



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 10.32 a.m. – 2.15 p.m.

Gibraltar, Monday, 7th July 2025

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 4.15 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Judge K Ramagge GMH *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

Appropriation Bill 2025 — Second Reading — Debate continued

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Monday, 7th of July, 2025.

Madam Speaker: Yes, the Hon. Chief Minister, I presume, wants to continue in his reply.

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, yes, thank you, thank you. I do rise now, Madam Speaker, to continue my reply to all of the speeches we have heard in this place from hon. Members in response to mine. Of course, that means responding not just to things said opposite, but also, in some instances, emphasising some of the things that have been said by my Government colleagues.

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And it has been, Madam Speaker, since last Monday, a whole week of speeches. But hardly *palabras al viento*. These are important contributions, Madam Speaker, although it is high summer and even though our fellow citizens are going about their daily lives.

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The reality is that the community is listening — I am very clear about that. They are considering the things that we say. They are making up their minds about what we say and considering the things that we do in this place.

And that is not just happening on social media, where we see the trail of it. It is happening in the cafés, it is happening on the beaches, it is happening in *el Quarry*. Our people care about what we say in this place.

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I suppose it is one of the most beautiful political aspects of being a Gibraltarian, being in politics in Gibraltar — the engagement that our public have. Being in Parliament in Gibraltar, debating things, is not a worthless endeavour.

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We are not speaking to ourselves. This is one place that is not an echo chamber. When we talk, when we debate, when we parley in this place, it matters — because what is said in this place does matter. So, what we cannot therefore accept, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, is any attempt by Members opposite to use this place to pull the wool over the eyes of our people. They have made many attempts to do that in the past week.

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I am afraid; therefore, I have to address that. I have to go to each of the things that they have said which are factually wrong and address them so that the public have the opportunity to contrast the facts and the figures. The public want to see in this debate what it is that the Government is doing with its money — what we are investing it in, the mechanisms that we use to invest it, which are also part of the debate, and the results that we deliver through that investment.

That, Madam Speaker, in the end, is the reality that will remain after this debate. After all of the words, what will remain are the things that we build and pay for with this money — not the words.

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We have heard, Madam Speaker, for years now, the narrative from Members opposite that investing Savings Bank money in projects that are in the national interest is a bad thing. We have heard

it for years now, since Mr. Clinton arrived — since the Hon. Mr. Clinton arrived in this place. The public do not agree.

I do not say that, Madam Speaker, because I feel that I am better placed to speak for the public. It is that the public have returned us to Office on a number of occasions despite the argument — despite the constant arguments that are made against the mechanism that we have employed for the Savings Bank.

We have heard for years now, Madam Speaker, the repeated narrative that the use of Government companies is a bad thing — although it was something they were doing when they were in Office, and it was a fine thing when they were in Office. The public do not agree. Not because I say they do not agree, but because, when the time comes and they vote to do things one way or another, the way we have been doing it and they have been criticising — although it was the way they used to do it. They still choose us, by a wider margin, by a narrower margin — they still choose us, because despite the arguments, what the public can see is the reality on the ground.

They see the delivery. They see that this is an economy that is working. They see that our public finances are properly managed.

What they have not been able to see this week, as I understand it, Madam Speaker, is hon. Members' speeches sent to the media. I understand that almost none of them have sent their speeches to the media. Perhaps some of them have. Perhaps they are a little embarrassed, Madam Speaker, to have things forensically checked quickly in the text of speeches. We will have to wait for Hansard, which is now so quickly done.

Because, you see, Madam Speaker, when I say that the things we say in this place matter, it also means, Madam Speaker, that mistakes made in this place also matter. The judgement of competence that the public make about each of us is, of course, based on whether we can stand up the things that we have said in this place. So that matters too — and also the tenor, the nature of what is said in this place.

I think people will also have noticed that hon. Members' speeches are more like my bowling than my politics — always in the gutter, never a direct hit. All we have had is a collection of negative adjectives strung together upon what appeared to be, at some stages, a common theme, although in other stages really disjunctive. I will try to show just how disjunctive the team opposite is.

So, theirs is a string of negative adjectives — our speeches are different. Our speeches are a collection of positive verbs, doing words — the words that describe what we are doing each day for our community. *Negative adjectives, positive verbs*. That is the difference between those who are doing and those who are just criticising. And the public will have seen that too.

As the summary of the week will probably end up being, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day the biggest row they had this week was with you — about the Principal Auditor's Report — making allegations against us of all sorts of *scandalous deceit*, Madam Speaker, until you put them right.

What they have not answered in this Budget debate, in this debate about the public finances, in this debate about the pounds, shillings and pence, are all the arguments that we put to them about how we are going to spend and how they would have spent — what the consequence of their words in this and earlier debates would have meant in pounds, shillings and pence.

They have not answered that, if Gibraltar had chosen them, we would have a grimy, smelly diesel power station up at Lathbury — and not just a blight on our Upper Rock Nature Reserve, our views to North Africa, and a negative in respect of our tourist industry. Not just that, not just more NOx in the air, more pollution, more burning of contaminating fossil fuel — not just that — an extra £78.5 million which would have been spent on diesel in the past five years if all we had was diesel rather than LNG. Almost £80 million extra on fossil fuel, the GSD way.

They come here to say that they are better guardians of the public purse, that they spend our money better. But the decisions they make cost more. They have not addressed that — £80 million more.

I mean, it would have taken Mr. Feetham a truly super-extraordinary performance to get us the £80 million more for just the five years that have passed. And, of course, the other thing they have not been able to deal with — other than to say, Madam Speaker, that they actually did not mean it — was

the extra £110 million in interest that we would have suffered if we had followed the advice of Mr. Clinton, which I will, of course, go into again in greater detail to explain, Madam Speaker, that even the *defence advance* is fatally flawed.

Fatally flawed. We would have paid likely 2.75% or more interest than we needed to pay if we had followed the clear advice of Mr. Clinton. I will come to his words later on.

A cool £250 million over 20 years. Add that to the £80 million they would have already incurred in just five years of extra costs for diesel, Madam Speaker — actual loss, actual loss — you are already at £330 million of difference between their management of our public finances and our management of the public finances.

But if we have saved £80 million in five years, if we extrapolate that forward for the next 20, that is another £240 million, Madam Speaker — in fact, it is another £320 million just on the diesel. You have the £80 million of the past five years and you have got another four sets of five years. It is remarkable, Madam Speaker, that they do not realise how embarrassing this must be.

It is five portions of £80 million to get the five-year period already passed and the four five-year periods for the next 20 years to match it up to the sovereign guarantee. That is £400 million, Madam Speaker, just on fuel, if the price differential stays the same. The price of fuel is very difficult to hedge, let alone work out.

But let us just assume that the price differential stays the same for the next 20 years — £250 million in lost interest, £400 million on extra cost of fuel. That is the cost to the public purse of the GSD, just on the things they have already stuck their colours to the mast on, although they are busy unsticking their colours from the interest rate mast, Madam Speaker — very busy. I can understand why.

Because Mr. Clinton, who comes to this place to try to build up for himself a reputation for competence, actually has been demonstrated to be probably the most incompetent when it comes to the key issue of determining how we should manage our long-term debt. I will come to that in a little while when I deal with Mr. Clinton specifically, and we look at the exact words that he used in that debate, which have caught him like one of those terrible hooks that the Minister for the Environment does not like to see in tuna, and have seen him, in effect, the political equivalent of hoist over this Chamber to be weighed like the yellowfin or bluefin that we see at the Detached Mole.

And so, Madam Speaker, as I try to frame my response this morning, I have to say that I was surprised that the Hon. Mrs. Ladislaus thought that I was running a *family-unfriendly Parliament*. This Parliament hardly ever sits late; it sits on a relatively clear timetable.

I mean, Madam Speaker, I am now a single parent, and I have had to make arrangements for today — of course I have made arrangements. Of course, we all have to make arrangements. Could we make better arrangements? Well, Madam Speaker, I am all ears. But let us be clear — it is hardly onerous to have to come here a couple of days a week in the afternoons of the third week of the month. It is hardly onerous, Madam Speaker. (*Interjection...*) I believe, Madam Speaker that you directed that that term should not be used — I've stuck to your ruling.

Madam Speaker: I am afraid I have to switch off to the mumblings in order to hear what the Hon. Chief Minister is saying, so I actually have not heard. The only mumbling I have heard is a pick-up on the use of the word *honourable*, and many Members during this debate have omitted to use the word *Hon.* before *Mr.* or *Mrs.* — so just a general reminder, but I have not heard what they have said. On that basis, I am going to allow the matter to continue.

Hon. Chief Minister: Even better, Madam Speaker. There is little to bother listening to on that side anyway, believe me, as I will demonstrate. Because, Madam Speaker, *sacré bleu*, if the worst thing that this *Goliath*, as I have been termed, has done is to seek the best speaking slots for his Ministers, I am happy to go down in history as an autocratic dictator of the timetable of the Parliament.

So be it, Madam Speaker. But let us make memory of what this place used to be — when we were not even told, and you had to come ready to do a Budget debate the minute one week had passed after the publication of the Appropriation Act, or the Appropriation Bill. I have been called many things, Madam Speaker; I have never been called *Goliath*. But this is hardly the stuff of *Animal Farm*.

Although I do hope, Madam Speaker, that at least other Members opposite are better read than the Leader of the Opposition, who seems only to have read Orwell — only. I certainly know that the Hon. Minister for Housing is better read than all of us, probably, in literature terms. Perhaps even Mr. Clinton is better read than the Leader of the Opposition — I am told that he achieved an A in his A-

145 levels for English Literature. (*Interjection: O-Level*)

Oh, his O-levels. I thought for once we had something in common — but we do not. Never mind, never mind. Obviously not the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, because he seems to be stuck on Orwell.

Perhaps it is because Orwell has shaped him. I suppose once you have been in Government with the GSD, you see everything through an Orwellian filter. He seems to be, Madam Speaker, an *Orwell-*

150 *only oracle*.
He wields 1984 like scripture, like Mr. Bossino wields the Bible. He treats *Animal Farm*, Madam Speaker, as prophecy, like Mr. Bossino regards the New Testament. He has outsourced all original thought to one man, Madam Speaker — to George Orwell. And if you are constantly quoting Orwell,

155 it starts to portray — or betray — this authoritarian simplification of how you see the world.
He is turning everything, Madam Speaker, into a binary *good* and *bad* — *GSD good, GSLP Liberals bad*. That is not modern politics, Madam Speaker; it is not modern life. I agree with some of the things they might say, and they no doubt agree with some of the things we might say and do. The problem, Madam Speaker, is that you go from being inspired by Orwell to being imprisoned by Orwell — you

160 see everything through that filter.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition is not just quoting Orwell; he is echoing him in everything that he sees. It is as if that were the ceiling for his political thought and understanding. Well, Madam Speaker, you will forgive me for thinking that nothing is more intellectually authoritarian than reducing every opponent to Napoleon the Pig.

165 So, I am going to prefer something closer perhaps to your heart, Madam Speaker. I am going to quote Lord Denning instead — because *the time has come to talk of many things: of audits and arithmetic; of facts and fictions; of timelines twisted and narratives over-rehearsed* — even though we will perhaps leave the ceiling wax for another day. But certainly of hon. Members who come here with sealed conclusions, wanting to think about *politics, politics, politics*, and not so much about *finances, finances, finances*.

170 Because, Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to say that this will be one of the last times that I reply in this debate. (*Banging on desks*) Thank you. I will be gone soon — retiring, not resigning, Madam Speaker. Retiring at the time of my choosing — not because they got rid of me, however hard they tried.

175 Hon. Members will know that many years ago, when I stood for Election for the first time as Leader of the Party, I said I wanted to do a maximum of 12 years. I have done 14 already — that is how good they have been at seeking to displace me. So, I am going, not to put them out of their misery, Madam Speaker — I am going to sink them into the misery of a new GSLP Liberal Leader who will once again mire them in the success that the public will want us to continue to have.

180 Because on this side of the House, we represent progress, we represent investment, and we represent achievement for our people — where they represent, if their speeches are properly broken down, austerity, job cuts and tax rises, as I will show using their own words, Madam Speaker. Their own words.

185 What was obvious, Madam Speaker, was that hon. Members opposite, in particular the Hon. Mr. Clinton and the Hon. Mr. Azopardi, have taken it upon themselves to choreograph a bit of a spectacle at the beginning of this week. They did not speak with the sober weight of those looking at the Estimates book to bring scrutiny, which is what they constantly say they are here to do — scrutiny, accountability. They did it, Madam Speaker, as if they were literally on Shakespeare's stage. This was theatrical protest at its best.

190 They elevated, Madam Speaker, an as yet undelivered Auditor's Report into a full unimpeachable indictment. Of course, the style of the Leader of the Opposition could not have been less effective as performance theatre, but at least the Hon. Mr. Clinton rehearsed with indignation and delivered with,

at one stage, absolute melodrama. I started to worry about his blood pressure, Madam Speaker. None of that from the Hon. Mr. Azopardi, of course.

195 But let us put something down on the record so that it is there forever: this Government, Madam Speaker, does not fear audit — we welcome it. What we resist, Madam Speaker, is misrepresentation masquerading as oversight. Accountability is not their weapon; it is their obligation and our obligation.

They have said on a number of occasions this week: *accountability delayed is accountability denied* — from the old *justice delayed is justice denied*. It is a catchy refrain; I think that is what we call spin
200 — the thing they say I am the one doing.

But let us not confuse what we need to be doing here. This place is not a reaction chamber for an absence of procedural thoroughness or procrastination; it is a place which is deliberate. And we cannot simply act because the Opposition decides that we should.

The Government has absolutely nothing to hide — nothing, even the things we get wrong —
205 because I have never stood in this Chamber to pretend that we do everything right. That regime ended when they were confined to that side of the House. We do not hide our mistakes or our successes — we deal with them. What we do refuse, Madam Speaker, are the Opposition's conclusions about what we have done, because everything that they say is drafted to suggest our failure even before we started to deliver on something.

210 So, Madam Speaker, the time has come to look in this debate not through the lens of Opposition hysteria, but through the lens of the Government's honesty. Not to allow this place to continue to be a stage for Opposition outrage, but to have a sober defence of what it is that we are doing this financial year with the public's money.

So, hon. Members will forgive me for not allowing the Government to be pulled into the Hon. Mr. Azopardi, Mr. Bossino and Mr. Clinton's theatre of accusations — the *ABC theatre*. Because things are not as easy as ABC, Madam Speaker. Of course, they can cry *wolf* a hundred times if they want to, as Mr. Bossino and Mr. Clinton have done.

I am not going to answer with volume, raising my voice in crescendo like Mr. Clinton; I will answer with substance to demonstrate objectively why they are wrong. So, I am going to have to go through
220 what each of them said, one by one — to deconstruct the arguments, Madam Speaker.

One by one, let us bring them onto the stage. *Bring on the clowns*, like Sondheim said. So, I am going to start, Madam Speaker, addressing the Hon. Mr. Azopardi's delivery and his speech — which was supposedly, I thought, billed, and because it came after mine must have been, the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. But there was nothing that sounded like a Leader of the Opposition speech
225 in what I heard, Madam Speaker.

None of it. I mean, Madam Speaker, this was probably, after the Budget speech of the morning before, the most effective sedative ever dispensed in this House. He was, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, with the very greatest of respect, a verbal anaesthetic for the intellect.

I mean, the Hon. Mr. Reyes, I have to say, was not asleep — I am very grateful — for one minute of
230 my speech. I do not think he heard many minutes of Mr. Azopardi's. He did not fall asleep for Mr. Santos' speech. But I have to say, with the greatest of respect to the Hon. Mr. Reyes, that he did an excellent imitation of the late, great Mr. Valarino in this House, by imitating Rumpelstiltskin for most of the Leader of the Opposition's speech.

And this was a speech that was billed as pointing to *an annual Budget fiction*, with overspend, erosion of wages and unrealistic forecasts. Well, Mr. Reyes did not pick up any of that, Madam
235 Speaker. By the time he woke up, it was all over. But I think we can all excuse him that.

It ill behoves me to put myself into your mind, but you must have, Madam Speaker, had to rely on all your judicial experience to stay awake. The attack was on me, and I was finding it difficult to stay awake. I mean, talk about being mauled by a sheep — I have never been mauled by a dead sheep
240 before. I could see Members across the House biting their lips, just trying to inflict pain upon themselves to stay awake. I mean, this was literally chloroform for the mind.

There was none of the fire of Daniel Feetham, Madam Speaker. There was none of the forensic analysis of Peter Caruana. There was none of the depth of the Hon. the Father of the House. There were none of those characteristics of success. There were words, of course, sure — but I do not think

it was just boring for us, Madam Speaker. I think the Wi-Fi dropped off at one stage; the radio link went down because the frequency could not bear it.

But I do have to apologise to him, Madam Speaker, for having called his speech *political diazepam*. I am sorry — I want to be honest with the public; I cannot misrepresent things. I have a duty of candour. This was not diazepam, Madam Speaker. This was absolute fentanyl — emotional fentanyl.

So, after that yawn-fest, Madam Speaker, I have to say, I felt that we had been subjected more to a lullaby than to leadership by the hon. Gentleman. Because he presents himself as grey, boring, charmless, and in that way a safe pair of hands. That is competent and sensible — I am not for one moment denigrating the hon. Gentleman. That is how he sells himself; that is what he says he is. But what he has demonstrated that he is, Madam Speaker, is a man with no judgement, no strategic vision and no capacity to read people. He just needed to turn to the right and see that the Hon. Mr. Reyes was asleep — to have asked that somebody wake him.

