

PRESS RELEASE 1229

Party Political Broadcast by the Liberal Party - 13 December 2005

Start – Liberal Party Leader Dr Joseph Garcia in his office

Good evening

This month the Liberal Party is fourteen years old. Next year will be our fifteenth birthday.

In those fifteen years, we have seen the hostility of successive Spanish Governments' towards Gibraltar take different forms.

The present Spanish Government has already made it clear that the process they are currently engaged in involves a change of approach but not a change of substance. In other words, at one time they would use the stick to try and achieve their objective, and now they use the carrot. But that objective remains the same.

Madrid has also said that they want to engage in a series of confidence-building measures before they resume negotiations on the central issue of sovereignty. This means that they want to build up your confidence and your trust in the Spanish Government.

Obviously they do not know us at all. The plain fact is that we do not trust them one inch and that we will not give them one inch. Now or ever.

In the meantime they use every possible opportunity to undermine the position of Gibraltar in the European Union. Last month, Gibraltar airport was excluded from the EU regulation on the blacklisting of unsafe airlines. This means that in theory an airline which has been banned from the rest of the European Union is free to fly to and from Gibraltar airport.

This shows the extent to which the Spanish Government is prepared to go to make a point about its sovereignty claim. Gibraltar should have been included in these and other civil aviation measures as a matter of right.

At the same time Spain continues to challenge in the European Court the manner in which the United Kingdom has chosen to enfranchise Gibraltar for elections to the European Parliament. Their concern that a couple of hundred of Commonwealth citizens are included in the European electoral register for Gibraltar is a hollow concern indeed when there are a million such voters in the United Kingdom register and Madrid has not batted an eyelid before. Isn't it a coincidence that their alleged concern to uphold the European Treaties in this regard only materialized after the Eurovote was extended to Gibraltar?

At the same time, it is quite incredible that what we hear practically on a weekly basis from Moratinos, Carracao, De La Encina, Estrella and Pons is met only by a deafening silence from our own Government.

It is only logical in such circumstances that so many of you should be worried. But that is the Government's own fault. Many of us still remember how in 1987 we were also told that concessions needed to be made over our airport. We were also told at the time that there were no sovereignty implications in the deal that was struck. We rejected that view then and we reject that view now.

I know that it is not only external matters that concern us all. Many of us are worried about the internal state of Gibraltar as well.

Neil Costa on site in front of Mid-Town Project

It worries me to hear more friends and family than ever, complain about the high-handed way and the incredibly long time it takes this government to take action on any matter. One important issue that affects the great majority of us, is development and planning.

I am greatly concerned that housing projects all over Gibraltar do not take us into account. Even as a young lawyer, it would be impossible for me to pay a mortgage, meet all my other financial obligations and live, precisely because of the ridiculously high price of housing.

It seems to me that developers are running rampant, with the government's seal of approval, and grabbing our already small territory. It would also appear that the main concern is to make profits and not to use our land, our resources, in a way that properly and sensitively considers the interests of you and me.

We all know that these developments are mainly luxury flats. It should be obvious that these are just too expensive for any of us. It makes me angry to think that this government has allowed a situation where more and more of my friends have had no choice but to find housing across the border because they cannot afford a flat.

How will this affect our identity as Gibraltarians? Has the Government not given this question any thought?

It would seem not, as for close on 10 years the GSD government has neglected the construction of low-cost homes for Gibraltarians from all walks of life. The GSD has instead allowed property speculation to spiral out of all control, even though they have been in the unique position to control the situation.

Now, when the GSD **finally** realise that their disastrous housing policy, or lack of policy, may cost them the next election, the Chief Minister, not the Housing Minister, announces the creation of what **they** describe as affordable homes. In our view the effort is rushed, badly planned and does not create affordable housing. What has the Housing Minister been doing for the past 10 years? **Why** do these projects require the Chief Minister's personal intervention? Is this government seriously trying to convince **us** that houses that cost over £120,000 are affordable? Affordable for whom?

As far as I am concerned, if we re-elect this stagnating government, without vision for our future, or care for its people, we run the very real risk, that the Gibraltar that we know and that we love will not exist in a few year's time. Our space is far from limited. This government has failed in its obligations to **us** and I am confident that **you** will make them pay the price.

Vijay Daryanani at the Theatre Royal site

The hole in the ground behind me has cost you millions and millions of pounds. The Theatre Royal project was supposed to be a restoration. Instead it has become a virtual demolition. From a heritage point of view there is now very little left.

Mr Caruana once described the Theatre Royal project as his own personal “vision thing”. What an expensive vision this has been!

Gibraltar continues to pay the rent for his vision behind me. The original rent was £60,000 a year which comes to no less than £5000 a month. To add insult to injury, the latest Government figures show that the rent has increased by 10% so that Gibraltar is now paying even more.

The Government continues to throw money away down this black hole. It is incredible that they had the cheek a few weeks ago to trumpet the refurbishment of the Ince’s Hall Theatre. This is what many people think they should have done in the first place as opposed to embarking on the expensive fiasco behind me.

The GSD have had no problem in spending your money on follies like this.

It is a fact that there is something seriously wrong with the spending priorities of this Government. Over the years they have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds to have Ministers globetrotting all over the world. They have organized lavish cocktail parties and dinners at expensive locations like the Savoy in London, when a more modest venue could have served the same purpose.

While the Government parties the reality is that people back here in Gibraltar have everyday concerns to worry about. Many cannot even afford a flat in which to live. Others have nightmare stories to tell about the health service. Parking and traffic are worse than they have ever been. While all this is going on Ministers continue to party.

Thankfully the latest indicators suggest that the party will soon be over for the GSD.

Conclusion - Dr Joseph Garcia in his office

In short, Gibraltar has reached a turning point. It is clear that for a variety of reasons more and more people are losing their trust and their faith in the GSD. It is equally clear that a GSLP/Liberal Government is an ever close reality. We will not let you down.

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