is it that he thinks he is using his pulpit for the public good in Gibraltar, describing any part of Gibraltar as a shanty town? Does he know what a shanty town is? There is no part of Gibraltar that is a shanty town any more. There might have been.

1890 And we are not going to take his advice and go to Fitur. We are not going to take that advice. You look at what he says ... He says, 'Don't go to Sea Trade,' which is the place where the maritime industry is represented and the Minister for the Port and Tourism should definitely be, 'go to Fitur instead.' They used to say, 'Don't go to the C24 in New York, it's a waste of time.' It sounds to me like they want to go to Fitur, they do not want to go to Miami and they do not want to go to New York because Miami and New York, for a short period – not the wibbly-wobbly – is too much like hard work and Fitur is a tapas run in Madrid. But whilst we are here, we will go to the ones that

matter, the conferences that matter, to continue to bring business – and, note, not to tapas runs in Madrid. I will leave that to him, hopefully not paid for by the taxpayer.

1900 In all that time as Shadow Minister for the Port not to have raised for one moment in a positive statement the incredibly successful, careful and remarkable work done by the Port Authority, and the Captain of the Port in particular, on the removal of the wreck of the *OS35* is just remarkable. I will tell him why. Usually our critics are outside of Gibraltar. On this issue, even the Spanish media and Spanish officials have praised the excellent work done by Juan Luis Ghio as Captain of the Port and the team at the Port Authority and Vijay Daryanani as its Minister – and he and the Leader of
1905 the Opposition have just criticised. So the Port Authority of Algeciras, our critics beyond, have said, ‘An operation very well done on the *OS35*, absolutely well delivered, did the right thing when the time came, put it in the right place and now removed in the right way.’ And then nothing. *Que savorio*. Negative, just rancour, not praising even officials and saying, ‘The Minister is has done very little because the Minister is a Minister, but here, the officials in the Port Authority that we
1910 in the GSD created’ – you created the authority, turned it from a department to an authority, gave them 12½% extra pay; that is how you controlled expenses – ‘have done a magnificent job. This guy who is now the Captain of the Port was employed by us when we were in government. What a great choice, he is now Captain of the Port. He has done a magnificent job. He has put Gibraltar up there because when we have been under the microscope, nobody serious has criticised us,
1915 everybody serious has praised us.’ Not a dicky bird. Instead, he prefers to say, ‘What was the Minister doing going to Bangladesh instead of going to Fitur on tourism?’ Talk about mixing apples and pears. The Minister did not go to Bangladesh for anything to do with tourism. He is also the Minister for Business. It was a Commonwealth business conference. So how would he connect the two? How can he be so nonsensical in his approach to the politics? This is the man who thinks of
1920 himself as the next leader of the GSD and then sees himself as the next Chief Minister of Gibraltar. We are not a Spanish town, to go and sell our wares in Fitur.

And by the way, the criticism of the roundabout outside of the airport tunnel I thought was particularly laughable because we built the design they left. We did not want to change the design because it would have cost consequences, so we built the design they left. So again, he is not just
1925 criticising themselves by suggesting there is something wrong in the Knightsfield contract, he is criticising themselves by criticising the roundabout which they left.

It is just tragic to see an Opposition that puts such little thought into the work they are doing, a little like – and I am going to take these two themes together now – Mr Reyes, and I am grateful he is back, and Mr Bossino. We have built, he said, the sporting facilities too far from residential
1930 areas. If we built them closer to residential areas, they would say we were creating congestion, which is what Mr Reyes said we are going to create by putting Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor’s Meadow where we are putting them, at the Europort Avenue. I almost pulled every single one of my hairs out when I heard that, every single one. How can Mr Reyes attack us for putting Bishop Fitzgerald and Governor’s Meadow at Europort Avenue? *They* put Bishop Fitzgerald and
1935 Governor’s Meadow at Europort Avenue, we have just rebuilt them. It is remarkable. This is remarkable. They are worse than a shower. And Mr Bossino says it is terrible that you put the sporting facilities there – the sports days were a disaster, nobody could park. Well, I went to the sports days up at Lathbury. Everybody could park, everybody was delighted, it was packed and there was space left over. These are wonderful new facilities. I do not just say it. I know they have
1940 had new people taken into their executive, very proudly announced new people that they have taken into their executive recently, some females in particular. Kim Chang, who is the Director of the Gibraltar Institute for Sport, said this on *NewsWatch* last week about the sporting facilities in Gibraltar:

One of the other legacies from the Gibraltar Island Games is we have these fabulous sports facilities, and now we are capitalising on that. We have just launched the Gibraltar Institute of Sport, so we have got that. And we recently had Lady Mary Peters over – she is going to be the patron, so that is a fantastic coup for us. And we are just going to maximise these fantastic opportunities in Gibraltar for warm-weather training, to try and boost the athletes who

have done so well here and try and better those performances for Auckland in two years' time and then the Commonwealth Games. And let's try and increase high performance sport in Gibraltar.

1945 This is the Director of the Gibraltar Institute for Sport, a guy who knows something about sport. And then Lady Mary Peters – she is the Olympic gold medallist – on GBC as well:

I am absolutely falling in love. I came for three days to see all the facilities that Joslyn is going to set up at the Gibraltar Institute for Sport, to see if we can bring people here to use these facilities, because they are fabulous.

This is an Olympic gold medal winner. Mr Bossino will forgive me for putting more score by what she thinks of what the track at Lathbury is like than him. I know he goes for the odd jog, but he ain't no Olympic gold medal winner, Mr Speaker.

This lady says of Northern Ireland:

We have 1.7 million people and I don't think we have these facilities, and you've got 34,000 people and you've got them. So I think you've got to increase the participation in sport, although it's already increased in the schools, but I'm going to bring elite athletes here, to use the facilities to train, and the youngsters will be able to watch them and train like them.

1950 And Joslyn Hoyte-Smith, also an Olympic gold medallist, says the same thing:

They are fantastic facilities here. We are looking at bringing elite athletes and high-performing athletes. The facilities are outstanding. There is no reason why anybody in the world wouldn't want to use these facilities.

1955 And Mr Reyes says it is a bit windy up at Lathbury, you should have put it somewhere else – or Mr Bossino said that. Gibraltar really does deserve a better Opposition, not because the Opposition should become the Government but because the Opposition should be roundly discarded. I am becoming disappointed Together Gibraltar have given up. They should have taken over from them. It is remarkable.

And then he said, 'Well, you must have sold Rooke to the highest bidder.' No, we have not sold Rooke to the highest bidder, we have sold Rooke to the lowest-rise bidder that provided the best project for our community. Wrong again.

