



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.01 p.m. – 10.46 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 21st January 2026

Contents

Order of the Day	2
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS	2
Madam Speaker: Would any other hon. Member wish to speak? The Hon. Mr Bossino.	2
BILLS.....	13
FIRST AND SECOND READING.....	13
The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 – First Reading Approved.....	13
The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 – Second Reading Approved	13
The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.– First Reading Approved	15
The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.– Second Reading Approved.....	15
The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 – First Reading Approved	16
The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 – Second Reading Approved	16
COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING	18
The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 – Clauses considered and approved	18
The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025 – Clauses considered and approved	18
The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 – Clauses considered and approved	18
The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 ; The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025; The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026;.....	19
Third Reading approved; Bills passed	19
PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTION	19

The House recessed at 5.47 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6.30 p.m...... 35
The House recessed at 9.47 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 9.59 p.m...... 72
ADJOURNEMENT..... 80
The House adjourned Sine Die at 10.46 p.m. 80

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.01 p.m.

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

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

Order of the Day

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Madam Speaker: Would any other hon. Member wish to speak? The Hon. Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I rise to make a contribution, but I see that the mover of the motion is not here to listen to my lecture.

5 **Madam Speaker:** I believe he's on his way up, but I did not want to delay the start of Parliament, so I would... Now is your chance, Mr Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: No, no, that is fine, that is fine. it is just that I thought that, in deference to him, it may be unfair if he's not here, but I stand by your direction and instruction.

10 **Madam Speaker:** It has just been confirmed to me that he has just arrived. No, please do not sit, for any reason.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am more than happy to do so. I am more than happy to do so. So, actually, yesterday, when I was given a lift by my...

Madam Speaker: Have we established that the hon. Member is not filibustering, because if we have not, I would rather sit in the pleasure of silence for a minute, and then we can have...

15 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And contemplate spiritually all the stuff that we have been hearing over the last 24 hours. But I was given a lift by my hon. Friend, Mr Clinton, yesterday, accompanied by my hon. Friend, Mr Sacarello. And on the airwaves, GBC, we were hearing Boogie Wonderland, from Earth, Wind & Fire, I was told, it is a 1979 single.

20 it is very rhythmic, and I was already moving and shaking my hips. But I thought, actually, it is very appropriate, given the references that we have had to Alice in Wonderland, and indeed, I think it represents everything that we have heard from the other side of the House in relation to this very serious issue. We have heard the Hon., the mover of the motion, Sir Joe Bossano, saying yesterday that there had been a waste of 8 million taxpayers' money, which is quite remarkable, and he basically pursues that point during the course of his intervention today, when he says, if
25 the whistleblower statements were known, then perhaps the Inquiry would not have happened.

But the reality is that the Inquiry did happen. There was, as we have said now, *ad nauseam* inside of this House and outside of it, a thorough investigation of all the facts and all the evidence. And we have had a report.

30 Indeed, the Inquiry was commissioned by them. It was commissioned by them. And this is not just one, this is one, rather, of the many contradictory statements that we have had across the floor of the House in relation to this issue.

But in the context of that Inquiry, it was also ruled as irrelevant for the purposes of the Inquiry which the Chairman was commissioned to undertake. The whistleblower statements, as my learned and hon. Friend, the Leader of the Opposition, has taken this House through during the
35 course of his intervention this morning, and he referred to the various excerpts of the Report, the very extensive and lengthy report. And what this is, let us be absolutely clear, what we have heard the Hon. Chief Minister and the Hon. Minister for Inward Investment say today, is nothing other than an attempt at diversion, of pursuing their narrative, which is to obfuscate, to confuse and to introduce issues which are wholly and utterly irrelevant, as far as we are concerned, to the political
40 issue at the moment. The report cannot be described in any other way than a political earthquake, which, as we said in the course of our interventions yesterday, should have had only one result, which is the resignation of the Leader of the House.

This is beyond prevention, and this is absolutely clear, and should have been, and ought to have been, the result of this report's findings. But they continue with their narrative, they continue
45 with the mudding of the waters. And what they seek to do is basically to reopen certain issues.

That is what the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano has done during the course of his intervention. He tried to do it yesterday, but he was very ably and properly and accurately stopped by the Leader of the Opposition, because it was irrelevant to yesterday's Noting Motion. Now what they have done is, they have used the ability that they have, without very much notice, to present the motion that
50 they have done, and they are introducing these irrelevant considerations.

But irrelevant they remain. Irrelevant they remain. And what they are seeking to do is to re-litigate one of the discrete issues, which was determined by the Inquiry Chairman, at a price tag of £8 million of taxpayers' money.

55 We cannot get away from that. But here we are now, a month or two, and now I have lost track of time, since the Report was delivered in early November to the Government, and since we had the publication on the 23rd of December, now we have the re-introduction of one of the issues. Why?

60 Once again, they want to muddy the waters, and they want to protect their position, so that they have some political sympathy out there in the streets, which they are not going to have, because people are seeing right through them, just as the Chairman saw right through the evidence of the Hon. Chief Minister. He was not having it. And the people of Gibraltar, and the public out there, are not going to have it. They are seeing right through them.

65 And, you know, all of this crude attempt at diversion, as I said, it begs the fundamental question. The Hon. Chief Minister, and indeed the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, do point out what on their face, and I emphasise on their face, look like very serious issues.

70 Indeed, we share that across the floor of the House. I think there can be consensus in relation to that. We have heard these things for the first time, and they do sound very serious indeed, that there should have been that level of intervention from the hierarchy of the RGP, in respect of police officers that he refers to, some of them who have been police officers for many, many years.

But if they are so serious, why is it, and I do not think that the Chief Minister, with the greatest of respect to him, answered the point fully or effectively or substantively, why is it that they did not take action at the time? Why is it? Why do they raise it today?

75 They raise it today, we say, because it is convenient for them, in order to pursue their narrative, to raise it today. And during the course of his intervention, the Chief Minister, in his usual way, uses emotional language, pulls those emotional strings, to make people, to sack people in, he refers to the letter in the Chronicle today, and absolutely that was a very serious allegations which were made in that letter, I also do not know the author of the letter, I also do not know the
80 circumstances which gave rise to the production of that letter at all, but yes they are on their face, very serious, but let us not forget, given that we are so battle hardened perhaps, on this side of the House, that we treat everything he says with cynicism, he may genuinely feel the things that he was saying, but actually we almost cannot accept it from him, even when he pulls the emotional strings. Yesterday we heard it again, but we have heard it before outside of this House, when the
85 Hon. Chief Minister talks about, let us not look back, let us not look at the rear view mirror, let us not look back six years, yet here, during the course of the interventions, we are being asked to look at incidents which were from 2015, and I think, I do not think he mentioned it today, but during his intervention yesterday, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano was talking about an incident I think 20 or 25 years ago, and he confirms that from a sedentary position, so it is okay, it is fine to go
90 back 20 years, to go back 18 years, but it is not okay to go back six years, because that denigrates the Chief Minister. So we very quickly see what is happening here, and it is now not really just a question of the Opposition not being fooled, which we are not, because it is a palpable cynical attempt they are trying to pursue, but actually we say that the people of Gibraltar are not being
95 fooled, and what they are relying on, is as the Deputy Chief Minister said during the course of his intervention yesterday, is simply relying on the mandate that they received two and a bit years ago now.

But why raise these issues now? They are revisiting stuff, a similar criticism, which was in effect levelled against the Chief Minister during the course of the Openshaw Report, when he does the very thorough analysis I referred to, about all the various incidents, whether the incident at sea, the incident at the airport, the recovery of the devices, all of that was brought before him, all of
100 that was analysed by him in a lot of detail, and then basically what he says is, actually we know what the real reasons are, the real reason is Operation Delhi, and the Hon. Chief Minister's attempt to assist, inappropriately, his friend and mentor. In a nutshell, that is what it is about, and what they are seeking to do here is exactly the same tactic. I mean, the hon. Gentlemen and Ladies opposite are simply incorrigible.

105 They are predictable, but they are incorrigible at the same time, and as I said yesterday, and I keep on saying it again, we are shocked that we are shocked, because it ought to have been predictable that they were going to be doing this, but it was not, because I thought, let us make a reference once again to the moral compass, that as a result of the very severe findings made by this retired judge, that there was only one possible result, political result to that.

110 But here we are again being treated to this attempt at confusing. And what does this remind us of? I will tell hon. Members what this reminds us of.

This is Principal Auditor Mark Two, with some nuances and some differences of approach. It is Principal Auditor Mark Two. Thankfully, it is not taking that long, and we hope that we will be able to conclude this motion during the course of today, and not spend six, seven weeks debating it.

115 But this is Principal Auditor Mark Two. The other difference is that the attack, as I said yesterday, is not against the author of the report, it is not against Sir Peter Openshaw. The direct attack is on Ian McGrail, this is what this amounts to.

Sir Joe Bossano says yes. But what other similarity is there in that context? The other similarity is, and quite frankly, quite unfairly, is that Ian McGrail is not here to defend himself. Just as Tony Sacramento was not here to defend his report. One was the author of the report.
120

On this occasion, he is not the author of the report. He is, by and large, I suppose, the complainant, one could put it in those terms. But he is being attacked.

Why? He's the one who brought this about, although, ultimately, it was their decision to commission this Inquiry. Because they could have adopted a different view.

125 They could have said, let us not have the Inquiry. But the Hon. Chief Minister and they were so convinced that they were going to be able to win, that they said, OK, let us have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It so happens that this is a truth which is an inconvenient truth.

130 So, what I do is I now invent, well, another truth. Let us call it another truth. Because, you know, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano made a reference to, I think, thugs.

And I think it was in the context of one of the complaints. I am not sure it was a stolen car. And he made a reference to thugs.

This is a political thuggery in the extreme. The use and abuse of power and of the process and procedures and of this Parliament. This is what this is.

135 This is not a court of law. We may be presided by a retired judge and many of us may be lawyers, but this is not a court of law. This is a political Chamber, and they are using it in order to make their case in the courts of public opinion because they think they are going to get away with it but they are not. This is political, thuggish behaviour on their part.

140 The timing, as I said before, this motion simply cannot be ignored. It simply cannot be ignored. The Hon. Chief Minister talked about wrongly interpreting, wrongly quoting what the Hon. Leader of the Opposition said during the course of his own intervention, which is that we are scared of transparency.

145 That somehow, we tried, as a result of the procedural point that was raised as to relevancy yesterday, we tried to block the production of these statements. Actually, what came out of the Leader of the Opposition earlier was the complete opposite. What he was saying and what we say now, why did not you investigate earlier?

150 Why do not you investigate? These things need to be pursued and then let us see what happens. But these things quite properly need to be pursued because on the face they are very serious allegations and it is totally and utterly unacceptable that people in positions of power should behave that way.

But that is what the Leader of the Opposition said. Contrary to the characterisation and the representation made by the Hon. Chief Minister as to what he had said, he did not say that. He said the complete opposite.

155 Go ahead and investigate. We are not scared of transparency. What we are shocked by is that this has been revealed now and nothing has been done about it.

That is the reality of our position. We have heard comments about a bloodless coup. So, we have now had two occasions in the intervention of the Deputy Chief Minister, both in this motion and in relation to the Principal Auditor's Motion, he complains about the use of language.

160 How about or what value judgement does he arrive at in respect of the word's bloodless coup, that there was an attempt to execute a bloodless coup in order to prevent them from winning the last Election in October and the Minister for Environment is saying yes. But that is what happened. I mean, this is shocking.

Shocking. Does not that have a reputational effect on this place? Or is it okay if it comes from them?

165 That Gibraltar is a jurisdiction which is capable, ala Banana Republic, to execute a bloodless coup through chicanery by the RGP and arresting the person who was procuring these statements All of that. I mean, really. Really.

170 This should be sending shivers, but I am sure they are not, down the Minister for Justice's spine who also has responsibility for Financial Services and we see him, you know, trotting the globe certainly in the UK in order to defend Gibraltar's economy as he puts it. But I will not go into that now. I will not go into that now.

A bloodless coup. He then makes an allusion in that context to the dirty war I make no value judgement as to what is happening in Spain. that is a matter for the Kingdom of Spain and how they do their politics.

175 A dirty war that he says is being affected on the left in Spain. And I know what he's referring to. This is what caused Pedro Sanchez, the Prime Minister of Spain, last year to announce his, not resignation, but his contemplation, at least, of a resignation for three or four days where he had the entire nation on tenterhooks as to whether he was going to resign or not.

180 Because there was an attack on him, his Ministers, and indeed his wife judicially and procedurally and prosecutorially. But I make no judgement about that. I may have my views about that.

But he tries to associate himself, with that. With the left in Spain. By saying that, you know, it was a dirty war which was affected on him, presumably, as he coins a phrase, the Wagner Group.

185 This is nothing other, once again, than victimhood and as I told you in the course of the Principal Auditor's Report debate with characteristics typical of narcissism. When you say, the world is against me. I am the victim.

190 When we cannot forget that the base underlying cause of all of this, the base underlying cause, reason why we are here today, once again, debating this issue with a particular focus on him but also on the rest of them is because of the way that he behaved insofar as this Inquiry Report is concerned. That is why we are here. That is why we are here.

And that is an indictment on him. He then, I think, refers to us relying on tittle-tattle for goodness sakes. I mean, talk about characterisation which is completely and utterly baseless.

Tittle-tattle. These are reports, serious report findings. That is what was quoted by the Leader of the Opposition very carefully.

195 Word for word. Not an invention on his part. Not an invention on our part.

It is not our fault that very serious language was used much to the chagrin of the Deputy Chief Minister. It is not us. It is the Inquiry Chairman who says it.

200 So that is not tittle-tattle. We are relying on findings, not even evidence, on findings. What they are trying to do is rely on now recently produced evidence by employees of the RGP under the guise of protection of a privileged disclosure, protected disclosure under the Employment Act which they introduced.

We are saying is why now and why no investigation in relation to these things. And also, it is very clearly that this is simply a cynical attempt to change the narrative. He says that we do not scare anyone.

205 I mean for goodness, anybody listening to him spout those words must have been laughing their heads off because it is so serious that one almost wants to cry when one hears these things. But one needs to laugh, as we say very often in Spanish. Because nobody believes that.

That nobody is scared of them. And he represents this image of a benign Government. He could not be further away from the truth.

210 But as I said yesterday, I am worried that he is believing all these things, of him and of them. We do not scare anyone, he says. And then, you know, as is what they normally do, they have no compunction in making references to people outside of this House.

215 We had it yesterday, we had it again today. Some of those individuals have had a repeat mention where the Hon. Chief Minister seems to have, once again, no compunction in making references to conversations, whether they are true or not. Quite frankly, I do not care.

220 But he does it to attack their personalities. He does it to denigrate the individual. He does it to attack their character because that is what they are about. I mean, I am not sure whether you see these things in any other Parliament within the Commonwealth. This level of attack, it is, you know, I would like to think, well, let me say it more confidently, I will say that if we are on that side of the House, we will not do that because instinctively, we are simply not like that as individuals. We will have a different approach but they are like that.

They are like that. And the revelation of what ought to be on any analysis is very clear. Of private conversations, by him, you know, one needs to have.

225 Now, I tell the public at large, be very careful what you discuss with this gentleman and maybe with some of the others. I do not know. Because you never know when you may find yourself referred to in Parliament or elsewhere.

Be very careful. Keep very careful. Well, and as my hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition says, and perhaps inaccurately, I do not know, in respect of that individual, we have not spoken to him.

230 But he does that. we have had a reference to him. We have had a reference with this obsession with James Gaggero.

Yes, well, he laughs, Sir Joe Bossano laughs. He has an utter obsession with the man and once again, it is very unfair.

235 It is very unfair. They can use the privilege of this House to throw splatter mud on whoever they wish, make allegations. Actually, I will tell you now, they are inaccurate because, you know, and paint a picture of, you know, an establishment which has the power to influence the police. And this is really what this brought all this about. This is a narrative of some individuals and sectors of society, but I dare say, it is a very small sector of society who believes that. You know? But, you know, he is obsessed with James Gaggero.

240 But the reality is, as I think I have said during the course of the Budget address, there is a new elite in Gibraltar. And it is not represented by James Gaggero. it is represented by the interests that there are, which is interested in ensuring that they remain in Office.

They should have no fear with us. Let me tell you, because we will treat everybody fairly. And we will listen to cases, and we will listen to them.

245 I have no problem with that. At the end of the day, we are all Gibraltarians. But there is a new elite to this painting of a picture that somehow, this was the old guard in Gibraltar wanting to influence a police investigation because he, I mean, that is quite frankly, that to come to have been referred to with the greatest of respect to the hon. Gentleman who is been in this House for as long as I have been on this planet, to hear him say that is actually very sad and disappointing indeed. But actually, I will give him this. I know why he is doing so because, once again, it is the painting of a narrative.

He talks about in that context, you know, deferential treatment. Deferential treatment that James Gaggero received because he had that meeting. Or that there is deferential treatment towards the higher echelons of the RGP because they have the power.

255 I do not know. I mean, I ask him this because I have my doubts. Has the Hon. Minister for Inward Investment, actually read the report from cover to cover?

Has he done so? Because it is possible one, that he has not, or two, that he has interpreted the very clear and obvious words in a completely different way. And I know that he is very fond of analysing things, of looking at things as he would say objectively and logically.

260 This is what has been his message although I say highly partisan when he does come to certain conclusions and certain views of life. That has been his political message throughout. Logicity and analysis and look at the documents, look at everything.

Look at source documents, do not rely on what people tell you. I hope that he has read the report. Because if he has read the report, given that I, you know, I have the, you know, respect certainly for his intellect, certainly for his tenacity, that he would have come to the conclusion, which is the only possible conclusion to arrive at.

270 That there was, you know, not just severe criticism of the Chief Minister, not just that the severe criticism was focused on him, not just those things, but actually that the basis on which those findings were arrived at, and indeed the basis on which he makes the first recommendation, which is to deal and address the issue of conflict of interest, is because somebody else was, there was an attempt to give preferential treatment to somebody else.

275 So, you know, for him to then, in that context, to rise and say, you know, hands on heart, that there was deferential treatment to James Gaggero is quite frankly, you know, preposterous. I think there was a reference, saying it and articulating here from this side of the House, you realise how ridiculous it is, the whole point about the findings were born from Operation Delhi. Those are the findings.

Those are the findings as they stand. But going back to the point about making references to other people, the Hon. Chief Minister could not help himself and he attacks, he attacks and uses as if it was the same thing, TSN all the time.

280 You know, I am told, because we are not aware, but I am told that it was in fact Sir Peter Caruana, his lawyer, during the course of the Inquiry was acting for Blands on the entire question of 36 North and during the Delhi Investigation. It was not us. And I do not say that in a defensive way, I am just saying to set out a neutral historical fact, but of course that does not suit his narrative.

285 It is not even a question of narrative, actually this is simply an attempt to slur anybody, anybody that crosses his way with his, you know, their scattergun approach and the mad and the manure, apparently that is parliamentary language, it has to be thrown wherever. And if it gets splattered, so be it, because I am saying it from here, I am saying it from a position of power. Now tell me, tell me if that is not an abuse of power, for goodness sakes.

290 Tell me if he simply does not understand that there are lines to be drawn. He has confirmed in the course of his interventions that he does not see the lines; he does not see the lines. And that is the reality.

So, Madam Speaker, differential treatment indeed. Can I just say this, that we are also, one of the points of contradiction which very clearly came through during the course of the interventions
295 this morning, when one compares that particular intervention to what we heard the Deputy Chief Minister say yesterday, Deputy Chief Minister said that the Inquiry saw everything, because of course, the narrative there was we are a transparent Government, we gave everything to the Inquiry, the Chief Minister talked about his striptease, he said all of those things. And this is a this is a positive, this is a lesson to be learnt. Fast forward, 24 hours later, well actually a few hours
300 later, because he said it yesterday, 8 million pounds, waste of money, and actually, the reason why I feel, Sir Joe Bossano says, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano says, I feel I need to bring these things to the House and therefore to the public, is because they did not have everything.

So, there is a direct clash between the position of this gentleman here, and this gentleman here, as to what was actually before the Inquiry. And this speaks to in effect, you know, a dog's
305 dinner. They just do not know, this is why I think the Leader of the Opposition has made this point to this morning and outside of this House previously, where you have language of exoneration and mitigation on the one hand, and then on the other hand, this is from the same individual, i.e. the Chief Minister, no, but I am going to be challenging these findings. So, what is it going to be? Then we have the Deputy Chief Minister saying, this is an example of how transparent we are, this
310 is a historical point in time in terms of our political development, fantastic, we need to applaud what they have done, because it is fantastic. And yet we have the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano saying, actually they did not have everything, they did not have everything, and this is a real reason why this whole thing, Palava, happened, and we have had to endure as a society over the last, I was going to say a few months, but actually over the last years.

315 This has been going on for years, since the first letters before your action were sent and all the rest of it. So, you know, a dog's dinner. And then, I think the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, the Father of the House, I was going to describe him as the Leader of the House, the Father of the House, he may become the Leader of the House, who knows, following the leadership Election of the GSLP, where he talks about trust being betrayed.

320 Trust being betrayed. They are the ones who are betraying people's trust. It is them who have caused all of this, which is resulting in a complete breakdown and breach of trust between people and their government.

This is why we think that the only solution is to call a General Election and to call it now. And he may laugh about this, that proposition. And I understand why he laughs.

325 I detect a nervousness in his laugh. Because he knows, and I am told that he says, that in the next General Election, they are going to lose it. But he talks about trust being betrayed.

It is they who have, you know, shown, not just, I say, in relation to the findings of this report, but they have shown that given the differences, and given the different statements that we are

330 hearing from the hon. Gentlemen and Ladies opposite during the course of this, that actually, they are governing really very badly. They are in disarray. As I said before, they are a dog's, this is a dog's dinner.

they are incomplete. And then they talk about, you know, not being prepared, ready for Government. Come on! Come on! They are now governing, but they are governing very badly. They are governing very badly. We need a new start. We need a fresh approach. We need to clear the swamp, for goodness sakes. We need to clear the swamp.

335 So, what this shows, is that they are in utter disarray. And then, you know, they are there, and as the Hon., the Chief Minister said earlier, his usual jibe against the Leader of the Opposition, that he says, lost Elections, and all the rest of it, and that he is seeing, and when he says he, I say we, that we are seeing power, you know, slipping through our fingers, the ability to win power, and secure office slipping through our fingers.

340 The reality is that it is the little respect which they had before the findings were announced, that respect, that respect, is what is slipping through the fingers of those Members opposite and the sooner they realise this, the sooner they stop playing games, the sooner they stop propagating this ridiculous narrative that what happened in the past is irrelevant, the sooner they accept the objective truth, however uncomfortable it may be for them, the objective truth as set out in the Openshaw Report, and indeed let us not forget, in the Principal Auditor's Report, the sooner they stop playing games and realise this, and call a General Election, the better.

Madam Speaker: Any other hon. Member wish to speak on this Motion? In that case, would the mover like to reply?

350 **Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** I will deal with one of the recent, the last mistakes of the hon. Member. I said the trust that we placed in the RGP, we are meaning the GSD and the GSLP, had been betrayed. That has nothing to do with whatever he thinks was relevant in the trust of the population, in the politicians.

355 Whether they trust him more than they trust me, I do not know. But what he was quoting from me was the disservice that was done when the GSD and the GSLP, before he was GSD, in 2006, where we both agreed that we would not want the police to be under political control, and that they had to be independent, and that they had to be trusted to do things correctly. And what I was saying that trust that both sides of the House placed, I was in Opposition, and I agreed with the Government, had been betrayed by what has been revealed now.

360 This is nothing about whether we win the Election or lose the Election or the people trust us or the people trust him. So, he has misquoted me. What I said and what he then derived from what I said is totally irrelevant.

I was talking about the disservice that the people who have behaved so badly in the RGP have done to both Government and Opposition when we agreed that we could trust them to do things properly and that now we have to review that because the experience we have had, although we expect that there will not be a repeat of it in the immediate future with the new Commissioner that we have got, we need to question whether there has to be some other mechanism to stop things getting out of hand as they have got out of hand here. And they got out of hand here because as I have made obviously clear to the Members opposite, the deficiency in the legislation that if somebody wants to do whistleblowing, they have to go to Commissioner McGrail to say I have got to report to you that I am going to whistle blow upon you.

365 I was talking about the disservice that the people who have behaved so badly in the RGP have done to both Government and Opposition when we agreed that we could trust them to do things properly and that now we have to review that because the experience we have had, although we expect that there will not be a repeat of it in the immediate future with the new Commissioner that we have got, we need to question whether there has to be some other mechanism to stop things getting out of hand as they have got out of hand here. And they got out of hand here because as I have made obviously clear to the Members opposite, the deficiency in the legislation that if somebody wants to do whistleblowing, they have to go to Commissioner McGrail to say I have got to report to you that I am going to whistle blow upon you.

370 The assumption in the legislation was that if things were going wrong, they would be going wrong much lower in the hierarchy of the Police Department. You know, we do not expect to have a situation, we never expected to have a situation. We took that policy decision jointly, we took it for granted that if something went wrong, it would go wrong with people who were in the bottom of the organisation, perhaps less you know, less well trained, less conscious of where the red lines were, and there if somebody saw things happening that were wrong, they would be able to go to the Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner and say look, I am worried about this.

380 And they would be able to put things right internally. And this is why it is a constable that can make. But when we have a person that says I have been 16 years in the police, and in my 16 years I have never seen somebody with a complaint being invited to a meeting with the Commissioner, never to anybody else, but yes to Gaggero.

385 And he says I am obsessed with Gaggero. I was quoting what the whistleblower said that Gaggero was given, in 16 years, a privilege that nobody ever had been given. That does not make me obsessed about Gaggero.

What is so special about him that he gets a treatment by the police that nobody else has had in 16 years. And the man that says it was the man in charge of the investigation who knows more. And this is first hand evidence.

390 Unless the hon. Member opposite says well I know this guy is a chronic liar and has made all this up. But he actually says everybody who was in a meeting, and he actually says the evidence the police have been lying. The police have lied from day one.

When the Inquiry talks about the position of the Chief Minister, they say that the Chief Minister should not have intervened in a legitimate criminal investigation. This was not a legitimate criminal investigation. This was a cooked up criminal investigation.

395 So, if the Chairman of the tribunal had been presented with evidence that the investigation was caught up from day one, he might not have thought that it was wrong he might have said you should have stopped it altogether. The investigation starts with the RGP lying. They have not reacted to that.

400 That does not matter. The fact that the police lie to the public in a press release and claim that the Government of Gibraltar is a joint complainant with James Gaggero does not worry them. And they do not think there is anything wrong. Why? Because that weakens what they are trying to show is the bad thing that we have done or the bad thing that the Chief Minister has done.

405 Madam Speaker the Leader of the Opposition yesterday stopped me from talking because he said I should not say anything about the whistleblowers on the motion of the report of the operation and the determination of the employment of Mr McGrail because it had nothing to do with it.

410 All that they have talked about today is what I was supposed not to do yesterday. I do not know if I should have stopped them all under the same argument that they should not bring in the McGrail Inquiry into the whistleblowers because today was about the whistleblowers and they said it was wrong to do what I was potentially going to do in their minds yesterday was wrong.

415 So, they stopped me doing it and they did it for me today. So they linked the two things except that they say that everything that we have got here which we have accepted in his last intervention and I am glad that he has that it is something totally unacceptable and must be rooted out if it is proved to be correct and I think the probability of it being correct is overwhelming. There are too many people involved here. They cannot all be lying. They have no reason to be lying. These are people at the rank of Chief Inspectors and Inspectors and people with 16 and 20 years of service. This is their life, their profession that they put on the line. This is not something that we have lined up in order to have smoke and to obfuscate and to protect Fabain or protect anybody else. This is something that is the most disgraceful thing that has happened in the 53 years that I have been in Parliament.

420 That is what this is. And the fact that these people were behaving the way they were behaving is what permitted Mr Gaggero to go to McGrail and be invited to participate as if he was a member of the RGP in how the investigation was going to be carried out. Nobody ever in the history of the police has done that. Nobody has had that level of treatment. (Interjections)

425 In fact, the Chief Minister reminds me, and I have already said that he actually, James Gaggero, actually told the Chief Minister when the people that were being complained of were being arrested, he knew before anybody else.

That is not normal. To have that level of control of a police investigation is not normal. The reality is that what happened with Gaggero was that he had a business and his employees who

430 were getting a very small share of the amount that was coming in, that is £817,000 pounds, is what we were being paid for maintenance in this.

I mean, if I say that Gaggero seems to be privileged, it is because look, nobody seems to mind, either there or in the Principal Auditor's Report, that Gaggero gets some things without having to tender. Nobody questions why he is not investigated. Now, I can understand that the fact that he was giving out GSD propaganda in 2011 and that they were the ones who gave him the privileges may make it difficult for them to now criticise it.

We regrettably, as far as I am concerned, have continued.

Yes, of course...

Hon. D J Bossino: Just so that the record of the House is accurate. The record of the House is absolutely accurate.

In fact, the individual that he refers to, Mr James Gaggero, did not hand out propaganda in the Elections of 2011. I mean, we have at least two individuals on this side of the House who participated as candidates in that campaign, and we certainly do not recall Mr Gaggero handing out... I mean, it is just a point of detail, but I thought it was important to point it out to him, and I wondered whether he would accept that and withdraw it, because it is simply not accurate.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: It might have been in 1996 when the GSD came in. Well at my age 10 years more or 10 years less is the same. But I imagine that he has continued in the camp that is natural for him to be in. I mean, I would not expect him to be campaigning in the GSLP. That is perfectly ok, people are entitled to whatever political party they want and have whatever political view. What they are not entitled to do is to get better treatment and that is something that, of course, they say they agree with. Well, then they should agree with me that the treatment that the police gave to Mr Gaggero was wrong and without that treatment there might not have been anything to inquire because the Inquiry was why Commissioner McGrail advised that the Government and the Deputy Governor, hence the UK Government, the two governments had lost confidence in him. The position of McGrail in running the operation here and the investigation was enough. His contact there was enough to terminate his employment because he allowed a private individual to produce the evidence and what the police said that they had done alone is not true. We know it is not true because of the people inside the police saying it is not true. So that you have a situation where the man that has asked for this Inquiry, for this to exonerate him and say, he ends with a report is made, he ends saying, I have now been vindicated. Well look, you have been vindicated because nobody knows all the stuff that is about you. If they knew all this, you would not have been vindicated.