Leadership, Madam Speaker, requires the ability to inspire, and we had absolutely none of that in the House from the hon. Gentleman. And in terms of judgement and vision, this is the man who told us that he would not have done the Tax Treaty — although it was a clear step towards the agreements that we have had since then. He tells us that he would have played hardball; that he would not have done any of the deals that we did in the Withdrawal Agreement because we gave rights to Frontier workers — never mind that the Withdrawal Agreement gave rights to workers across the European Union, because it was the UK Withdrawal Agreement which included us.

Madam Speaker, with him we would have had neither the Withdrawal Agreement, nor the New Year's Eve Framework Agreement, nor the agreement for the Treaty. It is clear. It is that simple. But how can the person, Madam Speaker, who presented a slate to the public in Gibraltar with Mr. El Hana and Ms. Tilbury as candidates, seriously tell us that he would have made better choices in the negotiation? When it matters, Madam Speaker, he falls short — even faced with an open goal, he does not hit the target.

Madam Speaker, one will not be forgiven for thinking he is the Morata of Gibraltar politics — the guy who misses even from the penalty spot. Of course, he is paid to cast a critical eye over the work of the Government — I make absolutely no complaint that he does so. But Madam Speaker, he is not required by any law, by any rule or by any convention to cast a cynical eye over everything that we do.

Of course, the role of Leader of the Opposition is not to be a St. Peter-like apostle to the Chief Minister — far from it. But neither is it to be a doubting Thomas on things that matter to the nation. But he says, in dealing with the Treaty, "*surely we could not have won 10–0*". Well, I do not disagree, Madam Speaker; nobody on this side is pretending that we have won 10–0. He is the one saying that if he had come with us, then we would have won 10–0.

If he was holding my hand in the negotiation, then 10–0 is a realistic prospect — from the guy who shoots at the open goal with the goalkeeper not there and still misses. But Madam Speaker, I have never heard anything more arrogant. The humility, therefore, is performative; his arrogance, Madam Speaker, must therefore be instinctive — because he is pretending to be a humble servant of the people whilst all the time polishing the plaque on the statue that he thinks we all owe him.

He is constantly saying, *I am a safe pair of hands. I am dull, I am boring, I am a safe pair of hands*. Actually, what the result of the last Election demonstrates is that he is a butter-finger, not a safe pair of hands — because the last Election slipped through his fingers, something I think Mr. Bossino will never forgive him. The Treaty would have slipped through his fingers.

He is only a safe pair of hands, Madam Speaker, if the job is to drop the ball — that is the reality. He started his speech by saying *the debt is up and the new dawn was a false dawn*. He did not want to hear that the cash reserves are higher than they were when we took over. He gave us the same speech that we always hear from him — the same speech, recycled again and again.

What is he trying to do? Get the Hon. Mr. Cortes to go over to their side by doing so much recycling? I fear it is not going to work. Could he not at least have put last year's speech into ChatGPT and said *please refresh*? Could he not at least do that? Is that what you do?

295 They say to me, *I have different numbers to deal with every year*. I wish I could do that. They do not deal with the numbers or ignore them. Maybe you could even ask the GPT — the AI — to do it in any literary style other than Orwell and see what it might come up with. Might be a bit of a surprise.

Madam Speaker, he says that we do nothing for financial stability; that our Budget does nothing for financial stability. Well, what has he done for financial stability this week? He said that he will use
300 surpluses to spend more on pay rises for the public sector and to cut taxes — that is what he said. That is what he said.

I suppose it is designed to try to win over one or two Civil Servants who might not care so much about Gibraltar and their children and might care more about the end of the month only — because that is not just nonsense, Madam Speaker, it is dangerous nonsense. Because tax cuts and pay rises
305 have to be sustainable — not based on the size of one surplus or another. In fact, that is the argument that fails to deliver financial stability; that is what creates unrealistic expectations; that is what delivers the golden rule breached, not followed — exactly the behaviour they incurred in 2007 when they took us to a deficit.

But not just then — they also delivered a deficit in 2002–2003, a deficit of £7.8 million, when he
310 was on this side of the House. That is to say, the last financial year he was a Minister — when he did not leave, Madam Speaker, for anything other than disenchantment with his then Leader starting a political liaison with the Leader of another Party, the Labour Party. But that led to a direct breach of prudence; a direct breach of the golden rule — because they said, *we do not want surpluses*.

Just have to look at the Hansard — *we are bringing down the surplus by paying it back*. Check out
315 what was said in answering this business of *a tale of two figures* and the general criticism that we faced from the Opposition, Madam Speaker. I had this thing in the back of my head of something I remembered, and I went back and found it — in April 2005, from Sir Peter Caruana, then Chief Minister, at page 198 of the Hansard, top left-hand column. He said this about the deficit of £7.8 million that they delivered in that year, when he had been a Minister — the Hon. Leader of the
320 Opposition. Talking about estimating and why they incurred a loss rather than a surplus, he says this: “*because, of course, at the beginning of the financial year, we do not know the expenditure and we do not know all the revenue. There are many demand-led items of expenditure — Health Service medicines, for example — and many issues of revenue that I do not know how much tax is going to come in, in a particular year.*”

325 Well, Madam Speaker, when we have said much the same, accounting for discrepancies in estimating.

They have said, “*that is unacceptable, you do not know what you are doing, this is bad for financial stability.*”

Madam Speaker, what Sir Peter said in 2005, every Financial Secretary presenting the Budgets since
330 1969 until 2006, and every Chief Minister since 2006 has said. Indeed, every Chief Minister since 1989, when Joe Bossano started to really present the estimates and not the Financial Secretary. Everyone said that because it is a definition of what estimating is.

But when Sir Peter used to say it, and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition used to sit next to him, that was fine; that was the position. Perfectly acceptable. When we say it, it is quite a basic formulation
335 — it is terrible; shows that you cannot estimate; shows that you have been saved by an extraordinary amount.

Well, Madam Speaker, to say that — that we do not deliver financial stability — and then say that he would spend more of the surplus on tax cuts and pay rises, is to say that he would not observe the golden rule. So, there is absolutely no question of his view delivering financial stability and our view
340 not delivering financial stability; obviously quite the Opposite.

So put in context then the thing he said next: “*This Budget does nothing for working people. It is a fiction. It does nothing for working people.*” Madam Speaker, we have given in this Budget to the public sector the highest salary increase this century. There was a higher one at the turn of the century — we have given 5%; the higher one was 5.2%, 0.2% more, with more or less the same inflation.

345 So, Madam Speaker, he says that we have given very little because we have done that, but we have put up social insurance rates. We have not put up social insurance rates — we have slid the cap 5%. I

would have thought he would know that. I mean, I can understand somebody in the street falling into the shorthand, but not the Leader of the Opposition replying to the Minister for Public Finance.

350 But given that he has made the argument that we put in one pocket what we take from the other, so we have not really given a pay rise, he gives me the opportunity of demonstrating the Opposite — not arguing, not saying it, demonstrating it.

The gross increase in salaries in the public sector less the increase in social security is as follows. In the bracket between £22,874, which is the entry, and £49,999.99: at the bottom the salary increase is £1,042 and at the top it is £2,399. So how can he say that the social insurance eats into the pay rise?

355 Actually, the gross salary increase without the social insurance is £1,143 at the bottom, £2,500 at the top. It is a £100 increase over 52 weeks, Madam Speaker, in social insurance. So of course it does not undo the pay rise.

In the £50,000 to £79,999.99 rate, the increase at the bottom of that ladder is £2,149; at the top of the ladder the salary increase is £3,500, despite the social insurance which is £100 over the year. At 360 £80,000 to £89,199.89, £2,699 to £3,049. At £90,000 to £99,999.99, it is £2,149 to £2,399, and in the over £100,000 it is £899.12. How can he say that the social insurance in effect left the pay increase with no value; that we did nothing for working people?

He might have said he could have given you £100 more a year if the cap had not slid up. But, of course, if they want to make the argument that they are responsible, that they care about the long 365 term, that they care about this community, they cannot put us in a position where we underfund the social insurance scheme. It must always need to catch up and always be there to provide enough for pensions and provide enough for the GPMS.

Because it is not as if the social insurance — which is the argument the GSD used to make in Opposition — is a stealth tax. They like that argument, it is not true. But it is not a stealth tax; it goes 370 straight back into the pocket of the employee. It goes into their fund at the GHA and it goes into their fund in the pension — in the great Ponzi scheme that is the public state sector pension scheme.

It goes straight to pensions because you are buying a ticket, you are buying a stamp for your entitlement at the end — that is what you are buying. You are buying your medicines, you are buying your doctor — it is the cheapest insurance in the world, and it needs to always stay current.

375 So that £100 over a year — 52 weeks, so less than £2 a week, Madam Speaker — he says is enough for him to be able to say the pay rise is as nothing, despite the pay rise being as high as £3,500, Madam Speaker. How can anybody take what he says seriously after that? And better to say it is all very good to give a pay rise, but some people are going to suffer a £100 loss in a year.

But I dare say that he got up and made the argument without working out that it was this. I mean, 380 it is 1%, Madam Speaker, of the lowest pay rise; 1% of the lowest pay rise at the bottom. So, I was not surprised by then that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, when he got into his flow — but I could see he was reading, so he had actually written this down — said this was like “*a pre-Election Budget*”.

Madam Speaker, I have now delivered three pre-Election Budget speeches — this was not a pre-Election Budget speech. I mean, hon. Members will have to accept, whether they like it or not, that I 385 can craft a pre-Election Budget speech because I have delivered three to enable me to win the three Elections which I have won from Government.

I did not write this as a pre-Election speech, as a pre-Election Budget speech. But he said something, Madam Speaker, as he was presenting, that gave so much away. If he looks at the transcript, he will see that perhaps his subconscious led him to say this.

390 I quote, Madam Speaker: “*Madam Speaker, I have to say that listening to the Chief Minister this morning there was a moment — although I think I changed my mind at the end of his speech — but there was a moment that this contribution sounded pre-electoral.*” — “*Although I think I changed my mind*”.

He does not even know whether he changed his mind, Madam Speaker. For goodness’ sake, how 395 can we expect him to have a position on the Treaty? But look, this was clearly not a pre-Election Budget. But his was certainly a pre-Election response. He gets up and he says, “*I will put-up public-sector salaries by more. I would reduce taxes by more.*”

Except that when he was in the Election campaign, when he published a manifesto, when he was asked by the National Broadcaster, when he was put on the spot — to his credit, he said he did not know whether he might have to put up taxes and he did not rule it out. Of course, our fault, because we have done things so badly etc., right?

But actually, after the Election, we, who are so bad, delivered the tax cut earlier than we said we would — and the surpluses. The General Election was in October 2023; it is June 2025. We are 21 months post-Election. We are in the bliss that is midterm; we are not in campaign mode, Madam Speaker.

We are halfway through our fourth — fourth, not the first, not the second, not the third — fourth successive term. We are in Government mode. That is what people complain about.

He is stuck, Madam Speaker, reliving the 2023 campaign when he probably got closer than he ever will. That is fine — he can play that in slow motion in his mind all the time and ask himself *Why? If only. Maybe if I had. Maybe if I had not.* But we got in.

We have not got time for that. We cannot relive that campaign. We have to get the job done. And then he went through the names of the manifestos. Whilst we are sitting here writing the next chapter of Gibraltar's history, he is just trying to relive the old campaign.

Anyway, when he falls into the trap of simply resaying all of the time that *"the New Dawn is a false dawn"*, I mean we are stuck with the same old same old. I am not going to tell him, Madam Speaker, that it cannot be a false dawn because I have met the New Dawn — I have met the children who have been born through IVF; they are walking down Main Street.

I have been in the houses that we have built where the Gibraltarian families have established themselves. But the Hon. Leader of the Opposition wakes up every morning, he opens the blinds into the magnificent Bay of Gibraltar, he sees a brighter Gibraltar, but he just thinks it is a trick of the light — it must be, must be the double glazing.

Let me tell him what the people of Gibraltar see — perhaps what he might see if he opened his Gibraltarian eyes and not just his Party-Political eyes, like he used to before 2015 and we worked so well together between 2011 and whenever it was that he decided to stand for Election.

What the people see are more affordable homes, a growing economy, the highest revenue in our history, a Treaty now at our doorstep. It is not a false dawn — that is the sun rising on progress, Madam Speaker. The sun of the fourth new dawn that we have delivered. And, of course, because it is the fourth new dawn, it is a demonstration that the public agree with us and our interpretation.

He went through the titles of our manifestos: *"The strongest foundations were not built. The green Gibraltar child-friendly city are nothing but a distant memory. The job has not been done."* And he looked so satisfied to have done it, Madam Speaker.

Far from being kept safe, Gibraltar is more vulnerable — especially financially. How wrong can he be, Madam Speaker? I mean, the people have consistently disagreed with him. But they are just marinating in this brine of negativity that is stewing all of their approach.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, their rhetoric is so poisonous that it is distancing them from the people that they are supposed to represent. All they are pandering to are the self-entitled and to the malcontents. Look, they might gain a vote here or there, I get it, but they will never inspire anyone, Madam Speaker, in that way.

And if they do not inspire, they cannot lead. That is what their manifesto — their IKEA catalogue, as Mr Santos nicknamed it — showed at the last Election. There was nothing in there to vote for; there were lots of things in there to vote against — us.

It was an Opposition manifesto for Opposition, but it was not a Leader's blueprint for Government. This was an attempt to win through exploitation of dissent. We do not do that, Madam Speaker. We win to do. We win to inspire. We win to deliver.

He says it is a false dawn. Well, after the new dawn, we took in the 2015 General Election the biggest landslide in Gibraltar's history, bar the one delivered by the Hon. the Father of the House in 1992 — also incidentally secured against them.

When we did that, we won to build strongest foundations, and we did. Because despite winning and finding immediately after that we had a Referendum to pull us out of the European Union, we

delivered a Withdrawal Agreement so we did not fall off the cliff. And we delivered a green Gibraltar and a child-friendly city — or have people forgotten that Commonwealth Park used to be a car park? That Campion Park was not green?

How can the hon. Gentleman say — the Hon. Mr Origo — that Gibraltar is less green? I will come to him in a moment, and all of the facts that he got wrong. And then we won again — we delivered cycle lanes, etc., which are so divisive but are safe for our children.

And then we won again to *keep Gibraltar safe and get the job done*. And they have been saying to us, *you are not getting the job done, you are not getting the job done, you are not getting the job done*. Boom — get the job done. And they say, *Oh, I do not know what I think about that*.

Well, Madam Speaker, look, all I can say is that I am not revealing any confidence because he has been open about it himself — that until 2015/2016, or whenever it was that he decided to, the vacancy arose in the GSD, he thought we were doing really well. The vote is secret, but I bet my bottom dollar — not any of the public's, but mine — that he voted GSLP–Liberal in 2015, perhaps with a vote for his friend in the PDP.

I bet my bottom dollar. I mean, we always fight Elections with a positive purpose, not just to remove the other guy from Office — although I do think that in 2011, when he launched the PDP, he partly did it in order to help us to remove the other guy from office.

We are not the anti-GSD, Madam Speaker, but they seem to be just the anti-GSLP. Now I think the Liberals have also got them against them. But he does not seem to accept — and this is the worrying thing — by going through our manifesto titles and saying that we have done none of that, he does not seem to affect the verdict of the people.

Because the people do believe that we have delivered that and have voted for us. And that, Madam Speaker, is the only judgement which is unappealable.

He then went into this idea that there is a debacle in the Care Services in Gibraltar — *a debacle in the Care Services*. Well, first of all, there is no such debacle. But why did he not go through the detail of what he was told by the Hon. Minister for Health, or what the Hon. Minister for Health has told the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus throughout the past six months, about the £224 million investment in our Health and Care Services, the new Services, the new facilities?

Why did he not tell us what they would do differently with that money? That is what this debate is about — *This debate is about the money. Look, why are you using it in this way? Why do you not use it in that way to deliver a better Service?*

We have got none of that from them. What would they do differently in Health and care? Cut Sponsored Patients? Fire nurses? Reduce the hours of care for our people? End zero-hour contracts in the Health Service so that the contracts cost even more?

For the clarity that is necessary, Madam Speaker, people need to understand that when they talk about overspends, what they say is just code for cut — cut, that is what they are going to do. Yes, Madam Speaker, we are going to get rid of zero-hour contracts in the Health Service — we are. But it is not going to be cheaper; let us be clear.

So, if they say that what they want is things to be cheaper, they should be urging us not to cut zero-hour contracts. But perhaps, Madam Speaker, the guiding principle here must be the Spanish adage that *the fish dies by its own mouth*. Because on *Viewpoint's Health debate* on GBC earlier this year, the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus, when asked if the GSD would meet the 10% pay claim from GHA Domestic staff, she said this: *"Not necessarily. But then, we possibly would not be spending on other projects as they are spending, for example, on the ERS residents."*

Well, I commend that honesty, Madam Speaker. I commend that honesty. *We are not going to give them the 10% pay rise and we would not be spending so much on ERS residents.*

The only surprising thing is that she then marches with the very staff who are claiming pay rises that she said she is not going to give. Well, look, Madam Speaker, that is a matter for her. But at least what is clear is that the debacle in care is not there because of us.