1960 And then, going on to housing, he says the housing list is staggeringly an unacceptably high. Really? Well, let's look at the golden legacy. He is the one who said that the GSD left us a golden legacy. In 1988, the housing waiting list was 2,126. When the GSLP left office, it was 265. It is in the *Hansard* for 28th June 1996. So the GSD inherited a housing list that was 10% of what it had been when the GSLP had inherited it. By 2011 it had gone up to 1,433, so in 16 years they multiplied the housing waitlist by six. We had already halved it by January this year, when it was 1965 792, so our performance is double as good as yours. Not as good as Pepito yet, but double as good as you. So where is the housing list that is staggeringly and unacceptably high? He set the benchmark. He said the GSD left us a golden legacy. A golden legacy is 1,433 people on the housing waiting list. We have 792. Ours is platinum.

1970 'The GSD's handling of housing development is marked by appalling mismanagement.' I did not say that, he did. 'The GSD's handling of housing development is marked by appalling mismanagement' are not my words. That is the PDP manifesto signed by Keith Azopardi in 2011. That is what the leader of the GSD thinks of the GSD's performance in respect of housing development. You could not make this stuff up, Mr Speaker.

1975 He complains about the affordable homes. He says it is terrible that they are delayed. Well, how many more affordable homes did they promise to develop? In 2015, in the thing that Mr Feetham will remember was the manifesto that was a pamphlet, absolutely no affordable homes were promised. In 2019, the commitment is this:

We will pursue to completion any housing projects that are inherited from the GSLP in respect of which there are existing contractual commitments that may have been commenced by the time we are elected to Government.

1980 That is it. They promised to build zero affordable homes in 2015 and in 2019, and that must ring true because, let's face it, in 1996 and in 2000 they built zero affordable homes. Zero. Maybe that is why the leader of the GSD said that the GSD's handling of housing developments is marked by appalling mismanagement. He was right.

1985 Let's look at what he says is our lost generation. It is what he said. *Nonsense*. Look at the number of affordable homes that have been developed in our respective periods in office. The first GSLP administration delivered 2,442 affordable homes under the 50/50 regime, 305 a year over eight years. The GSD delivered 801 over 16 years, 50 flats a year. In the 12 years to date, we have delivered, already, 1,273 – actually delivered. That is 106 flats per year. When we finish the current programme, which I hope we will be able to finish if we are returned to office by the people, we will deliver 2,141 homes definitely in 14 years, but let's say 16 years so we do the calculation in the same way: 178 flats a year versus 50 flats a year. Who has got the lost generation? They do. Who has the responsibility for the appalling management of Gibraltar's property development? They do. Who has failed the young people of Gibraltar? They have. That is the reality, and if he had done the research he would not have exposed himself to the point being made against him. That is why he cannot be Chief Minister of Gibraltar, because he does not bother to descend to particulars, he does not bother to understand the point he is making, he does not bother to realise the risk he takes with the things he says and he should never be empowered to take risks with Gibraltar on behalf of the people of Gibraltar, and this is a demonstration of how wrongly they have got it. And if he is going to build a rental estate, with what money? They say they have to tell us the difficult truth, they say we have no surplus and they say we have no money, so how are they going to build a rental estate?

2000 He was saying to me that I had said my gut told me that we were going to win, but he said my gut was smaller so maybe I was wrong. This year, at last, I can genuinely say that reports of my girth are greatly exaggerated, because now I am of a smaller gut. It is completely new for me to be thin: new wardrobe, new look. Not for him – he has always been gutless, something I have always been jealous of, but now I am brave and thin.

2005 He talked about the lonely photograph of my mug at Catalan Bay. Doesn't he know that because of data protection I never take a photograph of the mug with the person I am seeing, I only take a photograph of the mug on its own? And I was far from lonely at Catalan Bay. I got a lot of business done. But in fact, if people told him I had very few people with me, I can tell him the few people I had with me were more in my private meeting than went to their public meeting at Catalan Bay. That, I will tell him for nothing, and I must tell him – I am very sorry to disappoint him – I cannot recall being booed at a recent awards ceremony. If I had been, I would take it because people are entitled to boo – you are a public servant – but it does ill behove him to just make it up. But I suppose he just makes it up because there is nothing else to attack us on.

2015 They said it was terrible that Mr Isola got up and responded to some of the things that had been said because I was supposed to be the one doing the reply, and yet they then went on to have seven bites at the attack cherry, suggesting that they can do what they like and we can only reply through me. I suppose it is typical that when somebody says to them that they are wrong it is inelegant, and when they call us every name under the sun it is proper politics. It is the typical mixing of the virtue and the vice. Maybe he called Mr Isola inelegant because he had not heard what Mr Clinton called me. And then he said that if they are elected, we will have a clean Gibraltar again – and I do not think he meant the streets. And that is not inelegant? Frankly, I think his yardstick of elegance is very one sided.

2020 He then went on to try and suggest that there was a difference between Joe Bossano and me on the issue of the treaty. Far from it. Every word that Joe Bossano has spoken he speaks for the Government and for Joe Garcia and for me, every word, especially about the four-year horizon. This treaty, if we do it, has a four-year timeframe because if the thing that is supposed to happen at the end of the four years is not something that we negotiate our way out of, we will not agree it, and that is it. But given that they say they are going to take over the negotiation, how do they purport to negotiate that that four-year horizon does not materialise? Is it that they are going to

2030 say, 'We need the treaty to continue at whatever price – please could you change the bit that we
do not like?' Or is the better negotiating position, which is our real negotiating position and not
just a tactic, to say, 'Oh, yes? Well, if that is going to happen in four years, end of treaty'? What
does he think is the right way to negotiate the way out of that which we do not like? Of course it
is by doing exactly as Joe Bossano has done and I have done, which is to set out the reality of the
2035 position, to say that the people of Gibraltar will not accept that and that there will be a four-year
horizon. And these are the people who say, 'Put us in charge of the Brexit negotiation and come
along, so that when we crash the car you are in it too.' Good luck with that.

It is no coincidence, however, that things are being done in the last months of the lifetime of
this Parliament. People are electing a government to be there for four years, to do until the last
2040 day of the four years, and in this particular lifetime of this Parliament we have had two years when
we could not do anything, so of course we are delivering towards the end in some respects, but
delivering we are. When we do not deliver, he chastises us for not delivering in the lifetime of the
Parliament. Therefore, he has to accept that we deliver when we deliver it in the lifetime of the
Parliament, however late.

2045 Mr Reyes delivered his short, 31-minute speech – for which we were grateful – making points
which are frankly remarkable. He says that the GSD would never use taxpayers' money for the
stadium. Well, if there was one thing in the pamphlet, it was a stadium paid for by taxpayers'
money. So the GSD's position has been to pay for the stadium with taxpayers' money in 2015 and
to never, ever pay for the stadium with taxpayers' money today, because it is convenient.
2050 Genuinely, if anybody is interested in looking at what they say versus what they have said, it is
really quite remarkable. They say one thing today and another tomorrow.