Let us be clear. That is a reality that you do not want to face up. If they have been supportive of him, I imagine that they would not have been supportive of him, if everything that is being said in this report is true, as I believe it to be, and is proven to be true, and he is then convicted of all those many things that he has done that are criminal actions.

If all that had been something that they knew, they would not have been so supportive of him, because presumably they were campaigning for the Inquiry into his termination to take place on the assumption that the result would be favourable to him. I cannot imagine that they would want to be politically accusing us of not wanting to have an Inquiry into his termination of employment, because they thought we had done something wrong in being involved in his termination, and we were therefore scared to have the Inquiry. And that is that the hon. Member accepts that I am logical, that is what my logical analysis leads me to.

So, they believed that he had been mistreated, they believed he did not deserve to have his terminated. But if all this stuff turns out to be, as the people concerned say, all of whom are professional, long-serving members of the police, if 10% of the Police Force and the 10% that are not 10% new recruits, 10% of people who have been years there are saying these things, why on earth should they say it? Do you think really that people are being bribed to say all these things which are false in order to leave the police without a cutting pay?

Because that is the only thing they get out of this. They stop being police officers, they stop being Chief Inspectors or Inspectors or Sergeants, which is their profession and what they like doing, right? Without loss of pay.

485 That is the protection that they get. that is not an incentive to do the things that it says here. I mean, if they had actually been rewarded to say these things and then there was no evidence and then there was a reward, then what Mr McGrail said was happening and is not true and it is found not to be true and it is not happened, then of course a lot of the whistleblowers then would have been guilty of an offence and might have all finished in jail. This is not the case, and the reality is that I thought it was relevant that we should see the sight of the picture. That was not possible to
490 have within the terms of reference of the investigation because in fact the terms of reference were just about one thing and nobody says these things are things which led to Mr McGrail's termination. No.

These things are things that would have led to Mr McGrail's termination if it had been done before. It could not be done before because the people that were heading the organisation were
495 the ones that were doing it. It can be done now because now we have got an independent person from outside whom we can trust to get to the bottom of all this.

Is that so difficult to understand? If it had been done before and all this had come out, we would not have spent £8 million and there would not have been an Inquiry. This is enough to put him away for years.

500 And to say that I am obsessed against James Gaggero, look, I have got nothing wrong with him as far as I am concerned. He behaves like a normal capitalist does when their income according to them is at risk. So, he has from us £870,000.

He employs one guy that actually wrote the programme, which he claims is his, but we paid £400,000 for. So, we pay £400,000 for a programme which he uses for us. We pay him for using
505 our programme and he goes to the police and says somebody wants to steal my programme.

And the police say the Government of Gibraltar and Blands have both come jointly to put a complaint about a criminal activity. The criminal activity was the stealing of the programme. When they get down to doing the legal work of charging, they suddenly find that they cannot charge anybody with stealing the programme because the programme does not belong to the people
510 who claim the right.

That should have stopped the case there and then. This guy went to the police and made a false statement. He claimed somebody was stealing something that was not his property. He had not spent a penny on it. We paid for it. He accepted that it was not his. So, then he said, no, no, no, what they are doing is sabotaging it. There is no real evidence. He was allowed to bring people
515 from outside to prove that they were sabotaging, and they said there is no sabotage.

So, what was the crime? What was the crime that was committed? How can it be right that people who are innocent of having done the two things that they were being accused of, theft of sabotage, should not have their names cleared?

And therefore, justice requires that their names be cleared and justice requires that the wrongs
520 are investigated, and justice requires that those that have done wrong things are punished in whatever way the law provides. And as far as I am concerned, I do not accept that in this Parliament, the rules of this Parliament means that we cannot talk about anything other than the Bills that come to the House. Well, no.

I mean, if something is happening that is of major importance in Gibraltar, if somebody on the
525 other side of this issue is telling people in the UK things that are incorrect and false, then we in this Parliament cannot do anything about it. Well, look, we are going to put in Parliament our version of what is happening, based not on things that we have invented, not on things that Mr McGrail has said, because if the lawyer of Mr McGrail is pacing us as, you know, rogues and, you know, putting the Government of Gibraltar, and consequently the whole of Gibraltar, in a very
530 bad light internationally, doing Gibraltar good, I hope that when we get this cleared, the person that is now the lawyer will go back to all the people that he said, poor McGrail is being punished for being a brave man and challenging a lawyer that is very rich. Right? So McGrail attacking a rich

535 lawyer is a very commendable thing, but Bossano attacking a rich capitalist is a very bad thing. Is that the question? So, all I can say, Madam Speaker, that it seems to me that what they thought I should not do yesterday is what they wanted to do today, and they have done it for me today, and I am grateful for, in spite of all the nonsense about smokes and mirrors and all the rest, and let me just say, the 25 years, which he thought was not relevant to go back to 25 years, well I will tell you what was relevant about it.

540 Sergeant McGrail, 25 years ago, was in court, and the judge said to Sergeant McGrail, we have had so many lies from you in this case, that I am not going to allow it to go to a jury trial. So, 25 years ago, he was lying in order to convict an innocent man. Well, and he has finished up as the head of the RGP, and obviously, he has had 24 years to refine his methodology, and that is where we find ourselves.

I commend the Noting of the Motion.

545 **Madam Speaker:** I now put the question in terms of the motion proposed by the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano. Those in favor? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? (**Members:** No) Carried.

BILLS

FIRST AND SECOND READING

The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 – First Reading Approved

550 **Clerk:** Bill's first and second reading. A Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31st day of March 2024. The Hon. Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that the Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31st day of March 2024 be read a first time.

555 **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 ended 31st day of March 2024 be read a first time. favour? Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Clerk: The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025.

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The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 – Second Reading Approved

565 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to now put the Bill as follows, that it be read a second time. Madam Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to appropriate further sums of the money to meet Government expenditure incurred during the Financial Year ended 31st of March 2024. This Bill is therefore the annual Supplementary Appropriation Bill required to provide appropriation cover retrospectively for the outturn figures of the Financial Year 2023-2024.

570 hon. Members should note that the £81.5 million required to cover the additional expenditure incurred under the Consolidated Fund represents the amount required in addition to the Supplementary Provision of £9 million that is already included in the approved Estimates under Head 57, which is the Supplementary Provision Head. A full breakdown of the £90.5 million, that

is to say the £81.5 million and the £9 million of relocations to be made from Head 57 will be tabled at the House at the next available session of Parliament, giving the hon. Members a full and detailed breakdown of the Heads and Subheads for which the Supplementary Provision has been applied. The other components of this Bill are self-explanatory.

575 **Madam Speaker:** I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: Before I put the question, does any hon. Member wish to speak on the general principles and merits of the Bill? The Hon. Mr Clinton.

580 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would like to say I am grateful to the Chief Minister for bringing this Bill and in fact the subsequent Bill to the House in a timely manner.

In terms of the overspend in respect to 31 March 2024, which the Chief Minister identified, I think it was £81.5 million. I think we ventilated this in the Budget debate at the time. My only observation is, in terms of the way this is presented, and I have made this observation in the past, is that the supplementary amount goes into Head 57 in this case, which is a supplementary provision.

585 My reading of the Constitution, section 69 in terms of the Supplementary Appropriation, is that the Bill as presented really should have all the Heads of Expenditure in which this element is going to, but I know that this is something in which we and the Government disagree. As regards the voting on this Bill, Madam Speaker, we ventilated our views at the time of the Budget. It is for the Government to cure the overspend, so we will be abstaining.

590 **Madam Speaker:** Any other hon. Member wish to speak? In that case I call upon the mover to reply.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker I beg to give notice that Committee Stage and Third Reading be taken today if all hon. Members agree.

595 **Madam Speaker:** I have not put the question yet.

Hon. Chief Minister: Sorry, Madam Speaker, you looked at me, I indicated I thought clearly that I was not going to reply, and then you looked at me again and I thought you wanted me to read the paragraph.

600 **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 ended 31 March 2024 be read a second time. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Carried.

Clerk: The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to give notice that the Committee stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today if all hon. Members agree.

605 **Madam Speaker:** Do all hon. Members agree that the Committee stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today? Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Carried.

**The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.–
First Reading Approved**

610 **Clerk:** A Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31 March 2025. The Hon. Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that a Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31 March 2025 be read a first time.

615 **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 ended 31 March 2025 be read a first time. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Carried.

Clerk: The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.

620

**The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.–
Second Reading Approved**

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that the Bill now be read a second time. Madam Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to appropriate further sums of money to meet Government expenditure incurred during the Financial Year ended 31 March 2025. This Bill is therefore the annual Supplementary Appropriation Bill, required to provide appropriation cover retrospectively for the outturn figures for the Financial Year 2024-2025.

625
630 Hon. Members should note that the £65.5 million required to cover the additional expenditure incurred under the Consolidated Fund represents the amount required in addition to the Supplementary Provision of £9 million that is already included in the approved expenditure under Head 54, which is the Supplementary Provision Head. A full breakdown of the £74.5 million, that is to say the £65.5 million and the £9 million of reallocations to be made from Head 54 will be tabled in the House at the next available session of Parliament, giving the hon. Members a full and detailed breakdown of the Heads and Sub-Heads for which the Supplementary Provision has been applied. The other components of this Bill are self-explanatory.

635 Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Speaker: Before I put the question, does any hon. Member wish to speak? Yes, the Hon. Mr Clinton.

640 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, just to repeat my comments in identical manner to the previous Supplementary Appropriation, in the sense that in this case in terms of the amount of £65.5 million which has been appropriated for Head 54, which is the Supplementary Provision, ideally should be presented within this Bill. Other than that, Madam Speaker, as for the previous Supplementary Appropriation, I will be abstaining on this as well.

Madam Speaker: Does the Hon. Chief Minister wish to reply?

645 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker, simply to highlight that in relation to both of these Bills, it is remarkable to see hon. Members abstain because they vote against the Appropriation and then they abstain on the Supplementary Appropriation. One would have thought that the logic would have led them to take the same position on Supplementary Appropriation as they take on Appropriation, but it is a matter entirely for them, Madam Speaker.

650 **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 entered 31st day of March 2025 be read a second time. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Clerk: The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to give notice that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today if all hon. Members agree?

655 **Madam Speaker:** Do all hon. Members agree that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 – First Reading Approved

660 **Clerk:** A Bill for an Act to Amend the Pensions Act. The Hon. Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, before the Bill moves, I would indicate that I have written to you setting out that this Bill is too urgent to await the six weeks of publication before being moved.

Madam Speaker: I confirm I have that letter.

665 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that the Bill for an Act to Amend the Pensions Act be read the first time.

Madam Speaker: I now put the question, which is that a Bill for an Act to Amend the Pensions Act be read a first time. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

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The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 – Second Reading Approved

Clerk: The Pensions (Amendment) Act 2026.

675 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that the Bill now be read a second time. Madam Speaker, this amendment ensures that officers in the Police Force and Customs who are eligible for a pension, gratuity or allowance under the Pensions Act and have been transferred under exceptional circumstances to a Government department, statutory authority or agency or any wholly owned Government company or corporation as prescribed in the Gazette pursuant to the Pensions Act shall on retirement retain their pension status under the Pensions Act provided that the Governor acting on the advice of the Government
680 so approves. This Bill has been certified as urgent so that retirement income is not at risk in respect of any particular individual. That is the extent of the Act.

Madam Speaker, before commending this Bill to the House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the House for considering this Bill because it can affect individuals' ability to draw their pension once it is agreed that they are retiring.

685 **Madam Speaker:** Before I put the question, does any hon. Member wish to speak on the general principles and merits of the Bill? The Hon. Mr Clinton.

690 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, we note the Bill has been certified as urgent but given that the Bill was only published on Monday 19th this week, we are somewhat surprised at the declared urgency for this Bill. Given its intended purpose and given that it is about preservation of rights, we do not have any objection to it but I do not know if the Chief Minister can provide a little bit more information as to the urgency for this and what he would deem to be exceptional circumstances. But otherwise, Madam Speaker, I think we can indicate we would support it.
Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

695 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, this Bill was published two days ago and of course there is the constitutional mechanism that says that a Bill has to await six weeks unless it is certified urgent. As I have done before, I make the point again on the record that it would be helpful if the Government intends to certify a Bill as urgent for us to be notified as well so that we can be aware that this Bill is going to be taken. It may be that then we might have questions behind the Speaker's
700 Chair to the Government knowing it is going to come because it may be that my colleague would have wanted to ask information about this had we known this was going to come because it was only two days ago and so it would be helpful if the Government would take that on board once it forms a view of certification of urgency.

Madam Speaker: I call upon the mover to reply.

705 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, it is not a requirement that we should do that, but I have no compunction with the House circulating those letters when they are brought to the House. The minute I write to the House, I assume that can be circulated in the same way as a motion is circulated the minute that it is sent to the House. Other than that, Madam Speaker, this is a very short Bill.

710 It just deals with two categories of persons. It is explicit. It is one section. It deals with police officers and customs officers and I am asked by the GLO to do this and by the Treasury to do this in order to ensure that those who have been moved in exceptional circumstances and are now retiring based on the rights that they have can be dealt with in the same way under the Pensions Act, which sometimes is very prescriptive and needs amendments if it is going to protect the rights
715 that would legitimately be anticipated that an individual would have. But this is a statutory provision, and it needs those words in it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I now put the question which is that a Bill for an Act to amend the Pensions Act be read a second time. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Clerk: The Pensions (Amendment) Act 2026.

720 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I beg to give notice that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today if all hon. Members agree?

Madam Speaker: All hon. Members agree that the Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Bill be taken today. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Clerk: Committee Stage and Third Reading. The Hon. Chief Minister.

725

COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move that the House should resolve itself into committee to consider the following Bills clause by clause, namely: the Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025; the Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025; and the Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026.

In Committee of the whole House

735

**The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 –
Clauses considered and approved**

Clerk: A Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31st day of March 2024. Clauses 1 to 6.

Madam Speaker: Clauses 1 to 6 stands part of the Bill.

Clerk: The Schedule.

740

Madam Speaker: The Schedule stands part of the Bill.

Clerk: The Long Title.

Madam Speaker: The Long Title stands part of the Bill.

745

**The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025 –
Clauses considered and approved**

Clerk: A Bill for an Act to appropriate sums of money to the service of the year ended 31st day of March 2025. Clauses 1 to 6.

Madam Speaker: Clauses 1 to 6 stands part of the Bill.

Clerk: The Schedule.

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Madam Speaker: The Schedule stands part of the Bill.

Clerk: The Long Title.

Madam Speaker: The Long Title stands part of the Bill.

755

**The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 –
Clauses considered and approved**

Clerk: A Bill for an Act to amend the Pensions Act. Clauses 1 to 3.

Madam Speaker: Clauses 1 to 3 stands part of the Bill.

Clerk: The Long Title.

Madam Speaker: The Long Title stands part of the Bill.

760

**The Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025 ;
The Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025;
The Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026;**

Third Reading approved; Bills passed

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to report that the Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025, the Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025 and the Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 have been considered in committee and agreed to without amendments and I now move that they be read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: I now put the question which is that the Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025, the Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025 and the Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026 have been considered in committee and agreed to without amendments and I now move that they be read a third time and passed. Those in favour of the Supplementary Appropriation (2023/2024) Bill 2025. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried. Those in favour of the Supplementary Appropriation (2024/2025) Bill 2025. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried. Those in favour of the Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2026. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

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775

PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTION

Clerk: Private Members' Motion. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move the Motion standing in my name which reads that: "This House has No Confidence in the Chief Minister". Madam Speaker, over the course of the last few days and I suppose facilitated by the last few days, we have well-rehearsed a number of issues to do with the Inquiry. The basis of this motion, Madam Speaker, came about first because this was filed way back in July and it came about because of the fracas in relation to the Principal Auditor.

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Everyone will recall that the Principal Auditor published his report. It was laid in this Parliament. There were then lengthy exchanges, political exchanges, in relation to the Principal Auditor's Report.

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But in the course of their defence of their position, the hon. Members on that side started to gradually get more and more incandescent with the Principal Auditor. To the point that someone who they had said could say whatever he wants, whenever he wants, how he wants, suddenly was being chastised and trashed in the press by the Members opposite. It got to the point, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Members opposite not just defended their position but filed a motion that sought to go through the elements of the Report and then, once we got to this House, they amended it further so that the last paragraph said that they in effect are going to write an alternative report in relation to the Principal Auditor.

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I said at the time when I filed this motion that the presentation of the self-serving motion on the previous Principal Auditor was nothing short of a scandalous abuse of power by a desperate GSLP Government now fighting for its political survival. It was an act that was undemocratic and

800 an abuse of Parliament as well as power because it came against a background of other simmering scandals in the evidence heard in the McGrail Inquiry. Of course, that was four or five months ago.

805 Now we have seen the Inquiry Report and we have seen the findings and we have seen the attempt even today to in effect convert us into a Court of Appeal on the findings because the Hon. Father of the House before sitting down in ending his contribution in effect said that had all of this been before the Inquiry then maybe it would have been different. Madam Speaker, I filed this motion because the motion, the original basis of the motion of confidence that I filed was in reply to and in rejection of the conduct of Members opposite in relation to what they had done with the Principal Auditor because it went well beyond an attempt to rewrite the history and rewrite the Report and the narrative in the Auditor's Report. It was the, as I said, the use of state power, state power to engage the Parliament so that they could come here, not just trash the Auditor but
810 in effect usurp the functions of the Auditor and conduct a constitutional assault on the Auditor.

And I said also that it was a muscling down on the Principal Auditor and a chilling message to everyone that dissent would not be tolerated by the Government because ultimately the Principal Auditor is an independent Constitutional Officer called upon to audit the accounts of a Government because the Constitution asks him to do it, asks him to do it. And in the course of his
815 functions he should not be attacked because he does what he said, what the Constitution says he should do, especially by a Government that only weeks before had said he could say whatever he wanted, when he wanted, how he wanted. The reality is that the Principal Auditor has to be respected in his function and they did not and it had serious consequences for democracy, basic freedoms and our institutions.

820 That is what I said when I filed that original motion, Madam Speaker, because there had been a campaign of vitriol and it was systematic against the Principal Auditor. The basis of the motion has of course widened since then because it is not just about the Principal Auditor. We have now seen a further example, and I am going to turn to that.

We have now seen a further example of why this Motion of No Confidence should be passed.
825 Madam Speaker, I said at the time of the Principal Auditor's Report and I am not going to go at great length on this issue because this House well-rehearsed arguments in relation to the Principal Auditor and Hansard between September and November this year well records the exchanges that were had in this House on the Principal Auditor. In particular my speech that is recorded at Hansard on the 13th and 14th of November makes clear what our arguments in relation to that
830 motion were and I said that people would rightly think that the examples of waste and abuse that were set out in the Report were a stark contrast with people's daily lives, especially those who were trying to struggle to make ends meet to deal with the cost of living crisis and it showed rampant lack of control, some examples of abuse and waste and people were rightly angered. Gibraltar was seized by this feeling of real outrage when the Principal Auditor's Report was published in July and that became the topic of the summer. People quite rightly felt that not just
835 were they angered by the waste and abuse examples in the Report but they were also angered by the treatment of the Principal Auditor, a senior respected Civil Servant who after over 30 years of being a civil servant was being trashed by this Government in this way, who not just said I disagree with the Auditor did so in language which was well recorded in the exchanges in Hansard that was of such hyperbole and emotion that was unprecedented that any Civil Servant or Public Servant
840 has ever had to endure. We said at the time it was a disgrace and indeed it was Madam Speaker, indeed it was. It was however, it has however, been the backdrop of an emerging story because the Inquiry findings that we now have and we have been able to see before this motion has been taken merely widen what was already the sound foundation of this motion because the Inquiry findings and again we have had the benefit of the Noting Motion Madam Speaker this week so I do not intend, you know this week, I mean I think only yesterday, sometimes I loose track of the days because sometimes the sessions are quite long but we have had the benefit of the Noting Motion and again people will have heard it very recently and therefore I am not going to go into the great detail as I did yesterday on this issue but clearly we now have the findings of the Inquiry.
845 The catalogue of improper actions of the Chief Minister, of the gross impropriety, the number of
850

attempts to interfere in a criminal investigation well canvassed in the public, set out in the Inquiry Report in Technicolour and despite the efforts, despite the best efforts of the Members opposite to try to in some way undermine those findings by creating this alternative parallel universe of if this other evidence had been there in effect as a side wind in reality what they are saying, the message to the people of Gibraltar today by them has been in fact forget the findings. That is what they are really trying to do here. In fact Madam Speaker these findings are final until of course a court should decide otherwise but today as we sit here with no legal challenge having been filed and the Inquiry Report findings that have been welcomed and accepted by the hon. Members opposite and therefore welcomed and accepted the findings that also affect the Chief Minister well today the findings are what they are and the findings are clear. Several attempts to interfere in a criminal investigation by the Chief Minister, an unprecedented issue.

Those things are all linked Madam Speaker, they come together, they come together and the behavioural aspects that underpinned the Principal Auditor's Motion, that foundation that led us to file that motion because of the actions that the hon. Members were taking in particular the Chief Minister in relation to the Principal Auditor combined with now the widened basis that supports this motion because of the Inquiry findings and everything that we explained yesterday and everything we have explained in the public since the Inquiry findings have been made public that allows us to support this Motion of No Confidence and call on this House to pass it and to pass it with the constitutional effect that it has. And I have said publicly Madam Speaker, I have said publicly that Ministers need to consider their position in relation to the Inquiry findings, they have all read it and they all need to reflect.

Of course, since I said that we have now with a process of time we have had indications of what some Ministers feel, not what all Ministers feel but we have had indications of some but I do address them and ask them again to reflect on it because they need to logicalise the argument in their own minds because as I have said before the Minister for Justice takes an oath to the rule of law so he has got to consider how do I logically vote against this given that I have to support the rule of law in the face of findings that very clearly say that the Chief Minister grossly improperly attempted to interfere in a criminal investigation on several occasions. Now, we can take a view as to whether we think that there should or should not have been an investigation, I do not know because as I said this morning we are not investigators, we are not the prosecutors, still less are we the courts by the way.

So any attempt by the Father of the House to try to logically play out the film in his mind of because I have got these statements therefore all of this is not something that I believe, well I mean the reality is that there was an investigation, the reality is that there was an investigation. That the Inquiry having looked at the witness statements decides that they were, some were relevant, some were not relevant, it considered all the evidence, it cross examined all the witnesses, it heard what it needed to hear on a number of issues and in relation to the matters of Operation Delhi, it decided that the Hon. Chief Minister grossly improperly behaved and did so also in relation to the process of the GPA because he misled the GPA, he acted in a sinister way, deliberately and cynically.

Now that has a conclusion Madam Speaker, that has a conclusion because people need to not just understand what has been the impact of the behaviour of this Government over the last six months because of the Principal Auditor and the Inquiry findings but because there are consequences to all this. This is not, as I have said publicly, this is not just politics, it is not just politics because this is the first time ever, this is the first time ever that I have filed a Motion of No Confidence in any Chief Minister, in any Minister. I have not called for the resignation of a Chief Minister ever except now but there are reasons for that because things add up and when you are faced with an Inquiry Report that says what it says, what are we supposed to do with it as a society?

Are we supposed to stare at it and say not just once but on several occasions, there was gross improper behaviour, crossing of lines and an attempt to interfere in a criminal investigation. We are supposed to stare at this, are we? And then say but it is okay, things can stay as they are.

905 All we need to do is implement the recommendations about the note taking, sit down and take
some notes next time you have a conversation. Now these have consequences, these have
consequences and if all we do is focus on the recommendations, which is the same as focussing
on the payment of the order of forecasts without reading the judgement. Let us read the
judgement and understand what it means because 700 pages and it is cost the people of Gibraltar
£8 million, we might as well read it and understand it and things have consequences in public life
910 because there is a Ministerial Code and there is a Code of Conduct for Members of this House and
that Ministerial Code requires standards of behaviour of a certain type and you might take a view
that the investigation should never have happened but the fact is it was on-going and once there
is an on-going investigation, as a Minister of the Crown, you do not pick up the phone to give ideas
to people about what they should do to obstruct the police investigation. You do not call in the
Commissioner to berate him because you are the Chief Minister and he is the Commissioner and
915 there are boundaries, whatever you think. You do not act in a grossly improper way, you do not
withhold information, and you do not mislead the GPA.

You do not act in a cynical way and still less should you act in a sinister way and that is the
reality, that is the reality. And so this place that we all love, we may have different approaches
here but I do accept that we all fight for Gibraltar, this place has to consider what the
920 consequences of that are and needs to consider in the context of what it means to be in public
elected life and what the standards are and what the examples are that we are giving people
because people are watching. People are watching and young people are watching and what
examples are we giving young people about what it means because if we just whistle and move
on, are we really saying in this House, in this Parliament, the ultimate place where we debate
925 political issues, where we feel passionately about the protection of our constitutional institutions?

Are we really saying it is okay for someone to hold office who has been found to have
attempted to interfere in a criminal investigation not once but several times? Is that what we are
saying? Is that the message that we are sending people?

I do not believe it should be the message that we are sending people, but it will be the message
930 that this House sends at least on that side of the House if indeed this motion is not carried. That
is the message that will be carried and I will tell them one more thing. Let us see, I know we have
had indications from hon. Members on that side but let us see if the Chief Minister puts the
fulsome support that he has to the test with a vote on this question of confidence in him.

Let us see, or is he going to play the card of amending the motion so that he avoids a specific
935 vote on the question of confidence in him? let us see when he gets up, but I believe if he does
that, he will send a signal to people that he is running scared on this question, running scared on
this question, that he is not allowing his Ministers to vote on this question. But let us see what
happens, let us see.

But Madam Speaker, on this issue, on this issue, as this society, as Gibraltar looks forward and
940 considers the Inquiry findings, there are inescapable conclusions. Inescapable conclusions about
what all this means and the inescapable conclusions, Madam Speaker, are that the Chief Minister's
Office is now affected, that he can now no longer sustainably retain his Office with confidence of
this House because of the findings that there have been in this Inquiry Report together with the
whole background of the Principal Auditor. I commend the motion to the House.

945 **Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question in the terms of the motion moved by the Hon.
Leader of the Opposition. Would any hon. Member like to speak? The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, I do not know what the Leader of
the Opposition had for breakfast this morning, but if that was responsible for what we heard then,
I suggest they change the menu. This is not leadership. This is not scrutiny.

950 This is the same collection of slogans they have been rehearsing since 2023 and before. So, I
welcome the opportunity to continue with the serious business of this House and to speak to this
motion. We have heard it is an incredibly short motion, one line, nine words.

955 Nonetheless, it is a motion which as a mover will know carries with it potentially explosive implications. And I have to say also at the very outset that it is a very odd motion because it has been tabled in the full knowledge that it has little prospect of success. But more about that later.

I will argue in any event that the adoption of such a motion by this House would be a serious error. It would be unfair, undeserved and a blow to our stability, democracy and reputation. And the reason for this is very simple.

960 It is quite simply because my hon. Friend the Chief Minister merits the confidence of this House. And I say that for two reasons. First, because of his overall track record in Office and secondly, because the people of Gibraltar deserve a stable Government which is capable of navigating the challenges ahead. Backing this motion would therefore constitute a grave disservice to that bigger picture. It is relevant too that any assessment of confidence in leadership comes in the answer to a number of questions. Has he delivered? Has he done what he set out to do? Has he governed with the best interests of Gibraltar at heart? And the answer to those questions can only be yes.

Madam Speaker, in a 2019 Report the House of Commons provided a helpful description of this kind of motion. Broadly speaking it says there are three main types of motion which acts as tests of the House of Commons' confidence in the Government.

970 Confidence motions initiated by the Government. No confidence motions initiated by the Opposition. And other motions which, because of the particular circumstances, can be regarded as motions of censure or of confidence. Obviously, the motion before this House today falls into that second category.

975 Madam Speaker, I will try to make a contribution which is based on the facts. And which is devoid from the personal attacks and character assassinations that we have sadly become accustomed to these days. I intend to centre instead on the basic question that this motion has given rise to. Does the Chief Minister deserve the confidence of this House or not? And I will argue that he most certainly does.

980 I am hopeful too that a more cold and rational approach may again possibly serve to lower the tension. Though judging by the compliments showered upon me of late by the Opposition, that may well be wishful thinking. If being calm, prepared and focused on facts makes me Clark Kent, then I would wear the glasses with pride.

Madam Speaker, I propose to start with the political context. That context, as the hon. Member has rightly said, was the Report of the Principal Auditor for 2018-2019. This Opposition motion was presented in July as a direct response to a Government Motion about the Report.

985 It is no surprise that this debate will follow the same personal narrative and destructive narrative which hon. Members have already constructed. We have heard it all before. So, my first point is that this motion is little more than an extension of the same controversy. In fact, the hon. Member has said as much. Therefore, the motion can only be regarded as more of the same. Because it is a repetition in a different framework of the extensive debates which have already taken place in this House.

The debates on the 2018-2019 Report of the Principal Auditor and the debates on the report into the retirement of the former Commissioner of Police. It is worth reminding the House, as the hon. Member has done, that the McGrail Inquiry Report had not been published at the time that the Leader of the Opposition tabled this particular motion. And the sequence means that the same issues are set to be rehearsed all over again during this debate.

I already set out my views on those issues during the two other debates in this House. What I said then is a matter of public record, as indeed everything that my colleagues also said. So, I do not intend to repeat everything all over again. The House will be happy to hear.

1000 Madam Speaker, in summary, when the Government addressed the debates on the Report of the Principal Auditor for 2018-2019, we did so conscious of the fact that this House is a proper forum for debate, scrutiny and accountability. Once a report was made before Parliament, it was not only appropriate but necessary for Elected representatives to examine it and to respond to it here. And it was right and proper that the response came here in this Chamber. So, a Government

1005 Motion which engaged with the Report was a perfectly proper response. It was not an affront to
democracy, as the Opposition have again suggested.

On the contrary, the scrutiny was a reflection of that democracy in action. In the United
Kingdom, and in many other parliamentary democracies, I am not going to rehearse the instances
here, it is normal for audit reports to be debated, questioned and, where appropriate, challenged
1010 by Governments, by legislatures and by others.