The debacle in care would come because of what they call overspending, which they can only fix in one way — the sharp end of the Clinton cuts. Azopardi austerity landed in the GHA. It is not us saying

it; Mrs Ladislaus — the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus — has said so on television. We are going to continue to invest in our elderly, just as we have been doing since the 9th of December 2011.

What we cannot let them get away from in that context, or cannot let them get away with, Madam Speaker, is the idea that there is an absence of real Domiciliary Care under us. Because that is exactly what would happen under them — and not for the first time. I will come to the figures, Madam Speaker, because this debate has to be about the figures.

But if we just park the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus for a moment on what she said, let us focus on what somebody else said about their delivery of care. A politician in Gibraltar said on television in Gibraltar, Madam Speaker, *The social needs of our community will not be given the necessary priority under the GSD*. That was in 2011. The politician was the then Leader of the PDP of 2007 — the then Leader of the PDP setting them up to lose the Election in 2011, as they did thanks to his help. And he was right then, Madam Speaker. He would be right now too, because that is what the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus has told us they would do.

When we were elected, there were 402 people on the waiting list for Mount Alvernia. There were 43,000 Domiciliary Care hours provided for 68 people. After 2011, we built the Hillside Dementia Facility; we expanded Mount Alvernia; we opened the John Mackintosh Home; we increased Domiciliary Care tenfold; we ended the first-come, first-served system and looked at a needs-based access system for Mount Alvernia.

There are now 334,000 hours provided for 512 individuals in our community. I do not see any of them writing it down, Madam Speaker. This is the Budget debate — it is about the numbers; it is about what we spend the money on, not about what names we can call each other.

43,000 hours under the GSD; 334,000 hours under the GSLP — that is the debacle in care. 68 people receiving the Domiciliary Care under the GSD; 512 under the GSLP—Liberals — that is the debacle in care. Or is it the overspend in the Health Authority that is the debacle in care?

Because Madam Speaker, when I addressed him last time that he tried to make a point out of overspending on the Health Budget, I reminded him that he, as Minister for Health, is the Minister for Health who has most overspent — by 15.5%. So, if overspending the Health Budget is a bad thing, then the weightiest indictment lies against him, because that was in 2002–2003. Or 2003–2004 — 2003, I think it was.

In 2006–2007, with the new hospital already built, they overspent the Capital Budget — the Capital Budget — of the GHA by 73%. Do these things not matter to them? Can they not at least preface what they say by saying, Look, we have overspent on Health as well. It should not happen. Sometimes it has gone high. In my case, 15.5%. There was a very good reason for it — avian flu, whatever. There was not avian flu, but whatever. In today's book, we have seen that you have overspent by whatever percent. What are the issues?

No — they have to go into kill: Overspend is bad, is terrible. It makes you a bad Political Leader. You cannot aspire to become Chief Minister and lead your Party because of your overspend in Health. Hang on — you overspent by more.

This is not giving serious thought — the sort of serious thought that I fully respect that he brings to his profession when he presents as a lawyer. He knows I never denigrate him as a professional, as I was denigrated when I was on that side. But it needs to be brought to this too, to the debate here.

And then, having said what she said — the Hon. Mrs Ladislaus — and having heard what Mr Clinton, the Hon. Mr Clinton, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, Mrs Ladislaus sits there telling us that we are not spending enough and that we should spend more. This is such a morass of contradictions, Madam Speaker — that it is impossible to unravel.

This Opposition, Madam Speaker, cannot hold a line between themselves, let alone in a negotiation — a negotiation, Madam Speaker, that produces an agreement for a Treaty that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition tells us we are trying to do a hard sell on. I mean, the only thing that requires a hard sell now, Madam Speaker, is the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's credibility when it comes to this Treaty.

He has spent the last four years, Madam Speaker, sowing fear, doubt, division, casting aspersions on the process, pre-emptively trying to undermine the outcome — and now he wants to pretend that

he is a constructive critic. He says that we should have taken him with us to negotiate. But of course, as we did not, if it goes wrong now, it is our fault.

555 Of course, the problem the GSD has, Madam Speaker, is if it goes right. Because if it is our fault if it goes wrong, because we did not take him with us, what happens if it goes right? The answer is obvious, is it not? But let us be clear — whilst we were in Brussels, in London and in Madrid, sitting across negotiating tables, defending Gibraltar's red lines, shaping the future of shared prosperity, the hon. Gentleman sat behind his keyboard commenting but never contributing.

560 We asked him to meetings; we briefed him; and we asked him at the end of those meetings, *Look, is there anything that you think that we should be doing differently after this?* He never came up with one suggestion other than, like the old statue of Rodan in the old Skol advert, Madam Speaker, *Please, take me with you.* Those old enough to remember that advertisement on television might remember.

565 We invited him to a briefing, Madam Speaker, on the 10th of June. We said, of course, that he should come with one, two or more — and he came alone. I am surprised that he came alone to sit with me and the Deputy Chief Minister. He knows, Madam Speaker, that we know each other for long enough that we would never have a disagreement as to what is said in the room; and he can trust us if he says something — we say something, we know we can trust him because nobody is going to misrepresent what we say. We have got that relationship at a personal level.

570 But why did he come alone? I thought he would come with Mr Clinton and with Mr Bossino. Madam Speaker, if we get this Treaty over the line, the agreement for it is for a historic deal. But in a flourish, when he was doing his speech, he said, *I welcome — he said, welcome, Madam Speaker, welcome to the Gibraltar that this GSLP have built where concessions of jurisdiction are achievements.*

575 Concessions of jurisdiction by the GSLP? By the Liberals? This GSLP? These Liberals? Trying to get somebody to believe that Sir Joe Bossano did a concession? Or Joseph Garcia? Or me? Not him, of course — not the person who thought in writing that Andorra was not joint sovereignty. He would never make a concession — we might.

580 Madam Speaker, four Chief Ministers — the people I was accused of wheeling out, one of whom is me — four Chief Ministers, or former Chief Ministers, know what they think about this Treaty. We just do not know what he thinks. Perhaps I would not be surprised, given that he started his speech by saying, *I do not know if I have changed my mind.*

Well, if you do not know whether you have changed your mind or not, good luck knowing anything else. The Hon. Mr Azopardi has become the patron saint of hesitation when it comes to this Treaty. Look, I get that you cannot say that the Treaty is fine until you see the text of the Treaty.

585 But you can say whether the agreement for the Treaty is fine or not — whether the things that are in the agreement are things that you agree with. But what we have had is chronic indecision. I mean, the opportunity to support this has tiptoed past him, Madam Speaker, in its slippers, and he has not noticed. Better that, Madam Speaker, than the attitude that they took with the tax Treaty — the tax Treaty, which was obviously part of the building blocks of the new relationship that we need to have with the European Union, with Spain, with the OECD.

590 All of that he was against. He thought, Madam Speaker, and he reacted immediately — immediately — to Cordoba, that it was unsafe. Immediately, he reacted within 24 hours to Cordoba. Now he leads the Party that did Cordoba.

595 And on the tax Treaty, Madam Speaker, in his manifesto he sets out, *"We will seek to terminate the GSLP's tax Treaty with Spain. We will request the termination of the tax Treaty because it will deem some Gibraltarians who actually live in Gibraltar as Spanish tax residents just because they may hold assets like a holiday home in Spain."* That is not true, Madam Speaker. And although he raised that spectre, people will have now realised that what he said was not true — nobody is being taxed as a Spanish resident because they have a holiday home in Spain.

600 He said in his manifesto, page 65, *"The tax Treaty taxes Gibraltar companies who do not even operate in Spain just because the shareholders or directors may live there. It is a disincentive to inward investment and job creation."* Well, Madam Speaker — since he said that, the GDP is up 20%. He goes on to say, *"This means that the GSLP Government have accepted a system that has allowed Spain to*

exercise tax jurisdiction over Gibraltarians, our residents and companies even when they live here and operate here exclusively.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. That is the sort of stuff that the hon. Gentleman peddles out. So, beware when we publish a Treaty, because if he is prepared to say this about the tax Treaty, God knows what he is going to say about the Treaty between the United Kingdom and the European Union in relation to Gibraltar.

However, remember what he said about the tax Treaty — now we have evidence. We have evidence against which to judge how he will behave in the context of the new Treaty. And if he says any of these things about jurisdiction and concessions, we have to measure it up against the things he said about the other Treaty, which have now been shown — not by argument but by a fluxion of time and practice — to be completely untrue. Empirical evidence that what he said was wrong — untrue.

In addition, a demonstration that hon. Members will just say anything to denigrate us — they will make it up to scare people out there on even fundamental issues like sovereignty, jurisdiction and control, the incentive to operate in Gibraltar. In other words, telling people, *Do not come to Gibraltar because of this. Invest somewhere else, not in Gibraltar, because of this* — in an analysis that is completely untrue and has been shown to be untrue.

But this is the man who said that the Cordoba agreement was a bad thing and today leads the Party that did it. This is the man who says that Andorra is not joint sovereignty — I mean, come on, Madam Speaker; tell it to the Marines. His analysis is not shared by us at all.

I am reminded, Madam Speaker, that the last day I invited him for a briefing, which was the 10th of June, I thought he would come with the Hon. Mr Clinton and the Hon. Mr Bossino, and he came alone. Maybe the Hon. Mr Bossino and the Hon. Mr Clinton were polishing the bingo balls for that night, and they had their bingo. The Deputy Chief Minister and I were receiving the Foreign Secretary on the tarmac at the airport, and they were playing bingo, Madam Speaker — we were doing treaties; they were singing line. That is the difference between us and them — whilst we work and deliver, they play games, Madam Speaker.

Since 2000 and *legs 11*, we have been here doing; they have been there polishing their bingo balls. So let us look at this now through the filter of Leadership, Madam Speaker — talk about fiddling whilst Rome is being doused to prevent it burning.

Some of the things that we have seen in the past year in this House are really quite remarkable. State of the nation, Madam Speaker, includes state of the Opposition Party’s ability to present in the House. I mean, some of the questions that the Hon. Mr Origo has been permitted by his Leader to present would be excluded by a schoolteacher — which is not your role, ma’am — as careless. Some of the Hon. Mr Sacarello’s questions do not have an object, do not identify what it is that they are asking about — again, it is not your role at all, Madam Speaker; Any teacher would have sent them back and said, *Do it again*.

I was taught by the Hon. the Father of the House how to ask questions — I mean, in a way I will never forget. I learnt *a palo*, Madam Speaker — the tongue lashings I have got for draft questions I have put up to the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano — and he still does it, and still does it. And thank goodness, Madam Speaker, that I learnt in the privacy of GSLP headquarters and not under the microscope of embarrassment in front of my whole community — that was of huge value.

They have not had the benefit of his assistance, obviously, or his eye is less sharp than it was if he is casting his eye over things — and I doubt it, because I have the very highest regard for his professional ability. It must be that he is just not looking at the questions — that he is professionally so successful, as he should be, Madam Speaker, that he has not got time to check Mr Origo’s questions or the Hon. Mr Sacarello’s questions. Look, he is perfectly entitled to say, *The Hon. Mr Origo should be doing better* — we all think that. *He should at least be spelling things properly. The Hon. Mr Sacarello should be doing better* — of course he should; he should know how to write a sentence with an object and know what he is asking about.

But he is the Leader, Madam Speaker — you are a Leader for a reason. He sells himself as a rock, but he leads the GSD, Madam Speaker, like jelly on a trampoline. It is remarkable — there are so many wobbles every time they ask questions that one is left to think there is absolutely no Leadership there.

But I suppose it is to be understood — he is now leading a Party that he and I have been in competition to be the staunchest critics of, and he is now leading them. I mean, in 2011 we could not surpass each other enough in saying that the GSD had to go. And the guy sitting to his right and his left are talking about the golden legacy — of course they have a different view, of course they cannot be joined up.

I mean, when I watch back the Leaders' debate of 2011, Madam Speaker, the hon. Members know I am very honest in this respect — I think he did better than me. It was my first Leaders' debate; it was his second Leaders' debate. There I was with the giant that is Peter Caruana, the first time in the studio the night before an Election — I concede I was a little nervous. I did not bring him down; he did, for which I thank him. But he was the one making the arguments that brought down the GSD — I was trying my best; he was effective.

I mean, I had Peter Haynes' book — but he did the job on debt. I mean, he was very badly denigrated by Peter Caruana — by Sir Peter Caruana — but that is the reality. He now leads that Party — the Party that he helped me beat. How can that be serious?

So, Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the GSD has a problem: its people want a Treaty; its Leader is desperately trying to find a way to come out against the Treaty. And the problem the GSD has is the same problem it had in 2011, the same problem it had in 2023 — the GSD has a problem, Madam Speaker, and it is called the Hon. Keith Azopardi. He was instrumental in keeping the GSD out of office in 2011, as he was in 2023 — he is becoming instrumental in doing the same thing in 2027.

Thank goodness. I know that one man's meat is another man's poison, Madam Speaker, but I have to tell the House that my view, as the departing Leader of the House in the course of this term, is that the GSLP—Liberals have a huge asset in the Hon. Mr Azopardi.

The man who thinks it is a good idea to come and complain about overspending when he overspent 15% and when they overspent 73% on the capital Budget. And let us put this in electoral context — I have asked the people to elect me Chief Minister four times; so has he. I have succeeded four times, three times against him — in 2011, in 2019 and in 2023.

The people have rejected him four times — once against Sir Peter in 2007 and Sir Joe, and three against me. So, the only safe pair of hands he can claim to be is that you can be safe in the knowledge that if he is leading your Party, they are going to lose. So, he will forgive me, Madam Speaker, if I do not take much of his assessment that *we were not 0.01% of the way there when we went to the last Election*.

I was there. The Deputy Chief Minister was there. In 2023 we felt we were so close that we very quickly went with David Cameron in early 2024, in April, to do the deal in Brussels. We went to do the deal in Brussels — we were that close. We thought we were going to deliver it four months into the year. But we could not. A deal was on the table but not one that we considered safe, secure and beneficial.

Should we have done it just to show that we were *0.01% away*? Certainly not. And gaps change and widen, and positions change and national politics change wherever you are, and international politics changes, and we went back in April 2024, May 2024, back with David Cameron to the European Commission because we were *0.001% away*, and we could not seal the deal. And then there was a General Election in the United Kingdom. And we went back in September with David Lammy because we were *0.001% away*, and we could not do the deal because we would not do that deal.

So how can he try and persuade people that we were not that close? Simply by forgetting the rest of the history — that is what he needs to do: forget the rest of the history; get you to forget the rest of the history. He said, *I was spinning that reality*. No, Madam Speaker, I was not spinning that reality. I could not get Lord Cameron to go to Brussels because I was *spinning* that we were one step away — or the new Foreign Secretary David Lammy, with everything that was going on in the world by then.

That is not spinning, Madam Speaker — that is doing. And we were that close. What we were doing, Madam Speaker, is leading the most difficult and consequential and complex negotiations in our modern political history. I think everybody accepts that. It affects our Border, our economy, our children's future.

And what was he doing? Saying, *They are not that close. They are not as close as they told you. They are not going to do it. They will not be able to come back. They have misled you.* And then, one fine morning, after he had won the 'house' in the bingo, there is an announcement in Brussels that the political deal is done.

That is the difference between those of us who govern and those who speculate — stick to your red lines; do not compromise; walk away, even from the final meeting, if the result is not the one that you feel is appropriate; do it three times if you have to; and do not care that there is a bloke at home saying, *If you do not do the deal, you were not as close as you said you were.* Because what matters is the substance of the deal, not what the bloke back home is saying for his own party-political purposes.

And then, talking about this place, Madam Speaker, he says, "*Parliament is not here to do what Government wants.*" I have had moments like this before, Madam Speaker, with the GSD. The Hon. the other, Mr Feetham, said on one memorable occasion in this place, *Politics is not a numbers game.* Well, Madam Speaker, in this place politics is one thing and one thing only — a numbers game. Whoever has one more gets to do; whoever has one less gets to say whatever they like but gets to do nothing.

And so, whoever has one more forms the Government, and in our system of Parliament, the Government comes to Parliament to do. Sure, we could have backbenchers. To be fair, the honourable — sorry, Mr Robert Vasquez — is the only person who has been consistent in his approach in that respect. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition has had a position on that as well. There is a select committee that is working on the issues. But what is it that they are saying? Let us be clear — that if you have backbenchers, the Government will not be able to come here to do the things it needs to do, the things that are in its manifesto; that every day will be like the rebellion on the Labour backbenchers.

Because when they talk about these issues, when the Hon. Mr Bossino was talking about this issue, the argument was that I would not have been able to pass a motion condemning the Leader of the GSD if I had backbenchers. That is to say, what the Hon. Mr Bossino is telling us — what his crystal ball, what he sees in the future tells him, *Nostradamon* sees in the future — is that if the GSLP had backbenchers and the Leader of the GSLP, being the Father of the House, brings a motion against the Leader of the GSD, the GSLP backbenchers will not support the motion.

I do not think he understands politics like I understand it in the local context, Madam Speaker. What you would have from the backbenchers of the GSLP—Liberals would be baying for tougher language. And if I had a problem with my backbenchers in that scenario, it would be that the word *condemnation* only appears once and in the first sentence — and they want it in every paragraph.