What really I thought was shameful was that Mr Reyes should say to us that he hoped for our
children's sake that the new school buildings which will come into use from September prove to
be a product conforming to the higher standards. How dare Mr Reyes say that to us? Mr Reyes is
2055 a very affable person, he is a very affable colleague in Parliament, but this is an affront. As from
September, apart from the Jewish School, every school will have been built by the Government of
the GSLP Liberals – including St Joseph's, which is the first one done in the first GSLP
administration. They presided over surpluses – I have shown their surpluses were smaller than
mine, but they had surpluses – and they allowed the children of the Upper Town to continue to
2060 have to suffer the Victorian building that was St Bernard's. It was Victorian and it felt Victorian.
John Cortes and I cried when we went to the KGV and saw how our Alzheimer's patients were
being treated. We shed a tear, too, when we went, together with Gilbert Licudi, to see
St Bernard's. It was my alma mater. That is what posh people call the school they used to go to. I
had very deep affection for it. I was ashamed. Although it was in the very first months of my
2065 leading this community, I was ashamed to see that the good people of the Upper Town were
having to have their children put through that school in the way that the GSD had left it. So, given
that Mr Reyes was Minister for Education at some time – weren't you? – well, was in the
Government that had a Minister for Education that tolerated that, frankly I think it is remarkable
that he had the gall to say to us that we have to deliver to the highest standard when we are
2070 delivering to the highest standard, really remarkable.

On vocational courses, for example, the hon. Gentleman does not seem to know that we have
offered a vocational course in Bayside and West Side for construction and it is had to be
discontinued because it was taken up by zero students. It is remarkable.

2075 And the idea that the teaching profession is somehow being ignored when the teaching
profession is actually working with us on the school developments ... They are involved in the
planning. The head teachers are involved in the planning and talking to the staff to make sure that
they get the schools that they need. I am so looking forward to finishing this part of the
programme when, in the first week in September this year, we have the handover of the new
Bishop Fitzgerald, the new Governor's Meadow and the new St Mary's, because the programme
2080 will be almost complete. We will then move the Jewish School, we hope, and every school will
have been developed by a GSLP Liberal Government, if the people of Gibraltar return us to office.

Mr Speaker, I come almost now to my conclusion, dealing with Mr Phillips and Ms Marlene Hassan Nahon. Mr Phillips, frankly, was loud. That was it, he was loud. He is not here to hear me respond to him. He has not told me where he is. The Hon. Ms Hassan Nahon has told me that she has to be away from Gibraltar. She said she intended no discourtesy and I fully accept that. Mr Phillips has just not turned up. I am not surprised because nobody can objectively look at our record in government and say it is hopeless. Nobody can objectively say that our Book reveals half the story. Nobody can objectively say that we want no oversight or transparency.

What is actually regretful is that a Member of this House should suggest that for the last four years in particular we have been playing Monopoly, we have been playing games. I do not know whether Mr Phillips has enough Spanish to know the phrase that suggests that his face should fall of shame for having said that. How can anybody seriously say to this team that has been through what we have been through – that had to lock down this community, had to pay BEAT, had to take the risks that we had to take in ending lockdowns, in creating a silver hour and a golden hour, that had to address the community every day at four o'clock in the afternoon to tell them what was happening and what was going to happen next – that we have been playing a game? Maybe it sounded funny when he sat down and in an infantile way confected a speech that he thought might connect with some of his own supporters but go no further, but it is deeply disrespectful to this House and to every public servant of Gibraltar, and indeed even to the other Members of this House who sit alongside him and co-operated with the Government, to suggest that we have been playing a game for the past four years. It is deeply disrespectful to our families in particular, given what we did. It is extraordinarily disrespectful to the families who lost loved ones in the past four years during the pandemic, to the people who are experiencing problems at the Frontier because they are blue ID card holders and we have not been able to do a deal because it is not safe and secure to do a deal on the terms that have been put to us – deeply disrespectful. The past four years have not been a game, Mr Speaker, and I deeply resent the suggestion that they have been.

Mr Phillips cannot even come up with something funny to say for himself. He had to adopt Ms Hassan Nahon's planet Picardo reference from last year. Well, at least for her it was an original thought. Couldn't he think of anything original for himself?

He attacked Mr Isola for talking about 1996, probably because he missed that the person who talked about 1996 was Keith Azopardi, his leader, and Albert Isola was replying.

But then, most remarkably, because I know he had been here last year, he said we had not heeded their warnings of a potential perfect storm. He said Mr Feetham and Mr Clinton had been warning of the potential perfect storm. Has he forgotten what Mr Feetham said about the perfect storm and the effect of it? I am surprised because it was the cover of my Budget reply notes. This is a quote I put on the cover of my Budget reply notes and which was the theme of my response in 2021 and 2022. It is a direct quote from Daniel Feetham because Daniel Feetham sometimes makes the point for me even better than I make it myself. He said this:

Of course, no one on this side of the House is saying that if they had been prudent with the people's money over the last 10 years we could have avoided a £157 million deficit, which is of course COVID related and no one could have predicted the pandemic.

So much for the warnings that we were being given by Mr Feetham. Mr Feetham himself said, 'My warnings were irrelevant because we would have ended up in the same place.' No, it is all, for Mr Phillips, about getting Brexit done, it is all about the Venetian palace at No. 6, it is all about criticising the Music Festival. The hon. Gentleman has become the *Daily Express* of political speeches, although I am surprised he criticised the Music Festival because he and his family were there enjoying it with us – enjoying perhaps a bit too much a few too many of the drinks that were shared at the time, so I am surprised. Maybe he had forgotten, because he had had too many of the drinks, that he had been there, because he was criticising his own spending.

So I do not accept that I am leaving a broken Health Service, a decimated public service. I really do not accept that. And the idea that I am giving jobs for the boys – literally? I suppose the only

2130 way he can make that out is by arguing that the 26 people who are unemployed are not members of the GSLP, because everybody else has a job. Those are the numbers that Mr Feetham says he cannot believe. I will come to them in a moment.

Mr Speaker, I am going on a little longer than I expected, but not for very long.

2135 He said something which I thought was right. He said the people who broke the system cannot be trusted to fix it. Absolutely right. That is why they can never come back to government, because they are the ones who broke the system, as I have shown with the numbers I have gone through. Neither did I say – and he completely misinterpreted – that we are the third richest country in the world. We are not the third richest country in the world. I did the GDP per capita calculation saying I think it is a nonsense and that it does not work but that it has been done every year, so I have to do it. Even the nonsense argument is not to suggest that we are the third richest country in the world. I did think at one stage he reminded me a lot of Lord Farquaad from *Shrek* in the way he was going on.

2140 If we have not done a Brexit deal, it is because it is not safe. If we have not come off the FATF grey list, it is not because we are not doing things properly and Cayman did them properly. We are very likely to come off it much sooner than Cayman did, because they were on it for two years. 2145 ‘There is no proper governance in Gibraltar. The GSD will concentrate on this when in government.’ This is utter nonsense. This is worse than spin.