That process does not weaken democracy, it strengthens it by ensuring that audit findings are
tested, explained and properly understood. The Government also felt it was important to address
the question of the Auditor's statutory authority, because that lies at the heart of much of the
controversy surrounding that report. The Auditor himself acknowledged that he does not have
1015 explicit statutory powers to conduct value-for-money audits, despite those audits forming a
significant and contentious part of the document.

While it is true that such exercises have been carried out for many years, it is important not to
confuse long-standing practise with legal authority. The fact that something has been done
historically does not of itself mean that it has a clear statutory basis. That distinction matters when
1020 addressing the status and weight of the conclusions which have been drawn.

The findings of the Report also need to be placed in their proper historical context. Many of
the so-called weaknesses identified, whether in procurement process, contract management,
responsiveness to audit requests, controls on sick leave or the enforcement of rent arrears, are
not new, nor are they unique to the present administration. They appeared repeatedly in earlier
1025 audit reports, including from the periods when those now sitting in Opposition held office.

That demonstrates that these are long-standing systemic issues, and it is misleading to portray
them as a product of a single Government or a particular political moment. The way in which the
Report has been portrayed outside this House was also a matter of concern at the time. Complex
and technical audit findings have been reduced on social media to simplistic accusations, often
1030 stripped of nuance, context and proper legal explanation.

That kind of discourse does little to enhance public understanding. What it does instead is to
fuel polarisation. It is precisely for this reason that Parliament must engage responsibly with such
reports.

My hon. Friend the Chief Minister provided a very detailed explanation during the long debates
1035 in question. Indeed, facts are more important than opinion or argument in some of these cases,
and it is worth pointing out that the hon. Members opposite tend to respond to facts with views.
Partial political narratives dominate.

So, the Government's approach to the Auditor's Report was neither dismissive nor was it
defensive. Where criticisms were well-founded, they were acknowledged. Where conclusions
were disputed, they were challenged with evidence and with legal reasoning.
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The detailed responses placed before this House were intended to assist serious scrutiny and
to inform debate. They reflect our commitment both to accountability and to the proper
constitutional relationship between the Auditor, the Executive and the Parliament. Madam
Speaker, the debates on a Motion to Note the McGrail Inquiry Report took place only yesterday.
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So, I do not think it is necessary again to repeat all the arguments all over again, nor is it
necessary to remind the House of what Ministers set out during that debate. But I think it is
relevant to point out once again how the Opposition replied to certain facts with opinions. And
given that those two subjects have already been well ventilated, I intend to tackle the motion
before this House today from a much wider political perspective which goes beyond the two
1050 reports.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members will know that for this motion to succeed they need a majority,
and they know that they do not have one. So, this would indicate that the purpose of the motion
cannot be to censure the Chief Minister because they do not have the numbers and eight votes
will always be less than nine.

1055 This severely limits the prospect of success. There is some logic therefore in the argument that
their objective can only be to help this debate and in that way to score political points. That the

mathematics in this House means that their target audience remains outside this Chamber because the numbers simply do not work.

1060 And our parliamentary system, as I explained yesterday, works precisely on a majority. That is how it has always worked. In that context, a strategy is therefore highly questionable and I am sorry to say that the appeal to hon. Members of the Government to support the motion is really not serious politics. True, there have been occasions in the past where informal consultation has led both sides of the House to agree the text of a particular motion on a given subject. But this clearly was never going to be one of those occasions.

1065 The idea that they could somehow bounce Ministerial colleagues into supporting them is naive. It is obviously self-serving and it is unrealistic. More than that, the tone in which hon. Members have used to defend the motion once it was tabled, perhaps not today, is quite regrettable.

They have couched a loaded invitation to support them in accusing language, with downright name-calling or even veiled threats.

1070 The Government has been accused of clinging on to power. The reality of that is that it is the Opposition that is hungry for power, almost, it appears, at any price. Hon. Members have tried this tactic before in other debates.

1075 Do they honestly think that desperate finger-pointing or calling out individual Ministers is going to win them round? The truth is that their predicament today is a product of their own lack of judgement. Did they not know the numbers in this House before they tabled the motion? The numbers today are 9 to 8, the same majority of 1 which all Governments of Gibraltar ordinarily enjoyed between 1964 and 2007.

1080 I use the word ordinarily for a reason. There was a well-known interlude in the 1970s when two Members of the Opposition defected to the Government the other way round. Today, the composition of this House reflects the wishes of the people of Gibraltar and the way they voted in October 2023.

But the numbers on either side do not make the outcome of a vote in this place any less democratic. It would be profoundly unwise to suggest otherwise. They are entitled to proceed in whatever way they may wish to.

1085 What they cannot do is then hold others responsible for their own failure when the course of action they have chosen turns out to be so obviously flawed. When they do not get their way, or when it is clear that they are not going to get their way, it often leads to explosive tantrums, fuelled by rage and lights on substance. I must accept too that the Government have a different view. We are entitled to that too, just as they are entitled to their own. But that does not make our view or our actions any less legitimate than theirs. So, I regret to say that at the heart of this motion today is this question of political judgement. The judgement in having put forward the motion in the first place.

1090 Madam Speaker, I sat on the Opposition benches for some 15 years. The general policy at the time was not to table a motion when you knew you did not have the support to carry it. It was a pretty basic rule. Because the risk without a majority is that the motion is then open to amendment and to a very different conclusion from that which was originally envisaged. So, there was always little point for us of proceeding in the way in which they have done today when they were in Office, and it made little sense then to complain about it afterwards when the other side then had voted the motion down. If the intended outcome is a debate, then that is fine. We can have the debate, and indeed we are having it, but it is unwise to generate expectations that the final result may lead to anything different. There is no merit in stirring up public opinion by pretending otherwise.

1100 This theory, as I said, is not new. The House has always operated in this way, no matter who has been in Government or who has been in Opposition. It works on a parliamentary majority, as I said, in a very recent debate. And that is the system that exists today.

1105 It may well be that reform in the future brings us something different. But even more Members will not change the basic majority principle. So, from the point of view of a practical result, this

motion will again air the same issues, but it will also serve to raise our collective blood pressure, increase attention and divide public opinion.

1110 Madam Speaker, I also think it is relevant as we progress this debate to remind our Members, as I have done before and your Members reminded me, of the need to exercise a certain degree of restraint. The motion has given rise to many colourful adjectives, both inside and outside this House, and the use of inflammatory language on this issue, as I have said before, can often lead to unforeseen circumstances. More than that, and I agree with him, this House should set an
1115 example to the wider electorate. And it is possible to debate a policy difference without descending to the gutter.

The 17 of us in this Chamber represent some 30,000 people out there. And those people have a right to expect more from their Elected representatives. But sadly, Madam Speaker, this motion will polarise opinion further still.

1120 A Motion of No Confidence is the nuclear option available in the armoury of an Opposition. And a nuclear option can only be met or deterred with a nuclear response. That is the unfortunate reality of the position in which this House now finds itself in.

The course of action they have chosen to unleash is in the Parliamentary Manual, of course, but it has to be said that it was not the only route they had open on this issue. It is a route they
1125 have chosen. They have chosen yet again to pitch it at the highest level in that Parliamentary Manual.

Madam Speaker, the proposed removal of any Elected Leader through a motion such as this one is not a decision to be taken lightly. It is certainly not one that can be based on adversarial party-political rhetoric. Any Government of Gibraltar must be able to command the confidence
1130 and support of this House. That is a cardinal constitutional principle which underpins a relationship between the Government and the Parliament. However, in a wider political system, Motions of No Confidence tend to be presented against a government and not against a specific individual. The one before us today is directed personally at the figure of my hon. Friend the Chief Minister.

In the United Kingdom, those wanting to bring down a government generally express no confidence in it. The Spanish system is different, as hon. Members will know. A central motion
1135 there has to name an alternative candidate for the post of Prime Minister. It was such a motion tabled against Prime Minister Rajoy on 1st June 2018 which led to his replacement by Prime Minister Sanchez without a General Election. But this is not very common in our set-up. It is permitted, but it is unusual. So, Madam Speaker, as I said, a Motion of No Confidence is the most
1140 serious parliamentary device open to an Opposition. They have chosen to target that device squarely upon the head of the Chief Minister himself. The issue has been personalised in a way which is really never advisable, because as I said, any attempt to stir up public opinion against an individual will carry its own risks. Moreover, a Motion of No Confidence should be reserved for someone who has demonstrably lost the ability to govern. It should not be used to settle a policy
1145 disagreement, because in part this is what this is all about.

At the time notice of the motion was given, they had a policy in relation to the 2018-2019 Report of the Principal Auditor, and we had a different policy. Later on, they had a view on the McGrail Inquiry Report, and we had a different view. It is relevant to repeat, of course, that those
1150 disagreements have already been sufficiently well aired through two debates on those two other motions.

Madam Speaker, the point is that there are other mechanisms in a democracy through which Opposition can properly be channelled. This comes through questions, debates, scrutiny, amendments and accountability mechanisms, all of which do not involve the sweeping removal of the Government in Office. In this respect, Madam Speaker, the motion is entirely self-serving,
1155 and that could not be clearer.

The procedure will be seen as an attempt by an Opposition to remove and replace a government, but the tactic does not work when that government enjoys a stable majority, even, as I said, if there is a majority of one. It is healthy, of course, that different matters are ventilated in this way in any democracy, and it is perfectly legitimate for the government to defend its

1160 position and also for the Opposition to advocate their own. What is not healthy, Madam Speaker, is to use political differences, however legitimate they may be, as a cover for a character assassination.

The business of imputing motive through gossip and innuendo is not a business that we should be engaged in. So, it is perfectly legitimate to defend diverging political positions. That is, after all, 1165 what we are Elected to do. We have a particular policy, and they have a different policy. What is questionable is the personalised way in which they go about it.

Madam Speaker, no government is perfect. No Chief Minister, no Minister gets it right every time. We are, after all, only human, and we accept the Opposition have a role to do, and that they must be heard as well.

1170 Criticism can be constructive. It can assist to identify issues or to prevent those issues from escalating, and mistakes can and must be addressed. In this particular motion, one important point remains. The Opposition cannot simply make the case that the Chief Minister has lost the confidence of the House. They cannot because, in my view, he has not and all they can do is mud the waters, raise suspicion, and fuel speculation - that is not enough.

1175 In my view, their goal must be to demonstrate that confidence in leadership is irretrievably broken. I do not mean their confidence, Madam Speaker, because clearly, we never enjoyed it. I mean the confidence of the majority of this side of the House.

So, this motion will be perceived by some outside this House as yet another attempt to rerun the 2023 General Election. The public already delivered the verdict on that, Madam Speaker. We 1180 won the 2023 Election, the fourth victory in a row, and we always need to take care not to disrespect that result.

To support such a motion implies precisely that. It suggests the majority in this House should abandon the people's verdict at the ballot box. That would turn parliamentary democracy into a kind of quick replacement scheme, and it would dishonour the continuity and stability which is 1185 essential for governance.

Madam Speaker, I have known Fabian Picardo since 1991. As he said yesterday, we have been friends and political colleagues for 35 years. The unique characteristic of Gibraltar also means that I have known someone that side of the House for that as long, or indeed, in the case of the mover, possibly for even longer. But in relation to the target of the motion, to the person in its sight today, 1190 I must declare that I therefore speak with a complete and obvious personal interest and personal relationship. I also do so, however, with unrivalled first-hand political knowledge. And this is based on a relationship which stretches back three decades, way before our time in Office.

So, in the substance of this intervention, I will continue to present the cold facts, the evidence which supports the analysis that the motion is both undeserved and over-the-top. Neither can this 1195 procedure be justified on the basis of the 2018-2019 Report of the Principal Auditor, which it was a direct reaction to, in particular when all such reports have highlighted similar issues for decades. In any case, Madam Speaker, as I said, we are all conscious that this issue was already the subject matter of a separate debate in this Parliament. I am not sure how appropriate it would be to rehearse those same arguments all over again, and I for one do not intend to.

1200 So, Madam Speaker, I am speaking to this specific motion, and in order to judge whether confidence or no confidence is merited, the House must look at the record. It must take into consideration what this Government has achieved over the last 14 years, and it must do so in the knowledge that leadership has come from the top.

The thread of this story is one of navigating difficult external pressures, of diplomatic breakthroughs, of improved economic growth, of investment in infrastructure, education and housing, of safeguarding the fundamental interests of Gibraltar, and most importantly of protecting our sovereignty, our self-determination, our identity and our economic well-being. All of this and more must be thrown into the balance in this debate.

1210 Madam Speaker, the House knows my hon. Friend arrived here in 2003, became leader of his party in 2010 and Chief Minister in 2011. He has led the GSLP/Liberals to four successive General Election victories. I submit that to table a Motion of No Confidence against someone with those

credentials simply ignores the record. It overlooks the political reality, and it flies in the face of his and our achievements in office.

1215 Because Madam Speaker, we were not drawn easy cards, I would hope that even the most bitter adversary would acknowledge at least that fact. Having to deal with a once-in-a-generation crisis was already something. Thrust into a once-in-a-lifetime emergency at the same time is sheer bad luck.

1220 First, we had to manage Gibraltar's exit from the European Union and later negotiate our future relationship with it. This was an intense and protracted process. It lasted from 2016 until 2025, and we are now in the final stretch. But through no fault of our own, the process has spanned those three terms in office. It was full of ups and downs, loaded with tension, with emotion and with drama. And I know that my colleague's sharp mind and his ability to explore solutions outside the box to the problems which we faced were vital to our success.

1225 Brexit created profound anxieties across the board in Gibraltar. This covered trade, border control, movement of persons, goods, as well as our overall relationship with Spain and with the European Union. And the necessity of balancing all this in a way which did not impinge upon our sacred and enduring relationship with the United Kingdom.

1230 And it was not an easy challenge. But under the leadership of this Chief Minister, we first protected our sovereignty. We negotiated continued access and services to the United Kingdom market. We ensured our patients continued to use the UK NHS. We agreed lower home tuition fees for our students, thereby saving millions of pounds a year. We concluded a political framework for a treaty with the UK and Spain in December of 2020. And negotiated a treaty to govern our future relationship with the European Union. Negotiations which concluded only in December. A treaty which would be unique and tailor-made to the particular circumstances of Gibraltar. And all this with Gibraltar always present in the room. In London, in Brussels, in Madrid, in Cordoba, in Malaga and in Gibraltar itself. We negotiated our treaty for ourselves.

1235 And you will end up with a legal framework which will protect our border, our economy and our sovereignty. And all this came about under the leadership of my hon. Friend. Gibraltar has achieved greater certainty going forward than many predicted would ever be possible.

1240 The Government has delivered real and concrete progress here. And we have at the same time protected our position on fundamentals. But the treaty process has not yet come to an end. There are still ratification and implementation to come. So, it is nonsense to call for a change of Captain knowing that the journey has not yet finished. And when that Captain has already made clear long before that he was already leaving anyway, as he said.

1245 Madam Speaker, that record alone is a record to be proud of. It is a record which generates confidence. This is the opposite of what the motion calls for. But the matter does not end there. The handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is a critical part of the legacy. This was unpredictable and it required quick thinking and innovative action. We had won a General Election in October 2019. Within two months, the virus was detected in Wuhan, China.

1250 It struck out of the blue. It spread on a devastating scale across the planet. Millions of people lost their lives. Over 100 of them in Gibraltar. That period tested governments everywhere. The way we dealt with the challenge that we faced is a powerful argument for confidence in the Chief Minister.

1255 His was a steady, responsive and responsible leadership during a humanitarian catastrophe. The most serious since the so-called Spanish flu which followed the First World War. It was a public health emergency which meant a life and death situation.

1260 The pandemic was unprecedented in our lifetime. It placed demands on our people, our institutions, our frontline workers and our economy. That was a time which called out for leadership. Gibraltar needed action, not words. And action and leadership were exactly what my hon. Friend delivered.

Madam Speaker, I was there. He rose to the challenge swiftly and decisively. And he did so in a way which reflected to me a genuine concern for the lives of every single Gibraltarian. I can say this because I witnessed it all at first hand. We lived it together. Particular care was taken to

1265 protect the elderly and the vulnerable. Indeed, the decision to lock down the elderly early on, for example, saved lives. That was a political decision taken on advice. And that action was taken here before the United Kingdom itself did the same. The elderly were accorded priority for vaccination.

They were allocated a golden hour to exercise outdoors in safety. They were the first to benefit from protective measures. And they were the target of much of our public communication. A support network was built around them to mitigate the impact of isolation.

1270 The imposition of lockdowns and health protocols on our country was not an easy decision to take. It affected livelihoods, families and fundamental freedoms. But they were taken in the interest of saving lives and saved lives they did. Everyone played their part. But the buck stopped with my hon. Friend, the Chief Minister.

1275 Government is about taking such difficult decisions. And he and we, collectively, did not shy away from doing what needed to be done. The House may recall that Gibraltar was the first territory in the world to be fully vaccinated.

That achievement, too, was not a coincidence. It was the result of close cooperation with the United Kingdom. The consequence of effective logistics, good planning and, above all, the political will to save lives.

1280 Indeed, Gibraltar became a symbol of what could be done when leadership aligned with science and with compassion. The live daily public briefings here were his initiative. They proved to be an information lifeline to many of our citizens.

1285 Those broadcasts became a permanent fixture, and the Government transparently communicated the very latest updates to the public on a daily basis. Weekends and bank holidays included. My hon. Friend appeared on more occasions than anyone to deliver the message of the day. And we were held accountable live by the media which was physically present in that room. That consistency, that presence, that degree of transparency and accountability gave people confidence and hope.

1290 It came during a time of fear and uncertainty. We should always remember just how hard those days were. And it is easy to forget. But my hon. Friend did not hide away. He did not shy from delivering difficult truths. He stood before the people and set it out as it was. Because that is what leadership is all about.

1295 The BEAT measures protected jobs, sustained families and spared Gibraltar the scale of economic devastation seen elsewhere. I acknowledge of course that those hundreds of millions of pounds were spent with the support of the Members opposite in Opposition.

Madam Speaker, those were very difficult times for Gibraltar and for the planet. And when we tragically lost lives, my colleague did not treat each loss as a statistic. He felt the pain that came with each person who fell victim to the virus.

1300 And when Boris Johnson was almost on his deathbed, someone we had met only days before, it landed a harsh dose of reality and drama to the whole situation. He will not mind, I hope, if I say that I saw him break down on more than one occasion. Such was the intensity of the time.

1305 The exhaustion. The tension. And as I said earlier, it is easy to forget now all this with the worst of the pandemic behind us. Just how uncertain and frightening a period that was. But leadership in times of crisis is the truest test of leadership, Madam Speaker. There is no doubt in my mind that my hon. Friend proved himself to be a leader of resolve, empathy, discipline and care.

So, this House must not forget that period of trauma. In my view, the reaction to it of the person now subject to this motion is central to the confidence debate. It is an integral part of the argument as to whether he deserves the confidence or he does not.

1310 Madam Speaker, under the leadership of my hon. Friend, Gibraltar has also seen substantial investment in health, education and infrastructure. The Health Budget has increased significantly. There is now more staff in the GHA than ever before. We provided a Primary Care Centre, a new one. There is a new Primary Care Centre for children.

1315 Education has also been a priority. There are now more teachers than ever before. The provision of ten new schools was a huge achievement. A University of Gibraltar, which was once a dream, is now a reality.

Many aspects of Gibraltar have been transformed in ways which we now take for granted. Even here, the Chief Minister reintroduced Cabinet Government to Gibraltar. More meetings of this House than ever before.

1320 There is more Government data freely available online than ever. Meetings of the Development and Planning Commission were opened up to the press and to the public. None of that used to happen before.

They came in under our watch, under his leadership. The Gibraltar International Bank was established. Small Boats Marina provided berths for hundreds of boat owners.

1325 Thousands of affordable homes have been built or are in the pipeline. A new Power Station has replaced three old and highly polluting plants. Commonwealth Park and Campion Park have transformed the City Centre.

Record revenue, record employment, record minimum wage. The list is endless, Madam Speaker. And all this has come under the leadership of my hon. Friend.

1330 A leadership of 14 years in Government. And it is manifestly unfair, in my view, to judge 14 years of work through the prism of the last 14 minutes. And I regret that this is precisely what this Motion of No Confidence sets out to do.

It airbrushes away the solid achievements of over a decade in Office. And it seeks to shine the spotlight on two more recent areas of controversy alone.

1335 Madam Speaker, I also wish to highlight the extraordinary ability of my hon. Friend to bring the United Kingdom onside. Relations with London today are not where we found them. In December 2011 there was a strained relationship in a number of areas and with a number of key people in Whitehall. A considerable amount of work and personal contact had to be invested in order to make things right.

1340 That took time. But I think the UK understood that it was serious people with an ambitious programme of Government. This investment in connection with London paid dividends. It delivered rewards across the board in different areas of Government. There was a willingness to listen and to understand. It led to an acknowledgement of the policy position of Gibraltar in many areas. The speed of the Covid vaccine delivery was a visible manifestation of that, as was the £500 million Covid loan. Indeed, the Treaty negotiations again served as a relevant example where
1345 Gibraltar was both in the room and in the driving seat. And the backing from the UK came straight from the top.

No Chief Minister has ever had more interactions at Prime Minister level, ever. That is a genuine reflection of the relationship. There is a long list of Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries to whom Gibraltar has been able to make its case directly, face to face.

1350 Indeed, with some of those, the contact was personal, fluid and direct, even through WhatsApp. That is a considerable achievement in itself. Because that personal contact led to concrete results.

All of this is reason to have confidence. Madam Speaker, relations with Spain have also been taken to a new level. The reason for this, again, lies in those personal contacts.

1355 That has been the product of sheer hard work over many years. Some of this before you were Elected to Government. It has allowed my hon. Friend to develop the relationship with a network of key people in and around the Spanish administration.

1360 Gibraltar has been able to benefit from those links in ways which would have been unimaginable before. Indeed, those personal contacts went on to become the foundations on which Government policy on engagement with Madrid was built. I do not want to give away the breadth of the contact or the level to which they reach but suffice it to say that they have at times been cross-party and right to the top.

1365 So, Madam Speaker, in discussing the motion tabled by the Leader of the Opposition, the context of the Chief Minister's international defence of Gibraltar also becomes very relevant. It is an added reason for the House to have confidence in him. He has consistently defended our right to self-determination.

1370 He has stood up to the Spanish claim and to the manner in which they sought to assert that claim. Remember the days of Mr Margallo. He has upheld our long-standing red lines and he has taken the relationship with the UK and with Spain to a whole new level. And I think that on a good day, even the Members opposite might find it in their hearts to acknowledge the value of at least some of this.

1375 Madam Speaker, it is not my place to dwell on the personal sacrifices made during our time in office. This is a painful subject to dwell upon, and I have not discussed the matter with him. But I know better than most what his commitment to Gibraltar has meant and what it led to, because I lived it with him. Long nights, personal strain, time away from Gibraltar, missing key school activities and obviously time away from family and friends.

None of this is easy. My hon. Friend assumed composure in public when faced with adversity in private. He kept it together when others would probably have fallen apart.

1380 This speaks highly to the extraordinary character of the person sitting to my left. It takes mental and physical fortitude to remain focused on serving our country, no matter what fate may have thrown at you elsewhere. And that is a further reason to have confidence.

Madam Speaker, this motion strikes out personally at my hon. Friend's reputation, character and motive. As I said before, it is pointed at him. That is how the other side have chosen to play it.

1385 Needless to say, we have said this before, nobody is perfect. This Government has never claimed to be perfect or infallible. The Chief Minister has never claimed to be perfect either.

Indeed, as I said before, all governments make mistakes and human beings will make mistakes too. Very often, in politics, hindsight is a wonderful gift. But it brings with it the danger of reading history backwards.

1390 And I have no doubt that on occasions we will all have wished we had done certain things differently. And in the cold light of day, an alternative route may well now appear more attractive. But sometimes these issues have to be taken when they need to be taken, on the spot, with little or no time to reflect because very often that is what leadership is all about.

1395 Madam Speaker, the endorsement of this motion amounts more to that just simply rejecting a man. It is tantamount to rejecting more than that. It is a rejection of the long list of policy successes which I recited earlier. Over four consecutive Elections in 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023, albeit closely, under increasing scrutiny and pressure, this Chief Minister still won the trust of the people.

1400 The people judged the political project and they approved it, four times in a row. That mandate cannot simply be ignored now. It cannot be sacrificed at the altar of the political expediency of others.

1405 It is said that governments often face a low point at mid-term, between Elections. This Government is in mid-term of a fourth term and it is important not to lose sight of that as we continue the debate on this motion. The House knows that a Motion of No Confidence cannot be carried simply, as I said, on the strength of Opposition votes.

Otherwise, the art of governing would be hostage to transient alliances, temporary upset, personal issues or opportunistic tactics. In a sense it should be great that our system does not work in that way. The point of having Elections in the first place is precisely to allow the voters to decide.

1410 That is why the proper process is for Government to be judged on its record precisely by everyone when the General Election comes. That is the normal procedure we follow in this place. This motion is not the correct route.

1415 It is unmerited, unreasonable and obviously it is partisan. So, Madam Speaker, what is the way forward? The Government has reflected on this point, and the House will know that the original intention was to amend this motion and to turn it on a Motion of No Confidence in the Leader of the Opposition. After a Cabinet session the Government intend to proceed with a different amendment. And this would be simply to remove the word 'no' before the word confidence.

1420 So, for clarity, the amended motion would then read, “this House has confidence in the Chief Minister”. The amending turns a negative into a positive. This eliminates the more provocative dimension.

But it still allows the question of confidence to be debated in full. The proposal to amend the motion will mean that every member of the House and every Minister will have the opportunity to express their confidence or otherwise in the Chief Minister. This is in fact what the Opposition themselves have asked for.

1425 Now let that confidence be tested. So, the Government has altered its strategy, and we propose now to turn it into a vote of confidence in the Chief Minister himself. Notice of the amendment will now be given, Madam Speaker, in writing as required by the rules of the House.

So, Madam Speaker, to conclude. It is not wise to resort to a Motion of No Confidence over what is at base a strong policy disagreement. We disagree.

1430 There is nothing wrong with that. They have one view and we have a different one. They will do things one way and I will do them a different way.

That is why we are on opposite sides of the House. It is worth recalling too that our political system is, at base, adversarial and confrontational. This is based on the Westminster model which is not exactly a recipe for consensus politics.

1435 However, in the context of our international legal status, a well-worn tactic of divide and conquer, has been far from the minds of those who designed it. Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, it is true that the Opposition could have dealt with this matter in a different way. The path they have chosen sets a precedent for the future.

1440 Motions of no confidence or any other contentious subject. In my view, this path increases polarisation, politicises oversight, actually weakens institutional checks and encourages tactical militancy and has the potential to undermine the results of a General Election. The hon. Member said earlier that they respect the outcome of the 2023 Election.

1445 But they do not show it, and they do not act as if they did. In my view, motions should not be weaponised in this way. We must not erode the legitimacy of our institutions for short-term political gain.

The choice of the people as Chief Minister cannot be altered on the back of a policy dispute. The stability of Government must remain anchored to the choice freely expressed by voters. Time and again, the public have chosen continuity, investment, security and stability under my hon. Friend.

1450 That is why the support, the confidence and the trust of this House must, in my view, reflect that position. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Am I right in saying the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister has not moved the amendment? Has he given notice of it or has he moved it?

1455 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am formally moving the amendment by giving notice.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question in terms of the amendment moved by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. Would anyone like to speak on the amendments? Yes. The Hon. Mr Clinton.

1460 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you Madam Speaker. The Deputy Chief Minister, as a historian, will know that some great leaders in the past have had their otherwise stellar careers cut short, not through a lack of achievement, Madam Speaker, but through a change of public mood or change of political opinion. Of course, we all know that Winston Churchill won the war, but he lost the Election.

Julius Caesar, you could argue, had great achievements. He conquered Egypt. The Deputy Chief Minister could have been giving his Mark Antony speech in praise of Caesar.

1465 Look at what Caesar has done for us. Look how wealthy Rome is. You should be grateful to Caesar, but we all know how Caesar ended.

It was his political friends that decided that the tyrant of Rome had to go. There is nothing wrong in the Opposition bringing this motion. I accept that the Deputy Chief Minister is trying to be constructive, and indeed his amendment is constructive.

1470 But the fact remains, Madam Speaker, that this motion has come about not because the Opposition are being politically opportunists, or that we want to overturn the results of the Election. We have heard in the last couple of days about the McGrail Report, or the McGrail Inquiry Report by Openshaw. But the motivation, or the actual catalyst for this motion, was the way the Principal Auditor was being dealt with.

1475 And then the Deputy Chief Minister, you know, he talks about, or accuses the Opposition rather, of engaging in character assassination, and personalising politics, and poisoning the public discourse. And that we should engage responsibly, and that the facts are more important than the opinions. But Madam Speaker, using his own words, he's being light on substance.

1480 This is a nuclear option, because unfortunately this is the only thing that they understand. He talks about, oh well, there are other ways in which the Opposition can bring their concerns to the House. But Madam Speaker, we have tried all of them.

Umpteen times he said, well you can ask questions. Well Madam Speaker, I could give you the list of questions I tabled in this House in this session, and most of them are the answers, no it is commercially sensitive, we cannot tell you. No, it is commercially sensitive, we cannot tell you.

1485 And that is the quality of democracy that we get from Members opposites. They cannot even tell us how much the legal counsels are charging them, because they have not paid the fees yet. So, Madam Speaker, we get zero information from this Government.

1490 And yet the Deputy Chief Minister stands up, with a deadpan face, saying, well there are other things the Opposition can do. Madam Speaker, we are doing everything we possibly can. But the reason this motion is here today, and the reason we are debating this, is not because of those things which have been irritating enough in my ten years in this place.

The reason we are here is because they have weaponised this Parliament against the people. Yes, the Father of the House laughs, but that is exactly what they have done. That is exactly what the Government have done.

1495 As I said at the closing of my debate on the Principal Auditor, I am not going to go into all the detail about it, but it was not about a question of policy difference. The fact is that the Principal Auditor made some very good points they did not like. That is the truth of it.

And what happened there, Madam Speaker, is they went through a very public execution of the Principal Auditor. They engaged in character assassination. They accused him of political bias.