What does the hon. Gentleman think? In a small Parliament with backbenchers, would one seriously believe that those of the backbenchers, if they wanted to have a frontbench future, would not want to be doing the bidding of the person who is going to recast the portfolios? Because that is also how politics works.

The problem is when you have such a huge majority, as in the United Kingdom — 483 or something — that you cannot even pretend that there is a prospect that they might get a front bench Ministerial job, because there are too many of them, and you would have to reshuffle three and a half times the whole Cabinet, yourself included, as Prime Minister. That is the reality.

Although I did enjoy the next part of his speech, Madam Speaker, which was the attempted defence of Mr Clinton. And here the hon. Gentleman came into his own, because here he was acting as King's Counsel. He knows I have the highest respect for him as King's Counsel. At one moment, Madam Speaker, I was hearing the defence; I looked up; I saw you there. I thought I was in another place — except that of course, because it was the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition speaking, you could never get to nine people in the gallery to potentially be a jury.

But the fact is that Mr Clinton is stuck with what he said — and it is fine to be stuck with what you said. It is history. Why cannot he just say, *Look, shucks, I got it wrong. Predicting interest rates is very difficult. I got it wrong?*

We will go to what he said now, Madam Speaker; we will go for every single word. This is what he said — this is what the Hon. Mr Clinton said that even Mr Azopardi cannot get him off the hook on:

On Thursday, the 13th of July, in the afternoon, page 7 of the Hansard, line 249, “*despite... “ talking to me, Madam Speaker, despite having signalled last year in his Budget speech that he is looking for a 25 or 26-year rollover, the mere three-year rollover of this £500 million or appropriate facility on the 3rd of December 2023, up to 26, is very worrying as it has been on the cards for a long time.*”

And then he tells us what we needed — that is to say, what we should do: *What we needed was a long-term facility and repayment terms as necessary to precisely restore financial stability.*

The clearest indication that that is what he said had to be done — or not. Does he say that we need something and then say that it is not what we should be doing? He is saying, *You need to do this, but do not do it.* That does not pass anybody’s intellectual muster. If he is saying that we needed it, it is what he must be saying we should have done — what he is telling us to do, what he would have done if he had won the Election four months later.

But if you are not convinced about that, Madam Speaker, listen to what he said next: *“I am not convinced at all by the Chief Minister’s argument that interest rates will be better in three years’ time, so he can then negotiate a 22-year facility that will be better. But does he have a crystal ball? Can I please borrow it? We would both be rich men. I am not even convinced that this new facility would not be at a floating rate or a higher rate — who knows? But he is telling us that he thinks, in his judgement, that in three years he will be able to do a better deal. I do not buy it, and he has not been able to get a proper financing deal for this amount of money.”*

Of course we could get a financing deal — I told him we could, but he never believes us. He did not even believe us on the rates.

But he was wrong, and he was telling us that we had to do it then, Madam Speaker — that that is what we needed, that that is what he would have done, that that is what they would have delivered after the General Election — and he cannot get himself off the hook. That would have cost us already £10 million, £100 million over the next 20 years, and indeed, as each month will show before we finally fix, close on a quarter of a billion pounds, whichever King’s Counsel gets up to defend him.

That is the reality, Madam Speaker. That is the reality because of the foolish insistence of the hon. Gentleman opposite. Because Madam Speaker, the Hon. Mr Bossino has lost two leadership elections and four general elections; the Hon. Mr Azopardi has lost four General Elections, and I do not know what else. None of them are as big a loser as the Hon. Mr Clinton would have been if he had won the Election and done his fixed deal.

He would have lost us upwards of a quarter of a billion pounds — the biggest loser, the quarter-million pounder, the Hon. Mr Clinton. They certainly are not gurus, and they certainly are not doing any magic — that is for sure. They said that we were not gurus, and we were not doing magic. Madam Speaker, I am not pretending to be a magician. I am probably too tall to be compared to Paul Daniels — and I am not the tallest bloke around.

But they have presented Mr Clinton, the Hon. Mr Clinton, as a guru — their *economic interest guru*, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, this is the man who wanted to lock interest rates in at their peak. We will not follow the bust-a-nation champion’s advice. We will follow the advice of the Financial Secretary, of Albert Mena, of Sir Joe Bossano — but we will not allow them to put this community into the magic trick of losing hundreds of millions of pounds in interest rates.

Which then led him to this idea that what the Government gives in one hand it takes with the other. Seriously? I have already done the analysis of how the pay rise was much, much, much greater than the effect of the slide on the cap in social insurance — but what are we taking from the minimum wage, or the disability benefit that we put up, or the state pension that we put up?

We have not increased personal taxation. We have not increased corporate taxation. So how can they say that we give with one hand and take with the other? It is just not true.

And then attack us on governance in general — attack us on governance when they are the ones who signed the GibAir agreement after the Election had been called; when they are the ones who gave the GJBS pay rises after the Election had been called; when Mr Bossino was on that slate for election. Those are the things that I suppose Mr Bossino calls the *golden legacy* of the GSD.

He then made various points, Madam Speaker, which were financial — at least he descended into the finances a little bit for one minute, quite unlike Mr Bossino — but he appeared not to have heard

the information he had been given in this House during question time about locum cover, etc. Locum cover is going to be lower because more of that money has now been included in salaries as people have been recruited.

815 The Hon. Mr Azopardi talks about the £10 million lower cost of the Care Agency. Well, maybe it is a £3.5 million lower cost, but £6.5 million was part of the settlement. The maternity cover and temporary cover, which has gone down to £1,000, where more people have been employed in education — the specialist and special needs learning support assistants were put in a token, but the new subheads are included under subhead 1(1)(e), ad hoc cover, as opposed to 1(1)(d), temporary assistance, so it is going somewhere else.

820 The Europa sports complex, he says, what's going to happen with that? Well, £1,000 has remained under the Sports and Leisure Department in the event there's any cost there, but the whole sports complex is now under the GSLA. And then, Madam Speaker, he says, but it's terrible that you've only got a token for the Waste Treatment Facility, for the replacement of the Frontier fence, for the joint facility under the Treaty.

825 We only have £1,000 for the infrastructure works, for the implementation of the Treaty, the RGP headquarters, the GFRS relocation. It's terrible, isn't it? There are valid reasons for taking that approach, Madam Speaker, because you can't pluck a figure out of the air.

You've got to have a full cost set out before you can provide it. Is this new? Is this something that we are doing because we have no intention of delivering? But Madam Speaker, if that is the case, that must have been their position too, in the many years that they did that in respect of projects in the I&DF. Here's a few examples. The Housing Scheme at Waterport Terraces, £1,000 put in in one Financial Year.

The King's Bastion Leisure Centre, £1,000. They're both there. The Beaches Development Scheme, £1,000.

835 Airlines, ferry and Hotel Assistance Schemes, £1,000 because they would disappear in subheads. The Strategic Fuel Reserve, £1,000 but it's there already. The new airport terminal building, £1,000 to represent the £24 million it was going to cost — *Ah no!*

It cost £84 million in the end, Madam Speaker. The new Government rental housing scheme which became Mid Harbour, £1,000. That's how projects are born.

840 The refurbishment of Europa Point, £1,000 and the help of John Cortes otherwise it would never have taken off. The parking projects, £1,000. He remembers those, Madam Speaker, those are the ones they funded through the borrowing of companies.

845 The thing that they say is wrong when it's done by us but was perfectly right and proper when it was done by them. Madam Speaker, the speech of the person who spoke after the Chief Minister, the Hon. Mr Azopardi, does not deserve to be called a Leader of the Opposition speech. But I will say that that is our advantage as a Political Party, or as Political Parties, and that we should make hay whilst Azopardi shines on the GSD.

850 But the most personal of attacks that we were subjected to, Madam Speaker, came from a person who the public will not be surprised to see, has a picture of him boxing as his profile pic on Facebook. Ever the pugilist. The man who tells us that his job in Opposition is to attack the Government.

It's a direct quote from the Hon. Mr Bossino. Lots of politics from him, little detail, and surprisingly very little on his own portfolios. I mean, he has a position on everything, Madam Speaker, except the Treaty.

855 He has a photograph with everyone, Madam Speaker, except at Pride. And as he said, Madam Speaker, from a sedentary position the other day, or from a standing position, I forget, *I have nothing against gays I've always been busy on Pride Day*. I mean, it reminds me of the old, the old *I'm not a racist but*.

860 And the Hon. Mr Bossino really has become, Madam Speaker, the incredible sulk in this Chamber. Sulking every day since he lost the last Leadership Election. Well, I wouldn't know really whether that happened immediately because for three months we didn't see him here.

There were meetings of the Parliament but Mr. Bossino did not turn up, Madam Speaker. He was so marinated in chagrin that he could not bring himself to cross the door into the Parliament Chamber

to sit beside the man who had beaten him. I mean, since then I have to tell him with the greatest of affection he really has become a politically cantankerous old man having failed to achieve the high office that he craves because, of course, people can see through the fact that despite being absolutely friendly and nice, he does not have the intellectual firepower to be entrusted with the complex decision that this job entails.

That is the reality. So, I am going to sweep away the sweeper's wreckage, Madam Speaker, because let us face it, this was a speech so bloated with bitterness and so starved of substance that it should have come with a health warning. The Hon. Minister for Health has failed the public by not attaching a health warning to the Hon. Mr Bossino's speech.

Well, I mean, he certainly swept; he swept through every recycled insult, he swept through every tired trope, and he swept through every conspiracy theory that he could put his hands on. But the only thing he failed to sweep up and deliver to us was one credible alternative policy—not one. He failed to sweep up any reference to the figures in this Budget debate.

Just the usual cocktail of envy, innuendo, and intellectual indigestion—which leads him to say to me that I have lost all political credibility. And the guy who loses the two Leadership Elections, and who loses three General Elections—four General Elections as well, let us not forget 1996—tells me, Madam Speaker, that I have lost political credibility.

And there he is, clinging on to what might be described as a *de facto* Deputy Leadership of the Party, like Miss Havisham clings on to her wedding dress to bring it back to Dickens. And there, dressed as Miss Havisham, he gets up and says that we are involved in a game of thrones. Well, Madam Speaker, look, if this were Westeros, Mr. Bossino would not be a contender. The old Bossino would be the court jester tossing scrolls of gossip around whilst the grown-ups govern, which is much what he is left to do here. He mocks the Hon. Minister for Health, the Hon. Minister for Culture, the Hon. Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Minister for Justice—he mocks them all. The Minister for Justice is delivering record-breaking performance.

The Minister for Health is dealing with crises in the Health Service with steel and grace. The Hon. Minister for Culture is building bridges across community that the hon. Member would blow up if he ever had that responsibility. And the Hon. Mr Cortes has more achievements in one term, in one portfolio than the Hon. Bossino is ever likely to have in his whole political career. He would only need one of that, Madam Speaker. And then he seems to have become obsessed with the seating arrangements in the House. Madam Speaker, this is a Parliament, not musical chairs.

If the Hon. Mr Bossino took my advice and spent half as much time on policy as he does on furniture and personalities, we might actually have something useful from him one day. All of these accusations that he hubristically makes of my hubris are really quite remarkable when he says that I should resign and that he is going to give us Leadership advice. What qualification does the Hon. Mr Bossino have to give anyone advice on Leadership?

He would become the Uriah Heep of this House to stick with Dickens. And he pretends to be ever so nice and ever so humble, and yet he is so venomous and intent, Madam Speaker. There is this faux civility, but you could hear the malice in every syllable.

He speaks of *scholarship apartheid*, *the kiss of death*, of *Al Capone*. I mean, I did not know whether he was delivering a Budget speech or whether he was having a fever dream. So, Madam Speaker, he can continue to play prophet of doom and talk about how badly things are going.

We will carry on building, we will carry on Governing, we will carry on leading, and we will continue to discharge the mandate of the people. But we will not fail to point out, Madam Speaker, that the Hon. Mr Bossino did not mention one figure in the time that he was speaking. It was all politics.

The untalented Mr. Ripley treated us to all criticism and no calculation—because what is starting to appear more and more obvious is that they, Madam Speaker, have not got a Leader who can do the numbers and the politics. They have got somebody they say can do the numbers, but Christ help us if we ever fix a borrowing deal based on his advice and interest. They have got somebody who can do advocacy—a Leader of the Opposition. They have got somebody who can do aggression in Mr. Bossino. But they have not got one person who can do it all.

But Madam Speaker, the fascinating thing is that the Hon. Mr Bossino thinks that the way to get to the Leadership is to pretend that he can do it all by coming here with his notes on the back of a fag packet to deliver a speech in a Budget debate. That is not the way to get to—and he does not talk to us about the state of the nation; he talks to us about the state of the GSLP Leadership rankings. That was more important, Madam Speaker. How can he justify this to anybody other than to his fan, Madam Speaker?

I mean, the morning walk must have been superb, as he was told how brilliantly he had done, no? But does the hon. Gentleman think that nurses and teachers care about that? Nurses and teachers and firemen and police officers care about the Leadership stakes of the GSLP or they care about the numbers in the book and how salaries are going to go up, how resources are going to be provided?

Let us have a serious debate about those things. Not, *you know, the GSLP is bad, the Liberals I don't know, the GSD is good, this lady can't lead, that gentleman can't lead, the other gentleman can't lead either, I have nothing against gays, let's have a debate about it.* Seriously, Madam Speaker?

That is the best the GSD can do? That is the best the GSD can do? Madam Speaker, I am going to take your advice and not use certain terms, of course, but the hon. Gentleman is less than supportive of women.

I just want us to see how the hon. Gentleman addresses female Members of this House. *Calm down, develop a thicker skin, are you having your cage rattled?* I mean, the next thing that I have to hear the hon. Gentleman say to one of the female Members of this House is to ask them whether, if they are having a discussion that we might have amongst ourselves, whether they are *getting their knickers in a twist* or ask them to *calm down, dear*.

I mean, it is really quite remarkable. I do not think the hon. Gentleman even sees how he is behaving. And then he talks the language of 20 years ago, Madam Speaker.

It is the language of 20 years ago to say that we should have a debate about Equality. That we should have a debate about gay rights. We had that debate, Madam Speaker.

He was not here. I think that was another fit of pique in that period when he did not stand after 2015, or because of the other Mr Feetham and the other Leadership Election loss. That one really did stop him coming through the door.

Not just for three months but for three and a half years. We have had that debate. This community does not need to have the debate that the Hon. Mr Bossino wants to have. I do not have gay friends but I have friends of all sexes and sexual orientations with no *butts*. I suppose they have all got *butts*, Madam Speaker, but I do not need, Madam Speaker, to say *but* like he says. Ergo, Madam Speaker, the terminology that you asked me not to use would be proven and perfectly justified.

Because Madam Speaker, you see him here, you see him there, Madam Speaker, but *on Pride Day Macavity is not there*. Every year. Every Saturday, the photograph with this group or that group.

Every Saturday, here, there, Casemates, Piazza. *Shucks! On Pride Day, Macavity's not there*.

I was not there this year, Madam Speaker, because one of my children had a football tournament. But Macavity, every year, he is not there. Everybody knows who he is and what he thinks.

And to his credit, when the microphones are not on, he does not hide it. Well, even the man who is the Leader of the Opposition knows this and sends clear messages. Because the Hon. Leader of the Opposition said, at Pride, I think just before the Election, I think in a defensive posture—this was not about the people standing in front of him at the Pride March; this was a defensive posture to the people standing behind him in College Lane—*"We do not turn back the clock on rights. Rights have been obtained and we will not turn back the clock on those rights whilst I am Leader of the GSD."*—in other words - *cuidado con el otro* - Careful with the other one.

Oh come, oh ye faithful, keep me as Leader of the GSD because otherwise we might turn back the clock on rights, even rights that have been obtained - because I do not have to say at Pride, everything will be fine whilst I am Leader of the GSLP Liberals. People at Pride know that whilst there are GSLP Liberals, there is no turning back the clock on rights. Whoever is the Leader; this is not a Leader's whim.

It cannot be a Leader's whim if you are talking about rights, for goodness' sake. But in 2022, Madam Speaker, just before the General Election, the Hon. Mr Bossino said this: *"Whatever happens in the*

future with abortion or any other issue should be decided by the people of Gibraltar in democratic Elections and they will cast their vote in one direction or another. That is the way democracies operate, the voice of the electorate expressed in Parliament in General Elections." Because we know what he would do and we know what he would want to represent.

970 And you know what, Madam Speaker, I am sorry to say, he knows and I fear that there is a constituency for that and that is what he was pointing us to. And that is why, even after I am here, whilst I have breath in my body, I will be supporting Equality in this community and should there ever come to pass the possibility that any rights might go into reverse, whoever is leading the charge to reverse them will find me standing shoulder to shoulder with everybody else who will be standing there defending them, and I have no doubt that he and I would not be on the same side. I have
975 absolutely no doubt about that. Indeed, I am told this is not an issue that only I am raising.

I am told there was a huge fallout between Members Opposite about Pride two weeks ago, that the Party wanted to take a position, that Mr Bossino was insisting that individuals should take their own position and not a Party position. Dynamite, Madam Speaker, in the modern world because we
980 are no longer in a world where we need to have that debate. The horse has bolted, thank God.

Love is love, Madam Speaker. Love wins. But he then got into his main theme—me.

And that I should leave now, leave now. I mean, I suppose that what I am trying to deliver to the hon. Gentleman will be his only success. But this is like going to the dog show and when you see your dog is sitting down, you say, *sit*.