2150 And what he says is disgraceful is that I made them come back in the afternoon to give speeches ‘because we should be on summer hours’, he said. What utter nonsense is that? I am surprised that Mr Phillips should suggest we should only come here in summer hours. It was actually quite pathetic. What about the times we have been here late into the night? I have delivered a Budget speech at nine o’clock in the evening, Mr Speaker. He had none of that. He and the hon. Lady are complaining about being made to come here on a summer’s afternoon when obviously they would prefer to do something else. I had deliberately manipulated the diary of this House? Well, Mr Azopardi spoke at 3.30, Mr Reyes at 12.30, Mr Clinton at 5.30, Mr Bossino at 2155 8.30, Mr Feetham at 4.30, Ms Hassan Nahon at five o’clock. So what is wrong? I have given speeches at 9.30 at night. Before this was on television, before it was being streamed, people had to listen on the radio if they wanted to. I suppose I had an audience – I am here, aren’t I? – so he is criticising the GSD for that, in effect.

2160 And the fact that there is no line on mental health is terrible, he says it is disgraceful. He says it is really terrible – serious, Mr Speaker – it demonstrates we have no commitment to mental health. Does he know that he sits next to a former Minister for Health in the GSD? And does he know that when the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Health in the GSD there was no separate line in the Estimates Book for mental health issues? Talk about being stabbed in the side, not in the back. Honestly, I think Benny Hill does a better job, even though he does not say a word and just runs around. 2165

We are not cutting locums, we are employing more consultants. You have fewer locums when you fill the consultant post. This is a remarkable approach to these estimates. It is not even worth going through the detail of what he says.

2170 The smelly bowlers from Green Arc that he talks about – does he know that they signed that contract, which is still enduring, just like Mr Bossino was criticising the Knightsfield contract, which they did? As I told you at the beginning, Mr Speaker, we have changed so much we have even changed what they think of themselves. Even they think that the contracts that they did were not good contracts. He does not recognise the better air quality that there is in Gibraltar – none of that, because he thinks he knows it all. He says he has a blue and yellow army ready to do the 2175 Brexit deal that they are going to get done. I really did expect a lot better from Elliott Phillips when he was elected to this House than the diatribe that we were presented with in the way that we were presented with it.

2180 Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Feetham treated us to what may be his valedictory. As usual, I am persuaded of my view that he immatures with age. He really does remind me of Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, the primary antagonist of the beast, known for his muscular physique, his

handsome appearance and his self-centred personality. In the story, Gaston is infatuated with Belle, the film's protagonist. Here, I suppose we are both infatuated with Gibraltar. (*Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham*) I would not want to freak out Mr Bossino at that thought. Gibraltar rejects Gaston's advances because she values intelligence, kindness and inner beauty over physical appearance, but Gaston's arrogance leads him to become increasingly determined to win Gibraltar's affection and eliminate any competition – primarily the beasts on this side who Gibraltar has developed feelings for. So the whole story is about Gaston and the conflict that he feels as he tries to manipulate and harm others to achieve his goals. It is so apposite, Mr Speaker. Throughout that cartoon, Gaston displays manipulative behaviour, rallying the villagers against the beast and organising a plan to dispose of him. However, his arrogance ultimately becomes his own downfall and his actions lead to his own demise. The parallels are all there.

And yet he gets up to round up for the Opposition as if he were still the Leader of the Opposition. He gets up and makes the first mathematical mistake: 23 years in politics, he says, half my life. *Mas quisiera tener 46 años*. Put all of the rest of the numbers that he treats us to in context. He cannot even multiply 23 by two. He calls me his principal political opponent. I think I am supposed to be flattered, but he is not my principal political opponent, my principal political opponent is Sir Peter Caruana. They have not yet been able to produce anyone who has been able to stay the course as Leader of the Opposition for long enough to remove me, so I am not going to accept that we are principal political opponents. I will say that the hon. Gentleman was not a close second but he is at least – I will give him this – a distant second. He is the only one who at least took the fight to us for a little while.

Then he goes on and says that I am not elegant. Okay, he may say I am not elegant, but Gibraltar has preferred me on three occasions to him, and Gibraltar does not tend to get it wrong. As he was delivering what is, to all intents and purposes, a valedictory – I think it is in effect a valedictory, although I know him well enough to know that he still harbours the chance that they will ask him to stay and they will beg strongly enough and he will reluctantly say he will – I almost felt a little like saying this is the moment that Andrew Neil was referring to when he talked about Liz Truss finally realising that her ambitions and her ability did not match; always painful, always sobering.

He is right that we are divided on the Estimates Book. We say we are honest, they say we are not, but when you look at the numbers and you look at who compiles numbers, which is the Civil Service, not the politicians – unless they had the habit of telling people what to put in the Book – it is clear that our Estimates Book is an honest reflection of our prudent management of the economy.

He says that the people of Gibraltar will not want a Government that gets away with any abuse of power. What abuses of power? There are no abuses of power, absolutely none; and if there are, there are courts to go to. No one has sued us for abuse of power in all the time we have been in government. They had a couple of cases of abuse of power, in particular a case involving gold. We did not.

He said that Mr Isola could not undo the great work that Keith Azopardi had done on joint sovereignty. Mr Isola does not need to undo the work that Keith Azopardi may or may not have done. You just need to re-watch the leaders' debate of 2011 to see Peter Caruana say to Keith Azopardi, 'For goodness' sake, Keith, you were just in charge of financial services, you had nothing to do with the public finances of Gibraltar', and absolutely denigrate the contribution of Keith Azopardi.

Given what he told us, how he jumped on to the analogy of the jungle, I was reminded, in his case, of so many characters, but I was reminded in particular of the snake in *The Jungle Book*, because Kaa, the snake in *The Jungle Book*, spends his time saying much what he said repeatedly to the people of Gibraltar unsuccessfully, just as Kaa was unsuccessful: 'Trust in me, just in me, shut your eyes, trust in me.' That is the song that Kaa sings to try and hypnotise the boy: 'You can sleep safe and sound, knowing I am around, slip into silent slumber, sail on a silver mist ... Trust in me.' That is what he has been trying to do for the past 12 years, persuade the people of Gibraltar not to trust their Government but to trust him, and on every occasion he has put himself up, he

has lost, he has lost, he has lost, just like the snake in *The Jungle Book*. I really do think it was not a good idea to talk about the jungle for the other side.

2235 They were warning about the problems, they were warning of all these things, he said again, so he fell for the trap of repeating what Elliott Phillips has said about them, that they had been warning about the problems, but in fact he had forgotten that he had said that even if we had heeded his warnings we would have ended up in the same place. He is hoist by his own petard. His own words undo his warnings.