1500 They accused him of incompetence. It is the same things that the Members accuse McGrail of. And this has become the hallmark of this Government.

Either you are with them, or you are against them and the Chief Minister has the gall to stand up today and say, I do not believe people are afraid of us. I am a nice guy.

1505 But Madam Speaker, people are afraid of them. And for good reason, Madam Speaker, because if you cross them, you will have your name mentioned in this Parliament. You will be pilloried in this place, using their parliamentary privilege.

For them, conducting vendettas in this place is now the new normal. It is allowed. Next person they come along they do not like; they will have a motion against them.

1510 And it is just not on, I mean, how in God's name, Madam Speaker, is it right when the Chief Minister of Gibraltar questions the awarding of the status of KC to a lawyer in this Chamber? I mean, is that right?

And Madam Speaker, again, this motion is not about that. The Chief Minister may be guilty of multiple sins, as he is no doubt can be praised for some things that he has done. I am not saying everything he has ever done is wrong.

1515 But his behaviour, certainly in the last year, beggars' belief. It beggars' belief, Madam Speaker. As I said in the closing remarks on the debates of the Principal Auditor, what we witnessed, or what the public witnessed, was very public execution.

1520 Execution of a public officer, undertaking their duties as required under the Constitution. In good faith, Madam Speaker. And I wonder, Madam Speaker, I mean this is a hypothetical, but this is a debate.

What would have happened if the Principal Auditor had not retired? What would have happened then, Madam Speaker? Would they have had to force him out in the same way as they did with the Commissioner of Police?

1525 Would it be because, oh, I no longer have confidence in the Principal Auditor to undertake his constitutional duties? Madam Speaker, this cannot be right. It cannot be right that persons who are meant to be public officers are being hounded out of office because that is what the Government wants to do.

1530 And Madam Speaker, look, I know it upsets the Father of the House, but this is the truth of it. They are weaponising the House to achieve their political objectives. But Madam Speaker, what caused me more concern during the Principal Auditor's debate, and the Deputy Chief Minister has been singing the Chief Minister's virtues and all his achievements, but at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, it is about his behaviour and his behaviour in this House.

1535 I do not limit myself to one particular point. My Hon. friends will come up with other issues. But during the debate, some things were said about the Auditor's opinion, and I raised it at the time.

1540 And in the amendments to the original motion on the Principal Auditor's Report, the amendments, which was in fact passed and voted on by all of them, I do not know how because it was wrong, it said it provided a clean bill of health on the public accounts of Gibraltar. A clean bill of health. And Madam Speaker, I pointed out to the House and to the Chief Minister that that was wrong.

It was not a clean bill of health. The Chief Minister told the House that he had got a clean Auditor's opinion. He got top marks, to quote him, and that it was an unqualified opinion.

1545 But Madam Speaker, as I told the House at the time, you cannot selectively quote from an audit opinion. It is the same as selectively quoting from a legal opinion. And that is what the Chief Minister did.

And he did it knowingly, as I demonstrated to the House. He selectively quoted from the Auditor's Report, leaving out the words except for. In fact, even putting words in that the Auditor never said that I am totally satisfied.

1550 He never said that. And so, Madam Speaker, as I said at the time, he deliberately misrepresented the Auditor's opinion to this House. And therefore, Madam Speaker, I put it to the House that the House has been misled.

1555 And in the Ministerial Code, Madam Speaker, in Section 1.3(c), it says, it is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. It then goes on to say, Madam Speaker, Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to a Chief Minister. Now Madam Speaker, as we now know from the Openshaw Report, unfortunately, the Ministerial Code seems to leave a lot of discretion to a Chief Minister.

So, what happens when a Chief Minister knowingly misleads Parliament? Does he offer his resignation? Or is he immune from the rules of the Ministerial Code?

1560 Does he apply a different code to him? Because at the end of the day, as he claims, he is the alpha, the omega, the source of all power on the Government's side. At the end of the day, if there is, as the Deputy Chief Minister talked about, accountability, there needs to be responsibility.

Madam Speaker: May I interrupt the hon. Member for a moment, the Hon. Chief Minister is catching my eye.

1565 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, yes, as I indicated to you earlier, I need to now recess the House until half past six. I move that the House should recess until half past six.

Madam Speaker: Alright, we will recess until half past six and then I will call upon the Hon. Mr Clinton to finish his address.

The House recessed at 5.47 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Clinton was addressing the House.

1570 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Ah, where was I? Julius Caesar?

Madam Speaker, I think I finished talking just about the point about the Ministerial Code. And I think I just said that Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to a Chief Minister. But as we know from the Openshaw Report, as he described the Ministerial Code as unfortunately ineffective, to the extent Madam Speaker that we are now
1575 looking at legislating for conflicts of interest, and in fact the Chief Minister advised the House they have engaged Council in the UK to review the Ministerial Code.

So, the Ministerial Code is obviously not working. But Madam Speaker, if the Chief Minister expects his Ministers to maintain a standard as set out in the Ministerial Code as it exists at present, I think it is only reasonable to expect him to also abide by it. And the problem is Madam
1580 Speaker is that I gave the Chief Minister the opportunity to correct the record.

Again, I remind the House, he had told the House that the Audit Opinion for 2018-19 gave his Government top marks. And he even amended the motion to say that the 2018-19 Audit Opinion was providing a clean bill of health on the public accounts of Gibraltar. As I explained to the House at the time of the motion, that was not the case. The Audit Opinion was qualified. And I invited
1585 the Chief Minister to correct the record. And his response, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister did not correct the record. What he did was he doubled down. What he said was, well my report was no worse than everybody else's. Now Madam Speaker, that is not the point.

You cannot come to the House and tell the House I have a clean Audit Opinion and tell the people of Gibraltar you have got top marks when you did not, Madam Speaker. And if that is not
1590 misleading to the House, I do not know what is, Madam Speaker. And by the terms of the Ministerial Code, if he were an ordinary Minister, he would be expected to offer the resignation.

But no, Madam Speaker, we do not get that from the Chief Minister because the Chief Minister is special. Ordinary rules do not apply to him. And so, Madam Speaker, we have a situation whereby the Chief Minister can pretty much say whatever he likes to this place and get away with
1595 it. Because nobody will hold him to account.

Now Madam Speaker, the reason why the Leader of the Opposition brought this motion at all was because the Chief Minister was engaging in the character assassination of the Principal Auditor, who is a Constitutional Officer. So, it is okay for the Chief Minister to attack a
1600 Constitutional Officer. It is okay for the Chief Minister to make statements which he knowingly knows to be incorrect to Parliament. And yet there are no consequences, Madam Speaker. But it is not okay for us to call him out.

Yeah, and of course, it is then, you know, terrible for the Opposition to call him out or to point these things out to Parliament. I mean, do his colleagues not understand this? Or is it that they choose not to understand it?

1605 And by choosing not to understand it, Madam Speaker, look, it is their decision. But their consciences are going to bear a heavy burden in the future. Because they are knowingly going along with what is incorrect, Madam Speaker.

1610 They have an opportunity today to show that they were Elected to this place for the people of Gibraltar and not for power. Not for their political Party. Not for the special interest groups, which some Members opposite have in higher regard than the people of Gibraltar.

As we have seen in the Openshaw Report. I mean, the Father of the House, in all, I think he must be joking, Madam Speaker, when he talks about the deference offered by the Commissioner of Police to a wealthy member of the public. Well, Madam Speaker, and what exactly would he describe the Chief Minister as having done in the Openshaw Report?

1615 If that was not deference and special treatment. So, what is it? One rule for their friends and one rule for everybody else?

that is effectively what they are telling the House. Madam Speaker, the lux of this motion is not about the record of the Government in 14 years. It is about confidence in the Chief Minister.

1620 In how he is leading this House. And in fact, leading the Government. And in how he is handling conflicts.

And his inability to recognise conflicts when they arise. And that is the crux of the matter, Madam Speaker. He tells the House, Madam Speaker, proudly proclaims to the people of Gibraltar, he has never lied.

1625 He says he's never lied. Madam Speaker, it is patently obvious that on the opinion of the Principal Auditor's Report, he misled the House. That is true, Madam Speaker.

I do not make these things up. I invited him to correct the record. He did not correct the record, Madam Speaker.

Now, under the Ministerial Code...

1630 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Point of Order, the hon. Gentleman said I misled the House, It is not possible to do that under the rules of the House, other than on a substantive motion. This is not a substantive motion that I misled the House. So, I ask that he withdraw it.

And if he wishes, he put a motion in that respect.

Madam Speaker: That is the practise procedure and the rules of this House. Any accusations of misleading the House have to be under cover of a substantive motion.

1635 **Hon. R M Clinton:** In which case, Madam Speaker, I apologise to the Chief Minister. But at the end of the day, it is a motion of confidence in the Chief Minister. And in pretty much the same way as the Father of the House thinks, well, we should read into the record everything that is pertinent to the Commissioner of the Police.

1640 I think the House should be aware of the Chief Minister's view on the Principal Auditor's Report. Well, look, if I have transgressed the rules of the House, Madam Speaker, I apologise. But Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, it is for Members opposite to decide what their individual positions are.

1645 Our Deputy Chief Minister has made it clear that he believes that the Chief Minister enjoys the full support of the House. And others have said the same thing. And today we will find out the truth of the matter.

But regardless of the outcome of the votes today, Madam Speaker, and as the Deputy Chief Minister keeps reminding us, the only opinion that counts is that in the ballot box. And regardless of what happens today, Madam Speaker, they will suffer the consequences at the ballot box. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

1650 **Madam Speaker:** Does any other hon. Member wish to speak? I am looking to the right side of the House. The Hon. Sir Joe Bossano.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I assume that they have known from the beginning that we are not going to be supporting the motion that they put originally. I mean, I do not know in what world they live if they thought that

1655 was the minutest chance of that happening. So really, they just put the motion because they had to put something here to be able to attack us.

And that is what they do. And that is fine. But it is not that they thought that we are all so discontented with the Chief Minister that we are going to support what they say.

1660 If that were the case, then it would have happened outside this House and inside the Party where the machinery of democracy works. And therefore, I can tell the hon. Members that we fully support the Chief Minister. We do not accept that he should resign or should go.

1665 And indeed, that is true as far as the GSLP is concerned in respect of the Elected Members, in respect of the members of the Executive, in respect of the active group, the Party officials, and in respect of the general membership. And indeed, if we could, we would persuade him to not go and stand again for the next Election. (*banging on desks*) OK?

I think that is clear. So, they do not need to be waiting impatiently a long time to see what the result is going to be. Now or for the foreseeable future.

1670 Dealing specifically with the contributions of the hon. Member opposite. He says that look what happened with Churchill, he won the war and then he did not get Elected. Well, it is not that Churchill won the war and did not get Elected.

1675 Churchill will be always unique as a politician that saved Europe from fascism and from Hitler. Labour won the Election because Labour came with a reform programme and after the Election a lot of things changed, including the fact that a lot of working people after 1945 were no longer willing to accept the conditions that existed before 1939. The Labour post-1945 victory came in with a lot of reforms.

It was the first time social insurance was created. It was created in the reforming Labour Government. So, it had nothing to do with the fact that they were tired of Churchill having won the war.

1680 It was in fact from the point of view of many people who admired Churchill and appreciated what he did for Western civilisation. Then it seems a very cruel thing that he was not a continuing Prime Minister. They rejected the Tory manifesto, and they supported the Labour manifesto because it was a kind of change in society that was happening throughout Western Europe after the war.

1685 The world in 1945 was not the world of 1938. So that is not the kind of thing. Normally when in any Western country the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister changes it is because he has got a record of things going wrong for a very long time.

1690 This is not a record of things going wrong for a very long time. We are talking about a situation where something has happened which we have a different perception. The perception is not the perception of the Chief Minister. It is a perception of me. It is a perception of us. And the perception that we have is that the Report of the Principal Auditor that was produced in the last time was unlike any Principal Auditor Report before including his previous ones.

1695 His previous one limited itself to a year and the comments and concerns about one year which is what he is supposed to be doing. But this guy then does the year and then decides to go on a trolling of his own where he not only does the year he is supposed to do, but he also handpicks things for all the subsequent years which have not yet been done by the Auditor. I assume now the Auditor doing the audit of all those years may not have the same opinion of those years that he had. No Auditor has ever done that. No Auditor has done that before. And what is particularly interesting is the links.

1700 One of the things that happened after the Auditor's Report was that McGrail congratulated the Auditor's Report for criticising the whistleblowers. And the fact that they were being given money which happened after McGrail had launched an attack on the whistleblowers, accused them of being bribed to make false statements and they won their case. And after they won their case McGrail came out publicly again saying that although the case against the whistleblowers was lost because the Crown Prosecutor said there is no evidence.

1705 When the Crown Prosecutor said there is no evidence two extraordinary things happened. The police came out with a press release regretting that the prosecution had no evidence. Since when does the hon. Member think that this is a normal thing for the RGP to do?

Look at the connections. The RGP comes out with a press release saying we regret that the Principal Auditor has said there is no evidence against these people and that the case has folded up. The Principal Auditor makes critical comments criticising the treatment of the whistleblowers.

1710 And then McGrail comes out saying he calls for a criminal investigation in the alleged inducements to be re-opened after the Principal Auditor Report. And Members opposite say I am connecting him. I am not connecting anything; they are connecting themselves.

1715 Is this a normal situation in one other year? If the hon. Member talks about what happens in one other year?

Have we had a police force criticising a prosecution that has no evidence? And then the poor victim of McGrail which will soon be revealed as not being the victim of anything but the other way round. Calls for what has just been dropped to be re-ignited on the basis that the comments of the Principal Auditor are sufficient for a re-opening of the investigations which have just been closed. So, this is not a normal run of the mill report.

1720 The normal run of the mill report normally is a report that does all the things that the hon. Member said the Auditors do and I remind the hon. Member, Madam Speaker, that I said I was grateful to him when we had that debate because he actually explained in a level of detail what the role of auditing is and what the role was in connection with the people who make the accounts and the people who audit. And he explained very well and I was grateful because I did not know that level of detail and I did not have the expertise that he did.

1725 But I think what the Principal Auditor did in his last report is not what they do normally because it has never been done before. And if you are auditing a report I do not see why the fact that you are auditing a report gives you the right to say I do not agree that the Chief Minister should decide to give somebody a house. What has that got to do with auditing a report?

1730 What? I mean he does not agree, ok? As a citizen he does not agree.

If he joins their Party and stands for Election, he has a right not to agree to criticise it. But what effect does who gets the house or does not get the house in the waiting list have on the accounts of the Government? Zero!

1735 So he has no right to criticise that decision which was explained because it is an issue that there are cases that the top person on the waiting list does not get it because there are reasons that are not publicised about what is the particular condition of an individual or a family that is in a more desperate situation and then a political decision is taken that this person is in such a desperate situation that he has to be given the house, right? It may be true, may not be true but an explanation was given.

1740 There should not have been a need to give an explanation because it is none of his business. That is not what he was paid to do. And as I say to go into years into the future questioning things that will have to be re-questioned by the Auditor that then does those future years seems a very odd thing to do.

1745 So I told him at the last time when we were discussing it that what I thought was different in the year was that there was a level of comment that went in my view beyond the role of the Principal Auditor where he was expressing criticisms of who gets paid what which actually identified people and if somebody is saying that this is illegal then it is a different issue. The hon. Member says that he does not get answers to questions of things that are confidential. Well of course he does not get answers to questions because he is not asking questions of where the money is from the Government.

1750 The question that he asked to which he did not get an answer from me is the Savings Bank is the only institution that publishes every month where it has put all its money. They think that it is also common or right that where the money goes now has to be published as to where that entity has put that money. You do not see that anywhere.

1755 Nobody expects that. Nobody has ever done that. So that is the issue that he has.

1760 So, he gets a lot of questions, a lot of answers but there is one answer that they say they will not answer because it is confidential. Because it is confidential. Because if he comes tomorrow to do a business project and he presents something that is good for Gibraltar and something that is profitable and the advice that I get is that it should be done and I am the politician that is answerable and responsible for the Savings Bank.

1765 And I look at the numbers, and I say yes, I think it is right. That does not mean that because I have been able to see a confidential document in order to reassure myself that it should be done and in order to be able to defend it politically that I can then publish it. What right have I got to publish it?

1770 I mean does not he know that there are rules about respecting the privacy of people, that there are rules about the figures that are being put to a private entity. When it comes to somebody borrowing directly from the Savings Bank, the Savings Bank publishes where the Savings Bank's money has gone which is the first step, but he wants all the steps after that. The level of information we provide is massive compared to the level of information that they provided when they were in Government.

1775 The treatment that the Chief Minister gives to people when they ask questions here is the treatment of a pussycat compared to the treatment we got there when they were in Government. When we were there and we put questions to the then Chief Minister, we were attacked even before you put a supplementary. So, it was not a bad thing really that it only happened once a year because we were only tasked once a year.

So, the Member opposite has to have a sense of perspective. He has to measure things by what has happened in the past. There are many things that we have improved compared to the past.

1780 It may be that if they were in Government they would not go back to the bad old ways. They might continue with our reforms but to suggest that because of the report, the elements of the report of the Principal Auditor that we disagree with because we are accused of attacking him. No, we are defending ourselves.

1785 He has attacked us. He has gone beyond his role to attack us, and we defend ourselves here in Parliament because he is a member of the Parliament because of his place and if he is allowed to say things about us surely, we are allowed to defend ourselves.

He is not permitted. He is kind of defensive. We are not attacking him. We disagree with what he said was wrong about what we were doing. We are not allowed to do that. That is wrong.

1790 Okay, so what he is doing is right, but we are not entitled to even put in the public domain, and we can only do it here, we are not going to be changing press releases with him, our side of the story. I do not think the Member is right in saying what we are doing is a terrible thing and it is anti-democratic. Look, what he said is in the public domain and what he has written.

What we think of what he said is also entitled to be in the public domain and people read it. If people agree with us, they will say he is wrong and if people do not agree with us, they will say we are wrong and he is right. So, what is wrong with that?

1795 The Chief Minister has to go because of that. I mean the idea of democracy seems to be that it depends on whether it suits them or it does not suit them, whether it is right or it is wrong. Things are right or wrong depending on who says it.

1800 If we say things are wrong or they say things are wrong, they are still wrong not because they say it or whether we say it, it is because it is empirically the case. We believe with the value of an argument that the Principal Auditor's Report that he made when he left is unlike the report that other auditors have made before him and that he only made it in my view because he was going. And because he was going, he had a final flick at all those grievances, and he looked for everything that he could criticise because I can find no other explanation for the change that happened.

1805 The hon. Member makes a thing about the Chief Minister was lying because he said that they had given us a clean bill, and he did not say except for. The Chief Minister as far as I remember is that the phrase about the accounts which is therefore except for qualifying it to the remarks that may have made is the same one that is there every year. So, if the same one is there every year, then you cannot come along and say ah, but the accounts have been qualified this year.

1810 You are misleading people if you say it is qualified this year because in every other year that you have been here you have not said the same thing and both carry the same phrase. So, what is it that people have to say ah this is something new.

1815 If we hear the Member of the Opposition say this year the accounts have not been given a clean bill of health this year well that suggests that there is something different this year. If what it says this year it has said every other year in the history of Gibraltar, then by saying this year it has not been done you are creating the impression that something different has happened. Surely, he must understand that that is what he is doing.

1820 I assume he is doing it deliberately because he wants to do it or he has done it without thinking that that is the impression that people will get. So, to say it has got a clean bill of health because every other year nobody has suggested that it has not and the words are identical does not seem to be an unreasonable thing which means therefore it is valuable. If that was the level of lying that he has done in all his life, then who enters into heaven is guaranteed.

1825 So, Madam Speaker I think that the motion today is a motion that is simply a continuation of what we have had in the last few months and that all we are going to do is repeat the respective positions that we have. Of course, it is not that we say we need to pass behind because we want people to forget about it. If they want, we can have the same motions every month.

1830 I am quite happy to do that. It means that I have to stay longer than 12 hours in the office to make up for the time I waste here but if that keeps them happy, I will go along with it. But I would think that there is more productive use of time to be done in this place than repeating the positions we all know of each other in the knowledge that we are not going to convince each other.

And therefore, it is in the hands of the Members opposite for how long I want to keep it up or whether they are satisfied that we thrash it out sufficiently.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mrs. Ladislaus.

1835 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker in the November 2006 Referendum the people of Gibraltar who we all represent in this House were asked in exercise of your right to self-determination do you approve and accept the proposed new Constitution for Gibraltar? Madam Speaker the words in exercise of your right to self-determination because our Constitution is so much more than just a document because for us here in Gibraltar Madam Speaker it is more even than the foundational document from which our other laws derive. It is symbolic of everything that those who came before us fought for and fought so hard for and for what we continue to fight for.

1840 What everyone in this House Madam Speaker is on the same page on which is our right as a people to self-determination to govern ourselves and not have somebody make those decisions for us. We sent a very powerful message when we said yes to the Constitution because we said yes to modernising our democracy and to providing the safeguards that ensure that the Government's power is kept in check. That certain institutions maintain independence from outside influence including that of the Government and that nobody can have absolute power because absolute power corrupts Madam Speaker.

1845 And yet what we have seen quite blatantly in the past few years is a full frontal and shameless Government assault on the Constitution. They either simply do not realise the damage and consequences of what they are doing or they simply do not care. I do not know which one of those two it is Madam Speaker, but I think it might be a case of a bit of both and every time that they are called out for it they do their best to shift the blame.

1850 Madam Speaker four months ago I had considered this contribution, and it was in respect to the Government's actions which related to the latest Principal Auditor's Report. But since the Chief Minister has deliberately drawn out that debate I will also be turning today to why we can no longer have any confidence in the Chief Minister because of the findings in relation to him within the McGrail Inquiry Report.

1860 Madam Speaker let us go back to the Constitution and talk about the Principal Auditor's Report. Along with the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms like the protection of the right to life, to personal liberty, from inhuman treatment, the role of the Principal Auditor and his powers are also enshrined in the Constitution which the Chief Minister and the Government have spent months attacking Madam Speaker. The Constitution says that section 74 very clearly, I am quoting from that now:

1865 The public accounts of Gibraltar and of all courts of law and all authorities and offices of the Government shall be audited and reported on by the Principal Auditor and for that purpose the Principal Auditor or any person authorised by him in that behalf shall have access to all books, records, reports and other documents relating to those accounts,

1870 all of them Madam Speaker.

The Principal Auditor shall submit and lay his reports before the Parliament and in the exercise of his functions under the Constitution the Principal Auditor shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.

1875 Madam Speaker, according to subsection 1 which we have just read out, the Principal Auditor should have been given access to all the books, all the records, all the reports and all the other documents relating to those accounts which he asked for but on many occasions as we saw in his most recent reports and in other previous reports too Madam Speaker which were prepared by him and which the Government did not contend as strongly as they have this one, it is clear that
1880 he has not been given access to all the information requested as and when needed.

Moving on to subsection 2 Madam Speaker,

The Principal Auditor shall submit and lay his reports before the Parliament.

1885 The Principal Auditor does this because he is an Officer of this Parliament and he does not answer to the Government Madam Speaker. The Chief Ministers motion in respect to the Principal Auditor was brought simply to control the criticisms laid in that report because they do not like what is been said.

1890 Because Madam Speaker with this Government it is like opening one of those packets of very sour sweets and picking through the ones which are your favourites and then you pass around the ones that you do not like. The Government pick at the findings in the same way that they like and they either throw back the ones that they do not like Madam Speaker or they try to share out the responsibility so that they can avoid accountability themselves and in that sense they are exactly like a packet of sour Haribo. The integrity and independence of the former Principal Auditor and
1895 his work had never been called into question Madam Speaker by the Government before now.

Just weeks before they were thanking him for all his work and we have heard that various times. it is incredible that in all the years in which Mr Sacramento served as a Civil Servant his so-called political bias has not apparently shown because we heard even Sir Joe Bossano in this House, the father of the House said in his contribution that he had had a good relationship with
1900 him and that there was no evidence of any cracks in that relationship Madam Speaker. But suddenly when something does not go the Government's way his integrity is then called into question.

1905 The Government Madam Speaker rubbish the idea that people are afraid of them, of speaking out against them. But when they said that again today, I was reminded Madam Speaker of the placards that were held by GHA employees this past summer during a very well attended demonstration outside No 6 and on those placards, it said black upon white that they were afraid to speak out. And also, Madam Speaker, it reminds me of all the posters that are set up around the PCC around the hospital which state specifically that employees are afraid to speak up and that Madam Speaker is the general culture out there in the public.

1910 Madam Speaker when the Government come here and rubbish the Principal Auditor in the way they have done so for doing his job what message does that send to other Civil Servants? What message does it send to the Office of the Principal Auditor and to the current Principal Auditor? What message does it send to the public about the state of our democracy?

1915 What we have seen in this session of Parliament is that the Chief Minister has turned this House into a courtroom where he's put the Principal Auditor on trial. It is very interesting Madam Speaker that even the Chief Minister himself slipped on two occasions and referred to this House as a court because he said this court on two occasions. The only court that the Chief Minister should be concerned about Madam Speaker is the court of public opinion right now.

1920 The issue with that of course quite apart from the fact that this is not a courtroom is that during a fair trial the person who stands accused is given an opportunity to put forward evidence to refute what is being said. Of course, in this instance the former Principal Auditor cannot do that. He was already on the back foot because of all the failures outlined in his report which point to a lack of information being provided when they were requested by him.

1925 Even more unfairly and shockingly he has been accused of political bias in an attempt to discredit the contents of his report. Madam Speaker just because somebody takes a similar or even the same view as a political party does not mean that they are biased towards it. Has it ever occurred to the Government that when someone with a professional standing such as a Principal Auditor has makes recommendations as to improving procedures it might just be because the solution suggested a common practise in other jurisdictions. Maybe their best practise and maybe they come from a place of experience. Has that ever occurred at any point?

1930 Madam Speaker I liken that in fact to the findings in the McGrail Inquiry by the highly experienced retired judge that is Sir Peter Openshaw.

1935 He made findings about the Chief Minister that are less than complimentary Madam Speaker and sadly that also needs to be challenged. There is a clear pattern of behaviour emerging. A Chief Minister and a Cabinet Madam Speaker is what we see who are unwilling to be held to account no matter what.

1940 We will return to that later. The other problem with treating this House as a courtroom Madam Speaker is that in a trial everyone has been given all the evidence to consider. But here it is only the Government that holds all that evidence.

1945 We can only see what they choose to provide us and to make public. They control the narrative yet even when that narrative is carefully curated to provide in respect to what they did provide in respect to the Principal Auditor's Report it did not add up. Madam Speaker turning to the McGrail Inquiry which we have heard so much about over the past few days.

1950 Let me start by saying this. The rule of law in any democracy is absolutely sacrosanct. There is no choosing if and when to uphold it.

1955 We cannot do the Haribo here. There is no blurring the lines when it suits and nobody is above the rule of law. Over the past few weeks plenty of opinions have been expressed relating to the findings of the McGrail Inquiry and today we have been treated to a second hearing of the Inquiry Madam Speaker.

1960 We have had the Inquiry within an Inquiry, and it is a completely improper use of the procedures of this House. The irony Madam Speaker of hearing what we did today as to protect the disclosures was not lost on me and I am sure it will not have been lost on the public. Because Madam Speaker yesterday we were debating the findings of the Inquiry arrived at again by a very experienced retired judge who found that the Chief Minister had attempted numerous times to interfere in a live criminal investigation involving his own close friend.

1955 He was found to have attempted interference with the operational independence of the RGP. Today however we heard the Father of the House wearing his new hat of Minister for Protected Disclosures. Go through statements submitted to the McGrail Inquiry, Madam Speaker and which were deemed to have been irrelevant to the subject matter of the Inquiry might I add.

1960 Now some of that Madam Speaker may form the subject matter of what the Commissioner of Police confirmed last week was being considered by the RGP and that regardless of whether it was

1965 the Chief Minister who asked him to look into that or it was a decision taken by the RGP itself. The act of bringing potential evidence into this House is one which again demonstrates that this Government does not appear to respect the lines between the separation of powers. So now Madam Speaker, Government have done the job of the police in looking into statements of alleged criminality. They have held courts and done the job of judge, jury and executioner in here. And they are going to be doing the job of the Principal Auditor soon as well when they produce their very own version of the last report. What do we need different branches of Government for separation of powers Madam Speaker. This Cabinet is prepared to do it all.

1970 In politics it is to be expected that we will talk about policies. It is expected Madam Speaker that the public will want to know what the parties' policies are before they make a decision as to whether they want to vote for them and they want to support them and we have heard this afternoon the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister talking about the concept of policies and how we have a difference in the ideas of our policies and the ways that we would actually choose to implement those. But Madam Speaker integrity is not actually a policy.

1975 A willingness to be held accountable is not a policy and transparency is not a policy. These are all qualities that are to be expected of anyone who holds public office. What we have been debating for months is not a difference on policies.

1980 Again, I wish it was because it would mean that this House can get on with its work of actually furthering services to people, of improving their lives instead of being stuck in here discussing what is not policy. Exactly its principle as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition says. Madam Speaker it is the findings that we have been discussing in respect of two separate reports as to how this Government, as to how the holder of the highest Office of the land have been conducting themselves.

1985 The conclusions of both of those reports are clear, and the public have drawn their conclusions. Heads of Government have resigned for less Madam Speaker, and it is no defence to say that someone has been Elected to Government. It is no defence to look at the history of their achievements as the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister has sought to do today.

1990 In the face of behaviour that is unbecoming Madam Speaker, that has been found to be improper, that has been termed sinister by a judge. Someone may have the confidence of the electorate at the point they win an Election, but it does not mean that that confidence cannot be lost as it has been. It is eroded over a period of time, and we have seen that particularly spectacularly in the past few months.

1995 And also, Madam Speaker we have heard about all these achievements and the Deputy Chief Minister's contribution which might I add and observe, sounded like a speech in an Election campaign rather than a contribution as to a Motion of No Confidence. Madam Speaker, in respect of motions of no confidence, a Motion of No Confidence is not brought lightly, it is true. It is a last resort and never before has one been brought against a serving Chief Minister in this House.

2000 It is the ultimate tool of accountability. It questions whether the Head of a Government still commands the support of the legislature. But Madam Speaker, it also questions whether the head of a government still commands the support of the public and should command the support of the public.