985 And they give you the gold medal for getting the dog properly trained. It worked out for me when I was eight, Madam Speaker. I got a nice medal at the dog show because I saw that *Lobo* was about to sit down and I said, *sit*.

I think I got silver. So what he is saying, what he is saying, to be able to turn the prophecy around, to be able to be called *Nostradamus* and not *Nostradamon*, is to predict that the Chief Minister will go, or to bring about my fall by saying that I should go. Of course, years after I said I am going.
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Years after I said I am going. I mean, the incredible thing, as I was saying before, Madam Speaker—look at the headline he got in the *Chronicle*: *Time to go, says Bossino*.

Bossino tells Chief Minister time to go. He should have said—there is not enough space in the headline—*Time to go, Bossino tells Chief Minister who said he is going*.

995 It is remarkable, Madam Speaker. You could not make this up. You could not make this up.

But the problem that they have, the problem that they have, is that they are not going to get rid of me after I won two Elections, having said that I wanted to win three. I am going to retire having won four. Only in a GSD world could that be deemed a success, I suppose.

But are they not tired, Madam Speaker? As a team we are not tired. I have said personally that I
1000 am understandably tired.

Fourteen years in the social media age is like twenty-eight years in the normal world. But are they not tired of failure? Is he not tired of failure?

Because Miss Havisham was always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Aren't they tired of only losing – losing to me in particular. I know that given our trajectory it hurts a little more when it is me. But
1005 look, he lost to the other Mr Feetham in the Leadership Election. But what is it like to lose to a Johnny-come-lately?

Imagine, Madam Speaker, a world in which you join a Political Party where the Deputy Leader has gone off to form another Political Party. Right? The guy who leads that other Political Party, in effect, delivers that your Party loses the Election because he takes the votes in the middle.

1010 The guy then comes back, and you lose the Leadership Election to the guy who made your Political Party lose the Election. And when he comes back, he is not even constitutionally qualified to stand for the Leadership and you lose against him. I mean, all the Hon. Mr Bossino had to do was say, *um, the Hon. Mr Azopardi, or at that time as he then was Mr Azopardi, um, does not qualify under the constitutional rules of the GSD to stand for the Leadership*. That is all, that is the only gumption that it required. The only Political steel necessary was to say in the meeting of the executive committee, *um, look guys, um, I believe the only valid candidature is mine* and he would have won. I mean, how does
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it feel to lose even to the returning prodigal son, when he is not even qualified, because he cannot find the birth certificate.

1020 What has he got to teach Mr Feetham, Mrs Arias Vasquez, Mr Santos, or Mr Cortes about the Leadership of the GSLP? What?

I mean, perish the thought that he actually dared to proffer any advice to the legend that is the Father of the House or to the Hon. Ms Orfila, who will give him a literary reference to put him back in his place. The hon. Gentleman, Madam Speaker, was laughing his guts out at the *Bust the Budget Awards*. This is a man, Madam Speaker, who in Political terms has lost four times, but in the category of Best Supporting Actor—because he cannot even get the lead role.

1025 And then he cannot stop his mouth because, having told us that he is not taking a position on the Treaty, he then on an aside says about the colours of Varyl Begg because one might have been yellow, another one might have looked red, “*maybe the shape of things to come*”. The hon. Gentleman will go down in history as a person who makes mistakes because he cannot keep his mouth shut. I will go down in history, Madam Speaker, as a person who made mistakes, big and small, because I did big things in Government and small things in Government.

1030 And in doing so, I will have made mistakes in both the big things and the small things. Of course, he will go down in history as having made mistakes even though he never got the chance to do anything, just sitting here. Already now, mid-50s, I am ready to go.

1035 He is still trying to gear up. *Yo creo que se la ha pasado el arroz ya*. So, he says I have to go. But even that, I suppose, must be rhetorical, Madam Speaker, because why ask me to go?

1040 Surely, Madam Speaker, if I have done four Elections, if I am unlikely personally to be able to win a fifth General Election—no Chief Minister has won a fifth General Election—if you are interested in your Party winning the General Election, you stand up here and you say *Mr Picardo should not go. Mr Picardo should lead the Party. Mr Picardo should defend the things that he says. Mr Picardo should see through the Treaty, not just to implementation, but to see through the economic consequences. This is a world he is leading us into. He should stay and defend that. He should ensure that the COVID debt is repaid. He should not be permitted by the Party to leave until all of those things are resolved.*

1045 If you are thinking about the GSD, that is what you say. You do not say *change your Leader*, which immediately will see us reborn. Because his problem is not the current Leader of the GSLP, Madam Speaker. His problem—and their problem—is the next Leader of the GSLP.

That is the reality. He should want me to stay. Look, they almost beat me at the last Election.

1050 What is not to say that they could beat me at the next one? That is the reality. So, he went through the people he says are the ones who are going to be in the Leadership Election. Okay. Let us look at the options.

Who will the next Leader of the GSLP be? A King’s Counsel? An Oxford graduate?

A professor? A doctor? A teacher?

A former mayor? And on the other side? A King’s Counsel?

It is not him who, Madam Speaker. There is only one KC. There is no Oxford graduate.

1055 There is no professor. The Hon. Mr Azopardi is also a doctor. He is both a KC and a doctor.

1060 The Hon. Mr Azopardi is also, I suppose, in the end—we have to respect the Members of the GSD for having grudgingly had no choice but to make the choice they made even though he wasn’t constitutionally qualified to stand for the leadership and had done us the favour of winning us the 2011 General Election. But then he went on to Mr Feetham and said, “*Isn’t Mr Feetham going to resign if he doesn’t get us off the blacklist?*”

The hon. Gentleman cannot even get the right blacklist. The FATF blacklist is one thing; the European blacklist is another, which now only depends not on the technical work done by the Commission (that has said we should be off the blacklist), but on the vote in the European Parliament—principally by the European People’s Party. He cannot even get that right.

1065 Well, Madam Speaker, he then really, really, really got irate. Well, am I simply asking him to declare an interest when he was talking about Prior Park? Very simple. He had declared an interest in the past, and he was refusing to declare an interest now. That is to say, he had crystallised the fact that he had

an interest in those arguments, and now he refused to comply with the rules of the House to make the declaration again—which we all have to do. Straightforward thing.

1070 He even said it was disgusting, and I was bringing his family into it. I did not. I just said, “*Can you make a declaration?*”—which is the thing that the rules require. It is not me that is asking him to do something that he terms as disgusting; it is the rules. So he must think that our rules are disgusting. But that is what the rules are there for.

1075 Them saying that it is terrible to me—is it that they feel so bad about what they have done about my family and me in the past that they have wiped it from their minds? I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is praying for inspiration. It would be characteristic if he were, and I would not blame him. Better he pray than he crow, as he did on Friday about these issues.

1080 We all have families—or at least we all had families—and the pressure has been put on all of us. Or have they forgotten the videos of things that related to my family and the references to people beyond me in my family?

1085 So, Madam Speaker, because we just have a one-pager on the Treaty, he says that they cannot take a position. But they have got much more than the one-pager. Mr Sacarello said throughout that we have so much detail to assimilate and that we need it all in one place. And the other one says, “*We have no detail. I can’t take a position.*” I mean, he says, “*But anyway, we’re the largest Party in this House, and you haven’t given us any information.*” Well, only because your Leader did not ask you to come to see us on the 10th of June, when we had the latest briefing.

1090 But the thing that I found most fascinating, Madam Speaker, was that this was all then being brought towards the idea by Mr Bossino that they are united. He said, “*We are united on this side of the House.*” Well, Madam Speaker, there is not a problem in politics when people are jockeying for position in respect of a vacancy. The less edifying thing about politics, Madam Speaker, is when people are jockeying for position when there is not a vacancy—when the machinations are to create the vacancy, to push someone out, to then try and take their position. That is what brings politics into disrepute.

1095 Or has he forgotten, Madam Speaker, what he used to get up to there in the GSD? Has he forgotten the magnificent exchanges I had with the other Mr Feetham across the floor of the House, who was saying that he was being subjected to constant sabotage inside his Party—urging *the real Slim Shady to please stand up, please stand up?* As Mr Feetham said in the Hansard of the 23rd of February 2018, we all speculated about who the real Slim Shady might be, Madam Speaker. But we knew soon enough thereafter, did we not? Because by July of 2018, Mr Figueras had left the GSD and said specifically this:
1100 “*Figueras recently took the decision to sever digital links with some Members of the Party with whom he had been in close contact for the last year and a half working to deliver a change which ultimately failed to materialise.*”

1105 Mr Figueras—that is from inside the GSD—then told the much-missed *Panorama* the following: “*This group of disenchanted GSD Members whose objective was to form a new Political Party included politicians such as Damon Bossino (who subsequently re-joined the GSD) and Lawrence Llamas (who left the GSD and later re-joined it).*” United, Madam Speaker? Really?

1110 No one really believes that, Madam Speaker, because on that side there is no vacancy. But there is what there always is: division, division, division. And I am not saying that you should call the vote yet, Madam Speaker. I mean, there – that is the reality.

1115 And he gets up and he says on the Treaty, “*We will not be irresponsible like you were after the Cordoba Agreement.*” That, Madam Speaker, was not an attack on us. Let us be clear. It was not an attack on us. He was verbalising it as an attack on us, but it was not. It was an attack on the person sitting to his left—because we were criticised for taking two weeks for doing a careful analysis and coming out with a detailed view of which parts we considered were problematic with some aspects of the Cordoba Agreement.

The person who jumped out like a nervous jack-in-the-box against the Cordoba Agreement was the Hon. the now Leader of the GSD in his capacity as the Leader of the PDP. So he can really be clear that we all understood what he meant—that he is back to his old tricks. That Slim Shady is back to hitting to the left whilst facing to the front. That this was an attempt to make sure that everybody was

1120 reminded of Mr Azopardi's supposed elements about his reaction in Cordoba's response in 2006, which was purportedly putting it to us. They criticised us for taking too long to react.

Mr Azopardi, in particular of the PDP, strongly criticised the GSLP for not reacting immediately against the Cordoba Agreement. So, I thank Mr Bossino for seeking to remind the whole community of that, and in that way trying to score another point against Mr Azopardi for himself—because he is obviously back out of manoeuvres. Because there is not going to be a vacancy of the GSD soon enough, and he needs to machinate, like he was machinating back in 2018, and has not stopped machinating. Probably never will.

I mean, I look forward to being together with him at Rooke many years from now, with him machinating to be put in charge of the committee for determining whether the mashed potato is thick enough or not. Right?

He is guaranteed, Madam Speaker, after doing this job, I will not want to lead any other Committees. He is guaranteed my full support, Madam Speaker, as long as he plays me the *"Please stand up, please stand up."* And I am not wheeling out any former Chief Ministers. And anybody who knows the Hon. the Father of the House will know that any attempt to wheel him out is just going to get you run over.

I would not pretend to have a relationship with Sir Peter Caruana where I could wheel him out, and neither would I be disrespectful enough to think that I could even try to wheel out the former Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker, and Mayor of this House, Adolfo Canepa.

So, can I gently put it to the Hon. Mr Bossino that he has been hugely disrespectful to people who have achieved the high office that he craves by suggesting that they are wheelable out by me? And that he has been hugely disrespectful to the journalists that prepare *Viewpoint* and *Gibraltar Today* by suggesting that I am able to put guests on their programme? Because that is the sum total of what he has said—by suggesting that I have wheeled people out onto *Gibraltar Today* or onto *Viewpoint*. Or has he not thought that through?

He can say those things because they might sound good, but he does not think through that he is insulting three former Chief Ministers and the journalists who organise these shows by putting to me the fact that I have put them there to say what I want. In effect, that is the problem with him ever leading anything. But if he says that here—it does not matter. He gets it in the chops from me. And so, what?

Says that on international television or across a negotiating table—the equivalent of this—and Gibraltar has a huge problem, because this does not move as quickly as this with him. We get too much *"Bocinazo"* from Mr Bossino and not enough *"pensando"* from Mr Bossino.

And then he says, *"Well, where is the—where is the manure in all of this?"* Because I had said it was one manure show, another manure show.

First of all, I said it in the period of the negotiation. Everything I said during the period of the negotiation is part of the negotiation. He does not know what was going on at that time and why I was saying that publicly.

But look, he has not seen the text of the Treaty, but he has got the terms of the agreement. Mr Sacarello says there is a lot of detail—so, complete fluidity at the Frontier, removing the Frontier fence, certainty on indirect tax rates of 15%, 16%, 17%, the super, the super reduced rates, residents' permits and how they will operate, hot pursuit and how it will operate. All the issues that have been raised and I have answered.

Well, look, Madam Speaker, the good thing, the comfort that the Deputy Chief Minister and the Father of the House and all of my fellow Ministers take is that, having explained everything that we have explained, he sniffs out no manure. I mean, he spent most of this week trying to sniff out manure—and he has not sniffed any out. That is to say, everything we have said until now has not led him to see anything which he can describe as sniffing bad. Good. We agree.

But perhaps he had not thought that right there. I mean, I can see—I have known him for long enough to see on his face—that I have just landed a good one. He has just thought, *Oh my goodness, what have I said? I have just given him a free pass, that everything that has been announced until I*

spoke on Friday is acceptable because I have said that I sniff no manure in everything that has been said.

But then the fascinating thing is that he says, *“Well, we shouldn’t go to negotiate this together,”* and, *“Given that we haven’t—should you lose the next Election, you just give us all your contacts and everything will be fine.”*

I confess, Madam Speaker, he surprised even me.

So, for thirty-five years, the Deputy Chief Minister and I, together with the Father of the House and older Members, we leave our families on a Sunday in September to go to Labour Party Conference. They go to the beach, and we get on the plane at eleven o’clock in the morning on a Sunday to go to Manchester to be with the Labour Party, to go to Bournemouth to be with the Conservatives, to be with the Liberals, to be with the SNP.

We do all of that. You know, we go to Washington, we go to New York. In Opposition, we pay for it ourselves. They never get up off their derrières and pay out of their pocket to go to New York when they are not in Government. They never get out of their beds. They are little Political supermodels. You know, they do not get out of bed unless the taxpayer pays for it. You know, to go to the Labour Party Conference, to go to the Liberal Party Conference.

And now, thirty-five years of that hard work, their big idea is, *“Well, if you lose the next Election, send us all your contacts.”*

Seriously?

I mean, look, we all want the best for Gibraltar. And we need a number—call me. Yeah. But that is your politics. That is your politics. Surfing the wave that the GSLP Liberals make—that is your politics.

Because in my view, the hon. Gentleman has been well rejected by his Party on two occasions and well rejected by the people on four occasions. Because if that is your politics, that is a politics the people of Gibraltar can see straight through—and the Speaker, straight through.

And then he says, *“Well, and what are you going to do without Sir Joe?”* Once again, you are seeking to raise an issue that it might be more elegant not to raise.

Well, it is a question that I ask myself—not just what is this Party going to do without Sir Joe, what is this Nation going to do without Sir Joe?

Because the importance of the contribution that has been made by the Hon. the Father of the House, since he started giving speeches here fifty-two years ago—and before, in trade unionism and in politics and in governance, despite being constantly denigrated—is starting to be understood. But it will not be fully understood for many decades to come, when we can take a step back and we can see the Gibraltar that he got in 1988—well, indeed, in 1972—and the record that he has in that period.

So, the question that he asks—which he asked with the Party-Political flourish—is not a question for the Party. It is a question for the Nation, although he did not intend to pose it in that way.

Especially if all we are left with after the Father of the House is the quarter-of-a-million-pound, quarter-of-a-billion-pound loser. That is the reality that we have to fathom.

Look, everyone is mortal—and I am politically more mortal than most, because I am about to fall on my sword. I have asked for it to be placed so I can be about to jump on it.

But this community does have a serious issue to ponder. And then, when it ponders it, it might look back on all the things that hon. Members have said in a deprecatory fashion to Sir Joe, and ask themselves whether just that is not enough demonstration that they were not worthy to lead this community.

He accuses Mr Santos, Madam Speaker, of being obsessed with social media. Well, hang on—isn’t he actually just being transparent on social media? Showing what it is that he does?

The Leader of the Opposition also appears to be obsessed with social media. The other positions we put in little Ikea-style slides of the speeches of hon. Members for the past week.

But look—at least the Leader of the Opposition is a person going to be sociable on social media. So, suppose it works for him. For the Leader of the Opposition, social media has become like Political Tinder—it is the only place that he can connect with people.

So, the idea that we somehow are doing something which suggests that our manifestos are not contracts with the people—when all of us are on social media showing that we are delivering against our manifestos—where did they get that from?

1225 We are the ones that came up with the concept. We delivered 97% of our first manifesto. The Deputy Chief Minister has an Excel chart that tells us exactly where we are on every single one of the commitments—every single one. A contract with the people.

And on the airport, Madam Speaker, that he now says is one of the things that has enabled us to do the Treaty—what I would say to him is to go back and see what we said about the airport.

1230 We said it was too expensive—not because we made it up. We said it was too expensive because they said it was going to cost £24 million, and the Commission was going to pay for half of it. It ended up costing £84 million. The Commission paid for none of it.

How can that not be described as expensive?

The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition agreed with me—especially in 2011 in the Leaders Debate. The debate he helped me win.

1235 Our complaint was that we were building an airport before we were building a mental health facility, before we were building the homes that people needed, before we were building the children's PCC.