2240 If you look at the thing he said which I thought was most fundamental this time, he said, 'Based on all the indicators, they' – the GSLP Liberals – 'have failed.' Except, of course, if you look at the indicators. If, instead of using the word 'indicators' – because you read it in *The Times* and you thought, 'I am going to say indicators when I go to Parliament next time. I am going to say financial indicators. If you look at the indicators, you have failed,' – and you actually do the work of looking
2245 at the indicators, when you look at the comparison of the Budgets between us and them – I have given them the graphs – look at the growth in GDP and look at the growth in jobs, the reduction in unemployment, look at the housing waiting list and look at the affordable homes delivered, you name it, on all of the KPIs we beat them hands down except on one: expenditure. They increased expenditure by more than us, except they are saying expenditure is the problem. So expenditure
2250 is more controlled by us than by them.

Then he went on to attack Joe Bossano, which he could not help because I think there is a thing there, still, about 2002 and the executive and all that. He could not help it. I have to say to him he has to get over that. It is 20 years since he left the executive of the GSLP. Come on, we can all be friends. I am serious – this is not my poker face.

2255 When it came to this debate and I was preparing my notes ... I always put a quote at the front. Two years it has been his, Mr Speaker, because the whole subject of this debate, in effect, is about trust, about trust on the numbers, and in particular it is about who you trust to go and run the negotiation for Brexit, who finishes the Brexit negotiation, who sits there – across the table from Spain, from the Europeans – with the UK in this negotiation. What did he say of me? I do not think
2260 he meant it as a compliment:

Mr Speaker, I have to say I have never met anyone – and there is a sneaky admiration that I have for him on this front – with a greater ability to keep a poker face – of course, I am referring to the Chief Minister ...

Well, it is going to be in the manifesto, because when we go into the negotiation what we need is a poker face. That is what you need in a negotiation. That is why it is called a poker face. It is somebody who, in a negotiation, is able to keep their wits about them to such an extent that the other side is not able to see what he is thinking. That is a poker face. And he has said in this debate,
2265 when he and the Leader of the Opposition were saying that they should be the ones running the Brexit negotiation, that the guy with the best poker face he has ever seen is me. Can he say those words again, so I can get it for a party political broadcast? Or do I have to rely on the video of here, Mr Speaker? That is the best compliment he could have given me, where the key issue in the election is going to be who goes to the negotiation: obviously, the guy with the poker face. Who
2270 is going to go? The guy who wrote the book saying that Andorra is not joint sovereignty? This is not a poker face, this is a full house for the other side.

Then he went on to the 2011 General Election and what he was doing there. Mr Speaker, it is too late in the afternoon for me to have to, once again, demolish the arguments that we have demolished and that the jury of public opinion, namely the electorate, has already determined he
2275 was wrong about at every turn. But I can, if he likes, over a coffee take him through everything he said and show why it is absolutely wrong. He cannot rewrite history. Albert Isola was here from 1996 to 2000 hitting the GSD when he was in the UK, so he cannot say that Albert Isola was somehow a cheerleader for Peter Caruana. At least Albert Isola stayed in the GSLP. He did not come back from the UK and then join Peter Caruana and perpetuate his time in power.

2280 The one thing, however, that I am not going to let him get away with is the thing he said about unemployment.

Mr Clerk, please call the usher, because a picture is worth a thousand words.

2285 He said he did not believe that there were 26 people unemployed in Gibraltar, as we have told him. He said he sees so many people who are unemployed – maybe because they do part-time politics, he might see a couple of day and those are the 26 – but he did not believe that those were the numbers. So I am giving them a chart now with registered unemployment in Gibraltar from 1995, with employee jobs from 1988 to 2000 and employee jobs from 1996 to 2022, and also unemployed average between 1990 and 2022 and unemployed average per year as well.