2005 The Deputy Chief Minister in what has sounded like a speech again during an Election campaign and has not dealt with the issues, respectfully saying, that we have heard about in past months observes that this motion has been tabled in the knowledge that it has little prospect of success. Yes, Madam Speaker, we know that. Maybe so because of the way our Parliament is set up.

But given everything we have heard, it should have a prospect of success. That is the point to be made here. Because otherwise we are condoning an attack on democracy.

2010 It is as serious as that, Madam Speaker. It is not funny, it is serious. It says to the public that this Government should have an unvetted and unchecked ability to do whatever it chooses whether it is found to be right or wrong because they won an Election.

That is the position that is been taken today by the Deputy Chief Minister, Madam Speaker. And it is shocking, but unfortunately nowadays it is become the norm. Madam Speaker, I want to

2015 conclude this contribution with an Abraham Lincoln quote, which I think is very relevant here today.

It does quote the United States of America, but I think it is relevant to the situation here. And I hope that Ministers today will just reflect on it. Our safety, our liberty depends upon preserving the Constitution of the United States, here of Gibraltar, as our fathers made it, in violence.

2020 The people of the United States, here in Gibraltar, are the rightful masters of both Congress and the courts of Parliament, Madam Speaker, and the courts. Not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution. So, Madam Speaker, for all the reasons which I have just set out, and because the Constitution needs to be upheld at all times, I will be voting in favour of the motion as proposed by the Leader of the Opposition and against the amendments made by the Deputy Chief Minister, Madam Speaker.

2025 **Madam Speaker:** We are speaking on the amendment now. that is what is before the House.

Hon. J Ladislaus: Sorry Madam Speaker, I will be speaking against the amendments brought by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. Because Madam Speaker, Ministers should not just vote under pressure of a political party. They should vote under the pressure of their own conscience, Madam Speaker, and not blind allegiance.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Feetham.

2035 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I do not know how many times over the last two weeks, we have actually repeated the same statement. That each and every one of us on this side of the House has full confidence in the Chief Minister, Madam Speaker. No pressure whatsoever, at no point in time was anybody asked by the Chief Minister to come here or go publicly and make any statements of support on his behalf, Madam Speaker. So let us be absolutely clear in the terms of the motion. The motion says very clearly that this House has confidence in the Chief Minister. It is a statement that each and every one of us will endorse and affirm, Madam Speaker. And let me say, Madam Speaker, that the last two days in particular has been a salutary lesson in party unity and indeed collective responsibility, Madam Speaker.

2040 Something that they certainly do not subscribe to. And the reason for that is very simple, Madam Speaker.

2045 I will develop it during the course of my address. The Hon. Mr Bossino felt offended, Madam Speaker, when the Hon. Chief Minister today used the term bloodless coup. He was offended, Madam Speaker.

He was even scandalised. But of course, the Hon. Mr Bossino is a master of political coups, Madam Speaker, and I will develop that argument as well here today. He accuses us, Madam Speaker, he accuses us in this Chamber over the last two days, as he did indeed during my GBC debate last week, saying that we on this side of the House have no moral compass.

2050 Madam Speaker, I am not going to make a judgement. Yes, you did say it on a number of occasions. Moral compass, Madam Speaker, I am not going to make a judgement on whether or not the hon. Member has a personal moral compass but what I am entitled to do, Madam Speaker, is to say that he has no political moral compass, Madam Speaker. Because when the Hon. Chief Minister yesterday, Madam Speaker, described him as slim shady, Madam Speaker, slim shady is not a term that was coined by the Hon. Chief Minister. Absolutely not, as the Hon. Chief Minister rightly pointed out, Madam Speaker.

2060 It is a reference which is contained in Hansard, and I think I made a search today through Hansard and I saw at least five references to slim shady, Madam Speaker. Of course, slim shady, Madam Speaker, is the reference that the former Leader of the Opposition used to describe the hon. Member Mr Bossino. And I have got a copy here of Hansard, Madam Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt.

It is Hansard of the 23rd of February 2018, Madam Speaker, when the former Leader of the Opposition, who was coming under pressure internally from his own Party, Madam Speaker, from his own Party. Let us talk about Party unity, Madam Speaker, collective responsibility, when he was under pressure from his own party and the internal divisions within his Party. The Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber, those that were here may recall it, I think it was the Hon. Mr Reyes, it was also the Hon. Father of the House, the Deputy Chief Minister and the Chief Minister.

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You may recall that in Hansard, the former Leader of the Opposition said this, Madam Speaker, in a speech that he gave in this House, when he was facing the internal divisions caused by several Members on the opposite side, who were then, not in Parliament, because the Hon. Mr Bossino was not in Parliament, Madam Speaker, he had left the GSD, Madam Speaker, he had left the GSD because he did not want to stand for Election again, Madam Speaker, but that did not stop the machinations within the Party. And the Hon. former Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote,

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will the real Slim Shady please stand up, please stand up,

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and that was a reference to the hon. Member opposite, who was not a Member in this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

And of course that suited the leadership ambitions of the hon. Member opposite, because he was defeated in his first leadership contest against the then Leader of the Opposition or the person who became the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Party in 2011. It suited his own leadership ambitions to get rid of the former Leader of the Opposition in order to be able to contest what he believed would be a vacant leadership contest, as indeed there was, Madam Speaker, and he was defeated a second time by the now Leader of the Opposition. And I must apologise to him, Madam Speaker, because in the GBC debate last week, I said to him, when he said all sorts of things about the hon. Members on this side of the House, I said to him, well, you have lost three leadership contests, and he said to me, no, no, no, I have only lost two, as if it makes it much better.

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Yes, Madam Speaker, he lost two, he did not lose three leadership contests, and to that extent, I apologise, and as the Hon. Chief Minister rightly points out, he will lose the next leadership Election as well, Madam Speaker. And the then former Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, given all the machinations within the party, Madam Speaker, also said this, and I am reading from Hansard, it is the same Hansard of the 23rd of February, Madam Speaker. He goes on to refer to Mr Llamas, and Mr Llamas was then an independent MP that had left the GSD, Madam Speaker, but he sat in this Chamber, and Mr Feetham, the former Leader of the Opposition, said this,

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we all know, we are not stupid, we all know,

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he, referring to Mr Llamas,

is not a lone wolf. He forms part of a pack of wolves, political wolves,

there was laughter, according to Hansard, in this Chamber, and he says,

a rather timid pack of wolves, one that prefers to lurk in the political shadows.

And according to Hansard, we hear the words, hear, hear, I do not know whether the words hear, hear came from this side of the House, or from that side of the House, Madam Speaker, from those Members that sat on the opposite bench, and Madam Speaker, he then went on to say,

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rather than coming out openly in broad daylight, but pack a pack of wolves, nevertheless.

Madam Speaker, it is the same pack of wolves that are now calling for the political blood of the Chief Minister, Madam Speaker, but it is incumbent on us, on this side of the House, Madam

2105 Speaker, to protect his human and constitutional rights. And before they get to the Chief Minister, they will have to come through each and every one of us, Madam Speaker.

And of course, as I said yesterday, Madam Speaker, in my address to this House on the previous motion, what they are trying to do, Madam Speaker, what they are trying to do is to dehumanise and demonise the Chief Minister, Madam Speaker. And it is clear what the strategy is.

2110 The strategy is quite clear and transparent, Madam Speaker. It is quite clear and transparent that all they care about is agitating public opinion in Gibraltar. And I made the point in our GBC debate last week, and it is not the first time that Mr Bossino does this, Madam Speaker.

2115 Of course, he cannot take criticism. He likes to dish it out, but of course, he cannot take criticism himself. And on one occasion, Madam Speaker, in this Chamber, he described me as the Che Guevara, I think, of Gibraltar politics, Madam Speaker, the Che Guevara of Gibraltar politics.

2120 And the Hon. Chief Minister, Madam Speaker, pointed out from a sedentary position and actually questioning the appropriateness of that comparison because Che Guevara, Madam Speaker, whether we agree or disagree with his political ideology, Che Guevara was assassinated, Madam Speaker. He was assassinated. And I cannot say that I associate myself with Che Guevara or I do not.

I think the criticism from the hon. Member opposite was in the context of my tax strategy. Of course, he was here to defend big business, Madam Speaker, as he has done today. He is here to defend the powerful, Madam Speaker, the establishment.

2125 But when we saw the results of the tax strategy as the tax strategy was implemented, Madam Speaker, we came to this House with an additional £85 million of tax revenues, £85 million of tax revenue that we invested in education, that we invested in health, and that we invested in those things which the people of Gibraltar feel is important to them. The Father of the House, Madam Speaker, will clearly associate himself with Che Guevara because I think he has done it on a number of occasions, Madam Speaker. He calls himself the freedom fighter and he said it before 2130 the United Nations. He said it on National Day, Madam Speaker, and he has demonstrated here today that he is a freedom fighter, Madam Speaker, and if Trump were to invade Greenland or any other territory, the Father of the House would be the first one, Madam Speaker, to enlist and go there and fight for the freedoms of the people in those territories, Madam Speaker. As he has amply demonstrated today that he's still very well equipped and able to do so, Madam Speaker.

2135 And we have got to be careful, Madam Speaker, that we do not raise the temperature, Madam Speaker, of this debate and unfortunately, over the last month and a half, which is exactly what the hon. Members have done, Madam Speaker, and it is most unfortunate because you never know how it is interpreted outside Gibraltar and the unintended consequences. The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister has made the point, Madam Speaker. One has to sometimes temper the debate, 2140 Madam Speaker, because there are people that might be listening to the debate that do not take the things that are said in the context in which they are made, Madam Speaker.

2145 And I know that full well, Madam Speaker, because two weeks ago I was told by the Royal Gibraltar Police, Madam Speaker, that they had intelligence, that they had intelligence that indicated, Madam Speaker, that death threats had been made against me, Madam Speaker. And I am not, for one moment, going to suggest that those threats emanated as a result of anything that was said in this House. But it was said, Madam Speaker, in the context of my defence for the Gaming Sector in Gibraltar and indeed the economy of Gibraltar.

2150 And whatever was said was misinterpreted because there are very strong and passionate views, Madam Speaker, in that context. And all I am suggesting to the hon. Members is take care of how you raise the temperature of the debate because unfortunately, Madam Speaker, it can result in unintended consequences. I must say that I am happy, Madam Speaker, that the motion has been amended in the way that it has been amended, Madam Speaker, and that it is not directed at the Leader of the Opposition, not because I wish him any political goodwill, Madam Speaker, because it does, I think, help to lower the temperature.

2155 Quite apart from the fact, Madam Speaker, that if the motion had been amended in the way that we were proposing at the time, his colleague to the right, no doubt, would have used it to

undermine him even more, Madam Speaker. And finally, Madam Speaker, a reference was made by one of the hon. Members opposite that Churchill won the war but lost the Election. Actually, Madam Speaker, Churchill lost the first battle, the battle for France, Madam Speaker, he lost the first battle, but he won the war.

2160 The hon. Members opposite, Madam Speaker, no doubt, when they read the Inquiry Report on the 23rd of December, they already declared that they had won the war. But as the Hon. Chief Minister pointed out yesterday, they may have, on the 23rd of December, as a result of the Report, they may have felt that they had won that battle, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that they will not win the war because they will definitely lose the next General Election (*banging on desks*).

Madam Speaker: Any hon. Member on this side of the House? Well any hon. Member really. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: As is normally the case with Hon. Minister for Financial Services, he makes a contribution on a motion which is completely and utterly irrelevant to the motion before us. I am quite relaxed about that record because it actually does not represent the truth of the position. But I do not need to go there. I do not need to go there.

2170 We are debating here today whether, in effect, we have confidence, as a Parliament, in the Chief Minister. And the result is, as the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister points out, predetermined. This is the nature of our Parliament, he says.

2175 But to hear the Hon. Mr Feetham go on about these insulting references to me, which were said now in the distant past, which, if I follow the Hon. Chief Minister's advice, one ought not to do, and to look forward, you know, it is completely and utterly irrelevant. And he says that the reference to me in those terms had been made five times. He has even done a search of our Hansard.

2180 The reality is that I suspect that on most of those occasions when a reference has been made in those terms, had been done by the Chief Minister. Because he uses it in his obsession at attacking me as a stick to hit me with. But he has come up here with clearly wanting to, and quite frankly it is quite boring, wanting to exact vengeance in his own mind about things which he says happened on this side, in this party, on this side of the House.

2185 Why is he so obsessed with that? And it is totally irrelevant. But actually, I put to him that in focussing so much his attack on me and my political history, he has not only done a disservice to this House, but actually to him himself and indeed to them on that side of the House.

2190 Because he should have focused his speech and intervention and firepower on defending the Chief Minister. Are we to read in that implicitly that actually he is not that convinced? So, what he does is he comes here and focusses the attack on me.

I am not even the Leader of the Opposition. So, I put to him that implicitly, actually, he is not that convinced. What happens is that he says that he is subject to collective responsibility.

2195 But he ought to be looking at Hansard when he has not been here, but I think it has also been said in his presence, but he may have forgotten that actually the Chief Minister does not hold the Cabinet when he says in votes in this House to the President. But he does hold the principle of collective responsibility such that they can vote. He said, I think, today or yesterday that he does not write the speeches and that they can vote as they please.

2200 So, they are free to vote against this motion. So again, he makes an error, not just an error of judgement, but actually an error of substance by dedicating so much of his ire and focus and criticism on me, on something that he says happened X number of years ago. Ancient history.

And, you know, the reality is that he also has a political history. But actually, in his case, I have got a political history indeed. I have been here and in politics now for, we were reminded by the Chief Minister, for about 35 years.

2205 But he also has a political history, which is chequered, and he needs to be very careful because he participated in the coup to try and get rid of Sir Joe Bossano when he was originally in the GSLP, and then they formed the Labour Party, and then they decided to come into the GSD, and then he

left the GSD. So, he needs to be careful about reminding members of the public and this House about political history. But what I say is based on fact and not innuendo or supposition.

2210 That is a fact and it is open. And in fact he wrote a letter to the Gibraltar Chronicle on the 19th July 2013 being heavily critical of Sir Joe Bossano on his policy of the Savings Bank which happens to be our policy now in terms of our political criticism about will he, does he remember about the two sets of accounts; the first on the balance sheet and the other one the off the balance sheet which has been our mantra now for a good number of years. Predates the Hon. Mr Clinton, when I was in the House. That was our position that we took unanimously as an executive of the GSD of which he was a member. But he is the one who has changed his mind, so he needs to be careful about citing political history, when actually he should be much more embarrassed because I am not embarrassed at all about the things that I have done. If I have offered myself to the leadership of this Party, I have done so and there has been a vote, and so what?

2220 So, he talks about demonising and dehumanising but that is exactly what he has tried to do with me but actually, the demonisation and the dehumanisation is being done by themselves on their own account as ruled by Sir Peter Openshaw in his report and indeed by Mr Sacramento in his report as Principal Auditor. It is not us, we have now repeated the point on many occasions over the last 48 hours. It is not us, they are doing it all very well themselves. They are doing a good job themselves in relation to that.

2225 And this notion that they are socialists, yes, I did refer to him as Che Guevara in jest because I do not think he's actually a real socialist. But they want to propagate this notion that we are the party of big business.

I wish sometimes. I wish. Because maybe the party coffers would be a bit healthier.

2230 But their party coffers, I am sure, are very, very healthy. Because as I have said before, they are the party of the new elite of Gibraltar. They are the party who are really supported by big businesses in the plural.

2235 Or did we not have the debate with the office block at the dockyard, for example? Did we not have that debate? They are the Party who have their coffers healthy, no doubt, as a result of big donations by big businesses. So, they are the party of the elite. They are the elite. They are not the Party, as the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano said, of the little guy.

Nobody believes that. They are the establishment. But, once again, Mr Feetham, the Hon. Mr Feetham, makes a contribution which is wholly and utterly irrelevant.

2240 And maybe he ought to be checking that from his point of view because he has got this obsession with me which I simply do not understand. He just needs to move on and not look at the rearview mirror.

2245 As far as the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano's contribution in this debate is concerned, once again, I think the point has been made by my two colleagues who have contributed so far. My three, sorry, colleagues who have contributed so far. This is a matter of principle that we are debating here. For the Hon. Sir Joe, who said that he would rather not be wasting his time here, and that is the regard with which he has this Parliament, but we have known that that has been the case with him. Those of us who have followed politics for many years.

2250 He says, well, on this occasion, something has happened of which we have a different perception. As if this was a minor thing in respect of which we are entitled to have a different view. This is something much more fundamental. This is something that goes to the roots of principled politics and the quality of our democracy. It is not something that, you know, something has happened. You know, the reality is that they do not like the conclusions which were arrived at by the Principal Auditor in his Report and by Sir Peter Openshaw, so it is those things that they want to discard and criticise and demolish and trash.

2255 There is a word that we have used very often over the last five or six months. It has been an attempt at political assassination of, I was going to say these two gentlemen, certainly of one gentleman, and that is the Principal Auditor, but in respect of the Openshaw Report of Mr McGrail, because they did not like it. And as my learned and hon. Friend Mrs. Ladislaus rightly said, it is choosing the sweeties that they like, the sweet sweeties and the sour sweeties put to one side.

2260 So, this is much more serious than that. And then he goes on to talk about soon to be revealed
as to who the real victim is in all of this Openshaw drama. This is clear evidence, if there ever was,
of the hon. Gentlemen and Ladies opposite now wishing to gun for Ian McGrail. They are gunning
for him. Actually, that turn of phrase I think was actually used by Sir Peter Openshaw when
describing some of the evidence given by the Hon. the Chief Minister, where he was really, I think
it was in the context of the pension entitlements. Where he said actually, they were probably
2265 looking at one of the other officers' pension entitlements, but I think he came to the conclusion
actually he was gunning, this is Sir Peter Openshaw's Chairman, for Ian McGrail.

We are seeing a further repeat of that by the comments made by the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano in
that context. And again, they use the same mantra. The Hon. Chief Minister may not have written
their speeches, but they seem to be in unison in terms of the approach on some occasions.

2270 Because as I said before, there has been a heavy contradiction between the Hon. Deputy Chief
Minister and the Minister for Inward Investment, where there was clearly a clash. But that was in
respect to the other motion, Madam Speaker.

But he says, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, that these things are right or wrong. That he says that
his previous report, sorry, he says that his last report, i.e. Tony Sacramento's last report, was
2275 unprecedented in terms of its severity and the explanation he gives for that is because he was
going to go on retirement and he probably thinks he threw the hand grenade, because I am out.
Actually, we forget, but the report just before that one, his penultimate report, which would have
been his last report, was actually also very critical of the hon. Gentleman and Ladies' opposite.

Where he also came to rather pointed criticisms and conclusions in respect of their governance
2280 of our monies in this place. But what happened on this occasion? I suppose he pitched it higher
and then they knew that they had to do something about it, in their view.

Our view is that they should have taken it on board, accepted the recommendations and
moved forward with humility. But no, they had to go for it, as they have done with Ian McGrail.
And this was independently reviewed, all these accounts and the value for money judgments
2285 made by this gentleman were independently reviewed and that has to be respected. And this is
why there is a clear blue line between them and us. We know that instinctively you do not do that
but they simply do not understand that concept. If it attacks them and the warriors that they are,
they will go for you. And this is a very dangerous thing, especially and particularly because we are
dealing with a small place.

2290 And this is not a motion where we are making a comparison with the pussycat Chief Minister
and his immediate predecessor, who was the leader of our party. Because Sir Peter Caruana as
Chief Minister would have been much more severe than he was, he says. I am not too sure about
that.

They may have a different style. But the Hon. Chief Minister is also quite severe in the way that
2295 he deals with us on this other House. But as the Hon. Mr Feetham says, maybe when he dishes
that, it does not matter. But when you have the receiving end and in terms of his attitude and
approach, you know, he may have a different view. And by he, I mean not just the Chief Minister,
but indeed also the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano. But it is not relevant - it is not about that.

And then he says, you know, it is almost a joke with the greatest respect, but rather bizarrely,
2300 he says that we are not attacking him. I think it was that was in the context of the Principal Auditor.
We are not attacking him. We were just defending ourselves. The point is you should not be
necessarily defending yourself. You should be accepting what he said, because it was an
independent report by a respected individual who they themselves praised when he retired. Or
does he not recall that I think it was the Hon. Chief Minister singularly made Tony Sacramento
2305 responsible for tarnishing our international reputation, for goodness sakes. He went as far as that.

And that is not an attack? See, it is not an attack on their in their eyes. They say it is defending
themselves, but actually on any objective analysis, that was a direct and very severe attack on this
gentleman of just that one score. But there were others. But they see things in their own way.

2310 And as far as bringing a motion to this House where the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano says, well, if needs
be, you know, I will waste my time and come here, and we will do this every month.

Which bit of we were here for seven long weeks debating their motion on the Principal Auditor, does he not understand? Was he not wasting his time then when the Leader of his Party brought that motion and argued these points? Or is that most of the time, actually, as I am reminded by Mr Sacarello, he probably was not here.

2315 Maybe in his mind, he thought he was doing something more useful than listening to the diatribe that the Hon. Chief Minister produced in support of his motion. And it was his motion that took an inordinate amount of time. I mean, people were talking to us. How long is this going to take? That is the bit that he seems to have forgotten.

2320 Then, Madam Speaker, we had the contribution from the Deputy Chief Minister who has adopted this newfound role, I find in him, which was non-existent before, of almost like a patronising approach of a teacher admonishing his pupils. I am not sure whether he is a Clark Kent or not. But it is something which I have never seen him do. But to a point, I get it why he is doing it. Because politically, he is joined at the hip with the Hon. Chief Minister, and he feels he had to. But he had a fork in the road, and he has decided and chosen to take one particular route and stand completely by the gentleman that now occupies the seat as Chief Minister of Gibraltar. And
2325 once again, in his approach in doing so, I am afraid to tell him that he belittles, once again, the seriousness and what ought to be the political effects of both these reports.

This is not a question, I think the Hon. Mrs. Ladislaus rightly said, what we were treated to was in effect a campaign. But we are not doing an analysis, that would be for the history books and for
2330 memoirs, we are not doing an analysis of the entirety of the time of the Chief Minister in Office.

This is a decision which needs to be made by this Parliament as to whether it has confidence in this Chief Minister as a result of the recent reports. The recent reports, which let me remind Members, is not a few months old because they deal with things that happened, as has been said, in their defence. Unsuccessfully, I would say, six years ago.

2335 And as far as the Principal Auditor is concerned, in respect of accounts from 2018-2019. So it is that focus that we need to bring to the table as far as this Confidence Motion is concerned. When he says that, I do not know whether in this place there has been a similar motion brought before in this House.

I am aware that he refers to the Spanish situation and certainly in Spain it probably happens
2340 more often than it does in the UK. But what I can assuage any concerns they may have is that we do appreciate the very gravity of what we are doing. Of course we do.

But he needs to understand that as far as we are concerned, and I think we are entitled to have a different view. Indeed, as I keep on saying, we are the biggest party in this House, and we lost the Election by a sliver of votes. I think we are entitled to say that actually the gravity is more than
2345 justified because of those two reports.

And when we filed the motion, it was in response to the way that we were seeing things were happening on that side of the House. Where we were seeing press release after press release after press release, demolishing, attempts at least in demolishing, we would say not effectively. Many of the points made by Tony Sacramento.

2350 And that then sort of crescendoed into a motion by the hon. Gentleman opposite to say now I am going to bring this motion to attack the reports. And then we have the rather bizarre, I think as a result of an amendment, where he said actually, we are now going to write our own reports. I mean for goodness sakes, what has this place come to?

We are going to write our own reports because we do not like many of the things in there. It was in reaction to that that we said, you know, what are the options that we have available as an
2355 Opposition? What is the mechanism that we have?

This is sufficiently grave, sufficiently important, sufficiently goes to the root of our democracy that we need to file a Motion of No Confidence in the person who had brought the motion in respect of the Principal Auditor. So, we understand how serious this is. And then he talks about
2360 personal attacks. One second. This is parallel universe stuff. Personal attacks. They are the ones who invented it. It is. I know the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister is the Leader of the Liberal Party. And he may personally and his party may have a different approach. But it is certainly the approach

traditionally of the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano and the GSLP. They are famous, infamous, some would say, for that, for the personal attack, for the aggression, probably born from his time in the Union. 2365 That has been his way, creating division, attacking, attacking, attacking. That has been their Opposition, the hallmarks of them in Opposition and indeed in Government. Because you lift your head above the parapet and they go for you, as we have shown in respect of these two gentlemen, but also, you know, the ordinary man in the streets.

They are mudslingers par excellence. So, to criticise us for making personal attacks when 2370 actually what we are doing is relying on two reports. So, I simply do not understand the logic of his position.

Then he talks about a destructive narrative on our part. I think rather inelegantly, because I think he should know better. He talks about explosive tantrums, and he comes across as the person with the reasonable approach.

2375 But yet he actually, he is also mudslinging us by making those comments. And I think not just wholly unfairly, but the use of that expression actually, he should know, ought not to be used. You know, we had a reference in the Report to the word corruption, which has been ruled in this House to be the deployment of Unparliamentary language.

When I used it, and I think it was my first contribution to the Appropriation Bill back in 2012. 2380 But actually, it was used by the Principal Auditor. And they do not like it.

They do not like it, but it is there, black and white, in a headline in bold, in fact. Corruption and perception thereof. Which then they criticise.

But the point is that this is very, very serious indeed. And it is serious language which we are not using ourselves. And then, rather patronisingly, once again, he says, well, but we need to 2385 understand the context.

I mean, what context? The conclusions are there. it is all very, you know, set out in detail. I think the report ran through in excess of 400 pages. What are they, what, five volumes? So that we all understand the context.

And in that patronising approach, in that patronising approach, I am afraid to say that he is also 2390 displaying the same approach as far as how democracies work or at least ought to work. What he is saying, the sum total of his contribution on that particular issue is concerned. And he made the point, I think it was yesterday, that, you know, we get voted in. We have a mandate. And whatever happens within the four years, we have a mandate to rule this place for four years.

That is not democracy. There has to be, you know, a reaction. And that was our reaction to the 2395 reports which were produced that these gentlemen, you know, ladies ought to be offering themselves to the people again. That is a quality of democracy.

But I am going to put to him another scenario which they may want to consider. But in that approach, despite his Liberal Party leadership, emphasis on the word liberal, it has dictatorial undertones. But maybe it is because he has been there for too long now.

2400 Maybe that is the reason. You know? And then, as I said before, you know, he extols all the things, virtues of the Hon. Chief Minister, and all the things he has done, he did in respect of the COVID pandemic, the negotiations with the EU, etc. etc. But that is not the point. And he says in that context, in the treaty negotiation context, exactly the same campaign arguments that they used at the time of the last Election, that it is not the moment to change a captain. Again, have 2405 not they told us that the deal is done? Are not we in the process now of this legal scrum? have not they already, and I am assuming it is because, I think they said already that they are all supportive as a Cabinet of the treaty. So irrespective of the legal scrum, they are saying we are in favour of this.

what is there left to do? it is done. Scrub, sorry.

2410 what is there left to do? Dotting your I's and crossing T's?

So, and let me tell him that if he wants to take over as Chief Minister, look, he has been involved, as we are kept on reminded by every single press release and every opportunity that the Chief Minister has, that the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister, has been very much a part of the negotiations.

2415 And has, you know, attended all these meetings. I am sure, as the eternal note-taker that he is, that he will have a very detailed record of, Sir Peter Openshaw will not have a problem in relation to him, because I am sure that he would have taken minutes of every single meeting that he has attended. So, he will be very knowledgeable. Let me say, let me just give this to him for free. I personally, I would be confident that, you know, he could take over the role for the rest of the life of this Parliament. And maybe that is the solution.

2420 Because, you know, if, as we argue, that hon. Gentlemen and Ladies' opposite are so wanting to cling on and hold on to power, maybe they can continue doing so. As I put it to the Hon. Mr Feetham in the course of our *Viewpoint* debate, all you need to do is change the Leader of the Government. We say, we say, let us have an Election now.

2425 But he is concerned, as I think has been said across the floor of the House during the course of these debates, that, well, this is mid-term. So, Parties, Governments, Parties in Government, suffer mid-term blues. But if he is concerned about that, and that we will be able to re-energise things, then let us not have an Election now.

2430 We say, let us have an Election now. And we say that that should be the consequential effect of us winning or them losing this motion, now that it is changed, because we are debating the amendment. So, I offer that to him for free.

But as I said, the history lesson is totally and utterly irrelevant for the purposes of this debate. However convenient he thinks it may be, because at the end of the day I suppose he had to say something in support of the Leader of his Government.

2435 So, once again, we have had the same thing from the Hon. Dr. Joseph Garcia, when he says, we have a different view on the McGrail Report. I mean, how is that even possible or capable of being volunteered as a valid argument in support of his motion? it is not a question, once again, of a different view. Which bit of, once again I need to tell him, of findings made by a retired judge does he not understand?

2440 They may want to reverse those findings. Fine. But there ought to be political consequences now and what the Chief Minister ought to be doing is, not as Chief Minister, challenging that out of his own pocket. And then we move on. That is how we do not necessarily need to look at the rear-view mirror as a Government.

2445 That is how you do it. But not by clinging on and staying on to power. And again, he refers to us relying on gossip and innuendos, for goodness sakes.

Again, I repeat the point, and I will repeat it, and we repeat it ad nauseam. we are not relying on gossip and innuendos. You do not rely on gossip when you make a contribution in this House.

We are relying on findings of fact, as Sir Peter Openshaw ruled, for want of a better word, in his report. And indeed, Tony Sacramento in his report. This is not gossip and innuendo.

2450 And he talks about political expediency, opportunistic tactics, tactical militancy, did he say? But as I said before, he has taken a decision, and now he needs to live politically with the decision that he has taken. And as I said before, we are not naive, or indeed not embarking on serious politics.

2455 Because you see, this is, when he says that, it betrays, as I said before, his view of how this place works. And I appreciate that, I mean we are not stupid for goodness sakes, we appreciate that they have the numbers. But the numbers, only by one.

And yes, he is right, that until we had the new constitutional settlement, that was the norm. When winner took all, there were eight on that side, and seven on this side. But things can happen.

