

JOE BOSSANO, CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2007
20th December 2007.

THE VALUE OF FAMILY

Good evening

We are now at the start of a new Parliament, recently elected, where the party in government held on to office by the narrowest of margins.

In this, my 10th general election and the 31st year of our party, we have seen how strong our grass roots membership is, right across Gibraltar families. This is, especially so, in respect of those families that come from everyday working backgrounds, But also true, of all other sectors of our society, from those in our community, whose love for this Rock of ours, has always made them determined, to make sure, that our homeland will never, ever, fall into Spanish hands.

Clearly we have many differences in policies, value judgements and viewpoints, with the party in power.

In 2006 I reminded you of one of these. Remember how I said the real test of whether the new Constitution decolonises Gibraltar would come this year at the UN? Immediately after the election we saw, UK, once again, subscribing to the same, annual discredited, text on Gibraltar's future, as it was doing under the previous Constitution. Just as we had predicted would be the case.

We have seen only this week, on the 25th anniversary of the pedestrian opening of the frontier gates by Spain, how the proposed Cervantes Institute of Gibraltar is being trumpeted as more than a mere cultural event. In Spain it is described as the spearhead of the new campaign to Hispanicise Gibraltar. Already they are triumphantly proclaiming that we are on the road to a Spanish Gibraltar and they haven't even opened shop yet!

There will be many occasions in the year ahead to remind you that our analysis has been right on a whole range of issues but tonight I want to use this political broadcast to share my thoughts with you on the family.

The traditional Gibraltarian Christmas has always been a family gathering. When I was a small boy, many years ago, that meant all my aunts, uncles and cousins coming together in a huge family feast.

Even though today's families come in many more shapes and sizes, the fundamental point is to understand the meaning and the value of the concept.

Being family, is about belonging to a place which is your home.

Being family, is about the bonds that unite a group of people.

Being family, is about caring for and looking after each other, accepting those whom we love the way they are and not seeking to impose one's own ideas or preferences on them.

The GSLP is therefore more than a political party. It is a huge family made up of hundreds of small units interlinked by ties of a shared lifetime of political and trade union work, looking after the interests of our people, our people and our Country.

The bedrock of this family and of our way of life has been the solidarity and mutual help that ordinary families provided to each other, when wages were not as high as they became after parity.

It was also that same sentiment that many family businesses in Gibraltar had, as employers. A sense of loyalty to their employees, which was reflected in going beyond their legal obligations to help them out in their time of need.

Or the way in which neighbours rallied around whenever a household in their community was going through a bad patch

All these thoughts that I share with you tonight will be very familiar to many of you. To others it may seem that I am talking about a world that no longer exists.

Do we want those special qualities to survive? The qualities that make us "The Gibraltarians". That great family which we have always been. If we do, then we need to be conscious that it is this which makes Gibraltar the wonderful place it is.

When you have something that is worthwhile and precious you must be prepared to defend it and preserve it.

I know many of our young people feel 100% Gibraltarian. That they are wholly committed to their homeland and that they show this every National Day when we proclaim to the world, who we are.

However, it will not always be so if the trends we have seen in the last 11 years continue unchecked.

The lack of homes for young families that makes them go across the border.

The waste of our university graduates in whose education we invest millions and then fail to provide them with the opportunity to use their knowledge back here, at home.

The erosion of the job opportunities in the public sector, with labour being imported. The multiplicity of so called experts brought in at very expensive rates, to teach us how to do things, in ways that have failed where they come from. These are all symptoms of the threat to the cohesion and the strength of the overall Gibraltarian family.

We have criticised these tendencies and have committed ourselves to policies to redress them, which regrettably did not win sufficient votes for us to have become your government in October.

However, I can promise you one thing. The commitment to Gibraltar and its people is the very foundation stone on which the GSLP was founded 31 years ago and the philosophy to which I have devoted two thirds of my life. That will never change. We will be there whenever Gibraltar needs us and I shall continue to be ready to serve every individual that approaches me with a personal problem, irrespective of their political allegiance, as I have done in the 35 years you have voted for me.

With those thoughts I wish you a very happy Christmas with your loved ones and friends on behalf of Rose, myself and my party.

Good night.

ENDS