



PRESS RELEASE

No. 119/2015

Date: 26th February 2015

Opposition created the fishing issue that they are now complaining about

The latest statement from the Opposition on the enforcement of the law against fishing with nets shows that they have no policy on anything except misleading and confusing public opinion.

The GSLP/Liberals in Opposition were against the 1999 fishing agreement from the moment that it was entered into by the previous Chief Minister and a group of Spanish fishermen. The latest statement from the GSD exemplifies how embarrassed Daniel Feetham seems to be about those actions of Sir Peter Caruana - despite having called him "the greatest Gibraltarian of all time."

The fact is that there is today illegal fishing by Spanish fishermen because the GSD, which Mr Feetham leads, allowed it to happen and created the problem in the first place.

It will be recalled that the agreement purported to allow fishing with nets even though this was against the law. It established a regime whereby Spanish fishermen could fish with impunity inside British Gibraltar Territorial Waters provided that they did so at a certain distance, in certain locations, in certain numbers and with certain methods. Therefore the regime that the GSD created when they were in office was not only illegal at base, it was also discriminatory in its application.

It therefore should surprise nobody that the 2011 manifesto of the parties in Government contained a reference to no longer be bound by the 1999 fishing agreement and that once in Government this commitment was acted upon.

However, what is surprising is the newly found zeal on the part of the GSD Opposition to champion this issue when they did the exact opposite of what they are saying now from 1999 until 2011. Indeed, the perception at the time was that there was no action taken to enforce the law because the law enforcement agencies were told to ignore it. This was defended at the time on the basis that there were a whole series of laws about everything and that the Police could not enforce all the laws on the statute books all of the time.

This Government also took the view that the application of the law was a matter for the Royal Gibraltar Police. However, we acted very differently. It was made clear on coming into office that whatever suggestions has been put to the RGP in the past, the new Government was no longer bound by the 1999 fishing agreement and upholding the law was a matter for the RGP. In this



context, the maritime resources available to the RGP were vastly improved and increased by this Government.

Therefore the RGP has now been liberated by the GSLP-LIBERAL Government from the shackles of the GSD's illegal agreement. They are now free to exercise their discretion to enforce the law. The GSD Opposition is, remarkably, calling on the Government to breach the Constitution and interfere with the Police by directing them in what to do. The Government will not do that.

But the Government does call on Mr Feetham to be clear with Gibraltar and the Gibraltarians and answer whether he is in favour of the Spanish fishermen continuing to fish or not. The answer he has given before is that he would have allowed them to continue fishing under the illegal and unconstitutional fishing agreement. He needs to confirm that so that everyone understands that he doesn't want to see fishing stopped, he wants to see it continue and increase to the levels that it reached under the illegal agreement.

It is therefore the height of political hypocrisy for the Opposition to complain that the law is not being enforced when they spent the better part of twelve years undermining that same law completely. The plain truth is that the GSD, with this issue also, act as if they believe that there is some mileage in stirring up this matter for their own convenience. Their arguments are both contradictory and self-serving at the same time.

The Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "Daniel Feetham has nowhere left to hide. He is now caught in the horns of his own contradictions. He is trying to win favour with the 'anti-fishing lobby' whilst at the same time advocating a return to the GSD's illegal agreement that created this problem in the first place. He can't have it both ways and people are seeing through his politically hypocritical contradictions. He fools no-one."