2460 And we were hopeful that there may have been one, or two, but all we need is one. Of them opposite, to have had a moment when they could have said, actually, as a matter of principle, this is unacceptable. We need to move on.

And we need to bring the Government down, if need be. It is possible, and as I say, all we need is one vote. But I offer to them, that it is possible also, for this House to declare that it does not have confidence in the Chief Minister.

2465 For him, the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister, to lose his amended motion. And then us declare that we have no confidence in the Chief Minister. And it does not necessarily need to be an electoral effect.

2470 Because, as I think the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister, who is very fond of history, and he has written his book on history, A Making of a People, I think it is. There have been movements which have happened in this House. The thing is, it affected, in the mid-1970s, when the GDM, led by the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, lost two of its Members.

And they crossed the floor and went to the AACR. So, things can happen. In that sense, in those circumstances, it did not result in a change of Government.

2475 Because it just bolstered the Government even further. But this was before the GSLP was invented, by the way. And this was, I think, in 1975.

But the same can happen the other way. And then you automatically have, in effect, a change in the Parliamentary composition. And as I say, and I repeat the point, it is only one.

And this is not us, as he admonishes us, stirring public opinion. This is Opposition politics. It is not about that.

2480 This is much more fundamental than that. And I think he says, we are voted in and we won, even if it was by a small majority in terms of the popular vote. And that is absolutely right and absolutely accurate.

But we are voted in as MPs. We are voted in, in effect, really, although we have the Party machinery to support us. And we subject ourselves, I think, quite rightly in Gibraltar to Party discipline.

2485 I have never been particularly personally fond of the committee system. I think the Party system provides discipline. But the reality is, you are voted individually, each of us, as Members of this Parliament.

2490 So, if, as a result, for example, a matter of conscience or a matter of principle, or a fundamental difference in approach on initial policy, it is possible for individuals to resign their whip in a political party. It has happened more often than not on the Opposition benches. That, I admit, I cannot think of an occasion where it is happened on the Government side.

2495 But the reality is, it is possible. So, this sort of straitjacketed, firm view that he has, that nothing is going to change, well, no. So on that basis, whilst we appreciate that it was a tall order, it is not totally bizarre for us to have thought that we would be able to impress upon them, at least just one of them, to vote in favour of our motion as filed by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I mean, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano has stood up and said it is not going to happen. But that is his way. So, we did not expect the hon. Gentleman to have voted in favour of our motion.

2500 That much I can tell him. And it is not that we were necessarily identifying any Members opposite who may have voted with us on this motion. But who knows? One must live positively. But we did absolutely the right thing. And we are not going to be lectured by the hon. Gentleman opposite.

2505 This is not, as he said, disrespecting the 2023 General Election results. It is very much respecting it. We are Members of Parliament. We are not saying that we should resign our seats. All we are saying is that there ought to be a reconfiguration of the seats. And certainly, a resignation of the Chief Minister as a result of his behaviour.

I hope, has not come across as too patronising. As to our view of how parliamentary democracy actually works. And is not, as the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister has put it, and I have put to him, the option which they have individually to take this forward in a different way.

2510 Without necessarily, if he does not want to know, call a General Election. Although I must insist that we want a General Election now. Because I think this is so severe and so grave in terms of conclusions come to in those two reports.

That we need to have an Election now. And he can be, I know he will not agree with me, but he can rest assured. Or is he also saying that they are the only ones who are capable of being guardians of our sovereignty?

2515 You see, yes, is what the Chief Minister says. Well, that is not true. That is not correct. That is what they may think. But in a situation when we are asking them to vote in favour of our motion, or not in favour of the amended motion, which is what we are speaking to, technically. I ask just one of the opposite to consider that they can be absolutely relaxed, and they can rest assured

2520 that under the leadership of Keith Azopardi and the rest of us, there will be absolutely no concerns whatsoever that we will continue to guard Gibraltar's sovereignty.

You see, because I am not embarrassed about my political history as the Hon. Mr Feetham is trying to make out. The four of us here, the Hon. Mr Azopardi, the Hon. Mr Picardo, the Hon. Dr. Garcia, actually Dr. Azopardi, and myself, started off in politics with the Gibraltar National Party. So, he can rest assured that there will be absolutely no doubts whatsoever as far as our guardian
2525 of sovereignty.

And I speak also on behalf of all of Members on this side of the House. And as far as the other policy decisions are concerned, he talked about housing and those issues, you know, we will have a different way of doing things, and most definitely we will have a different way of how we do our finances. But he can rest assured that the people's social needs will be catered for under a GSD-
2530 led administration.

You know, they are not the only ones who are capable of governing in this place. We nearly made it. So clearly, we have at least the confidence of 50% of the population.

And I would add that as far as the last opinion poll is concerned, we now have the confidence of the vast majority of the population. Or we are also going to ignore that particular statistic. Eight-
2535 point lead.

But I suppose that explains why they are getting all jittery and nervous about things, and why they do not want to have an Election now. But he brushes it to one side, that is the Deputy Chief Minister, as being mid-term blues. But Madam Speaker, this is not an issue, and as has been made by my friends during the course of this intervention, this is not a question of a debate on ideology
2540 and political ideas.

This is much more than that. You know, this is not, as the Hon. Dr. Garcia says, dealing with policy differences. This is, as I say, much more, there is much more fundamental than that.

We are dealing with the core issue of how we are governed in this place. And what we say further is that these two reports have opened a window in terms of some aspects of it. Which
2545 gives us, and we would say the vast majority of the people of Gibraltar, greater cause for concern.

Because what on earth is happening with other areas? We will only know, presumably, until we are in power. And we are able to see the books. And we are able to see what is going on. It may be, as I told you before, that the Hon. Joe Bossano continues to govern indirectly through his control of the Savings Bank, but I do not know. We will need to deal with it.
2550

It will be a headache, I dare say. It will be a headache, but we are ready for it. And this is about whether you have an individual, given the way that he has been dealt with and tarnished as a result of findings and decisions, sorry, and reports made, whether we have an individual who is capable of continuing to discharge the Office of Chief Minister.

A very prized Constitutional Office in this place, which we have the highest regard for in terms
2555 of the Office. And he has shown to have simply no qualms whatsoever to break boundaries and, as Sir Peter Openshaw put it, crossing the line. And he has been found, in respect of each of his findings, not just of improper behaviour, but grossly improper behaviour.

This is very serious indeed. And the notion that this can be somehow ignored and we can move forward and we can make a reference to them wanting to build the houses, in fact, the Hon. Chief
2560 Minister said at the conclusion of his intervention in respect of the other motion, that he still needs to take the Treaty over the line and he went further and he said that he had to build those houses. Well, actually, the reality is, his intention is, and this is something that perhaps the leadership contenders need to consider further, he is going to be here for the entire lifetime of this Parliament because the houses are going to take a long time, given the subject that they have
2565 been, the subject of tremendous delay is going to take a long time to complete and build.

Well, Sir Joe Bossano, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, actually is encouraging him to continue. We have no problem with that because, actually, the Hon. Chief Minister knows that he is in a sticky wicket politically. So, I think he also understands that he would find it very difficult to win a General Election.

2570 So, we would be, I suppose, in a partisan war, I say this personally and I offer it to him, perhaps happier that he remains. But this is too serious for that. And for that reason, he must go.

So, as I said before, this is a much deeper question that goes to the heart of how you discharge your duty as Chief Minister of Gibraltar. And for all those reasons, we say he must go. And I ask just one of them, on this one occasion, just for once, to vote this motion down and let us see the political effects of doing that.

2575 Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Prof. J E Cortes.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, I will try not to. But I can confirm, Madam Speaker, as the Chief Minister said earlier, that the Chief Minister has absolutely no idea about what I am about to say. I do not think he should be worried. I do not know whether the hon. Member opposite should be excited. Madam Speaker, we have, over the course of this week, heard some extraordinary speeches. Extraordinarily brilliant from this side and extraordinarily absurd from the other side, Madam Speaker.

2580 Today's contributions from the other side seem not to have heard the extraordinarily brilliant speech made by the Deputy Chief Minister. Because certainly the Hon. Mr Clinton just gave his prepared speech and did not refer to it at all. The Hon. Mrs. Ladislaus dismisses words by saying it was reminiscent of an Election campaign, not that there is anything wrong with that, but did not really address any of the substance.

2590 Have they got such short memories and forgotten our recent past? The motion, Madam Speaker, is utter disrespect, not just for the Chief Minister, but disrespect to Gibraltar as a whole. And disrespect is the order of the day, of the Opposition's Day.

Madam Speaker, the Hon. Mr Bossino's criticism of the Deputy Chief Minister is disgraceful. And again, he addressed mainly his style, but very little of the substance in his own speech of no substance. Because, of course, the substance of his speech damned them, Madam Speaker.

2595 And then he looks at me in the eye when he is talking about somebody voting with them. Madam Speaker, anybody else could have looked me in the eye and I would have seen the twinkle. But he is the only one who treats me with disrespect and sometimes, at least in this House, with contempt, Madam Speaker.

2600 So, if there was any chance at all, which there was not, the hon. Member just blew it. I have got to say, he may have been deliberate to vote, he did not make it. (interjections) Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker, yes, absolutely.

Those words were meant to me. Madam Speaker, we should hear the hon. Men and Women opposite, most of whom, frankly, have done so far, most of whom have done so far, very little for Gibraltar. Casting aspersions on the Chief Minister.

2605 The Chief Minister, as described so eloquently by the Deputy Chief Minister, actually offends me. And should offend every Gibraltarian who has lived on this Rock of ours in the past decade and a half, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as we have seen, there has been considerable overlap in the matters referred to in this debate and in the debate on the Motion to Note the Openshaw Report of a day or two ago, losing track of time.

2610 I will not try and cover the same ground, but as I did not contribute to that debate, I have saved some comments that are relevant to both, to deliver them now. Madam Speaker, the insistence of Members of the Opposition to concentrate almost entirely on denigrating the name of the Chief Minister and on little else in that report, and in doing so, in my view, going well beyond the conclusions of the report, and this before the Chief Minister has exercised his right to a legal challenge, is premature. And damages Gibraltar at a critical time more, in fact, than it damages the Chief Minister.

2615 Members of the Opposition, both inside this House and out, have repeatedly tried to prise the Members of the Government apart by suggesting, nay, insisting, that a failure to condemn the Chief Minister because of the findings of the report in some way implicates us, all the Members

2620 of the Government, in some kind of collusion, in some kind of plot that shocks them to the core and that we must decry. Madam Speaker, that is nonsense. We were not actors in that particular play, quite apart from the fact, of course, that the report clearly finds that there was no such plot and that the Government is fully exonerated.

2625 And a personal observation on the Report, Madam Speaker, coincidentally, my hon. Friend, the Deputy Chief Minister made a very similar point in his contribution to yesterday's debate. It is absolutely clear to me that Sir Peter Openshaw, whom, incidentally, I have never met, does not have the measure of Gibraltarian society, of the friendships and the loyalties and how they interrelate and how the issue of conflict of interest, about which he makes so much, has to be seen in the context of the society in which it allegedly occurs. The Learned Sir Peter Openshaw
2630 has seen the whole process through the eyes of an eminent and extremely experienced judge.

But an eminent and extremely experienced English non-resident, not familiar with our close-knit community, judge. There were points raised in that debate, Madam Speaker, which are likewise relevant here, because if the allegations were true, they clearly reflect on the Chief Minister. One of these points is this.

2635 The Hon. Leader of the Opposition claimed in that debate that there is a crisis of governance in Gibraltar. Madam Speaker, there is absolutely no crisis of governance, as we will continue to clearly see in the weeks and months ahead. Madam Speaker, the Opposition must have been really disappointed when they read the Openshaw Report.

2640 They will have been relishing the thought of seeing a condemnation of the Government and of the Chief Minister waiting, while wringing their hands, hoping to see devastating evidence of corruption and collusion, regardless of what that would mean to Gibraltar. But they did not get it. They did not get it, Madam Speaker.

And so, they have had to make do with what they could, trying desperately to squeeze blood from a 700-page stone. They will get none.

2645 Madam Speaker, I entered politics in order to work to make Gibraltar and life for our people better, for no other reason and I will stay in politics for as long as I feel I can continue to do that. And most certainly, not for my private political interests. I came from a background of environmental advocacy and the judiciary, where Madam Speaker, I have fond memories of working with your good self while on the bench.

2650 I brought with me strong principles and an absolute belief in the importance of the rule of law. Madam Speaker, I need to make it absolutely clear that I will never sit in a government which is in any way corrupt, nor will I support a Chief Minister who does not follow my same principles and in whom I have no confidence. That, Madam Speaker, is a statement of principle, principles to which I will always adhere.

2655 Madam Speaker, to a great extent, this debate is about loyalty. And Madam Speaker, loyalty is not fickle. Loyalty is not something that can be won or lost easily.

In the context of loyalty, I think it is only right for me to state here, Madam Speaker, that I have had approaches from people asking me whether I would be considering my position at this point in time. Of course, Madam Speaker, if, and I repeat, if I had cause to feel that the Chief Minister
2660 had crossed the line that made me lose confidence in him, if I felt that he had crossed the line which would make it impossible for me to continue to support him, would that be enough for me to give up my position in the Government? To abandon my party even?

If, Madam Speaker, if that were the situation, I suppose I would need to ask myself the question, does my loyalty or otherwise to the Chief Minister, to my colleagues and to my Party, conflict with my loyalty to Gibraltar, to the people, to those who have voted me into Government
2665 repeatedly over the years in four General Elections, who have put their trust in me, to my socialist ideology, to the work that I, that we, need to continue to do. Because that is what this debate amounts to.

2670 The Opposition is not really concerned about what happened in the Ian McGrail or Operation Delhi issues, or even the Principal Auditor's Report. The ultimate aim of the Opposition is to destabilise the Government, attempting to cause division between us so that one of us, and it only

takes one of us, so that one of us defects and brings the Government down and puts them in power. That is what this is about.

2675 They have sensed weakness where there is none. And they have failed to recognise the meaning of loyalty and the genuine bonds that join us on this side of the House. Madam Speaker, we all know there have been several documents used by the Members opposite to justify the motion, the main ones being the Principal Auditor's Report and the Openshaw Report. The Principal Auditor's Report has been dealt with in its own motion and soundly rejected by this Parliament. In the closing days of that debate, I was unable to deliver my contribution due to my
2680 being away from this House for serious family health reasons happily, now totally resolved. Worry not, Madam Speaker, I will not deliver that very long speech that I prepared for the debate.

I will probably publish it in my memoirs when I eventually retire after 30 years of continuous service as a Minister.

2685 Madam Speaker, in relation to the Openshaw Report as was said in the last debate we need to await the results of any legal challenges before we can really discuss this further in any detail. Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister has stated publicly that he did nothing wrong. Importantly, he may well be making legal challenges to some conclusions, challenges that, as has been made, the point that has been made here and very eloquently by my hon. Friend Mr Feetham in that
2690 *Viewpoint* last week, challenges that he has every right to make. Madam Speaker, in any case and regardless of the results of any legal challenge we are not talking here at all about corruption. The Government, which includes the Chief Minister has been totally exonerated.

The Chief Minister's actions, as he very well explained, came at a time of huge national challenges flavoured by a justified lack of confidence in the management of the Royal Gibraltar Police of the time and a legitimate questioning of their motives. No plot, Madam Speaker. No
2695 corruption - A Government, fully exonerated. Even if upheld after judicial review with those Openshaw remarks because they are remarks, not recommendations, would those remarks be a reason to resign? A reason for me to vote for the Opposition and step down from the Government?

To remove a Government that has done so much for Gibraltar. Madam Speaker, there are most
2700 definitely things over which I and I suspect any member of any Government would resign. They would include a loss of confidence in my leader.

They would include evidence of corruption. Decisions that go strongly against my principles. Moral, social, philosophical, environmental. Decisions that I felt would harm Gibraltar or the
2705 Gibraltarians. This is not such a thing. At all.

Madam Speaker, I have worked with Fabian Picardo and been with him through thick and
2710 through thin for going on 15 years. Only the Deputy Chief Minister and the Father of the House have been in Government with him all this time. I am in distinguished company indeed.

I am proud to have been a member of his team. Of the team that has transformed Gibraltar. Transformed beyond recognition.

2715 Our way of life, our Education, our Health Service, our Environment and environmental principles, our economy, and yes, our governance. With all these changes and more and with our aggressive, progressive, legislative programme, we have brought Gibraltar out of the GSD's 16-year time warp into the 21st century. On a huge breadth of issues including issues of equality, sustainability, care for the environment, identity, international standing, and self-sufficiency.

2720 This Government led by Fabian Picardo has made Gibraltar what it is today. It has made us who we are today. Loyalty to Fabian Picardo, Madam Speaker, is loyalty to Gibraltar and to its future.

Madam Speaker, Fabian Picardo has led us through the dangers of COVID and the uncertainties of Brexit. And Madam Speaker, no one can deny that Gibraltar was an example to the world on how we dealt with COVID. And the Deputy Chief Minister's reminder of what we went through,
2725 *me dieron escalofríos*, because I was there with them.

And the extraordinary way in which, led by Fabian Picardo, we dealt with COVID was recognised beyond our shores. I was there with him. At Cabinet meetings, which we would rather not have had.

2725 Taking decisions, we did not want to take, that no one should have had to take. And I have seen his leadership in action through this, the greatest humanitarian crisis Gibraltar had faced in decades. And then there is our unwanted and untimely departure from the European Union.

Fabian's leadership has run success from the very edge of the precipice of disaster, so that Gibraltar, thanks to his shrewd and skilful negotiating, will now rise like a phoenix from the ashes of Brexit. And we will clearly see in the months and years to come.

2730 Madam Speaker, being in the room when Fabian Picardo is in action is an experience in itself. His shrewdness, sharpness, always with wisdom, are respected and feared by anyone across the negotiating table. And I know this directly from people across the negotiating table. His absolute love of Gibraltar and of our people, his standing his ground, firm and unmoving on principle, always, managing always to find a workaround that will benefit us, will become legendary. I have
2735 been there, I have seen it, I am there, and that is his legacy.

And then, Madam Speaker, there is the human side of Fabian Picardo, his genuine emotional connection and his desire to help. I will never forget that 1st January 2012, a mere three weeks after being thrust into Government, when we cried together at the old KG5 hospital to see the condition that residents had to endure, and we dealt with it, and well, and we consolidated a
2740 personal bond that is there still.

That day, we have mentioned this before, Madam Speaker, but I do not think I mentioned this. That day, we drove around Gibraltar, seeing all that needed to be done, and talking about all that we would do. KG5 was dilapidated. Dementia had no home. Our health service was in disarray. Our schools were collapsing. Our air was polluted. Look at us now, Madam Speaker.

2745 Madam Speaker, I am a great admirer of the Bard of Avon. Indeed, I have played several roles in Shakespearean plays. Having read him avidly, it is the subtle, or not so subtle irony, of Mark Antony's sublime valedictory to Brutus in Act 3 of Julius Caesar, remains my favourite speech. Let me remind this House of the opening phrases.

2750 "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives on after them. The good is oft interred in their bones". And then, a little later, he lets the honourable men have it. The motion by the Leader of the Opposition is akin, in my mind, to Brutus' plotting with Cassius and the other senators to remove Caesar on the ides of March.

For he feared Caesar would, essentially, remain in power forever. I think that is a real parallel
2755 to the Opposition's fear that if they do not act now, that then the successors of the Government, which will soon include a thriving post-treaty economy and another outstanding GSLP Chief Minister, whoever she or he may be, will ensure that this administration is renewed time and time again. The irony of Mark Antony's words escapes no one.

2760 Brutus is actually treacherous, ungrateful and ambitious and manipulates the situation to remove Julius Caesar unjustifiably for his own ends. I repeat, can we not see parallels here? Should I question the motives of this Shakespearean assault on the Chief Minister?

2765 Surely not, for Brutus is an honourable man. And so are they all, all honourable men and women. Importantly, Madam Speaker, anyone familiar with Shakespeare's Julius Caesar will know that Brutus' actions did not serve a useful purpose but ultimately caused more chaos and did not restore the republic that he yearned for.

And that would inevitably be the result here if the lead of the Opposition's motion were successful and amended. And they know it. Chaos at a time when we need stability, when we do not need a General Election but a government firm in defending and progressing our interests under the leadership of the man who has achieved so much.

2770 The good is often interred with their bones. We will not allow that. We will not allow the good done by and under this Chief Minister to be forgotten ever.

Madam Speaker, this is not a time to play games. The undue emphasis placed on the Opposition on this is not doing Gibraltar any good. The Opposition is undermining the good name of Gibraltar at precisely the wrong time.

2775 Madam Speaker, yesterday, in an outburst which was outstanding even for him, the Hon. Mr Bossino, and he repeated it again today, repeating his mantra that he must resign, said that the Treaty is no reason to keep the Chief Minister opposing. He said that just a moment ago. We have a treaty.

2780 What more is there to do? Madam Speaker, this is immensely worrying. Clearly, the Opposition do not understand the complexity of the work that we need to do to continue doing and to continue doing to maximise the Treaty's benefits.

2785 If they do not get this, if they really think that there is nothing left to do, he said it twice, one day after the other, they clearly but clearly would not be competent to lead us through the Treaty and into the future. Madam Speaker, the hon. Member said that this Government had got through on a sliver. Well, thank goodness for that sliver.

If that sliver had not occurred, they spoke about us being in a parallel universe. I am imagining a parallel universe, maybe we call it the GSD-verse, where they have won the Election. My word, Madam Speaker, that is more terrifying to think of than if Thanos was still ruling in the Marvel Universe.

2790 Madam Speaker, this is a time to consolidate, for all of us to rally around the very strong Government team that we have on this side. And I know for a fact, Madam Speaker, that when he is no longer Chief Minister, Gibraltar will be all the worse for it. He will leave the position when he decides to do so, but not when anyone else does.

2795 Madam Speaker, fortunately, this play has a very different ending from the Shakespearean tragedy of Julius Caesar. Because Madam Speaker, as Julius Caesar was falling at the hands of his assassins, he turned to his now-royal friend, Brutus, and said to him in wonder, fear, and no doubt great sadness, *Et tu, Brute?* You too, Brutus?

2800 Well, Madam Speaker, I can assure you, and I assure my friend the Chief Minister, that today he will not have to turn to me to say, *Et tu, Ioannis?* Madam Speaker, I have every confidence in the Chief Minister, and so I will be supporting the amendment to the motion.

Madam Speaker: Any other hon. Member would like to speak? Yes, the Hon. Pat Orfila.

2805 **Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P Orfila):** Madam Speaker, thank goodness that my colleague woke us up a bit after the long, monotonous, and yet tedious listening to our Hon. Mr Bossino. So, we are now quite awake. I must also commend my Learned Friend, the Hon. Minister Cortes, for knowing his Shakespeare a lot better than my Hon. Mr Clinton knows his Dickens. No. Well, he knows his Shakespeare, and he gets an A plus for it. Never mind. We forgive you. We forgive you.

2810 When the Deputy Chief Minister was speaking, you could hear a pin drop. What a speech! And how many truths were spoken. It was quite emotional, actually, to be reminded of all the good things our Chief Minister, had done, and how Gibraltar has changed thanks to his vision and leadership.

2815 The Chief Minister has always acted with transparency and integrity by acknowledging errors of judgement and engaging seriously with the Chairman's recommendations. However, he is entirely right to challenge those elements of any report that is flawed or unfair. In defending his position, he is standing up for due process, his position, his effort, due process and accountability.

And in this, he has my wavering support. Every person, and that includes you and me, has a right to set the record straight. And if things are not right, then things have got to be challenged.

2820 This, Madam Speaker, safeguards the process of our legal right. I salute the Chief Minister's courage to stand up for what he believes is right. This encourages all of us to confirm things when we believe we are right and not allow ourselves to get bullied and pushed into a corner and silenced.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that young people watch us and therefore this is exactly why it is so important that we show our young people that they too have

2825 a voice and when it is necessary, they must use it. Our youth must never be intimidated and feel
reprisal or be silenced. The message we are sending everyone is to always stand up and fight for
what you truly believe in. Do not cower. This advocates for courage, integrity and unwavering
commitment to one's principles.

Notwithstanding all of this and knowing the IQ of most of these gentlemen who sit here today,
my support for brilliant leadership must go to our present Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo.

2830 There is no match. And let me add, because after having listened to so many speeches today,
do you know what, Madam Speaker? There are victims here and those victims are the
whistleblowers who have suffered and yet been cast aside.

Madam Speaker, I agree and I support the Chief Minister.

2835 **Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member wishes to speak. The Hon. Mr Santos. I was not sure if the
hon. Member was leaving the room or...

2840 **Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos):** Madam Speaker,
we are here to debate the amendment to the motion. The original Motion of No Confidence was
proposed by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition in July 2025, following the former Principal
Auditor's Report. Months later, the Leader of the Opposition is still trying to tarnish our Chief
Minister's reputation, grasping at straws, this time using the McGrail Inquiry, using his pick-and-
mix approach to the findings of the Openshaw Report.

So, we are going to talk about choosing which sweeties we like and which ones we do not. I
suggest that the Hon. Mrs. Ladislaus looks within. We do not deny that the report does contain
criticism of our Chief Minister.

2845 Criticism which has been latched onto by the Opposition for dear life. Those criticisms can
certainly not be dismissed, and the Chief Minister himself has not sought to dismiss them.
However, Madam Speaker, acknowledging criticism is not the same as accepting the narrative that
some would now like to impose.

2850 We see the Opposition's strategy focussing relentlessly on extracting a handful of negative
phrases from the report, stripping them of all contexts and repeating them in isolation. This is not
scrutiny in good faith or for a positive purpose. It is political opportunism and a recognisable
pattern of how the Opposition operates using any means necessary to demean and attack our
Chief Minister.

2855 The Opposition would have the public believe that criticism of tone or process somehow
equates to guilt, even when in the case of the Inquiry, the report itself explicitly rejected that
conclusion. The public could be misled about what the Inquiry was and was not designed to
achieve. Similarly, this Motion of No Confidence has also been planned to mislead.

This motion goes further than questioning the person. It questions the kind of leadership we
value and, most importantly, need in Gibraltar.

2860 Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has also questioned us Ministers, urging us to
act, again in relation to the findings of the Openshaw Report.

2865 My fellow Ministers and I did not refuse to act. There was simply nothing to act on. We
deliberately opted not to engage in the selective mudslinging that characterises all the
Opposition's responses, included today in the Leader of the Opposition's contribution this
morning, referring to Ministers as spineless, gutless and cowards.

We are in Parliament, I would have appreciated being called honourably spineless (*laughter*),
maybe. He has gone even further, stating that our support as Ministers for the Chief Minister says
a lot about us. What does it say about us exactly?

2870 It says that we have confidence in our Chief Minister because it benefits Gibraltar. Because we
are loyal to the man who has given the better part of his life for the good of Gibraltar. It says that,
to doubt, Fabian began to forget his track record and the progress he has delivered.

And to ignore that, he has been rigorously tested through some of the most difficult times Gibraltar has faced in recent history. He has carried Gibraltar forward and out of the darkest moments, putting his people first.

2875 Madam Speaker, Parliament is where matters of governance, accountability and support for the Chief Minister are to be debated on the record. Instead, the GSD Opposition have chosen social media as their forum and battleground, preferring to reduce these debates to soundbites designed to tarnish reputations. Whilst our Chief Minister is working hard for the sake of Gibraltar, the Opposition would rather take cheap shots on social media using sponsored paid posts, which
2880 appear constantly on my media newsfeeds. Expensive, yet not wide-reaching or effective, as I note the mediocre numbers of engagement.

I suggest the Opposition reflect on whether their relentless approach is useful, or whether it genuinely speaks to the priorities of the wider community, is a reflection of good leadership, or if it is merely for the benefit of a limited audience of die-hard followers.

2885 I note that on the 24th of December, the GSD posted on social media about a meeting the Shadow Cabinet had discussing the report and how they were all united in seeking the Chief Minister's resignation. Where was that unity yesterday during the session on this motion?

I certainly did not hear all of them unite on the other side of the House, or have an opinion on the Inquiry, or in seeking the Chief Minister's resignation. Perhaps there are those on the other
2890 side who have more confidence in our Chief Minister than in their own leader. Tellingly, my fellow Ministers and I are always ready to speak up and go on record to defend and support our Chief Minister and what we do as a Government, as I do now and I was ready to do yesterday.

And I do not think that all of them will stand up and speak today on this motion either. Madam Speaker, leadership is not about pretending mistakes are not made. Leadership is about learning
2895 from mistakes, making positive changes and moving on and we have heard all this from our Chief Minister already. Weaponising process failures only leads to undermining democratic outcomes.

Gibraltarians want Government to deal with priorities like Housing, Healthcare, the economy, jobs, the Brexit Treaty. In short, the day-to-day smooth running of Gibraltar, exactly what Fabian Picardo does expertly. He is a leader who has never stopped working for or believing in his people.
2900 And his people have never stopped believing or supporting him, electing him to hold this position.

It is easy for me to speak about what his leadership has delivered. It is clear that Gibraltar has thrived under his leadership since he was first Elected as Chief Minister over 14 years ago. I could not possibly list every advancement, progression or initiative made by him and his Government in this period.

2905 However, I will mention some which clearly highlight why he stands as our leader and why he has repeatedly had the following support from the electorate. We have already heard of these this afternoon, but they are worth repeating. And also, I have spent two days listening to them on the other side of the House, repeating exactly the same four arguments in hopes that it will land somewhere. It has been excruciating. And now I feel I also have the right to repeat all the great
2910 things that have happened in the past 14 years.

We have over 4,400 students now go to class every day in our ten new schools. An investment in elderly care and in all our health and care services to ensure that every Gibraltarian can be treated with dignity. People who had lost hope of ever owning a home now own property and hold the keys to affordable new residences.

2915 Madam Speaker matters of equality have undeniably been transformed and progressed under Chief Minister Fabian Picardo's leadership. His Cabinet passed the Civil Partnership Act in 2014 where same-sex couples were given legal recognition with rights almost identical to those in marriage to include adoption. Two years later, in 2016, Parliament went further and unanimously approved same-sex marriage with the first same-sex wedding celebrated right here in Gibraltar by
2920 the end of that year. This was the moment that decisively showed our Government's and our community's commitment to true equality. And it has not stopped there. Equal access to IVF, surrogacy and adoption rights are the tangible and meaningful changes that make Gibraltar a place where every family has the right to be recognised and respected.