By all means—a new airport. But first the new dementia facility. That is what we were saying. First a new Bayside and Westside and then a new airport.

1240 But anyway, I suppose that he sees history through the jaded eyes that he sees the relationship with Knightsfield Holdings. These people were fine when they were with them, and they are terrible when they are with us.

1245 The same people doing the same thing—getting us on the front page of the *New York Times Magazine*, getting us into *The Times*, constantly getting us into *National Geographic*, getting us on to the BBC, getting us on to Netflix—and yet they are terrible people now.

Madam Speaker, let me bring out that crystal ball that Mr Clinton wonders whether I have—whether I can, whether I see what the interest rates are. Let me polish it.

The year: 2079. The GSD finally win a General Election. The Budget debate one year later: *"The excellent work done by Knightsfield Holdings..."*

1250 Come on, Madam Speaker—can they make this stuff up?

The problem they have with Knightsfield Holdings is that these are people who understand history. These are people, like the Deputy Chief Minister, who will write the history and will point out that they say that something is bad when we do it, and they say it is brilliant when they do it—the same.

1255 Too much of the Political hypocrisy of saying that what they do is right when they do it, and wrong when we do exactly the same thing.

You know, I have all the figures from the hon. Member showing how well things have been done in terms of increased tourist numbers etc., etc. It is not interesting, because what I have concluded, Madam Speaker, is that I am going to end up repeating things in this House.

1260 I am going to give the House again the figures it was given in the Budget debate, to counter what the hon. Member said—except the hon. Member should never have said it, because he had the figures which demonstrated that what he was going to say was wrong. And he said it anyway.

The privatisation of the Upper Rock, they said. Well, look, Madam Speaker, there is no privatisation of the Upper Rock—but there, you know what there is in the Upper Rock? That thing called investment which they dislike so much. That thing which they did not do for sixteen years.

1265 I think, Madam Speaker, for sixteen years there was the same *meaito de zorra* in the same place whilst they were in Government. But look—after all that, Madam Speaker, in the end at least he puts up a fight, no? He is the pugilist.

1270 There are the boxing gloves on Facebook—he puts up a fight. I guess that is why they send them to television instead of sending Mr Origo. Perish the thought that the GSD might be represented on a programme where there is a serious debate with a performer like Christian Santos—the Hon. Mr Santos—who can really stand his ground, who can defend a principle, who knows his policies, knows his numbers. Perish the thought that you send the Hon. Mr Origo, because that one we would have

won 10–0, and all hon. Members agree. I think even Mr Origo. So, I am not surprised that the Hon. Mr Bossino was praying in aid to deliver a performance on television where—at least, look—Mr Santos won by a country mile, but it was not 10–0. It was not 10–0. Just that demonstrates that somebody who has been in the House for two years can de facto wipe the floor with somebody who says he spent a lifetime in politics.

Although you can say that Madam Speaker—you can say he spent a lifetime in politics—but he cannot say he spent one day in Government.

That says it all. So, when he says that the Hon. Ms Orfila has not built one flat, it is another instance of facing this way but hitting that way. Facing this way but hitting that way.

Because who—who in this House who has been here for longer than two years—cannot build a flat in two years? Really. It is a block. Takes longer.

Who has not built a flat? Who has been in Government that is in this Chamber today for longer than two years and has not built a flat? Countdown.

He knows the answer, Madam Speaker. He only said it of Ms Orfila because he knows the answer. The only person who has been in Government for more than two years and has not built a flat—or been in a Government that has built a flat in those two years—is the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Between 1996 and 2003 the GSD did not deliver one affordable home. Not one. So, the Hon. Ms Orfila can rest assured that although the attack was ostensibly on her, what the Hon. Mr Bossino was doing was hitting out at the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

There was no more to it, Madam Speaker. This was the real Slim Shady standing up, standing up. Hitting left every time, as he does.

Hitting the left. Hitting the left. Hitting the left.

So, Madam Speaker, you know, it is almost, I have to say, intellectually bereft to have to come here to hear the hon. Gentleman say *you've said nothing about Bob Peliza Phase Two*. To come back and say how can you say that? I told Parliament that we were starting at the end of March 2025 with one of the blocks and that we were starting the second block of Phase Two in November 2025 when AquaGib move out of the final section.

We did the first one, we are on track for the second. So how can you say we have given no news to the people of Bob Peliza Phase Two? He just does not like the news, so he says we have not given it because it delivers as we said we would deliver.

So I do not understand how he can say that I behave like a far-right politician. Here I am being accused of investing too much in schools, investing too much in education, investing too much in health, overspending in paying for nurses—you know, all of those things. This is not the behaviour of the far-right, Madam Speaker.

My problem is that it is the behaviour of the far left. We are delivering across the board, investing and investing and investing. That is what they say is my problem.

Or has he failed to hear what Mr Azopardi and Mr Clinton have been saying for years now? Or is it another hit to the left? So, Madam Speaker, the fact is that we need to ask ourselves what the Opposition—what the politicians in the Opposition opposite us—want from us.

What is it that their speeches tell us that they want from us? What do they want? Less debt?

They do not want less debt from us. Neither net, nor indirect, nor gross. Do they want more homes built by us?

No. Do they want more employees in the hospital? Is that what Members opposite want from us?

No. They want to talk about that, but they do not want to pay for it. Is it more flights, Madam Speaker, more tourists, more nightclubs—or even canals, Madam Speaker?

Which the Hon. Mr Sacarello referred to, dementedly, on GBC during the General Election campaign. I will give him the *quote* in a few minutes. Is that what they want?

No. They do not want any of that from us, Madam Speaker. They do not want debt, they do not want more homes, nurses, flights, not tourists, not nightclubs.

They only want one thing from us. They are only interested in one thing in Gibraltar: our jobs.

That is what they want. The only future job strategy that they have is trying to take ours by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul—and of course, when it comes to Mr Bossino, through hyperbole.

1325 A hyperbole I did not detect when the Hon. Mr Clinton started to speak. I have to say, this year he was, for 95% of his speech, more subdued than ever—which I respect, because having demonstrated that he exposed us to a quarter of a billion of extra interest over 20 years, I would expect nothing less than for him to be a little bit more humble. Rightly so.

1330 *Un poquito cabizbajo*, Madam Speaker, as we might say in Spanish. But he kept on deliberately using gross public debt as a measure which, according to them when they were here—and it is in Hansard—makes him economically illiterate. A *quote* from Hansard.

And then this idea of the indirect debt, which the hon. Gentleman has invented, is not a concept that is known in public finance. Something which they did not report when they had debt in Government companies. There was no question then of direct and indirect debt being reported.

1335 None of that. All he wants to do is to artificially inflate the amount he says is owing, to try and scare some people. That is the reality, Madam Speaker.

To such an extent—so desperate to do it—that he included in his calculation loan notes purchased from private companies, which had been told by the Hon. Mr Bossano would be redeemed at maturity date at the last question time. But he included them nonetheless as occurring. Because he needed to make out the headline, Madam Speaker.

Mr Clinton's speech was all about the headline that he wanted: *Another year. Budget fiction obscures rising debt and unrealistic forecasts*, Clinton says.

But of course, if we had more space, we could continue: *Despite his same prediction every year since 2015 having been proved wrong*. That is the reality.

1345 So, Madam Speaker, every reinvestment of funds by the Savings Bank is, as far as his calculation goes, Government borrowing—despite that being absolutely foolish. But here he was, Madam Speaker, the greyest of the grey, the quarter-billion-pound loser, telling us how we should do things.

Thank goodness we did not do what he said we needed. Madam Speaker, at my heaviest moment in 2015 when I won the landslide, I was 110 kgs. I am now just over 80 kgs.

1350 I thought I was the biggest loser in this House, Madam Speaker. I was wrong. It is the Hon. Mr Clinton. And he comes here to pretend that he is the clever one, that he is the competent one, Madam Speaker. Seriously? I mean, if competence were a torch lit in the centre of this Parliament, he would be the gust of wind, Madam Speaker.

1355 That is the reality. That is the reality. And he said, *"I must have done something to upset the Chief Minister to deserve so much attention this year."*

Yes, exactly. Because this year, we can see how the interest rate has gone down. And I can see the effect of what you were telling us to do.

I respect hon. Members across the floor of the House. When they say something, I listen. And if they are right, I will say they are right.

1360 And if I do not think they are right, I will check. Because I do not think I am so clever that I know. I will check.

And I will tell him that I checked when he said that we needed to fix because interest rates were not going to go up. I checked. And I said, *Look, this is my view*.

And it is your view. Are you sure? And we checked and we checked again.

1365 The hon. Gentleman says it is rubbish—doubting my word. It is not rubbish.

I can bring people here to say we had those conversations because of what he said. Because actually, we respect people, Madam Speaker. And he gave that speech.

And we checked. And we thought we were right. And it had reached such a peak that we had to be right.

1370 It was not going to continue going up. But now we know, Madam Speaker. And now we can calculate.

That is what has happened to make sure that he gets all this attention—that we can calculate in pounds, shillings and pence how much extra interest he would have cost us. And that is his problem.

1375 He would have condemned us and our children to an extra spending of a quarter of a million pounds plus a quarter of a billion pounds plus over the next 20 years. That is the tale of two numbers: the

interest we paid today versus the interest we would have paid if he had won the Election, or if we had done what he recommended that we do.

1380 So, Madam Speaker, of that, £10 million would already have had to be paid. We would have been paying £10 million already of the £110 million that we would have incurred, but instead we saved. Already by now, there would have been £10 million out of the book.

So if we had paid it this year, it would have denuded the surplus to zero because of his decisions, Madam Speaker. All of that, Madam Speaker, meant that he said very little—apart from setting this up in his long and Dickensian way—he said very little of any consequence in respect of the two numbers he said this tale was about: the number for revenue, the number for expenditure.

1385 Because Sir Joe had already told the House—something which he chose to ignore—that over the period, revenue had gone up above inflation and expenditure had come in below inflation. That is a very good news story, Madam Speaker. One that he does not want to hear.

1390 So, everything that he said has to be looked at through the glare of hindsight. Because actually, if you go back now and read his speeches, you do not just find that he was wrong on interest, he was wrong about us not achieving our targets. As wrong as he was, as wrong as he was about the Savings Bank being the lender of last resort.

Does the hon. Gentleman understand the consequence of what he is saying? I fear, Madam Speaker, that he does. Because he is a banker, he knows what a lender of last resort is.

1395 A lender who is the only one who will lend to you, usually at very high interest rates. So what you could borrow at 6%, you end up going to the high street to a loan shark that will charge you 25%—or more.

A lender of last resort. That is what it means. And he has the gall to come here and say that the Government has to go to a lender of last resort.

1400 We have a competition of people wanting to lend to us, Madam Speaker. But we also have a responsibility, as the Father of the House has said, to administer the funds in the Savings Bank in the best possible way. This is not a question of a lender of last resort.

1405 Gibraltar does not need a lender of last resort. And I take great exception to anyone suggesting that the economy of this small but great nation of ours, and the public finances of this small but great nation of ours, have to rely on any lender of last resort. It is a shame that anybody should dare say that Madam Speaker.

Especially in a year with record revenue. It is true he bleats from a sedentary position. It is not true, Madam Speaker.

Or has he not seen that we have available offers of funding from banks around the world? Does he not want to understand that? Of course he does not, Madam Speaker.

1410 Why not? Because it does not play to his theme. His theme is that we are on our last legs, and that we need him to save us, Madam Speaker.

But that theme is as wrong today as it was in 2015, in 2019, and in 2023. And in fact, he would not have saved us. He would have condemned us.

1415 That is the reality, Madam Speaker. And with record revenue, Madam Speaker, with record revenue, we do not need, Madam Speaker, a lender of last resort. So, Madam Speaker, if the Minister for Financial Services, Justice and Taxation delivers a magnificent result like he delivered in revenue, look, you can describe that in many ways.

1420 But the hon. Gentleman has spent the better part of the last 10 years trying to fry our Budget books, roast the credibility, and grill our public servants in the Public Accounts Committee we will not have. So, talking about bacon today, Madam Speaker, is not going to change that we have delivered consistently. A bacon isn't burnt but perfectly cooked, Madam Speaker.

Think of having Nigel around for a barbecue. Whilst he was busy waving his frying pan, Madam Speaker, we were negotiating a Treaty, stabilising the economy post-COVID and delivering yet another Budget surplus and record revenue. He cannot accept it.

1425 It sticks in his gullet. The quarter-billion-pound loser cannot accept that we are delivering. So yes, there are overspends, Madam Speaker.

I get that. We get that. We have a job and we do it—always trying to ensure that the overspending is as low as possible.

1430 But the hon. Gentleman comes here and quotes himself. He is a bit like the Hon. Leader of the Opposition because I think what they want to do is recycle their speeches, so the easiest way to do that and not get caught out is to say *I am quoting myself*. That is to say, *I am recycling my speech*.

But he quotes himself to show that his warnings are right. I mean, I felt for a moment, Madam Speaker, that we had gone from Little Dorrit to Mrs Slocum in *Are You Being Served?* saying to us *I am unanimous in that*. Look, when we say that Government costs are demand-led, it is terrible.

1435 When Sir Peter said it, it was absolutely perfect. They say *it is like playing Russian roulette*. Sir Peter said *it is a prudent way of giving back to our community*.

I mean, I just do not understand which is the GSD position—or do I have to accept simply that they have one position in Government, one position in Opposition? That is what they call principle. And then, talking about the head which is provided for the payment of interest in the year, as if he had not learned, as if I had not talked to him enough about it, he says *rates will go down but not dramatically*.

1440 And Government estimating £10 million less in respect of interest payments is not going to be enough. Has he not burnt his fingers enough already, Madam Speaker, on that? He says we are not doing enough to repay the COVID debt.

Well, if we paid £1.5 million each year, it would take us 281 years to repay. But he knows that it is payable in a bullet at the end, Madam Speaker, that what we have to pay is 10% of surpluses—which we volunteered to do to show a discipline in repayment—which will go into a fund and that the whole amount is paid in a bullet at the end. If that was not enough, Madam Speaker, he then moved on to impugn—to impugn—the integrity of the board of the Gibraltar International Bank.

1450 That is the seriousness of what we heard in this place. He said, *“I hope that GIB are acting at arm’s length and that Political influence is not being brought to bear on GIB because we have refinanced the 75 million with them and not with NatWest”*. That is a disgraceful allegation, Madam Speaker.

No one has even raised this issue with Gibraltar International Bank. They came to us to make the offer, and yet the hon. Gentleman sits there and casts aspersions on the integrity of the people who make up the board of the bank—and he is so relaxed about it. That sort of behaviour, Madam Speaker, is in my view disgraceful behaviour.

1455 It is an affront to the board and the directors and every professional at Gibraltar International Bank. A bank that we are justly proud of, that has just matured its first decade, that is performing magnificently and operating entirely independently, Madam Speaker. What they could do, NatWest could not do because of regulatory issues in the Channel Islands.

1460 Because the Channel Islands regulations are different to the regulations in the United Kingdom and in Gibraltar, and we are aligned with the UK. Nothing to do with Political interference on anyone at the Gibraltar International Bank. We have an excellent relationship with National Westminster Bank.

We do a lot of business with National Westminster Bank. We want to do more. And with GIB, and with the Savings Bank, and with other banks.

1465 But every time the Hon. Mr Clinton gets up and talks badly of the Savings Bank, it does better, Madam Speaker. He says that the GSB is giving the Government rates below the Bank of England and below its own headline rate. So now he wants to make the argument, this year, that the GSB is going in below the rates that it should be going in at.

1470 Other years, he says, Madam Speaker, that the GSB is charging more interest than it should and that is why it has got such a good reserve. He cannot make up his mind. Which of the two is it, Madam Speaker?

1475 The reality is that the GSB is doing very well because it is run by the Hon. the Father of the House. That is the reality. That is the reality he cannot get away from because he has been trying to audition for the part of running the GSB now for I do not know how many years—ten, I think—and he has been rejected every time.

In my view, Madam Speaker, the Hon. the Father of the House will never release the Savings Bank Reserve. Good luck to anybody who tries to prise the Hon. the Father of the House’s fingers off the Savings Bank Reserve on behalf of the people of Gibraltar—because he is holding on to it on behalf of

the people of Gibraltar. But he says, “*Ah, I warn you, Sir Joe, the Chief Minister has got his eyes on the reserve because he has used it to calculate the net debt.*”

I did that calculation with Sir Joe, and Sir Joe invited me to deduct the £83million to reach the £77 million of the final net debt, Madam Speaker. So he did not have to warn Sir Joe—Sir Joe alerted me to how we should do the calculation this year to reach the £77 million, because the Savings Bank Reserve is in effect money that the Government could have by simply paying it up as a dividend, as they did every year, Madam Speaker, to leave it with a thousand pounds. That is the reality.

So, if you are going to determine what the net debt is, you should rightly calculate that, because if you had to net your debt you would use that if you had to and if you wanted to—if you made that judgement. So, there is no need to warn Sir Joe of what Sir Joe has done, I would put to the hon. Gentleman. So, it is not that he had done anything in this moment to upset me monumentally—it is not what upset me monumentally—it is the exposure to the whole of our community that I have given so much to, my children and everybody’s children, of his wrong decision on interest rates.

