

PRESS RELEASE 1230

2nd Party Political Broadcast by the Liberal Party – 20th December 2005

Start – Joseph Garcia in his office

Good evening,

As you know, the process of decolonisation which was started in 1999 by the House of Assembly has been moving slowly towards its logical conclusion. We strongly believe that Gibraltar must be decolonised by the year 2010 in keeping with the United Nations deadline.

Gibraltar and London are engaged in negotiations over a constitutional blueprint that would change our status so that we cease to be a colony. The objective is that the final document, if and when it is agreed, would be accepted by the people of Gibraltar in a referendum as an act of self-determination.

We are convinced that this is the way forward. We are equally convinced that Gibraltar cannot be treated any differently to the many other colonial territories that have gone down this road before us.

In other words, Spain should have no bearing on the decolonisation of Gibraltar. We are not part of Spain. We do not want to be a part of Spain. Spain is not our administering power. As far as we are concerned Madrid has got nothing to do with this process and should keep out of it.

And so, moving on now to domestic issues, it is clear that more of you are increasingly unhappy with the way that we are being governed. This discontent is particularly strong in relation to planning and developments.

The Government has to realize that Gibraltar belongs to you, to the people of Gibraltar. Future generations will now be stuck with the mistakes that this Government has made.

For nearly ten years the GSD Government have given permission for the construction of luxury houses at the expense of low-cost accommodation for our people. These luxury flats have the best locations and the best views in Gibraltar. Regrettably, the worst locations and the worst views are reserved for local people. This cannot be right.

How can the Government justify the development at Rosia Tanks when this site did not even go out to tender? How do they know that the Mid-Town project at the naval grounds is the best possible deal for you, the people, when this plot of prime land did not go out to tender either?

Quite apart from all this, the GSD are turning Gibraltar into a concrete jungle.

Leslie Bruzon at Safeway car park with the hospital behind him

Development problems stem directly from the fact that Gibraltar does not have an up to date Development Plan. The last such plan dates back to 1991 and the new one is now four years overdue.

The lack of planning and foresight on the part of this Government is visible in other areas also. Their management of the health service at a political level is an absolute disaster.

Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in their decision to move the old St Bernard's Hospital into an office block at Europort, with all the problems that have ensued. It would have been far better, as we argued, to have constructed a purpose-built hospital.

This poor planning is reflected in the fact that they converted an office block into a hospital without providing on site car parking for the general public or proper kitchens. As a result underground car parking spaces had to be purchased from the developer building flats next door and the area for cooking meals had to be sited in the old wine factory.

Earlier this year tests on the drinking water in buildings 3 and 4 showed a higher than normal copper content. This led to a ban on drinking tapwater in the affected wards. The saga went on for two months before the ban was lifted.

There are also issues in relation to social services which give cause for serious concern. A group of parents whose children have learning disabilities and use the respite services at the Dr Giraldi Home were recently desperate enough to come out publicly with their problems.

We have a Government that does not care and a Government that does not listen. They spend money on the wrong things and cut back money in the wrong places.

Steven Linares in front of the House of Assembly

Nowhere is the culture that the GSD have created over the past nine years seen clearer than in relation to our young people. The ineffective and misguided policies of the Government have fuelled a serious problem of juvenile delinquency in Gibraltar.

The excuses that they give by pointing the finger at the past are transparent and self-serving. The GSD have been in power for nearly ten years now and it is they who have to answer what is happening at this time.

I believe that some of the factors that account for this vast increase in juvenile delinquency are the following.

Firstly, the GSD have removed the youth service from under the wing of the department of education, where it had always been. This shows the incompetence of their ministers and betrays the fact the GSD have absolutely no idea of what the ethos and the concept of youth work actually involves.

Secondly, the lack of a properly set up Pupil Referral Unit within our education system where behavioural problems in schools can be dealt with. At present there are two retired full-time teachers and one part-time to service approximately 5000 pupils. This is just not good enough.

The third reason is the fact that our Youth Clubs are not properly and readily made available at the proper times of day when the facility is required. Did you know that at present youth clubs are open only 3 times a week?

I have no doubt that the drinking and gambling culture that this GSD government has instilled in our society is contributing to anti-social behaviour and delinquency. It must be recalled that Peter Caruana is on record as having suggested that Casemates Square is a place where our youth can enjoy themselves. The fact is that the only thing that our youth are expected to do at Casemates is to drink in bars during the evening. And this begs the question. What are the under-aged supposed to do?

The virtual breakdown of our social services is yet another factor which has contributed to anti-social behaviour problems among our youth. It is currently taking from 9 to 12 months for social services to complete child welfare reports for our courts in matrimonial cases. The only victim of such a long delay are the children themselves given the uncertainty that this creates.

Bullying is a problem which is increasing in schools and everywhere else. Indeed for the first time an independent association has had to be formed to deal with bullying in the work place.

It is curious to note that the attitude of the Chief Minister himself in many instances hardly serves as a role model in this regard. His bullying interview earlier this year with GBC journalist Christine Clifton is an example of this unacceptable kind of behaviour.

The GSD therefore has a lot to answer for in relation to the increasing number of juveniles that are charged and convicted.

It is lamentable that even after conviction and sentencing the GSD have lacked the policy and the will to help to reform those youngsters. The community service system is in complete shambles.

The disturbances which we now associate with Halloween night are a symptom of the wider problem that exists. I know that all our young people should not be tarred with the same brush. However, there is an increasing minority whose unruly, selfish and anti-social behaviour needs to be tackled urgently. This GSD Government has failed them all.

Conclusion: Joseph Garcia in his office

In conclusion, these are only some areas where I know you will agree that the Government is sadly lacking in solutions. The GSD have run out of ideas and they have run out of steam.

The time is drawing closer for the GSLP and the Liberal Party to become your next Government, with your trust and your support.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas. Thank you for listening and good night.

ENDS