Table 5



Table 5b



Table 5c

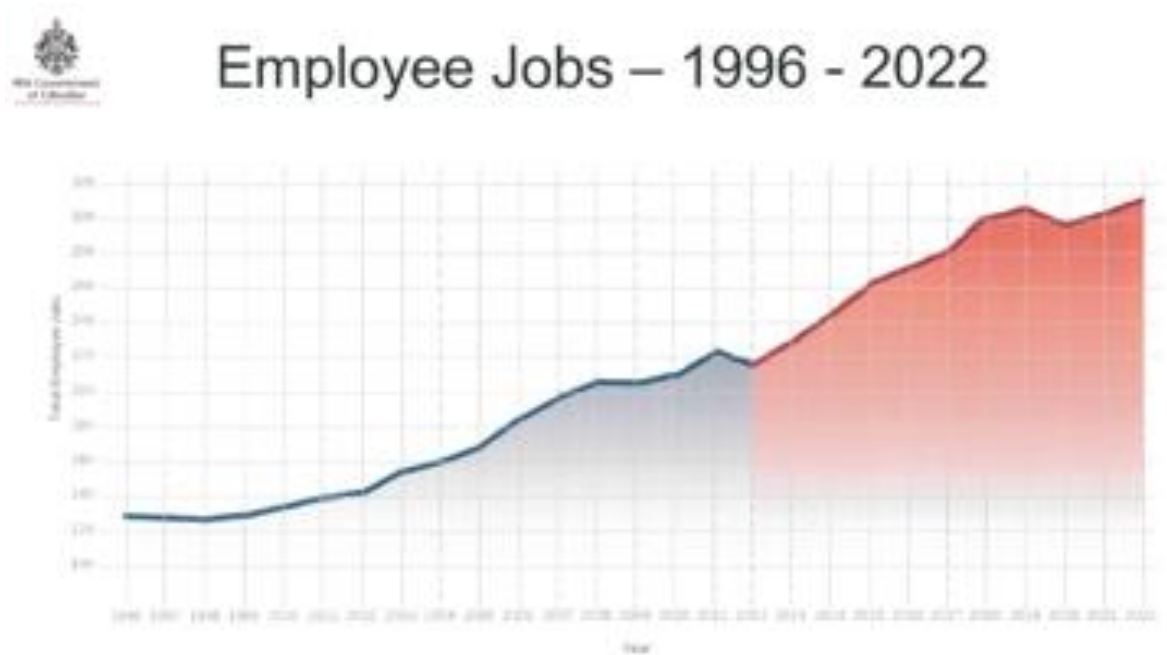


Table 6

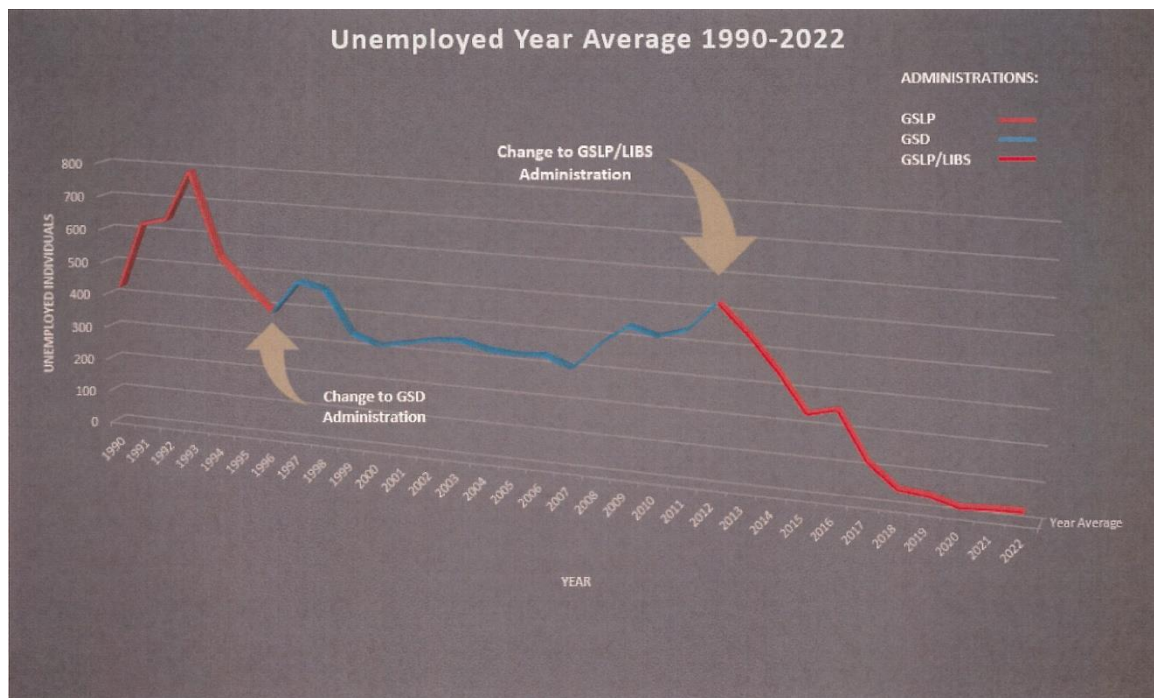
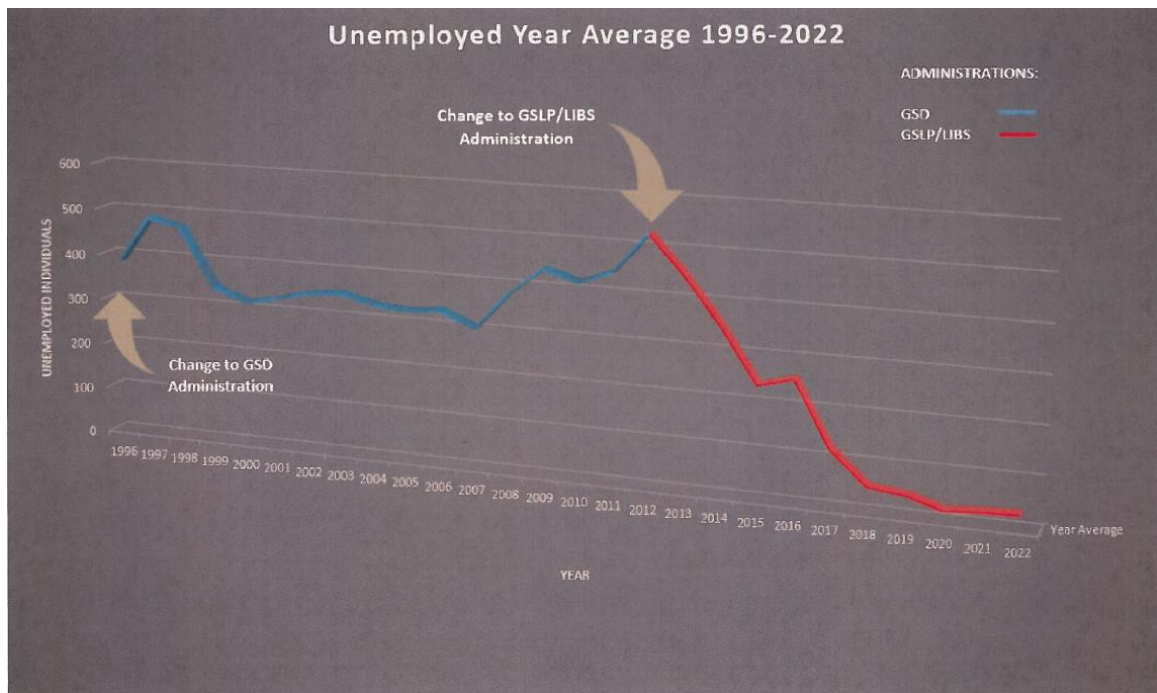


Table 7



2290 The numbers speak for themselves and a picture tells a thousand words. Look at how
 unemployment falls, measured in the same way that they measured it. Look at the number of
 employee jobs. As the curve goes down in unemployment, the curve goes up for employment.
 Look at that between 1996 and 2022. There is the answer. He can believe it. Or is it that he also
 believes that it is not just the Financial Secretary who puts in the numbers that I tell him to put in
 2295 without any regard to what the reality is? Is it also he thinks every employer who returns an
 employment record to the Employment Service, so the Employment Survey is skewed and it
 produces these results? So he does not just not believe me, he does not believe every employer
 who returns a return to the Employment Service.

2300 There is a caption there, because when he was sitting here next to Peter Caruana – well, not
 really next to him, a bit further down – Peter Caruana said this:

Look, if I am an unemployed Gibraltar person, and we know there are around 280 to 300 and something of them,
 some of those are unemployables, some of those are not looking for employment, and if they are, they are so choosy
 and selective that I suppose they want to wait until the office of Chief Minister is vacant to apply for it, and if they
 cannot get that job, they go round saying that they cannot find a job. No, what they mean is that they do not want
 to accept any of the many jobs that are going.

2305 That is what Sir Peter said in the *Hansard* in 2008 was the view of the GSD with 300
 unemployed – with him sitting there next to him. That is not our position. We said we could get
 more people in jobs, and more people in jobs we have got. That is the reality. The numbers speak
 for themselves and you can see those numbers for yourselves. We have left no stone unturned to
 find jobs for Gibraltarians and we will continue to do so.

2310 What I did not think was fair was that he should end his address by praising the Police in a way
 that suggested that we do not. Let's be very clear. The Royal Gibraltar Police enjoy the confidence
 of the whole of this House, not just the Opposition. The Commissioner of Police enjoys the
 confidence of the whole of this House, in particular the Government, not just the Opposition. This
 Commissioner enjoys the full confidence of the Government. I have said so on television. He did
 not have to come here to suggest that we do not. He does his cousin no service, by pretending to
 come here to help him, to do that. He does the opposite. He attempts to do what he always
 attempts to do: he attempts to politicise the Police for his own purpose.

2315 I will tell him how you undermine the Police. You undermine confidence in the Commissioner
of Police by sitting next to him when he is having a meeting with the GDP and telling them what
the shift patterns are going to be if they merge, and saying, ‘No, Louis, that is not how you are
going to do the shift patterns,’ and telling them what you think, as Chief Minister, the shift
patterns should be, which is what happened when he was Minister for Justice, when Louis Wink
was Commissioner of Police and when Sir Peter was Chief Minister of Gibraltar. Well, he thought
2320 he was also the Commissioner of Police. That is how you undermine the Commissioner of Police
and that is how you undermine confidence in the Police.