So, Madam Speaker, by the time he was getting to the end of his speech, he was visibly a broken man. His apparent reputation for competence in tatters. So he then moves like Widow Twankey to an Oscar Award-style ceremony with his credibility shot, and to tell us things which were as frivolous as they were vexatious.

These awards that he did, wagging his finger, puffing his chest, Madam Speaker, just like a self-proud Mr Bumble, also from Dickens. Let us be clear—let us bust the nonsense. The Hon. Minister Arias Vazquez has not busted anything except the myth that the Opposition care about health.

If he wants to cast himself, Madam Speaker, as the ghost of Budgets past, well, let him rattle his chains all on his own. It is very clear that his legacy in Hansard will read like a minor character in *Little Dorrit*—full of pomp, scant on impact. He really has become, as I predicted ten years ago, the stereotypical colonial era clerk.

Always ready with criticism but never able enough to captain the change. His speech was not *Great Expectations* despite quoting Dickens. It was more like *The Pickwick Papers*—a comedy, but only unintentionally so.

So, I say this to the hon. Gentleman: he can scribble his awards, he can rehearse his one-man monologues, he can do it all. He has got the time whilst we govern, whilst we deliver, whilst we face these realities—not with Dickensian bluster, but with resolve. This fiction was amusing but, in the end, Madam Speaker, look, he wins the award for the lifetime achievement of Political irrelevance.

Sitting there in Opposition, lecturing but never doing. Because as happens in the context of the Principal Auditor’s report, all we hear from the hon. Gentleman are complaints. I mean everything is just a huge moan from the Hon. Mr Clinton. He has become the indomitable moan man. He just keeps moaning. I think my children are going to start calling him *Moan Anna*.

Because he then moved on to accuse us of a *scandalous abuse of power*—the harshest, worst accusations. He raised the temperature.

This was no longer the comedy of the Bust-the-Budget. This was the harsh suggestion of standing in the way of accountability. Really heavy weather—raising the voice, puffing the chest, Madam Speaker.

Remarkable. I mean, how—if that were real—could you go from, you know, the sitcom of Bust-the-Budget to the scandal of a Government standing in the way of the delivery of a report, until, Madam Speaker, you put them right. Indeed, the person who put them most right was the Leader of the Opposition.

In a very useful letter that he wrote to you after the letter that you read out that you were sending to him, the Leader of the Opposition—it is a matter for him—decided to put all the correspondence in the public domain, including a follow-up letter. And in the follow-up letter, the Leader of the Opposition says this. I do not know whether he consulted Mr Clinton on it:

“*You will see from this table that the practice is clear—that it was always*” - by the GSLP—Liberals, by the way—“*always tabled at the first available Parliamentary day after the report was delivered to Parliament, except for 2019, which we consider was a breach of the practice.*”

1530 *The reason for the gap in 2015 to January 2016 was because of the intervening 2015 Election that occurred after the report had been received, as there was no Parliamentary day after receipt."*

They accept that we post the report that they complain of the day after we receive it. I confess, Madam Speaker, I do not know what happened in 2019.

1535 Those were the days of the withdrawal agreement. I think we were not in the House a lot, although the House was sitting but we were not here. I do not know what it was.

I genuinely do not know what it was. But the 2019 report did not give them much to crow about. And they had it anyway—before the Budget and before the General Election of 2019.

1540 But I accept that, for reasons that I cannot understand, I cannot remember, I cannot see, for some reason it was not tabled immediately. But every other one—the day after we get it—tabled. That is what the Leader of the Opposition said in his letter, in a very useful table that he put.

So, Madam Speaker, where is the complaint? Where is the puffed-out chest? (*Interjection*)

1545 **Madam Speaker:** I am not going to allow that comment. Well, I am going to ask the hon. Member again not to make any comments about this principal auditor reports, whether from a sedentary position or from a standing position.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker. But then he moved on to the question of mandatory scholarships, which he said were £2 million more than Budgeted. Well, what is he saying?

1550 What is he saying? That he would cut that, I suppose. Because if he is not saying that, what is the point of raising it?

So again, evidence, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman is ready—should he ever be given the purse strings—to cut in Health and in Education, and to cut scholarships across the board. To save the £2 million his complaint was spent.

1555 Otherwise, he would have to accept that he complained about something that he too would have done. Which, Madam Speaker, set us up well to deal with sloppy Mr Sacarello. *"This Budget lacks ambition"*, said Mr Sacarello. What is the ambition, Madam Speaker? His idea that we should give money to businesses so that they can better transition to the transaction tax. Well, Madam Speaker, if that is what he wants, he might want to read the *nutshell guide*, which is the polite lawyer's equivalent of the *idiot's guide*, to a thing called *State Aid*.

1560 Because if you give aid to businesses in the retail sector, in the single market, that is called state aid. And that is illegal. And that would put us in breach of the Treaty, Madam Speaker.

So he needs to be very careful what he is telling us in this place. He can say, look, in the cafeteria downstairs, or in the cafeteria that is about to open elsewhere, he can say what he likes. At Catalan Bay, he can say what he likes, Madam Speaker.

1565 But in this Parliament, he has to be very careful with what he says. Look, I am very happy to go to Catalan Bay with him and have the pint that I was said to be having, you know, the other day on television, with him. He is a lovely chap, Madam Speaker, absolutely.

1570 Grossly incompetent when it comes to the business of politics, but an absolutely lovely chap. So he and I can have a beer together, and I can explain to him why he should not be saying these things—when he should be saying, why he makes it more difficult for businesses if he says these things with the amplifier that Parliament is, that gets him, unworthy though he might be, on the front page of a newspaper with comments such as this, which are not just read in Gibraltar.

1575 Not just read in Gibraltar. Then he says that he met someone, Madam Speaker, who told him that the pension was too low for him and his wife, that it was £600, and it is terrible, it has only got that very little. It does not make any sense, because the state pension for a couple is over £800.

So the person who was talking to him has not paid the stamps, Madam Speaker. And, in any event, can get the minimum income guarantee. So, Madam Speaker, you know, I do not understand who it was that he was having the conversation with, and I hope he did remind them that if they are residents of Gibraltar, they get a quarterly £1,200.

1580 Because he does know, does he not—his Leader has explained to him, or not, just like he does not check his questions—why it is that the state pension does not go up more. I am not going to explain it here with the megaphone that is Parliament. I will explain it to him over the beer.

Okay, because he needs to think a bit more before he engages the mouth. I know that the putative Leader of the GSD, the Hon. Mr Bossino, is prone to engage tongue before brain, but I do not
1585 recommend that to Mr Sacarello as a way to continue his Political career. Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has got it so wrong on the GEA that it would take me a little while to undo how wrong he has got it.

He has wrong the number of engineers that there are there, despite having been told in answers to questions by the Hon. Minister for the Utilities what the numbers are. Again, what is the point of
1590 my putting him right now? He was put right before he made the mistake.

In other words, he had the information that would have enabled him not to make the mistake that he made when he said that there is only one person in the GEA who is a qualified engineer. So what is the point of me telling him? What is the point?

There are two. The Hon. Minister told him there were two before he spoke and got up and said
1595 there was one. I do not want to waste my time now telling him again what the numbers are.

I recommend that he go back and read what he has been told, that he read what he has been told about the number of smart metres that there are. Because he has been told—he has all this information. It is not information that we have not given him and therefore it is understandable he made the mistake.

He could only make the mistake if his politics is that, after 2023, when he is Elected, he just
1600 continues to say the things he thought or the things that he thinks, and he does not take into consideration at all the things that he is told in this House. Just like on tax, Madam Speaker. I mean, how can he get up in this Parliament and talk about underperformance in the collection of corporate taxes? How can he do that? The whole theme that they were developing is that there has been an
1605 over performance of corporate taxed that has saved our bacon. That bit was designed by Mr Clinton to catch the ear – The corporate tax that saved the bacon. Where was his ear? He has made a pig's ear of his speech, Madam Speaker, by suggesting that there was something wrong in the collection of corporate taxes.

He is the only sceptic in his Party. The owner, Mr Clinton, Mr Azopardi and Mr Bossino have all said
1610 that we've been lucky to collect too much. He is saying we are not collecting enough.

I mean, it is remarkable. And then he keeps saying that we are putting—you know—this is all because we are putting up the rate. But does he know that the rate went up last year? We will not see a penny of the additional amount for at least 18 months after it has gone up.

This is the performance at 12½%. He does not have a clue, Madam Speaker. It is not what the hon.
1615 Gentleman said, although he nervously pretends that that is what it was.

I can imagine that, having started to hear me, he wished that he could recast his speech—but he cannot. And there is this thing, Madam Speaker, called Hansard, which shows us exactly what he said. That is his problem, Madam Speaker, *El Chivatito*—that will remind us of everything that he has said, Madam Speaker.

So how can he say that the GSD vision is for a stronger economy? We have grown 20% in three
1620 years. Madam Speaker, that is—the question they should be asking is whether that is sustainable.

And if we had not had an agreement for a Treaty, would it be sustainable? And if our expenses get to that, is it sustainable? Not, *we are going to grow more*.

I mean, really? What is the hon. Gentleman saying? That with them in Government, we would be
1625 able to hold our head high.

Well, Madam Speaker, I disagree with all the things that GSD did in Government. But I was a Gibraltarian. And, apart from one particular incident where Channel 4 had cause to say that there were Gibraltarians in Gibraltar who were racist, I have always held my head up high, whoever has been in Government.

It does not require a change of Government. But do I need to persuade him to hold his head high
1630 up as a Gibraltarian when he sees the person who represents him—whether you chose him or not—

together with the British Foreign Secretary, the Spanish Foreign Secretary and the Vice President of the European Commission at that level? Is that not something to be proud of?

1635 Even though, unfortunately for him, it is me and not one of them. I do not see anyone in Gibraltar who is not proud of being a Gibraltarian, Madam Speaker. I really do not get that.

And, by the way, *the Mirage Budget* was the speech from the Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Mr Clinton, I think a year or two years ago—not this year. I know that they recycle their speeches, but he needs to know which cycle he is on, Madam Speaker.

1640 That is the problem that he had. He did not know which cycle he was on. And, frankly, for him to come here to say that the economic engine is spluttering makes no sense after I have given him the figures on revenue, and I give him the figures on the GDP, Madam Speaker.

But to then follow it up by saying that what they are going to deliver is *dynamic Leadership* leaves me with just one thing to ask him: has he met his Leader? Seriously?

1645 They were going to replace us with *dynamic Leadership*. Their attack on us has always been that we do too much and that we should do less—not that they are going to do more, Madam Speaker.

But look, let us try and see things through the Sacarello filter. Happily, on one thing that kaleidoscope of filters aligned between him and me—the thing that we can talk about over the beer if he likes—when he said that the agreement we had done with the United Kingdom and the European Union was *a landmark, a landmark moment*. I do not think he got the memo from the Leader of the Opposition to all of his Members of Parliament to say *there is nothing to see here*.

There is not a Treaty, so we are not saying anything. He at least said *it is a landmark*. Good.

1650 It is a landmark. It is not *the* landmark, but it is a landmark. Thank you for demonstrating that Mr Bossino is right when he says that you are united—because you are not. Madam Speaker, then he says that we should have achieved—we failed to achieve—no duty for imports from the UK which are not produced in the UK, which will have to pay 12% when they enter the European Union. Well, Madam Speaker, look, the TCA is a tariff-free agreement, but if goods are produced outside of the UK and taken through the UK into the EU, they have to pay the tariff. Otherwise, what you have got is the UK being the back door for the tariffs that those products would pay if they had come in directly to the EU.

1660 How can he believe that we would be able to achieve? It is not negotiable that Gibraltar should be the place where goods come from the UK to be put on the single market at a lower rate than if they go anywhere else in the EU—except that, in Gibraltar, the transaction tax that they will pay, which we have achieved, will never be lower than the lowest in the Union, but does not have to be higher. And look, hon. Members, I have to understand that I am hearing a lot of things out there which, of course, I am concerned to assist on, but there are brand names in Main Street that are making concerns about this issue plain, that operate those brand names inside the European Union, outside of Gibraltar.

I mean, for example, at a loss, he says—Madam Speaker, at a loss, at a loss—there is one branded store that operates at 21 shops in another Member State of the European Union. They would not be doing that if they were at a loss. 21 shops.

1670 So he needs to understand. He says that we have to give information with the clarity and precision of a surgeon. We have given that up to now.

We have set up an email address so that people can send us in their questions. We are preparing the answers. Well, *tax is on the up*, he says.

1675 No, tax is not on the up. Tax is where it needs to be to be at the levels that the OECD consider to be credible. If you are not there, you can slip back into a back list.

That is what is happening. Or does he think that we wanted to put corporate tax rates up? This is an obligation, in effect, Madam Speaker.

1680 Has he forgotten all of those issues, or was he simply not listening? I guess he must have, because when he told us that there are not enough professionals in the GFSC, and that what we must do is to go to more FinTech conferences and licence smaller, mobile, digital-first banks, what he is doing is guaranteeing the implosion of Gibraltar as a Finance Centre. There are serious rules about what banks get licenced in Gibraltar.

You know what, Madam Speaker? If he wants a credible, serious piece of advice on what banks can and cannot get licenced in Gibraltar—really good advice, serious advice that I would rely on—he just needs to ask the Hon. Mr Clinton. Because I am sure the Hon. Mr Clinton can tell him what the regulatory standard is.

Much better than I could. And I would take Mr Clinton’s advice in that respect. It is not digital, mobile-first banks.

That is the ruination of Gibraltar’s reputation as a Finance Centre and, by the way, the end of GAR—the end of the single market with the United Kingdom. That is what he has recommended in his speech.

That is what is sloppy Mr Sacarello, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Mr Sacarello has proposed that we lose access to the UK single market because he does not know what he is talking about. It is that dangerous.

And high-worth individuals bring philanthropy to Gibraltar as well, as we can see everywhere. We have to encourage more of them to come. Madam Speaker, we can see that everywhere in Gibraltar.

We can see that in this building. We all were treated to it the other day at the Mount. We are the ones who don’t reject philanthropy?

Does he not know that when they were in Government, they rejected philanthropy completely? And we accept philanthropy because we think it is right. And we believe that high-worth individuals who come to Gibraltar and want to engage in philanthropy are doing a positive thing.

Yeah. And so, when we took £3 million for Campion Park, they could not think of worse things to call us. They could not think of worse things to call us, Madam Speaker.

Well, Madam Speaker, we just completely disagree. In particular, with a man who comes here to say that we should be working with universities and those who are developing technologies in the renewable space. Does he not know that is exactly what we did?

Does he not know that we worked with an Israeli university to bring to the old submarine pier a tidal system of creating energy, which they criticised us for doing because they said it was experimental, which is exactly what they are now telling us to do? And does he realise, Madam Speaker, that although I agree with him that energy is a step forward from diesel, it is still a fossil fuel? They were saying we should be burning diesel all the time.

Well, I mean, he says *I did not say he is right*. He did not say he was in another Political Party. He too has gone from one to the other, Madam Speaker.

Well, look, okay. The thing he recommended to this community—the thing he said, him, not anybody else—this is not tarnished with a GSD brush when he was not there.

You know, when the Hon. Leader of the Opposition was in the PDP, and he was in Together Gibraltar, and yet Mr Bossino is still not able to rise above them and become the Leader, right? What he said on television—and I have a transcript of it—is that the way forward for us was this: *“No matter how many solar panels you put on the roofs, they are going to get covered in seagull muck, and they are not going to be the only solution. We need to create something that is different. Something like, for example, in the UK, they use canals. The temperature difference between the mass of water and the mass of the land produces...”* and Ros Astengo then stops him and says: *“canals?”*

And the transcript then continues: *“Yes, they use a voltage, we are surrounded by a water. It is not just about whether you are at wind range, but if we bring it, we bring...”* and then the transcript just says, *“Joe Bossano, laughter”*.

“No, no, of course not. But we still have—we have to—we still—we have a still body of water that, you know, just an example, I am not an expert, I am not pretending to be a scientist.” That was his sum contribution to the debate on renewables during the course of the General Election Campaign.

The Hon. the Father of the House has never been described as being cruel in his interpersonal relationships. He would not laugh in someone’s face unless he could not help it, Madam Speaker. That is the reality of what we are dealing with.

This idea that Gibraltar is suffering from low financial resilience with us—well, Madam Speaker, perhaps if the hon. Member had his way and had been elected, he would still be digging up the canals now. Mr Origo had been the most elegant last year, perhaps because he features as one of those politicians—like one of those people—who is more handsome when he is quiet, as the saying goes in

1735 Spanish – *está más guapo cuando está callado*. Because this year, Madam Speaker, he was long on words, short on content, and wrong on most, if not all, of the facts.

Madam Speaker, for me, this was not a speech; it was like a hostage situation, with each syllable begging to be released as soon as possible. He delivered it like a snail reading an obituary, Madam Speaker.

1740 I think, in the end, I saw the microphone join us in losing the will to live. At least somebody used it profitably—Mr Reyes did two tours of Never Neverland whilst the Hon. Mr Origo was speaking. I do not think he had 40 winks; I think he had about 120 winks during the Hon. Mr Origo's speech.

1745 Every syllable, Madam Speaker, was serving its sentence in the solitary confinement that Mrs Ladislaus would confine children to if we had a young offender's institution. Whoever worked on his script and on his diction deserves a prize, Madam Speaker—I congratulate them for it.

Whoever worked on his facts and arguments deserves a prison sentence, Madam Speaker, because it was completely wrong—completely wrong. "*We are failing our youth badly*. I have got a testimonial from a young person.

