

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

43/2010

12 April 2010

The GSD Government have nothing left to offer Gibraltar other than insults and personal attacks which are designed to deflect public attention from the shortcomings of their policies. Their response last week to the plight of a family who wanted medical attention for their children highlighted by Shadow Health Minister Neil Costa is a case in point.

The exaggerated and hysterical overreaction on the part of the Government to this simple request is indicative of the fact that they see themselves as being infallible and above criticism. It is obvious that they are now even more hypersensitive than usual the more that they come to realise that their time is up.

It is clear that the Government do not like it when people approach the Opposition with their problems, still less when at the request of the affected party the issues are made public. The Government must understand that in a democratic society members of the public are free to approach their Members of Parliament with their concerns. Equally, the Opposition are perfectly entitled to raise the issue in public on behalf of their constituents. In this particular case, the Opposition had even written to the Minister for Health Yvette del Agua before taking this step.

Indeed, from the tone of the Government's statement it is obvious that they did not even like the headline in the media "Govt acting in heartless manner over family plight". The GSD Government have clearly not realised that the headline in question was provided by the media and not contained in the Opposition statement itself!

It is the Government that have not got the facts right and who have distorted the truth to suit their own political ends. It is correct to say that the family in question did originally try to register using the one-bedroom Government dwelling of a relative. However, when they were told that this was not possible, they moved into a private one bedroom dwelling in Gibraltar. They were then told this second time that it was possible to register but that they needed to have an identity card in order to be able to register with the GHA.

The question is not that the Minister is being asked to waive the requirements imposed in the law but that she should exercise some common sense in relation to these bureaucratic issues in exceptional cases of real and genuine hardship. Given that the Gibraltar identity card is simply there to provide proof of identity, if there is a requirement for the GHA to establish this in order to ensure the

entitlement to register for healthcare, then it should be possible to do so by reference to other official documents like passports and birth certificates.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Health Neil Costa said:

“The plain fact is that while the Government imputes my motives and questions my personal integrity and professional ability, there is a 9 year old Gibraltarian out there with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder who requires immediate medical attention and a 7 year old Gibraltarian with learning difficulties who requires an educational assessment. The Minister and the GSD Government should show more compassion and humanity in this case because we are, after all, dealing with children. It is totally unacceptable that Mrs Del Agua and her Government should play politics with people’s lives in this way. The GSD should understand that their smokescreen of insults does not work any more and that their days are numbered.”

ENDS