What you should do is let them get on with what they do better than any other organisation,
and that is what we do. That is not to say that there cannot be issues. Of course there are issues
and of course they have to be dealt with – that is the interaction – but not to bring here any
2325 suggestion of a lack of confidence in order to curry favour with the Police, in particular when you
are saying that this is your valedictory. I thought at one stage he was going to grab the
microphone, he was going to jump here into the centre dais as if he were Robbie Williams and
treat us to the Clash’s good old *Should I Stay or Should I Go* – if I stay there will be trouble, if I go
it will be double. For goodness sake, Mr Speaker, what a performance. It is the same old frustrated
2330 Daniel Feetham, the same old broken record.

By going through all of the scaring that they have done since 2011 till now, the one thing he
does not get is the moral of the story of *Monsters University*. In *Monsters University* you have an
ecosystem where the whole city is powered by the screaming of children. The monsters go out
and scare the children so that they scream, and the screaming fills the tank with power. Yes?
2335 When I have time with my children I do like to watch something with them. The moral of the story,
which is deeper than just watching a cartoon, is actually that the monsters work out that they get
more energy from the children by inspiring them and giving them hope than by scaring them, and
that is exactly the difference between him and me. It is exactly the difference between them and
us. They have spent the last 12 years trying to scare the public into voting for them. We have spent
2340 the last 12 years telling people what we want to do with Gibraltar for Gibraltar, alongside them
and inspiring them. That is the difference between him and us. Maybe he should give Mike
Wazowski a call. In the end, this may be his last Budget address, or it may not. If it is, in the end,
our relationship will have been more like Coyote and the Road Runner than anybody else –
another cartoon, where the road runner always got away.

2345 The hon. Lady is not here to hear me respond to her and there is very little I intend to say
because she has already indicated that she will not be standing for election, but she said some
things which need to be replied to and some things that I want to say to her. First of all, I am very
happy that the hon. Lady leaves politics as she entered it, and that, to me, is as a very good friend.
We have had our ups and downs, we have had serious issues between us, but we have remained
2350 close in the time that we have both been Members of this House. In particular, she has worked
very closely with us on issues of progressive politics and I do think that in the future, should those
progressive policies ever come under attack, the public in Gibraltar – if I am retired by then or
have been discarded by then – will know that I am available to come and fight for those
progressive policies. I am sure Mr Azopardi will, too. I am sure Mr Feetham will, too, and I am sure
2355 she will, too. She has, to a very great extent, led on those issues and I think she has a very proud
contribution that she can look back on in the context of what she has done in respect of
progressive issues and, in particular, women’s reproductive rights.

‘The state of our nation today is appalling’ is what she said. Really? When you start to say things
like that is when you are not being serious in your analysis. ‘Gibraltar is becoming unbearable to
2360 live in with so much development and unpainted railings’ – apparently, unpainted railings is
something that one refers to in a Budget speech because it makes Gibraltar unbearable to live in.
What about Commonwealth Park, Champion Park – railings painted every two years? What about
our tunnels and the Upper Town, with art? What about all of the new areas there are? I think if
the hon. Lady looks at the schools to which our children go, the homes in which our people are
2365 living ... Of course there are still some things to go. Gibraltar is not more appalling today than it

was in 2011, in 1996 or in 1988. Of course there are issues, of course they have to be resolved, but frankly, Gibraltar is not going to consider that a statement such as that Gibraltar is appalling to live in is going to be serious. What about the bike lanes? What about the green walls in the new schools? Come on. The Upper Town is not abandoned. The Upper Town needs work still in some areas, but it is looking better than it has ever looked before. So when you ask where has the money gone, it is in the schools, it is in all of those new developments. It is obvious.

2370

I was grateful that she had picked up the GSD also in the way that they were attacking the issue of tax, because she was more serious when it came to tax, but I thought she was wrong to suggest that we had been using dirty tactics because of the way we had timed the debate on the estimates.

2375

I have gone through that already.

She referred to vanity projects. I still do not know what those vanity projects are. I suppose the vanity projects are the schools, I suppose the vanity projects are the primary care centres, the affordable housing or the sports facilities. I do not know what the vanity projects are, otherwise, but in the end she has come to politics, she has done politics, she is leaving politics and she leaves a friend and she leaves with the regard of the Government for the work that she has done.

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Mr Speaker, I now round up. It is really quite remarkable that Members opposite have told us they are once again going to vote against the Budget, this year in particular, for a simple reason: they say they are going to become the Government in the autumn, which means they will be running the Government with estimates that they have voted against. They are going to vote against being able to spend money the day after the General Election. They are going to vote against being able to continue to pay civil servants after the General Election. We will be gone, in their world. In their hopeless fiction in which they win a General Election, they have voted down the money they are going to have to spend. It is really quite remarkable. It is very clear that all of their statements were flops for the reasons that I have gone through, that many of them are already FLOPs because they are former Leaders of the Opposition, that Mr Azopardi is soon to be a former Leader of the Opposition, not because he is going to become Chief Minister but because he is going to be got rid of by the GSD when he does not become Chief Minister and then Mr Bossino is soon going to be a FLOP, a future Leader of the Opposition. But what they have demonstrated is that they have not got what it takes in this Budget debate.

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Are we are tired? Of course we are tired. We are tired of them. We are tired of their negativity. We are tired of them not having full regard for our people. That is the reality. We are not tired of delivering the best affordable homes in our history, we are not tired of delivering new schools for our children, we are not tired of serving our people. In this last state of the nation debate, what have they offered our people except flawed analysis, flawed understandings of the estimate, and their policy, which has fallen immediately, which is to suggest that we should form part of their Brexit negotiating team? Nothing is what they have offered our people.

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And what have they done in the past four years? They do have *hacheo* politics, the politics of rumour and innuendo, the politics of what they call perception because they cannot point at anything in reality. In particular, Mr Azopardi and Mr Bossino: one asking questions about chickens, the other one running like a chicken away from a meeting with the Minister for Tourism, always ready to criticise, never ready to meet and discuss. Mr Azopardi and Mr Bossino do seem to be the new Claudia and Cynthia of the Calentita-style politics that they seem to be running, bringing gossip and *hacheo* to this place. And to think, Mr Speaker, that that, opposite us, used to be the party of Peter Montegriffo and Peter Caruana. We might have disagreed with them, but that was a party of substance – but now the party of Azopardi and Bossino. Or is it Bossino and Azopardi? I do not know which way round.