1750 This is not me speaking; this is somebody else. So let us puncture his hot air with something called reality: "*As a student who regularly takes part in Government-led youth initiatives such as the Connect Hub and the youth symposiums, I have seen first-hand how the Government truly supports young people—not just by giving us a voice, but by helping us grow in the process. I have seen friends secure jobs through the Connect Hub, showing the real impact it is having. We have had the opportunity to hear from leading professionals, deepening our insight into the industry.*" That is a year 12 student.

1755 We are developing Gibraltar's first-ever youth strategy with direct input from young people aged 8 to 25, NGOs, professionals, educators, careers—the voice of young people at the heart of decision-making in Government. *Not enough*.

When attendance at youth clubs is up 8.9%, the hon. Gentleman says it is negligible. I guess that is the word of the week—maybe that is why he used it.

1760 When there are youth symposiums once every six weeks, it is not enough for him—although there were none when they were in Government. And then the Careers Fair was in a Mickey Mouse format, Madam Speaker. Look, let us be clear.

1765 The only cartoonish element of the comments on the Careers Fair was him—and the way that he described it, by hurling insults at the Civil Servants who developed it, the Youth Workers who were there, ensuring that it delivered to people. I suppose this was just an attempt at cheap alliteration.

So be it. But look, this was not Disney, Madam Speaker. This was people leading in ensuring that our young people can see what the options are.

1770 That is not running things on a shoestring budget, as he said we were. But I can tell him, Madam Speaker, that shoestring budget is probably double or triple what Mr Clinton would want spent on it if they were in Government.

It is just one line—the £683,000 budget line that he referred to—because all of the other areas are already provided for. Or does he think that we do everything that we do for young people under that line? Education has nothing to do with young people? No? Health has nothing to do with young people?

1775 We do nothing for young people because we have £683,000 on youth clubs? But the big problem with Gibraltar is that we do not have enough nightlife—there are not enough discotheques in Gibraltar.

1780 The Father of the House is convinced that is the big problem with Gibraltar, yes. Except that, a few months ago, he was here complaining about the noisy Ocean Village on a Friday night and asking what we were doing to stop the noise at Ocean Village.

Well, opening new discotheques is not going to help the noise at Ocean Village on a Friday night, Madam Speaker. He had the misfortune that he made those points on the day that we all went to a magnificent party with a DJ from Ibiza in Gibraltar, and the day before we had the most magnificent wine festival that we have had for a long time, which everybody enjoyed.

1785 So this weekend was not a weekend to complain about no nightlife—or, indeed, is he sitting in a place where he should be complaining about power cuts? One power cut is one power cut too many, but they had 112 power cuts in their time in office. We have had 46.

Big difference. In our time, their power station blew up in 2013—it blew up. So, of the 46, can I please be given credit for half of them, because most of them happened within two weeks of that power cut, when I was not even in Gibraltar when it blew up? One of the things that I will always remember—Easter Sunday 2013.

The 60% drop in power cuts—how can you sit there and talk about power cuts? And in terms of what we have not achieved—equilibrium on the beaches—well, look, Madam Speaker, it is in the contract that his firm negotiated that we have a guarantee of beach equilibrium.

1795 So, I do not know what it is that he is talking about. But look, given that he wants less noise but more nightclubs, maybe what he wants is a silent disco. Maybe we could have a silent disco with the *real Slim Shady* giving us the music on our headphones.

Maybe that would be the world in which Mr Origo would like us to live—a world in which he says there is too much dust, Madam Speaker, but not enough development. So, which is it? Do we want more dust and more development, or less dust and less development?

1800 They cannot have it both ways—you cannot have noise and discos, Madam Speaker. So, the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that just about everything that he said was really remarkable by how vacuous it was.

I mean, when the Hon. the Minister for Health talks to this House about her lived experience, she is talking about the problems she had with a very premature birth for her child. When the Hon. Mr Origo talks to us about his lived experience, it is about his problem waiting for a taxi. And then he tells us what an excellent treatment he has had at the hands of the consultants of the GHA.

1810 Maybe he might like to tell Mrs Ladislaus, who keeps telling us that the service is lousy—and they are sitting next to each other. Well, Madam Speaker, look, everything he then said about tourism has to be seen through that filter.

Again, I have all of the numbers here that show that what he said was wrong. But why should I give him the numbers? We have already given the numbers in our main speeches.

I should not entertain the House by going through the numbers again and saying he got this wrong, he got this right. But when he says that we are not promoting Gibraltar, Madam Speaker—well, tourist expenditure is up 7.1%, cruise calls are up 10% in 2024 and are projected 30% up in 2025. That is a 40% increase in 24 months.

Cruise arrivals are 9.7% up. He calls this stagnation. He says there is absolutely no promotion of Gibraltar.

1820 Does he not have one of those things—one of those things—called a television, Madam Speaker? Has he not seen *Where the Med Begins*, which reached 18 million adults on UK primetime advertising? Visit Gibraltar social media has 1,500% more engagement.

We have been featured in two Channel 4 primetime travel programmes, in the *Scuba Diver* magazine and across the UK press. We have hosted the CLIA Destinations Showcase. We have welcomed over 60 travel agents and executives.

1825 This is not spin, Madam Speaker. But I guess that he heard it from Mr Santos and he does not have the Parliamentary dexterity to be able to deal with the issue and change the words that have been prepared for him. Look, I understand that.

1830 Maybe in the future he might mature into being able to do it in a different way. But let us be clear—he does not want to inform; he wants to mislead; he wants to misinform. And in this House, we deal in policy, not in pantomime.

So, I really do recommend to him, Madam Speaker, that he work a little harder and get the facts right and then criticise the facts, and tell us that we are not doing it right for whatever reason he might wish to—about the facts. But not the non-facts, Madam Speaker, because that is not the way to do it. Especially when it comes to arrivals in the Upper Rock and the Museum, and the excellent work being done at Gorham's Cave.

You know, frankly, Madam Speaker, there was very little here that anybody who is not close to him would not quietly tell him demonstrated that he obviously had not done his best. If I was preparing him for a career in politics and he had brought me this speech, I would not have marked it at all. I would have given it back to him and said, *Giovanni, this is really not your best work. Go back and start again.*

How can you say that there are fewer green areas in Gibraltar? The Gibraltar in which we were elected had no Commonwealth Park; it had no Campion Park. Now we have all of those, the flourishing Alameda Gardens, and a hundred new trees planted just last year. The problem with the Hon. Minister for the Environment is that he will plant a tree wherever he can, Madam Speaker, not that he is not planting enough trees. The nature reserve has increased by 35% in size.

There are Barbary partridges everywhere—you run them over with a bicycle these days, you do not need to catch them with shot. And that is enough for him to surmise that we have no plan for the environment and no plan for transport, Madam Speaker—despite electric car registrations having gone up 44% and probably going up 135% this year against 2021; the registration of hybrid vehicles being up 72%; and, at the same time, the registration of diesel cars at 60% of what it was in 2021, and petrol cars at 50% of what they were in that same year.

But he just wanted to attack—so the facts did not matter. Look, it might feel good when you are delivering it, but if these facts are there, give a different speech so that you do not have to be embarrassed by being shown that the stuff you said was objective nonsense.

I mean, the idea that we have no coherent plan for the sewage system, when the Minister for the Environment has hosted Mr Sacarello here, explained to him the plan—which is a recovery plan after 16 years of no investment when they were in Government, and we have invested a million each year where they invested about a hundred thousand or thereabouts each year. We have given the figures already. How can you come here to talk about that? Look, if you do not have to talk about sewage—do not.

Talk about something sexier, because people do not want to listen to you when you are talking about sewage. That is the reality.

What I should say to the hon. Gentleman—because he is sitting in the wrong Party, although I will gently remind him now across the House that he is still a Member of the GSLP. He has never resigned. He might just be keeping his options open.

We do not have a problem with dual nationality. What I would say to him is: could he please, if he is going to continue in this vein, stay there? Because he is going to be a huge electoral asset as we go through all the nonsense he has said in this House two years from now in the General Election campaign and show people what they are paying for. Show people that they are giving £35,000 to somebody who cannot get his figures right.

It will be very good at Election time.

Mrs Ladislaus, as she knows, I consider to be more serious in her approach—but not when she goes into the area of pretending to be someone that she is not. I mean, of all the time that I have known her and respected her as I do, I have never seen her as somebody who would be out on the streets shouting, right?

It is not her style. It might be her heart and her passion, as it is mine and all of us—that is why we are here in this place.

But it is not her style to say that she is here to represent *El Pueblo*. Very good. That is very good. We agree. But then why is she sitting with the Party that represents *El Yacht Club*, Madam Speaker? If you want to be with the people, do not sit with the people who represent the elite.

That is the reality. That is the reality.

To end up with a headline in the local newspaper that says, *Government has stifled progression, improvements and innovation within the GHA*, Ladislaus says. Well, it is a very good headline, Madam Speaker, because it effectively reflects what the hon. Lady said—and, of the two speeches which were worth reporting, puts that across the banner. And on the top left puts *time to go, Bossino tells Chief Minister*—once again properly relegating the Hon. Mr Bossino to where he should be, number two, to Mrs Ladislaus's proper headline.

Except, of course, that there is nothing true in the headline. The problem that we have, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, according to them, is that we are spending too much on Health because she is doing too much. She has introduced too many new services.

Did she not get the memo from their public finance guru that we should not be encouraging more spending? Perhaps he might yank her out of one of those demonstrations where she is marching for more money, and pull her back into an interview where she says—as she honestly says, as I think she always speaks, because I think she always speaks honestly—that she would not necessarily give the 10% pay rise that people are asking for. That is the reality.

That is her position. That is their position. So, Madam Speaker, the one thing I did not think was befitting the seriousness that she usually brings to debate was the idea that she would then do placard politics here.

Just read to us all of the placards that a Union took to a demonstration, as if that were politics. Look, that is the position of the Union. I respect it. I am a Member of that Union, Madam Speaker. The Union is there to fight for its workers, and it takes its cue from its Members, right?

It does not mean that—objectively looked at, as you have to look at it here in this House as a Member of this Parliament—this is a reality. We together have to take a different approach, Madam Speaker.

People calling for parity who are on more than their parity equivalents in the UK are not calling for parity in keeping with the parity agreements—they want the same as somebody who is sitting next to them doing something similar. That is different. That is not parity; that is a pay review, Madam Speaker.

That is what they are asking for. Nothing wrong with a pay review, but it is not parity. And nobody here is straying from what democracy means.

But I at least welcome that she believes that whistle-blowers are a good thing. We believe that whistle-blowers are a good thing. They did not—except perhaps for one, Madam Speaker—who does not have oversight of what is happening in the Government accounts. This is the time to do the exercise.

But what I found difficult to understand, Madam Speaker, from somebody who I continue to take seriously, is that she should say that there is an issue with a number of nurses. She represents the GSD: 389.5 nurses in 2011–12; today, 544.5 nurses. That is 193 additional nurses—and that is what we are being told is costing too much. That is what they want to cut. That is the reality.

So, look, I welcome that she says that she loves her role, because despite the respect I have for her, I think she is going to be doing it for many years in Opposition. Because if she is going to continue to make the argument that there is Political overreach at the GHA, when the Union's complaint is that the Minister would not engage with them on a particular issue—and what they want is Political overreach—you know, frankly, I think they need to get their act together.

And on Mental Health, Madam Speaker, it hurts us on this side of the House—especially those of us who visited KGV in December 2011—to have to hear that anybody thinks that we are not doing much better than them when it came to Mental Health. The police, that used to take £10 million from this Appropriation when they were in Government, now take £18 million from us. There are more police officers. We have also recruited 17 in May '24, and 20 this year. We have recruited more people in the ECU for civilian posts, and civilianised 15 posts in the police.

The numbers of personnel resources available to the police are much higher than they ever were. I welcome Owain Richards to Gibraltar; I think he is going to do an excellent job in maximising those resources. But if we had a Young Offenders Institute—which we have been advised not to have—the cost would be disproportionate, and if we ever had just one, that young offender would, in effect, be in solitary confinement. That is the reality.

And if there is not a drug squad, it is not because we decided there should not be a drug squad—it is because the police decided there should not be a drug squad.

I turn now, Madam Speaker, to deal finally with the contribution of the Hon. Mr Rumpelstiltskin, the Hon. Mr Reyes—because Mr Reyes really did feel like Rumpelstiltskin. He spent most of the Budget debate snoozing. I can understand it. I understand why. Their speeches were very boring.

1940 But when he comes here to tell us that he supports all of the associations getting the international recognition, he enjoys the full support of the House. But what we have to remind them of is that once you get that international recognition, they can count on us—but not on them—because they are now saying they would not help the GFA at all. A surprising position for them to take, Madam Speaker.

1945 Because although we have said there is going to be no taxpayers' money involved in the development of the stadium where Victoria Stadium is, they, in their manifesto of 2015, had the stadium they were going to build for the GFA at the Victoria Stadium. And now they keep saying, *ah, but you said no taxpayers' money, ah, you said no taxpayers' money*. And there will be no taxpayers' money.

1950 But with them, at one point, it was all about taxpayers' money for building the stadium. So which is it, Madam Speaker? I do not understand.

I mean, the old mantra that he then wheeled out in respect of education was simply to say, *talk to the teachers in the classroom*—something that the Hon. Minister for Education spends a long time doing. But we have invested in both the fabric of education in Gibraltar—in the schools—and the people in education, in the teachers and the learning support assistants, etc., etc.

1955 We continue to invest in them. We have serious discussions about how to improve their lot, how to assist them more. We now have a system of education in school which, I think I can rightly say, gives pupils who need it even more than they would get in the United Kingdom, by far.

1960 And that is all I need to say, Madam Speaker, in respect of the Hon. Minister for Education's contribution—because he did not say much at all. But the reality, Madam Speaker, in the end, is that hon. Members' arguments are, in respect of them going against this Bill, about as useful as a marzipan hammer.

They have the Political credibility of a snowball describing itself as natural in August in Seville. They did not succeed in 2015 when they said we were going to blow up Gibraltar. They did not succeed when they said that we were going to bankrupt Gibraltar.

1965 And they did not succeed when they said that our Treaty on tax was treachery. They were wrong about Andorra. When the Party started, they were wrong about the Brussels Agreement of 1984. And when the Party more or less ended, they were wrong about the Cordoba Agreement of 2006. Andorra, Brussels, Cordoba—ABC. Azopardi, Bossino, Clinton—ABC.

1970 The ABC of the GSD have been wrong about the ABC of Gibraltar politics from the beginning. All they want to do is to be negative—an ABC of boys who cry wolf and who, in Political terms, are really no more than a pack of wolves trying to come and take down the GSLP Liberal Government.

They campaign, Madam Speaker, in General Elections like they do here in respect of this Bill, to give people reasons to vote against us. We campaign, Madam Speaker, to give people reasons to vote for us. They are the Party of the negative.

1975 We are the Party of the positive. It is one thing, Madam Speaker, to sit there and say things; it is quite another to come here to do things. They say we do. And, Madam Speaker, after 52 speeches in Budget debates, when the Father of the House spoke, not even Edwin Reyes closed his eyes—that is how well he does.

1980 His GDP estimates have been right, despite the naysayers on the other side. And Mr Clinton—the Hon. Mr Roy Clinton—for 10 years has been here saying that the Father of the House was wrong. And now we can demonstrate just how wrong he was himself on interest rates.

1985 Madam Speaker, we know that Lee Majors was *the six million dollar man*. Now we know that Roy Clinton—the Hon. Mr Roy Clinton—is *the quarter billion dollar loser*. Madam Speaker, this Budget is not just an Appropriation—it is a declaration that no matter the size of our territory, the strength of our people will never be measured in miles, but in spirit.

Together, as a people, we have walked through the fire of Brexit. Together we faced down Political storms and tempests, and still we achieved. But we are not finished. We are not busted. We are not bending. We are building brick by brick, policy by policy, dream by determined dream.

1990 And that is what these figures will deliver—numbers that will build another part of our collective future as a people, despite their threat to vote it all down. Because in the end, Madam Speaker, all's

well that ends well. And with our votes here today, Gibraltar will have this Appropriation. We will have this Budget.

Our people will be paid their salaries. Our pensioners will be paid their pensions. Our disabled will be paid their benefits—thanks only to GSLP Liberal votes in this Parliament. Because Madam Speaker, despite everything that we have heard here, the reality is that the fortress is secure, and all's well. And I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam 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 2026, be read a second time. Those in favour?

Hon. Chief Minister: Call division, Madam Speaker.

A division was called for and voting resulted as follows:

FOR

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez
Hon. J J Bossano
Hon. L M Bruzon
Hon. Prof J E Cortes
Hon. N Feetham
Hon. J J Garcia
Hon. P A Orfila
Hon. F R Picardo
Hon. C P Santos

AGAINST

Hon. Dr K Azopardi
Hon. D J Bossino
Hon. R M Clinton
Hon. J Ladislaus
Hon. G Origo
Hon. E J Reyes
Hon. C A Sacarello

ABSENT

Hon. A Sanchez

Madam Speaker: All right, there are seven noes, there are nine ayes. The ayes have it. The question is carried.

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I now move that the House should adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. when it is the Government's intention to continue with Bills and then move on to Committee Stage.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. I now put the question which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2.15 p.m.