



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's Speech On May Day

Commenting on the May Day events organised by Unite the Union at Casemates, the Chief Minister has confirmed the commitments he made at the event.

The Chief Minister said:

“It was a real pleasure to be at Casemates on May Day to enjoy the fantastic event organised by Unite the Union and the Ministry of Culture. At the event, I was very happy to confirm that there will be no erosion in Gibraltar of workers' rights as a result of Brexit.

“At last year's May Day event, before the Referendum, I said that there would be no such erosion if Brexit did happen and yesterday (Monday) I confirmed that clear and unstinting commitment now, after the result of the Referendum, has determined that Gibraltar will be leaving the European Union along with Britain. I made it clear that the introduction of the new Clause 24 in the EU Council negotiating guidelines would not be met by Gibraltar lying down, if it was pursued further in the negotiations. Gibraltar was clear that we would not tolerate discrimination against our people and that we would deal with any such attempts with reciprocity of approach. It could not be otherwise.

“I was particularly proud to be able to say that in Gibraltar, on the last day of April, only 142 people were unemployed. That is the lowest record of unemployment since records begun. It also demonstrates a Gibraltar in which there is no need for austerity, although we will always continue to fight for greater efficiency. Real efficiency (and not austerity in the name of efficiency) is as much in the interest of the worker as much it is in the interest of the taxpayer. Austerity, as proposed by our political opponents, namely Mr Feetham and the GSD, has real victims. In Gibraltar there is no need for nurses to attend food banks, as Andrew Marr put it to Mrs May is the case in the United Kingdom. That will never happen in Gibraltar with a GSLP Liberal Government. We do not believe in austerity although the GSD opposition constantly insist on their policy of austerity and cutting £50m from Government spending. Nonetheless, I was clear that the Government would not tolerate the growth of zero hour contracts in service providers to the Government and that this was a matter which would definitely be dealt with.

“I was pleased to be able to tell Unite the Union that although I had pressed 'Pause' during the last budget debate in respect of the introduction of pensions in the private sector, I was going to be able to press the 'Play' button again now on that important manifesto commitment. We can do this because our economy is continuing to perform strongly despite the Brexit vote.



“At the May Day event I also said that I will soon be announcing additional support for existing pensioners in the private sector. In respect of pensions, I was also able to refer to those who are awaiting feedback from the government and in respect of pensions in utility companies that were subject of Government joint ventures. They will soon be getting good news from the government: I emphasised that there will be no losers but there will also be no gains beyond what they would have received if they had continued in government service. They'll be no losers but they'll be no real new Rolls-Royce deals.

“Furthermore, I was also very happy to be able to tell the Unite meeting that the minimum wage has gone up more than public sector salaries in the time that I had been in office. I told them that I had read carefully what they had said about the minimum wage and that they would be very pleased with the budget I will introduce this year. I said the budget will be a ‘Budget for Working People’ and it will be one with which working people will be very happy.

“I also pointed out that in Gibraltar everybody has the right to join a union. The right to join the union is protected in the constitution which preserves the right of freedom of association. There is no need for any new law to allow people to join the union. I will however be starting a consultation in order to introduce trade union recognition rules, which I think is a good thing for both employers and for employees.

“I was able to tell Unite that I was very pleased to see that they were requesting things that we had already committed ourselves to. It is quite something to see that the government remains ahead even of employee representative organisations in ensuring that we deliver the best for working people. For that reason I said we already have a manifesto commitment to introduce equalization of pension ages between the sexes and that such absence of discrimination should also extend to different sectors in the public service.

“The last thing I told the meeting was that, whilst I am Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the International Workers Day celebration will always be a holiday on 1st May whatever day of the week that may be. I was able to enjoy a great family day at Casements with all my family and with representatives of Unite the Union and other unions, and very much enjoyed what was a real family event for everyone. I congratulate the organisers of what was an excellent May Day event.”