

## **Opposition Press Release : 98/2010 - GOVT FUNDING OF 7 DAYS IS TAXPAYER FUNDING OF GSD CAMPAIGN**

The statements by the current Chief Minister, Mr Caruana, on GBC's Newswatch last Friday attempting to justify the Government's funding of the "7 Days" are a transparent nonsense peddled in the manner of a snake oil salesman.

Mr Caruana told GBC that the only criteria for placing government advertisement in newspapers was that they should not be "in house" party organs. Mr Caruana has argued for the last 15 years that Government would not advertise in "The New People" on the basis that it was an in house party organ of the GSLP. However, Mr Caruana has been fully aware that for the past 15 years "The New People" has been owned exclusively by Mr Clive Golt (the new Government Media Director) and NOT by the GSLP or any member of the GSLP executive. The "7 Days" is owned by a GSD party supporter.

In any event, this is different to what Mr Caruana has previously told the Parliament when he was trying to justify removing official advertising from VOX, after it had taken an editorial line that was contrary to the GSD. At that time, Mr Caruana argued that official advertising would only be placed in publications that were up to date in their debts to Government. The GSD Government had advertised in Vox - despite the debts that newspaper had to government in PAYE and Social Insurance - until it changed its editorial line to be anti-GSD.

Commenting on the matter, shadow minister for the media, Fabian Picardo, said: "This Government is making a virtue of contradiction. Peter Caruana will now say anything to try to hang onto power and justify his funding of the 7 Days to allow it to publish a GSD manifesto on a weekly basis at taxpayers expense. This is totally contrary to established principles of good governance and illustrates that Mr Caruana is confusing his party interests with those of the State. In effect, taxpayers are now funding a part of the GSD's campaign with public money. The state funding of what is clearly a party organ like "7 Days" has to be considered when looking at substance and not form. If Mr Caruana is now saying - having changed his position - that if the form is that a newspaper is not owned in-house by a political party it will get state advertising, he is just seeking to carve out an exception to fit the facts as it suits him. As I told Mr Caruana during the course of the Budget debate, he has lost his democratic way on this. Unfortunately, although Mr Caruana speaks to the highest standards of governance, his actions stoop to political skulduggery of the lowest kind. But his excuses no longer wash with the public, who are too clever to allow him to continue to pull the wool over their eyes with transparent excuses. These actions serve to show just how badly a change of government is needed in Gibraltar, and soon!"

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