

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

32/2007 8 March 2007

The Opposition note the announcement by the Election Registration Officer that a new Register of Electors is being compiled. This will virtually be a census of every household in Gibraltar which will take place from scratch.

The Opposition is convinced that this is the only way to cure the problems with the register that have existed in the past.

It will be recalled that in the 2002 Referendum Register there were about 20,000 persons. This number went down to about 18,000 for the 2003 general elections and it then increased for the 2004 European elections and the 2006 Referendum.

Therefore there has been a different number included in the register and entitled to participate in each of our last four public consultations. The different entitlement to vote is not enough to explain these wild fluctuations. Indeed, even though the entitlement was more restrictive in 2002, there were more people in that register than for the general election the following year. This did not make any sense yet the Government refused in 2003 to acknowledge that there were 2000 people who by definition should have been entitled to be included in the register.

The Opposition was inundated with complaints after the 2003 general elections by people who were not included in the register.

Whenever the Opposition have highlighted these problems with the register, the Government has simply brushed aside all the arguments, refused to look into the matter and defended the way in which they had compiled the register.

The last time that the register was discussed in detail in our Parliament last year, the Government suggested that the register for the 2006 referendum might be used for the general elections and gave as the excuse for doing so that this would produce a saving of £60,000 - £70,000.

Given the way in which the Government spends £60,000 - £70,000 as if it were pocket money, it did not seem a good enough reason not to produce a new register to address the shortcomings of the previous one.

Although the Government will never admit that they got this wrong in the past, the fact that a new register is now being compiled from scratch proves the need for this to have been done previously in order to get a register which accurately covers all those who are entitled to vote.

ENDS