2925 Fabian has not merely legislated equality. He has nurtured its growth in hearts, minds and institutions, enshrining anti-discrimination protections within employment, celebrating diversity, strengthening social support networks and safeguarding workers. He has spearheaded and supported initiatives and mindsets that have shaped Gibraltar where people are not just equal on paper but equal in practise. This record is a testament to a leader who sees equality as the foundation of a united Gibraltar.

2930 Madam Speaker, this is the legacy of equality achieved. This is why I stand here to reiterate my confidence in Fabian Picardo's leadership because of what he has done to progress equal rights so that people like me can live the life we genuinely want without any compromise. So, before I am accused of only thinking of myself and the progressions that have benefited me, I want to speak of a time in Gibraltar that affected every single one of us.

2935 Madam Speaker, of course, I am talking about the COVID pandemic, some of the darkest days of fear and uncertainty. But Fabian Picardo stood firm, placing the protection of our people above all else, making hard decisions to safeguard the most vulnerable, strengthening our health services and guiding Gibraltar with courage and compassion. Madam Speaker, Fabian Picardo's service to this community during COVID will forever be remembered as one of the finest chapters of leadership in Gibraltar's history.

2940 And we are asked to have no confidence in him as that was a serious question to ask. He is also leading us through another of Gibraltar's historic moments, Brexit, a decision forced upon us as a nation which threatened our economy, our freedom and our way of life. Other lesser leaders may have buckled under the pressure, but Fabian Picardo has not.

2945 He has sat at the negotiating table with Europe, with Spain and with the United Kingdom and has spoken as the voice of Gibraltar loud and crystal clear. Over two years ago, the people of Gibraltar were asked to choose, and they chose Fabian Picardo as the Chief Minister in an Election which may have been close, but democracy is not about margins, it is about mandates. And the people gave him a mandate, a renewed vote of confidence.

2950 All I have spoken about reiterates why this Motion of No Confidence is not just misplaced. It is reckless and self-serving, and it seeks to unsettle Gibraltar at a time when Gibraltar most needs stability. But this motion has never been about the good of Gibraltar.

2955 It has been about trying to get into power by default, which is totally self-serving. Fabian Picardo is a leader who has never wavered in his belief in his people and never shied away from toil to make Gibraltar better, more resilient and more prosperous. It may be simple for people to see the Chief Minister and have an opinion on him according to their own political allegiances.

2960 However, when you speak to Fabian about any subject affecting Gibraltar, his first thought and response is on how it will impact the Gibraltarian, regardless of whether he has secured their vote or not. This is my truth, my experience and not just rhetoric for a speech in Parliament. This is my lived experience about my dealings with my Chief Minister.

His guidance, his example and his mentorship have shaped the way I choose to work in politics. He has told me that the people in our community are at the front and centre of every decision and always the most important consideration. I have spoken of Fabian's proven track record and can assure you he is not content with resting on the laurels of past achievements.

2965 His vision, his passion and his conviction is to continue to secure the prosperity of the Gibraltar of tomorrow where our education is first class, where families can own their homes and where Healthcare is second to none.

2970 Two years ago, I stood for Election. I believed in Fabian as Chief Minister and was proud to stand with him and his team regardless of the outcome. An Election that was theirs for the taking. Yet Fabian led us to victory again. I joined the GSLP to join Fabian Picardo firm in my belief that Gibraltar is the better place led by a GSLP Liberal Government with Fabian Picardo at the helm.

2975 Madam Speaker, Fabian Picardo has led his people through every trial through the pandemic, through Brexit and through uncertainty. Not once has he slowed down or stopped believing in or working for the good of the people. I state my unwavering confidence in Fabian Picardo as Chief Minister.

Gibraltar is a much stronger place with him as our Chief Minister. I support the amendment to this motion and urge everyone in this House to do the same. We may be on opposing political parties but for the sake of Gibraltar we must continue to stand together as one people.

2980 And the people have spoken. They chose Fabian Picardo as our Chief Minister. Not once, not twice, not three times, but four times.

Four times the people have spoken I have said my bit, and I look forward to maybe after being called out seeing the other Members who have not had an opinion maybe have one. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Any other hon. Member wish to speak? The Hon. Mrs. Arias-Vasquez.

2985 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias Vasquez):** Madam Speaker this is a motion which requires some deep introspection if it is to be done well. Given that I am consistently being asked to change sides I think I need to set out exactly why I am here and exactly why I know that I need to be here. In order to be properly able to deal with the matters at hand I need to start with a ten-year-old girl with a Gibraltar project who went and sat for ten minutes with the then
2990 Chief Minister to ask him what he was doing for Gibraltar's youth.

The year was 1992 and the Chief Minister at the time explained to me that rather than building the basketball court that I so wanted what he was doing was ensuring my future by investing in me. Investing in my future. I was not convinced.

2995 I still wanted my basketball court. Two years later my parents were the first generation in our family to enter a mortgage and purchase a property 50/50 at Montagu Gardens. I still did not understand quite how extraordinary this was.

Eight years later I got a full scholarship with my maintenance paid and went to university to study. Again, I was the first in my family to have been able to do this. In the interim at age 15 work experience was organised for me by my school.

3000 Westside organised a week's work experience for me. At the time Madam Speaker, I wanted to be a paediatrician but the GHA at the time could not organise work experience for me. As an aside Madam Speaker, the GHA now does organise placements for students in every field in order to make sure that we have those students available and wanting to come back.

3005 So instead, Madam Speaker age 15 I went for work experience at a law firm, at Hassans, and I walked into the office of one Fabian Picardo. Fabian Picardo did not know me. Fabian Picardo did not know who my family was. Fabian Picardo was not interested in my background, but Fabian Picardo took the time to listen to me.

3010 So, Madam Speaker you have here two men. Two men who have led my party. Who are a part of the formation of who I am. Because Madam Speaker if I look around Gibraltar today what I see is beautiful. What I see is people who like me have come from families who would not have been able to afford it who are now young professionals.

3015 The very fabric of Gibraltar has been changed by this Party. And now you do not have to be of a certain family to be able to progress. That Madam Speaker is what the politics of this Party is about. A Party that teaches principles and not as I said yesterday Madam Speaker a mismatch collection of individuals such as those who sit on the Opposition benches whose only commonality is a hatred of the GSLP/Liberal administration. Two of them Madam Speaker are still Members of the GSLP. One of them, whilst a lovely individual on a personal basis aligned himself to Together Gibraltar and now sits beside the Hon. Damon Bossino.

3020 How is that possible Madam Speaker? Abandoning your party for what aim Madam Speaker? For the aim that is aligned to the aim of this motion.

At least Madam Speaker I suppose the Hon. Mr Bossino has never shied away from his views. However objectionable I might find some of them. But let us not digress.

3025 I come from the learnings of two men who believe in people. Believe in people whatever their background, whatever their family name and whatever their trust fund contains. That is important Madam Speaker as my generation is now coming of age.

That is important because anyone who stands in this Chamber needs to know what they stand for, what their principles are and importantly Madam Speaker, they need to know who they are. We all know who we are and we all know where we stand. I know who I am and I have no intention of ever denying who I am or where I come from.

3030 I cannot stand here and defend ideals that I do not believe in and that is taught through actions. It is taught by example. I come from a legacy of people who have believed in people and have forged a Gibraltar which looks like Gibraltar of 2026.

3035 The Gibraltar we have today Madam Speaker and the future of Gibraltar has been formed since 2011 by the man who is now the subject of the vote of No Confidence. Let us delve into this record Madam Speaker. Sorry, let me go to the amendment.

The man who is now the subject of the vote of confidence. Let us delve into this record. Let me begin by a matter that matters to us all.

3040 Housing, as the hon. Lady is well aware of. I am not going to go into the fact that this is a policy devised by the GSLP which was then appropriated by the GSD. I am not going to go into the fact that we are the party that has the ideas and I am not going to go into the fact that the GSD when in power simply sat on the ideas because they are good.

I am not going to go into the 2,442 houses built between 1988 and 1996. 2,442 flats for 2,442 families Madam Speaker, including my own. 1996 to 2011 saw 801 flats.

3045 801 flats in a 16-year period. Since 2011, a Government led by the Hon. Chief Minister, 1,558 flats have been built to date with a further 583 flats coming onto the market in this term, aside from the future developments which are in the pipeline. That is a total of 2,141 flats.

3050 2,141 flats, 10 new schools, growth of the economy, future proofing of the economy, one university, one new bank and everything else that the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister went into earlier. let us look at what happened in that same period Madam Speaker. I am only going to delve into 3 larger events.

The decision of the UK to leave the EU, Covid and the Treaty. Madam Speaker, as the Members of this House are aware, I led the 'Stronger In' campaign in 2016 and I was supported by all parties in this House. In Gibraltar, 96% of Gibraltarians voted to remain in the EU.

3055 But Madam Speaker, on the 24th of June 2016, there was no Gibraltarian that thought what the team led by the Hon. Chief Minister has achieved would be achievable. No one on the 24th of June 2016 thought we would be able to achieve what we have achieved. And that is thanks to a team led by the Hon. Chief Minister which included the Deputy Chief Minister and our Attorney General, Michael Illamas.

3060 The team has negotiated a treaty which I would not have thought possible on the 24th of June 2016. Our team led by the man who the Opposition now want to crucify has sat at a table with the Foreign Secretary of Spain, with the successive Foreign Secretaries of the UK. Let me put that in context Madam Speaker.

3065 The Chief Minister of a territory of 38,000 people has sat with the Foreign Secretary of the UK, the Foreign Secretary of Spain and the head of the EU. Gibraltar, UK, Spain and the EU sat together at the negotiating table. Indeed, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister of Gibraltar had dinner at the table with the Prime Minister of Spain, recognised as a Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

3070 That Madam Speaker is politically extraordinary. Do we honestly think that the Leader of the Opposition could have achieved this Madam Speaker? I venture to say that the man who can barely crack a smile at a voter in the street would be unable to bring through a complicated strategic and diplomatic vision for Gibraltar that few thought possible in 2016.

No Madam Speaker, I think indeed that there are few people in Gibraltar, few teams, which could have achieved what our negotiating team has achieved.

3075 We also need to look at COVID. As I said yesterday, Madam Speaker, this was a period where everyone was paid during BEAT, everyone was in employment, throughout one of the most difficult periods in Gibraltar's history.

Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister has negotiated Gibraltar through Brexit, through COVID, and has negotiated an extraordinary treaty. And Madam Speaker, it needs to be said, through this

he gave Gibraltar everything, including sacrifices in his personal life. He got up every single day, day in and day out, to defend Gibraltar, leaving everything that was his inadvertently behind.

3080 No one can do more Madam Speaker. No one can be asked to do more. Do I think that the Chief Minister does not make mistakes?

3085 Madam Speaker, anyone that knows me, knows us, and knows our relationship throughout the years, knows that I have no hesitation in telling the Chief Minister when I think he is wrong. Madam Speaker, he is fallible, as am I, and as is everybody in this House. But Madam Speaker, it has to be said that in 14 years, when you take big decisions, you will inevitably make some mistakes.

Mistakes which he has admitted. But Madam Speaker, I think, as I stand here before you today, that this man fully deserves my full confidence. The Chief Minister's record is impressive.

3090 The Chief Minister has done so much for Gibraltar. And the Chief Minister needs to continue doing what it is that he does. Leads Gibraltar through to the point when he decides to go.

So, Madam Speaker, I stand here today knowing full well who I am. Knowing where I have come from and, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, owning my words. Knowing what my principles are, and importantly, never having wavered from them.

3095 And knowing where I feel that Gibraltar needs to get to in the next 20 years. I stand proud in a Party which has a vision, which has created the Gibraltar that we have today. We witness the chastising of a man who has created the Gibraltar of tomorrow.

A man who has had the ability to hold negotiations together when many in June 2016 thought it was impossible. Let us now contrast and compare to the man that presented the original motion. A man who has attempted to become a leader three times and failed.

3100 A man who knows that this is the only way that he might be able to get into power. A man who continues to lead on negativity. And a man who stands to gain from this motion, rather than willing at the ballot box.

3105 So, Madam Speaker, does the Chief Minister have my confidence? Yes, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister has my confidence. For the beliefs that he has in people, no matter their surname or lack of trust fund.

The Chief Minister has my confidence because he has taken Gibraltar through some of its darkest hours. And Madam Speaker, he has my confidence for leading a team which has created a framework which will enable my children to live in a Gibraltar which is able to thrive politically, economically and socially. A vision and a purpose which I believe few would be able to achieve.

3110 And so, Madam Speaker, for all of those reasons outlined above, I support the Motion of Confidence presented to this House.

Madam Speaker: Anybody else? The Hon. Mr Bruzon.

3115 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, I rise today, or this evening, to speak on the motion. But before I begin, I would like to say that in doing so, I place firmly on the record my unreserved support for our Chief Minister. Madam Speaker, I am one of those individuals who has followed proceedings in this House from a very young age.

3120 I have been a member of this House indeed, I can say that I have listened to countless hours of debates on the radio, including many outstanding contributions from political figures going back to the days of Sir Joshua Hassan. Individuals from both sides of this House have fuelled my deep respect and love for this institution. Being a Gibraltarian, Madam Speaker, means that politics plays an important role in our daily lives.

3125 For those of us born during the close Frontier years, politics was not an abstract subject. It was a lived reality. Nothing that happened internally and sometimes even externally failed to affect us and our way of life.

Madam Speaker, I was only a teenager when I began engaging actively in Gibraltar's political scene, often contributing letters to the editor at a time when the late Marie Montegriffo sat in

3130 this Parliament. Madam Speaker, although I often wrote letters criticising him, one of my greatest supporters who almost encouraged me to stand up and be counted and to one day stand for Election was the late Ernest Britto. Such is the nature of our community.

3135 I continue to voice my opinions, often facing consequences for being outspoken, but my passion for this Parliament and for Gibraltar never wavered. Throughout those years, Madam Speaker, one conviction has remained constant in my mind, and that is that whoever is sat in this House, whether Chief Minister or Leader of the Opposition, they have always shared a common goal, and that is the best interest of Gibraltar. We all want a stronger economy, a safer environment and a brighter future for our children, and a Gibraltar that thrives.

3140 We debate passionately about the way forward, but I have never lost sight of the fact that at heart, we are united by a passion for our home. Today sitting at Cabinet, humbled by the trust placed upon me by our community. Alongside political giants like Sir Joe Bossano, Dr. Joseph Garcia and Fabian Picardo. Leaders who have been instrumental in defending Gibraltar and shaping the way of life we all cherish. For that reason, Madam Speaker, it deeply saddens me to hear accusations that go far beyond legitimate disagreement, with allegations which are, in my view, entirely inconsistent with how a modern Gibraltarian Parliament should conduct itself. Madam Speaker, this is not why I put my head above the parapet when I was a teenager.

3145 And if holding on to this belief makes me naive, it will not detract from my views that in a nation as small as ours, politics done in this way does not only weaken this institution, but it also weakens our Gibraltar. Madam Speaker, I truly hope the motion is simply a misguided attempt at playing to the public rather than a picture of what is to come in Gibraltar politics. For this reason, Madam Speaker, I support the amendment to the motion.

3150 Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Would any other hon. Member wish to speak? The Hon. Chief Minister.

3155 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, in every Parliament where a Motion of No Confidence or Confidence is brought, the person in respect of whom it is brought speaks and defends their record. It should surprise no one that I rise to speak after my colleagues have already confirmed that I enjoy their confidence. And I ask, Madam Speaker, as I am entitled to do under the rules of the House, that when the time comes and the vote is taken on each of the amendment and the motion that you call a division in respect of the vote.

3160 Madam Speaker, when everyone thought the world was flat, Columbus said it is round. He went down in history and America was found because he had confidence. A little thing called confidence.

3165 There is no job too immense when you have got confidence, Madam Speaker. That is what Elvis Presley said. And indeed, Madam Speaker, what I have had today is the most remarkable demonstration of the confidence that my colleagues have in me.

I have not authored one word of the things that hon. Members on this side of the House have said. I did not think I needed even to ask them what they were going to do. But I want to thank them for the approach that they have taken to this destructive approach to politics that Members opposite have taken.

3170 If this is the first Motion of No Confidence presented in respect of a Chief Minister, now subject to an amendment by the Deputy Chief Minister, it is because no one in the past has thought that that was the right way to do politics in Gibraltar until Keith Azopardi could not get in through the ballot box and tries to get in in this way. But I do want to highlight, Madam Speaker, the things said. And the Deputy Chief Minister this morning was once again a demonstration, if he is Clark Kent in the view of the hon. Members opposite, that not all heroes wear capes, Madam Speaker.

3175 Because the way that he set out what we have done together in the past 35 years and in particular in the last 13 years moved me greatly. And I have been moved greatly by the things that I have been said that have been said by my colleagues in support of me. Because as a warrior, Madam Speaker, I do not shed a tear when I am being attacked.

3180 But when I am reminded of issues related to family and the work that we have done, I am reminded of why I am in politics. So, I thank all of my colleagues for their support today and this evening. I always act to do what I think is right.

3185 If I have acted to take issue with a former Principal Auditor because of his overreach. If I acted in my loss of confidence against Ian McGrail because I genuinely believed he lied to me. If I did all the other things in the past decade and a half that I think I was right to do, I did them always with Gibraltar in my heart.

We have heard a couple of important quotes, and I am mindful of the fact that in Hamlet, Polonius was a bit of a windbag, Madam Speaker. Like Members of the Opposition. But he said one thing when he saw his son off to France which was the deepest of the things that he said.

3190 This above all, he said. To thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man. Whenever I have acted, I have answered to my moral compass.

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition said that he presented his motion because the auditor was being trashed in the press. But even before then, his first reaction to the Principal Auditor's Report was to say that we should resign. That there should be a General Election.

3195 Because if there had been the report issued before the General Election, he would have won it. So what nonsense is this, Madam Speaker? That this motion is only brought because I brought the motion in respect of the Principal Auditor.

3200 This is not about clearing the swamp as we heard from one of the Members opposite who suddenly thinks that he is so right wing that he wants to emulate the 47th President of the United States. He cannot even get it right, Madam Speaker. That phrase is drain the swamp, not clear the swamp.

3205 But in hearing that, Madam Speaker, and seeing him align himself with that, I understood immediately why he was not asking so many questions about the lunch with Donald Trump Jr. Because they wanted to have been there. They were just jealous that they were not invited. And in their references to Spanish politics, when the Hon. Mr Bossino was told not to take sides, has he forgotten, Madam Speaker, that I have led the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party into Socialist International.

That we are aligned now with the PSOE in Spain. That I called Pedro Sanchez a friend. He may be holding a candle for Partido Popular and Vox.

3210 But we on this side will never pretend to side with them. But I am not going to demonise Mr Bossino anymore. His birth certificate almost does that already, for lack of a spelling mistake.

And how can he say to a team with Joe Bossano in it, with Nigel Feetham in it, with Pat Orfila in it, with Gemma Arias Vazquez in it, given what she has said, with John Cortes in it, with Christian Santos in it, you will understand why in a moment. That we are not socialists. And that we are just pretending to be.

3215 Seriously? That is the tenor of the Motion of No Confidence to remove the leader of the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party from Office. That we are not socialists?

That is the argument that we have to face? He said, well, you have just accepted the report of the Principal Auditor and moved on as we were urging. Everything would have been fine.

3220 That is not true. They were saying that they wanted a General Election then. But you have to take that, Madam Speaker, with the pinch of rock salt that you have to apply to everything the Hon. Mr Bossino said today. Because, as was rightly pointed out, having called my colleagues gutless, spineless and cowards, he then says we hope that one or two of you might vote with us and bring the Government down. Are these the people, Madam Speaker, who would replace us to run the affairs of Gibraltar? The people who call you gutless, spineless and a coward in one breath, and then ask for your help in the next?

3225 These are the people who would build the relationships that would enable them to deliver a treaty. The Hon. Mrs. Arias Vasquez stole my best line on the Leader of the Opposition. I was going to say that he spends more time looking at his shoelaces when he is going down Main Street during a General Election campaign, let alone otherwise.

3230 Those are the people that are going to build relationships. They tell us, I mean Mr Bossino says to all of us, the nine of us that is me, the devil incarnate for the purposes of this motion, and the other eight you are all cut from the same cloth. And then he says that one or two of you be the thread that comes to us.

3235 This is nonsense. This is wasting our people's time. We should be building houses, we should be looking at the legal scrub text, not here, listening to this.

When the Deputy Chief Minister referred to what we did in respect of the Development and Planning Commission when he went through the list of things that we did, I mean he might have forgotten but the GSD were against us opening up the DPC. So how can Mr Bossino say to Mr Bossano that they are going to take things further? They wanted us not to go as far as we have gone, not least on the DPC, let alone on equality and same-sex marriage.

3240 And then Mr Clinton says that I should leave because I misled the House and then he withdrew it because he could not put it in that way. Because I had said that we got a clean bill of health and in fact we have not because we have an accountant that was qualified. Well, we got as clean a bill of health as every Government in the history of Gibraltar.

3245 That is a clean bill of health and the person who would have been misleading the House had they suggested the opposite, was not me. But look, I put him on notice that he said something during the course of question time about a note in the accounts of the GFA which was incorrect and I will take up that issue, if I have to, at the next meeting of the House.

3250 Madam Speaker, who are the special interest groups that they now got it into their heads that we represent, Mr Clinton and Mr Bossino? Special interest groups? The people. Special interest group? The workers. We are the servants of the people. Who do they represent? The people they have always represented, Madam Speaker. Big business. The Yacht Club. The establishment. that is who they represent. How can they suggest that we are not the representatives of the people?

3255 It does not make any sense. But this you have to hear, Madam Speaker, when speakers get up and say, well, okay and I think this is an illusion that I might have done something right. Churchill won the war but then he lost the Election.

3260 In other words, okay, if he has done something right, he did something right but that does not mean he should survive this vote. Did they forget that Churchill did not just win the war and lose the Election for the reasons the leader of the Father of the House said, because he was facing the Labour Party proposing the creation of the welfare state.

But that he came back and won an Election after that too.

After what Mr Bossano has said today, watch this space, Madam Speaker. Watch this space. There is the nervous laughter, the minute they think they have to face me at the ballot box again.

3265 Do not worry, it is not going to happen. It is not going to happen. My emotional health would not allow me to stand for Election again, Madam Speaker. I have given Gibraltar everything I have.

3270 And then Mrs. Ladislaus starts to talk to us about the Constitution. I mean, it was in the last Inquiry, not this one, that people were talking about the raping of the Constitution. But I did not quite understand that the Constitution that she was going to tell me that I had failed to uphold was not ours, but the Constitution of the United States, which was how she ended her address. I mean, this was really quite remarkable. But no more remarkable given the fact that she was telling us that people in Gibraltar are afraid of us and they are so afraid of us that they go with placards outside Convent Place to tell us how afraid of us they are.

3275 Well, I have never seen anyone outside Convent Place with a placard and a balaclava. Because if they were afraid of us, they would have to wear a balaclava if they were going to pitch outside my office with a placard. But I commend to the hon. Lady that she should attend at least one more demonstration in the time that she's a Member of this House. She's only ever attended one. She can only remember that one. Two, Madam Speaker, two. Maybe the one about the Porsche. The one about the Porsche and the one with the placards of the people without balaclavas who are so afraid.

3280 But this is not, Madam Speaker, a totally improper, and neither was the debate on the Principal Auditor, a totally improper use of the procedures of this House. Because if it were, Madam Speaker would have stopped us. Or no?

3285 Is the hon. Lady saying that Madam Speaker would not stop us if we were making an improper use of the procedures of this House. She needs to think about what she is going to say, Madam Speaker. The one thing that I would ask her to never do again, Madam Speaker, in this House, is refer to Haribo. Because it is so difficult for me to keep away from them. And I try not to think of them, Madam Speaker. And when she mentions them in this House, I am minded to ask the Clerk to send the usher to get me a packet. And I do everything I can to stay away from those.

3290 Madam Speaker, I have already governed for more years than I wished. It was my wish to be in Government for 12 years. I am already in my 15th year. That is their problem, Madam Speaker. However hard they tried, they were never able to discredit me enough with politics. They had to go beyond. They, perhaps not explicitly, but to their benefit, together with others who wanted to get rid of me, had to use other institutions to raise innuendos. Whether it is the Principal Auditor, whether it is the Inquiry, the issue of the whistleblowers, but not with politics. Because with politics, they cannot achieve their aim.

3295 Perhaps today what they have done is to demonstrate how bad they are at politics. Because hon. Members do not just call Members on this side of the House gutless and spineless and cowards and then expect us to vote for them. Or say we are all cut by the same cloth but then expect us to vote for them.

3300 They in effect now say, well, here is a clever idea that I have got and I am going to put on *Viewpoint* and I am going to put it here. Vote no confidence in the Chief Minister. He then is no longer Chief Minister, but you guys stay in Government.

3305 Yeah, because the guy who you have just voted no confidence in is going to blithely come here and vote confidence in the nine. In what political world does that work? But the hon. Gentleman says that seriously.

He says it when he pretends to be barristerial, which is not very often because he cannot achieve it. And I do not mean the Leader of the Opposition. I mean the Hon. Slim Shady.

He says it I put it to them that they should remain in Government just remove Mr Picardo as Chief Minister. In what world does that work?

3310 I mean the reality is Madam Speaker, there is very good reason not to have confidence in them. But the Deputy Chief Minister has changed the motion now to remove the no and I am supporting of course the work of the Deputy Chief Minister. I would much rather have changed the Motion to say there is No Confidence in the Leader of the Opposition.

3315 Perhaps because I am a street fighter now, because that is what Sir Joe told me. I am just a warrior now, the pugilist. But how can somebody who goes to *Radio Cope* to talk—with the friend that takes him often to *Radio Cope*, driven by the driver in the Jaguar to *Radio Cope*—to give an interview about the Principal Auditor's Report, Madam Speaker, in Spain, to air our dirty laundry in public in Spain, and his interview in *Cope* about the Principal Auditor's Report leads to a Report in *Europa Sur* on the 17th of August that says this, based on his interview in *Cope*: "The Gibraltar audit is outstanding. We thought the Mafia families were based in Madrid, and it turns out we have the Genovese family as neighbours. Since we are discussing Gibraltar's budget, the Gibraltar audit is outstanding. We thought the Mafia families were based in Madrid. This will have repercussions." This was said in *Europa Sur* as a result of what the gentleman said in *Radio Cope*.

3320 How can we have confidence, Madam Speaker, in a Leader of the Opposition who goes to Spain? The hon. Gentleman has the right if reply, I am not going to give way.

Madam Speaker: There is a Point of Order being raised.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: The Point of Order is, he is not suggesting that I said any of that, because I did not, so I am asking him to clarify that I did not actually say that.

3330 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I have not said that he said that. I said he went to *Radio Cope* and *Europa Sur* then said this as a result of what he said in *Radio Cope*. How can Gibraltar have confidence in a man that goes to Spain to bad-mouth Gibraltar and feeds this type of diatribe? That is what I am saying, Madam Speaker. He is not a safe pair of hands neither on this, nor on whether Andorra is or is not joint sovereignty. So, what does the Mr Bossino think? He is going to persuade us that they are a safe pair of hands. They are not a safe pair of hands. They are such an unsafe pair of hands they let Election wins slip through their fingers.

3335 Who presents, Madam Speaker, a Motion of No Confidence when your country is in the middle of the finalisation and about to start ratification of an existentially important treaty? And who brings a Motion of Confidence, Madam Speaker, when he has not got the votes to win it? I will tell him: not Alberto Núñez Feijóo. Alberto Núñez Feijóo says, I am not bringing a motion of confidence because I do not have the votes. But yes Abascal, the leader of Vox, who brings a motion of confidence for exactly the same purpose we have had here today: for the Leader of the Opposition to hear his own voice again.

3340 He did not have enough with turning *Noche Buena* into *Noche Keith*, Madam Speaker, to give a political statement on something seminal on the 24th of December. Look, if they offer you that date, say, thank you, I will do it on the 7th of January. (interjection) No, it is not *cuando quiera yo*. It would have been better politics. But thank God I have you there, Madam Speaker, to lead the Opposition. As long as you are leading the Opposition, that is a good thing, Madam Speaker.

3345 The problem is if you ever get the chance to lead although you have been rejected, I think, four or five times in that respect. I am having difficulty keeping count of how many times the hon. Gentleman has lost an Election. He used to say to Joe Bossano, you have lost too many elections; you should go. He should take his own advice, Madam Speaker although actually that might not suit us. So good: nobody helps us as much as the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

3350 Madam Speaker, who comes to this place to bring the first Motion of Confidence in respect of a Chief Minister as he says it is; I have not checked, but I assume he is right in respect of the only Chief Minister who has said he is about to retire? To who? To install him? To what end, Madam Speaker to install him as Chief Minister? As the Hon. Mr Feetham has astutely pointed out, that is not Mr Bossino's view of what should be happening. Mr Bossino's view is there will be a General Election so that he tops the poll, so that he can be Chief Minister. Right let us be clear.

3355 But Mr Azopardi's view, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's view, must be in order to install himself as Chief Minister, almost twenty-five years after he left the Government under a cloud. Or does he think, Madam Speaker, that he is going to come here and say all these things about me and I am not going to talk about the cloud the things that led to him falling out of favour with the GSD? I mean, he says it is because he told Sir Peter that he had to go, and he would not go, and he wanted to be able to have a chance at the leadership. Well, he was wrong about that. Sir Peter went on to win two more Elections.

3360 Then he used the ruse that the Hon. Daniel Feetham had joined the GSD and he could not be in the same party as Mr Feetham. We all know why Sir Peter lost confidence in him. We all know what went on then, Madam Speaker. So, if we want to talk about moral compasses, let us have a chat behind the Speaker's Chair if he has forgotten, and I will remind him of the things he used to get up to when he used to travel as a Minister. But then, Madam Speaker, in 2007.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Point of Order Madam Speaker. If he wants to impugn my conduct, he needs to make an issue of substantive motion.

Madam Speaker: If the Hon. Chief Minister intends to go on and impugn the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament then clearly, he has to file a motion to that extent.