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What substance is there now in the GSD that we have before us? They arrive together and they smile together, but they are obviously at political loggerheads. The next election for Mr Bossino is not about government and it is not about Gibraltar, it is about leading the GSD. It is the final act, in my view, of the post-Caruana civil war, in which Mr Bossino and his Vox-like values, I believe, will prevail, and then we will have the final real battle looming between progressive GSLP liberal politics and GSD deep conservatism, because they, the GSD, are all about opposition, not about

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leadership, all about opposition, not about vision, all about opposition with no plan for our people's future. The GSD stand against everything, but they stand for nothing. We know everything they are against but we know nothing about what they might support, other than that Andorra is not joint sovereignty.

So our people know now that the GSD are not a credible option for the future. It is the GSLP Liberals that will keep Gibraltar safe. We will get Gibraltar through the jungle, just like we have got our people through COVID, just like we are getting us through the Brexit crisis. Our message to our people who have suffered these COVID years, who may have lost loved ones, who are suffering the cost of living issues, is that we will continue to work for them as we have these past four years, these toughest four years. When our people look back at the challenges of COVID, the conclusions of the New Year's Eve Agreement even whilst we were in lockdown, the way we dealt with lockdown and with furlough, the way we designed BEAT, the way we got the vaccine because of the way we nurture the relationship with Britain, the way we got our sovereign guarantee because of the way we nurture the relationship with Britain – all of those photographs at No. 10, which are more than just photographs – everything we did for our businesses and our citizens alike, and they see how the economy and the public finances have recovered and they look at the alternative, I believe our people will genuinely and deeply value what we have done. They will genuinely and deeply consider the work that we have done which shows our good faith, demonstrates our hard work, shows that hard work pays off and evidences our deep and undying *love* for our country and our people.

There is only one coalition of parties in this Parliament that is on the side of the Gibraltarian people, and that is the GSLP Liberals. There is only one coalition of parties that is ready to stand up always for the Gibraltarian people, and that is the GSLP Liberals. There is only one coalition of parties in coalition with the Gibraltarian people, and that is the GSLP Liberals, only one coalition of parties that is the political wing of the Gibraltarian people, the GSLP Liberals – never caring for ourselves, always acting in the best interests of our people, whether our actions are popular or not. Judge us on our record. On judgement, we were right about the Lisbon, Strasbourg and Brussels processes from the beginning. When the GSD defended the Brussels process and attended the talks, we said no. We were right then and we are right now. When the AACR defended the 1987 Airport Agreement and the GSD defended the 2006 Cordoba Airport Agreement, we said no. When the GSD spent £100 million on the Airport before spending a penny on the KGV, we said no. We were right then and we are right now.

The public will also look at the contribution by hon. Members opposite, reflecting on these toughest four years. They came here to criticise everything and recognise nothing, and on spending they criticise our record but they forget that when they had the purse strings they lost the public's money. Yes, the GSD lost the public's money. They lost £10 million on the Theatre Royal. They lost £7 million which they loaned to OEM and was never paid back. They made no investments in the comprehensive schools, we had to deliver that; no investment in a Victorian St Bernard's, we had to deliver that. A number of multi-generational projects which needed doing delivered on time and on budget by the GSLP Liberals: a new PCC, a new children's PCC, new affordable homes at subsidised prices, and great quality new sporting facilities so our athletes do not have to go to Spain to train anymore unless they want to. Which of these is an extravagance? An increase in public sector pay and improving terms and conditions? Which of these do the Opposition say is an extravagance if they now argue that we should increase some of these things more? They talk about our spending too much, but they never point to the one thing they would not have spent on. They say we need to lobby and market more, and then they say we should not fly on the flights available because they cost money. This is nonsense opposition from parties with only nonsense to propose to the general public in Gibraltar.

The Gibraltarian public know the GSD is not on their side. The GSD is on their own side. They do not want to win for the Gibraltarian. They want to win for the GSD. They want to win for the rich they represent – the people they used to tax at 5% and we now tax at 25% – not for the working people we defend and whose side we are on. That is how they defended the working

2470 people, by having the tax on those who earned hundreds of thousands at 5%, and the tax on those who earned £20,000 or £30,000 at 25%. We do the opposite. We make sure that everybody pays their share.

So what was the golden legacy of the GSD? That the rich pay 5% and the rest pay 25%? Taxpayers' money loaned to OEM and lost? That was the golden legacy? When you spend one
2475 minute looking beyond the headlines at the social media noise that they try to make, you can see the truth, and the people of Gibraltar can see the truth. They will not have the wool pulled over their eyes. The public, in my view, will see that the only option available at the next election, the only choice that will keep Gibraltar safe will be the GSLP Liberal team, and that these estimates for the year ahead are the best demonstration that we continue to work to keep Gibraltar safe,
2480 that we keep the vulnerable safe and that we keep the incomes of working people safe, that we keep our public finances safe, that people who work each day in everything they do in this Cabinet team do it to keep Gibraltar safe.

We are the only safe choice, Mr Speaker. We are the only ones who will keep Gibraltar safe, especially given the clear position of the leader of the party opposite on an Andorra-style solution and what it means, which once again puts Gibraltar at risk under the GSD, puts Gibraltar's
2485 sovereignty at risk with a GSD Chief Minister who has specifically written down that an Andorra-style solution is not joint sovereignty. That creates the risk, once again, that under the GSD a joint sovereignty solution would be mooted, and that is something that the electorate will want to avoid at any cost. They will want to avoid the risk that a vote for the GSD presents. The electorate will want to act to keep Gibraltar safe, and in my view they will vote to keep Gibraltar safe and they will do that by returning us to government to keep Gibraltar safe, because in this election, like in every election, it is always, first and foremost, for us, about keeping Gibraltar safe – just like this Appropriation, every Appropriation, is for us about one thing above all else, about keeping Gibraltar safe. With this one, it is about finishing what we started, about the social justice that we
2490 want to do, about the protection of the vulnerable, which these estimates are designed to do.

And so, Mr Speaker, for that reason, I once again unhesitatingly commend the Bill to the House, and, because nobody does it better, I commend a renewed GSLP Liberal Government to the people. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, I just left one thing out. I would propose that we come back and look at the detail
2500 of the estimates in the Committee Stage and Third Reading at 4 p.m.

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 2024 be read a second time. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? (**A Member:** No.) Carried.

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Clerk: The Appropriation Act 2023.

**Appropriation Bill 2023 –
Committee Stage and Third Reading to be taken at this sitting**

Mr Speaker: You need to give notice of the Committee Stage and Third Reading.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I beg to give notice that the House should
2510 resolve itself into Committee to consider the following Bill clause by clause –

Mr Speaker: Shall we say, 'I beg to give notice that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today, if all hon. Members agree'?

2515 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Okay, too fast, yes. I beg to give notice that the Committee Stage and Third Reading be taken later today, if all hon. Members agree.

Mr Speaker: Do all hon. Members agree that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today?

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Members: Aye.

Mr Speaker: The House will now recess until four o'clock.

The House recessed at 2.49 p.m.