3375 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker I said I would do it behind the Speaker's Chair just to remind him of it I will remind you behind the Speaker's Chair or if the hon. Gentleman wants me

in the next session to bring a substantive motion and setting out even the receipts I will try and find them it goes back a long way Madam Speaker

3380 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker he is carrying on talking about stuff I mean I do not even know what he's talking about but he's clearly impugning my conduct somehow in an invented way. I mean I think it is quite unacceptable that he should be allowed to carry on this is an amendment on confidence in him. If he wants to talk about me let him do so but let him bring it forward the nonsense implying stuff that has not happened

3385 **Madam Speaker:** I am going to ask the Hon. Chief Minister to move on from this subject and to address the motion the amendment that we are talking about now which is confidence in the Hon. Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Hon. Chief Minister: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, you have been very Claire, I mean, you have been very clear, Madam Speaker, so I will move on.

3390 Madam Speaker, in 2007 the people showed they had no confidence in him; in 2011 the people showed that they had no confidence in him; in 2019 the people showed they had no confidence in him; and in 2023 the people showed they had no confidence in him. I prefer the judgement of the people to his self-serving judgement on me.

3395 But they want to talk about these things because they do not want to talk about the other things that we do, and that I have done, and that the team has done. Hon. Members already on this side of the House have been very generous in the way that they have talked about what we have achieved, but when are they going to talk about the excellent organ transfer developments at the GHA, or the moves to ensure our Gaming Industry remains competitive, or the great initiatives in housing, the magnificent work being done in Heritage and Tourism, and areas which are abandoned by them completely?

3400 All they do is come here and complain about the progress that we are making in those areas, try and put spokes in the wheel of progress, or the new schools, or the University, or the National Bank, the Gibraltar International Bank, or the growth of the Savings Bank, or the growth of the GDP to 3 billion. When do they mention that, or the Treaty?

3405 It would be a dereliction of my duty to leave now, Madam Speaker, which is why I am still here, because, Madam Speaker, a motion of no confidence is the ultimate tool of parliamentary democracy, but it must not be used as a shortcut for the failure that hon. Members have been characterised by at the ballot box.

3410 Of course hon. Members are able to challenge my policies; the criticisms in the report are something they can, of course, raise as much as they like—we have debated that at length now—but what they cannot do, however hard they try, is delete the mandate that was given to me, and with me my colleagues, by the people.

3415 And voting for this motion, despite the fanciful nonsense we had to hear from Mr Bossino about how he was trying to jump over hoops, to try to change what the people decided two years ago. The people have changed their minds, they say, because they walk down Main Street and there people go up to them and tell them they have changed their minds, but look, seeing the photographs and the videos of Main Street on Saturday, there were not many people around to talk to them about how they changed their minds.

3420 So, voting for this motion is not to provide a new direction for our nation; it is to turn away from the democratic mandate that we got in 2023, and they refuse to accept there have been headwinds in the past two years. Of course there have been, but leadership is not about navigating just in the harbour; I mean, given that most of them are in the Yacht Club, I would have expected them to know it is about navigating in the heart of the storms that we have faced, and that is what I have done with my colleagues in Cabinet.

3425 But this House is now being asked to judge me on the waves that have hit us in the storm rather than consider that, despite it all, we have kept the ship steady. I am very proud of that, Madam

Speaker, and I would rather be judged for the difficult decisions I have made for the benefit of this nation, even if I have been criticised for some of them.

3430 Madam Speaker, in fact, I would not have confidence in me if I had not done the things I had to do in respect of the Principal Auditor's Report; I had to do that. I would not have had confidence in me if I had not done the things I did in relation to McGrail and the Inquiry, and yet hon. Members come here to talk of no confidence, but they do not offer any alternative, because this is not trying to search for an alternative; this is about them getting into Office at any cost. That is the reality.

3435 And what families want in Gibraltar is not more of these debates, which is politics for the sake of politics; they want politics of action, they want politics delivering the Treaty which we have talked about for so long. People say it has taken too long; of course it has taken too long, but if it had not taken so long it would have been the wrong treaty. They are the ones urging us to do it more quickly; we are talking about doing it right.

People want reclamations and homes, people want the gaming industry to be defended, they want the GHA to continue to grow, and they want to create a vacuum of leadership.

3440 Madam Speaker, power in Gibraltar is not a freehold; it is a lease, and every day for fifteen years I have gone to the office to pay my rent in dedication and in results. And look, if the result of the vote today was that my colleagues did not have confidence in me, I would accept that, of course, and if the result of the ballots being counted after October's 2023 Election was that the public did not have confidence in me, I would have accepted that, of course.

3445 But to put them in place, with what vision? All they do is refer to the past, and indeed even their manifesto was a reference to the past: we will go back and review what the GSLP have done; we will go back and audit what the GSLP have done. They have offered absolutely nothing to persuade anyone that they should be handed the reins of power at this difficult and seminal time.

3450 When you become Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Madam Speaker, and I still remember that night when I became Chief Minister of Gibraltar, hon. Members will forgive one final cultural allusion: what are you saying to the people of Gibraltar? You are saying to them, bring me all your problems; I will do better than my best; I have confidence you will put me to the test; but I will make you see I have confidence in me.

3455 As I end tonight, Madam Speaker, although without murdering anyone, without being hauled off to trial in Venice, I think I am entitled to say at this stage that I have done the state some service, and they know it. I think I have done our state some service, and I am grateful that my colleagues are clear that I should continue to provide that service.

3460 I will not be around for much longer; they might miss me when I am gone, Madam Speaker. There is no greater political honour that I have ever heard in this House than the Father of the House asking me to stay.

Madam Speaker, I renew my gratitude to my colleagues for their continued confidence and to the Deputy Chief Minister for moving the amendment, which of course I will support, and despite the affliction of time since I was first sworn in as Chief Minister I have to remind the House that in my heart the honour of leading our people is never diminished. A greater honour I cannot imagine.

3465 Madam Speaker, if the vote goes in the way the hon. Members have set out today, I look forward to continuing that work tomorrow. I commend the amendment to the House.

Is it a convenient moment to recess, Madam Speaker, for ten minutes or fifteen minutes before we continue with the final speeches and the vote? I think we have been at it now for three and a quarter hours without a break.

3470 **Madam Speaker:** Right, we will recess for 10 minutes.

The House recessed at 9.47 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 9.59 p.m.

Madam Speaker: If no other hon. Member wishes to speak, I call upon the mover of the amendment to reply.

3475 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker nothing to add on my part.

Madam Speaker: I now put the question in terms of the amendment moved by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. The Hon. Chief Minister indicated he would like me to call a division Alright a division. I remind the House that we are taking a vote on the amendment which for the avoidance of doubt would make the Motion read that this House has Confidence in the Chief Minister. It is a late it is a late sorry. This House is confident in the Chief Minister, that is what is up for vote.

A division was called for and voting resulted as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Hon. G Arias Vasquez	Hon. Dr K Azopardi	None
Hon. Sir J J Bossano	Hon. D J Bossino	
Hon. L M Bruzon	Hon. R M Clinton	
Hon. Prof. J E Cortes	Hon. J Ladislaus	
Hon. N Feetham	Hon. G Origo	
Hon. Dr J J Garcia	Hon. E J Reyes	
Hon. P A Orfila	Hon. C A Sacarello	
Hon. F R Picardo	Hon. A Sanchez	
Hon. C P Santos		

3485 **Madam Speaker:** The result of the Division is as follows: nine Members in favour, eight Members against. Carried.

I now propose the question in terms of the Motion moved by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition as amended by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. Would any other hon. Member wish to speak? In that case I call upon the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to reply as the mover of the original Motion.

3490 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, We have had a debate on this issue and lots of things have been said but the reality is that the foundation of the motion that was brought to this House and that has become was transformed into the confidence issue puts to one side, because a lot of the contributions made by the hon. Members on the other side have ignored, have not addressed the issues of the Principal Auditor, or indeed the fact of the Inquiry findings. they have turned it into a long catalogue of issues in respect of, you know, achievements that they say over the last 14 years, but look, the reality is they have not dealt with the points that we have raised, because there were some very serious issues in the previous Principal Auditor's Report. I mean, the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister said to me at the outset of his contribution that whatever I would have for breakfast this morning they should change the menu.

3495
3500 Well, I can tell him that I had for breakfast what I always have, nothing. I never have breakfast. I like to come to court, I like to go to court hungry.

3505 So, their conduct in trashing the auditor outside and inside this House was relevant, because there were some very serious issues. And the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister says that we go into name-calling and veiled threats. I mean, and he did take this rather sanctimonious position in presenting his view of life, and I get why he does that, but it is almost as if he is not sitting next to the person who regularly gets up and does name-calling and veiled threats, not least in the last few minutes of his contribution, in a rather dark moment that he may want to reflect on.

And, yes, we pursue a Motion of Confidence, but this is not a numbers game. You do not bring a notice of motion because you have done a calculus. You do it on a matter of principle.

3510 And there have been a number of confidence issues before in the Government. It is clear. I was going through trying to find something else, and it struck me that there were a number of confidence motions that Members of this House had debated way back in the Government.

3515 This is a constitutional mechanism. So, to hear the Deputy Chief Minister kind of deride it as if it is below, it is beneath this Parliament. Well, what he is commending to the people of Gibraltar and anyone listening is that we should behave somehow.

We should ignore that. it is a constitutional mechanism. it is in our Constitution.

it is in the Constitutions of many countries out there. So, what is he subscribing to? The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister?

3520 Is he really telling us that he subscribes to this blank check style of politics? Is that what he is advocating? That actually, as long as you win an Election, you should not get tested again.

And that you should not bring a motion of confidence on an issue of principle. I do not believe in that because it is in our Constitution. Otherwise, why is it there?

3525 it is there for a reason. it is there to be used in exceptional circumstances. And I have, as I have said publicly before, in 35 years in politics, it never occurred to me to even consider putting a motion of confidence.

3530 But these are exceptional circumstances and if we do not look at the circumstances and think they are exceptional, then we are not looking hard enough at the facts. Because it is not us that is personalising the findings, it is the Inquiry that personalises the findings because the Inquiry goes through the core participants and reaches conclusions and those conclusions bite softer or harder on different individuals.

3535 But it bites hardest on the Chief Minister. But that is the Inquiry Chairman. A person who has decades of experience and has reached a view on the Chief Minister because he thinks, as he says in the Inquiry Report, that he could not give a straight answer after giving lots of passages of the evidence. Who he says has acted in a grossly improper way on several occasions attempted to interfere in a criminal investigation. This is not a policy disagreement.

This is about the fact that the hon. Members trashed a Constitutional Officer. Trashed the auditor and trashed the constitutional protections, that is how they started.

3540 Because we only put in the motion when they had. Otherwise, it would have been a war on press releases. But they provoked the situation by bringing it to this House and provoked us into bringing this motion, which we had otherwise not thought of bringing (*Interjections*).

Yes, it is. He says from a sedentary position, *es culpa mia*, indeed it is. Read the press release that we issued.

3545 Our motion of confidence was tabled because it was, because they trashed the auditor to the point of filing a motion in this House. And the findings of the Inquiry are not policy disagreements. we are not imputing, Madam Speaker, motives by gossip and innuendo, which is what the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister said. It is in the report. Read the findings. These are not policy issues.

And we are not personalising things in that way. We are reading the Report into the record of Hansard in this House, as we did yesterday. And it really should stick in the throat of the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

3550 Look, we are in the cut and thrust of politics. I do not complain about the cut and thrust of politics, but for him to get up and say somehow that there is this one-sided vilification. Does he not hear the things that are said about us in this House?

Or does he do the Nelsonian blindness, but not to his eye, to his ear? This is not a motion of confidence in the Government. It is a motion of confidence in the Chief Minister.

3555 So, he tried to kind of defend it on the basis of track record as if it was a General Election campaign. It is not about that. We think that the people of Gibraltar should have the right to express a view.

3560 But, you know, and he says, one of the things he says is, talks about the handling of COVID, but the handling of any particular circumstance cannot be preyed in aid on the question of now. I mean, we gave support at the time of a COVID situation because, Madam Speaker, people can do things, but they also need to be judged and they can have made achievements, but they also need

to be judged on the other things that they do. They can win Elections, but sometimes they then get booted out of Office for other reasons.

3565 Boris Johnson won a landslide and he supervised COVID, but that did not stop him having to resign on an issue. Lots of leaders have to resign on issues. Indeed, for less, for less, because Boris Johnson was not held to have been attempting to interfere in a criminal investigation. So, they cannot use the defence of, I have got a track record. Nor can they use, well, the argument that they have invested in public services as, well, a blanket of immunity over the findings of the Inquiry or the fact that they misbehave against the Principal Auditor? So, it is ok to misbehave against the
3570 Principal Auditor because I put a lot of money into the Health Service. Well, I think people are entitled to believe that the Ministerial standards mean more than that, and that the Ministerial standards and the codes are going to be followed and not ignored. Is that their defence?

Is that their defence? So, people say what? So do not think badly of me because I am someone who attempted to rob the bank, but do not think badly of me because for the last 10 years, I have
3575 invested a lot of money in the bank.

Is that really the defence? they are trying to airbrush away the Principal Auditor Report and everything they said about the Principal Auditor, and all the constitutional issues that arose, and they are trying to brush away the conflicts of interest, the issue of waste and abuse, and all of that, and the grave findings of the Inquiry. But things have happened since the Election, Madam
3580 Speaker, things have happened, and that is what they need to be judged on, the things that happen.

In the same way that they say judge me on my track record, the judgement also has to include this that is before us, that cannot be ignored. It is part and parcel of precisely something that is happening under their watch. We are not seeking to invent parliamentary practise.

3585 The Constitution makes clear that a motion of confidence can be brought against the Chief Minister and sets out the mechanism in section 45. So, what is it that we are saying? That we can ignore the Inquiry Report?

That we can ignore it? I mean, they deride our attempt to bring this motion today, because they say that we do not have the numbers, so we are wasting time. It is not a waste of time to bring an issue of principle to this House and debate it.
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I mean, at the end of it, they keep saying that they should debate all manner of things here. They weaponised Parliament against the Principal Auditor. They weaponised Parliament this morning, or they tried to.

3595 So, it speaks to a demeanour, Madam Speaker, and an approach to governance. A demeanour and an approach to governance. And then the Father of the House, Madam Speaker, who made a shorter contribution, but I remind him, because he sounded as if no auditor has done this before.

Well, I do not know. I have read lots of Principal Auditor Reports, and all auditors do value for money reports. Is it not strange?

3600 If he expressed it in greater colour, it is because there was a need for greater colour, because the issues were more serious. But he commented on matters within his remit, on the issue of resources and statutory duty. We said that well-rehearsed during the debate on the Principal Auditor.

And he says that the Chief Minister treats us like a pussycat. Is he serious? Is he serious?

3605 Well, this is a massive, massive exaggeration, given the personalisation that the Chief Minister conducts to every single person on this side of the House in different degrees. I mean, we just have to sit here and listen. We get it regularly - hardly a pussycat.

And he says we are defending ourselves against the Principal Auditor, the father of the House says. We are not attacking him.

3610 that is what he said. I just remind him of the things they said that the Chief Minister said against the Principal Auditor, the pussycat. He called the Principal Auditor ludicrous, utterly disreputable, designed to contain allegations but not explanations, shocking, improper, scurrilous, idle and unsubstantiated, misleading, unbalanced, risks defaming officials by alleging lack of propriety, democratically despicable, poisoned, jaundiced instrument, that is the Report, an element of

3615 collusion, inhuman, improper, unbecoming, unforgivable, witch hunt, heinous, blatant
discrimination, fundamental attack on our democracy, worst possible witch hunt to pursue those
with an inclination to the left, attempt to mislead the House, a huge risk that the report created
for Gibraltar's jurisdiction, a breakdown of trust, unconstitutional, hurts the fabric of our nation,
undermines the trust and faith in institutions. Those are not the words of a pussycat. Those are
words of a paranoid tiger.

3620 So no, Madam Speaker, I think they should apply. We are not twisting the findings. Yesterday,
and in every public comment and statement we have issued since the Inquiry findings were
published, I have not exaggerated things. I have been very careful about quoting exactly what was
said by the Inquiry. When I read into the Hansard yesterday, the principal findings of the 10
3625 examples over 10 days, I did it in a very careful way to precisely quote the particular phrases that
was used by Sir Peter Openshaw of the grossly improper attempt to interfere in a legitimate police
investigation and operation, or a grossly improper attempt by Mr Picardo at interference with the
investigation, or a grossly improper disclosure of confidential information, which he must have
known and intended might assist his defence to the detriment of the prosecution, or a grossly
improper meeting, which should never have taken place. All those are quotes. There are more.
3630 There are more. I read them into Hansard yesterday, and they welcome and accept the findings.
This is the irony and the contradiction. They welcome and accept the findings. Those are part of
the findings as well. That is what they said in their press release. That is what they said in their
press release.

And Madam Speaker, I turn to the Minister for Justice, and he says, he said that it was, I think
3635 I quote him accurately, he said it was incumbent on him, on them, to protect the Chief Minister's
constitutional rights and human rights. But what is he talking about?

I mean, if he is talking about his right to challenge, well, fine. I accept he has got a right to
challenge if he wants to. He has not done it yet.

3640 Today, today, these are findings that do not see a live challenge. And there are findings. Where
does he put in the balance, the Minister for Justice, the fact that there are findings, and that the
Chief Minister has not protected, so he's concerned about protecting the Chief Minister's
constitutional rights.

3645 Does he put in the balance the need to protect the constitutional institutions that have been
trashed in the process? Or the protections of democracy, of a Chief Minister not acting in the way
that he should, in accordance with his Ministerial duty, and the rule of law? I mean, it is an
inversion to the point of lack of reality.

I mean, I certainly have not called, I do not think, him Che Guevara. I mean, I had a poster of
Che Guevara on my wall at university (*Interjections*). But you know, he says, he added, do not raise
the temperature, because people are listening out of Gibraltar.

3650 Again, an inversion of reality. We did not write the report, the Inquiry Report. I know they are
keen to write the Principal Auditor's next report.

3655 And they have reserved to themselves a position that they are going to write a rival report to
the last one. But we do not get to write reports. If there is a raising of the temperature, it is
because of the findings of the Inquiry Report that we did not write. And if there are consequences,
there are consequences. And we did not invent them. We did not invent them.

3660 Madam Speaker, can I just say, before I go on to other speakers, I saw the item on the news of
the threats that were made against the Hon. Minister. I can tell him, I can tell him, that he has our
support, that he has our support on that issue. And he knows, not on a personal level, but also,
he knows he has our support on the political issue of the gaming tax. He knows that. So, I can
assure him that on that issue, we are at item, you know. I am not really sure why he mentions it
in the context of this report, by the way, of this motion, because not really relevant, but so be it.
But given that he has mentioned it, I tell him he has our support at all levels.

3665 But Madam Speaker, there is a big contradiction here because of the welcoming and accepting
of the findings on the 23rd of December of the hon. Members in their press release that I quoted
yesterday. So, this is not a question of, we have been foolish because we do not have the numbers.

We know what the mathematics are. it is not a big Parliament, you know, 8 and 9, 17. it is really not that difficult. We are the biggest Party, you know. But we know the math. But it is not about that. Because if we do not bring a Motion of No Confidence now, with the issues stacking up and the serious findings of the Inquiry Reports, people would be entitled to think, what are you waiting for? If we do not bring the motion now, because we do a calculation, this is not about mercenary mathematical politics, that unless I have had some smoke-filled, dark room conversation with a Member opposite that I know is going to jump ship, I do not bring the motion. We bring it on a principle.

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3675 And then the contribution of Professor Cortes, I have to say, when he said that we are concentrating on denigrating the Chief Minister and going well beyond the reports, I mean, he is a clever guy. I really, when I heard that, I thought he has not read the reports. He has not read the report.

I mean, where in the reports, and given what I said, that we, I have been very careful in quoting precisely what was said, which part of what we have said does he think is not in the findings? Which part? Read the reports and tell me who else faces that severe criticism. Because most people get off fairly lightly, actually, and maybe surprisingly.

3680 You know, people watched the Inquiry and perhaps people were thinking that maybe more than one person would get off with some more serious criticism, but they did not. Actually, most of the serious, serious criticism is on the shoulders of the Chief Minister. And that is a reality.

3685 So, it is not about us denigrating the Chief Minister or going well beyond the reports. we are just saying what the report says. And we are very precise about that. And when he says that Sir Peter Openshaw does not have the measure of the society, well, that was an almost borderline out of order comment. Because what was he suggesting? Was he commenting on the conduct of someone involved in the supervising of the Inquiry and someone in the administration of justice. Again, that was a slightly, slightly edgy comment.

3690 And when he said, Madam Speaker, the Government has been totally exonerated and that there were legitimate questions over the questioning of the motives of the RGP, I am not sure that is what Sir Peter Openshaw said. And certainly, how? I mean, they keep repeating this mantra of vindication and exoneration, but at the same time, the wholly contradictory part of welcoming and accepting the findings.

3695 Which part do they not understand? That if you welcome and accept the findings, lock, stock and barrel, you also accept the findings that criticise the Chief Minister. And if you welcome and accept them, including those findings, you are so far removed from exoneration. Far from exoneration. The Chief Minister has been chastised by this report. Heavily. As my hon. Colleague, Mr Bossino has said, seriously wanting.

3700 It is incredible. It is incredible to hear the hon. Member, has appeared in many Shakespearean tragedies. The last time I saw him was in Macbeth. Is this a dagger I see before me? A story of a Scottish Lord King who becomes a tyrannical ruler.

3705 And this undue emphasis that we are not helping Gibraltar by bringing this up. Well, Madam Speaker, we did not pick the timing of the delivery of the reports. We did not pick the timing of the publication of the Report.

3710 These are things out of our control. Believe it or not, we are not machinating with the RGP, Sir Peter Openshaw or the Council of Wagner or whoever it is. We are really not. Tony Sacramento. We are really not. We are just stating the findings when we find it. And it is our duty. It is our duty on this side of the House. We have been Elected as well. And we have a duty. And our duty is to call it how it is, despite the personal friendships that we may have of Members of this House. Because yes, we all know each other. And yes, we may be fond of people in this House. But the reality is that it is our professional and political duty to call it how it is. And if there are findings in front of us, and we were not to bring the matters to this Parliament, it would be a dereliction of our duty. That is the reality.

3715 We would be failing the people of Gibraltar in the same way that the Chief Minister has failed the people of Gibraltar by attempting to interfere in a criminal investigation and putting his friends

before the public interest and the boundaries, the constitutional and democratic boundaries that should guide his leadership of this community.

3720 And Mr Santos, the Hon. Mr Santos says that we have a pick-and-mix approach to the Inquiry findings. I do not. And we do not. Because, as I said before, and if he is honest when he reads it, he may not say it publicly, but when he reads the report, as he has read it, the criticisms are not a handful of isolated phrases. And list the core participants, and I challenge him, I challenge him, list the core participants and find me findings that are as damning of the others as they are with the
3725 Chief Minister. He will not find them. that is the reality. He will not find them.

He said in jest that he was sad that I should have added honourably to the Spineless Well, honourably spineless, there he is, he has it on the record now. And that we appear a lot on social media, well, you know, well that must be because of the success of our social media, because I certainly do not expect the algorithms to be driving the GSD social media to him, and therefore it
3730 must be successful.

And who is he to complain about social media? He's on it all the time. He is on it all the time.

This is modern politics. We are no longer fighting politics like we used to fight it when I first joined politics, where we would issue a press release, buy a fax, we would have to pass it through the fax three times, or four times, so we could reach the GBC and the Chronicle and Panorama
3735 and so on, Vox in those days, not the political party, the newspaper. And then we would wait, because the other side would reply to the next day.

And then we would have, on the third day, we would get a reply. But we are in the age of social media, so, and he knows, he is an expert at it, he is at it all the time. But Madam Speaker, the hon. Members opposite, who are backing and not sacking the Chief Minister, are blinkered on the
3740 Inquiry, and keen to ignore it.

Keen to ignore it by trying to rattle off reasons why they should ignore it. But very few engaged at all, even attempted to do so, on the real issues of the Inquiry findings, or indeed the Principal Auditor, and the weaponisation of this Parliament. So, they are trying to do that, list the reasons of why they would be re-Elected, or in the words of the Minister for Justice, why they will win the
3745 next Election, without actually taking the risk, no? Because, maybe, actually, if they did ask the people of Gibraltar today to express confidence, the people of Gibraltar might say, no, we are not confident in this Government.

And then, Madam Speaker, the Hon. Ms Arias Vazquez, I have to say, was spectacularly arrogant in her view that they are the only ones who can negotiate anything, or get anything done.
3750 I mean, quite remarkable, quite remarkable, actually, but tribal, actually, I thought, because I have always said, when I have got up, the AACR did things, the GSLP did things, the GSD did things, good things.

When you lose Elections, you lose them because the people decide they should change the Government. And there are reasons for that. But I always acknowledge successful things that have
3755 been done in the past, but it appears that in Ms Arias Vazquez's view of life, there is only one creed, and there is only one set of people, the chosen people, the chosen few, maybe the privileged few, and the powerful few, who can negotiate things.

And she says that the Chief Minister should remain in post because he is someone who helps people who do not have a trust fund. Madam Speaker, when I was growing up, I did not know
3760 what a trust fund was. I do not know who she has been growing up with. But I certainly did not recognise a trust fund. When I first studied equity and trusts, that is when I first learnt that there was such a thing called a trust fund. So, normal people do not have trust funds.

And then, Madam Speaker, I turn to the Chief Minister, who did not say much, actually, but seems to ignore a number of things. First of all, I think there have been Confidence Motions in the
3765 Government before, it is obvious. When you go through the record of Hansard in this House, I have not done an exhaustive check, but I have seen examples of it.

And, fair enough, people take a view on whether it is on one single issue or another issue. Motions in the past have been deemed to be motions of confidence by Speakers in this House, and they have been taken like that. Secondly, we did bring the original motion in reaction to their

3770 own motion - it is obvious. And this is about politics. And because of their usurpation and breaking down of the constitutional boundaries, this is about raising issues that are political. Because how is it not political when the Government of the day takes on a Constitutional Officer, seeks to erode his functions, usurp them, and weaponise Parliament against him?

3775 How is it not political when an Inquiry finds that the Chief Minister of the day attempts to interfere in a criminal investigation? Breaking all the boundaries, including the Ministerial Code and Codes of Conduct and principles. How is that not political? it is about standards of public life. Of course it is political.

3780 And then he said, I am a street fighter, a pugilist. Finally, Madam Speaker, finally an admission. Not the pussycat. A street fighter. that is what he is. Absolutely a street fighter. A street fighter. A dirty street fighter. Because some of the stuff that he said were dirty street fighter stuff.

Talk. Maybe he reflects on it in his less dark moments. Because, you know, lots of things could be said in this Parliament. Lots of things.

I can tell you I did not go to Spain to do an interview, by the way. I have done interviews with the Spanish media here.

3785 I do not think it was Coppe, by the way. I have done interviews here. I have not gone to Spain. And certainly, that was more twist and spin invention. If people do stories, run stories, but not on the back of stuff that I have said. I am very careful about the things I say to the Spanish media.

3790 Precisely because I do not want to be misquoted. I am uber cautious on these issues of Spanish media. The problem is he cannot recognise the truth if it stares it in his face because he has not written it.

Unless he writes it, he says it is not true. And then he says that I gave, I addressed the people of Gibraltar on the 24th of December as if there was something wrong with that. If I had waited till the 7th of January, he would then have said, it took him two weeks to react.

3795 But do not I know him well enough? Because Madam Speaker, he chose the 23rd of December. He had the report since the 6th of November.

3800 He could have published it at any time before he fell ill. After he fell ill, I understand. He knows I spoke. I rang him. After he fell ill, I understand. And of course, I understand it was delayed further because of the coroner's inquest. Absolutely. But before the 5th of December, they were planning to do it on the 5th of December. Before then, they could have done it at any time. He then chose the 23rd of December. So, of course, and he did a Ministerial broadcast on the 23rd of December. So, how am I going to react before then?

I get a Ministerial broadcast reply under the rules, the GRA rules, after he does one. So, the 24th of December was inevitable. And yes, I have no problem with my track record.

3805 He can keep reminding me. I think he must realise by now that really it is water for ducks back. I have stood for Election. I have offered myself to the people of Gibraltar. The people can accept or reject the offering. I am a democrat. I accept that. Sometimes you win. Sometimes you lose. I have been on the winning side, and I have been on the losing side. He says I have lost a number of Elections as a leader. Yes, I have. Sir Joe Bossano won Elections as a leader. He also lost seven Elections as a leader. So, what? So, what?

3810 The reality, Madam Speaker, he says we might miss him when he is gone. I can tell him that when he acts like the wounded Chief Minister, like he did in some instances today, lashing out in a dark and sinister way in the words of Sir Peter Openshaw. We are not going to miss him because that kind of conduct, that kind of conduct, we should never miss in this House. That kind of conduct should be confined to the history books because there is a better way of behaviour in this House. There is a better way than weaponising Parliament.

3815 There is a better way than transgressing the boundaries. And that is why, that is why I regret very much how they have taken this motion, amended it and created it into a motion of confidence into the Chief Minister. But at least one thing is clear, Madam Speaker, that they now own and condone all the improper action too.

3820 **Madam Speaker:** I now put the question in terms of the motion by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition as amended by the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister. Does the Hon. Chief Minister want a division called? Division.

The avoidance of doubt, we are now voting on whether this House has confidence in the Chief Minister. As amended, yes.

3825

A division was called for and voting resulted as follows:

FOR

Hon. G Arias Vasquez
Hon. Sir J J Bossano
Hon. L M Bruzon
Hon. Prof. J E Cortes
Hon. N Feetham
Hon. Dr 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
Hon. A Sanchez

ABSENT

None

Madam Speaker: The result of the Division is as follows: nine Members in favour, eight Members against. Carried.

3830

ADJOURNEMENT

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, thank you very much indeed for those two divisions. Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn Sine Die. And I am particularly pleased to do that as Leader of the House, given that reports of my political death have been greatly exaggerated.

3835

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question which is that this House do now adjourn Sine Die. I now put the question which is that this House do now adjourn Sine Die. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye)**. Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn Sine Die.

The House adjourned Sine Die at 10.46 p.m.