



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Phillips Wrong on Govt's Command Paper**

The remarks by the Leader of the Opposition, Elliott Phillips, in relation to abortion on GBC's 'The Opposition, Your Questions' illustrated in technicolour the intellectual decline of the GSD.

Additionally, and despite saying that the GSD does not yet have a policy and will be discussing it tonight, Mr Phillip's position can only be interpreted as him being in favour of abortion being offered in Gibraltar.

In his wild and angry attack on the Chief Minister, Mr Phillips said this:

*"We continue to listen to people on this particularly difficult area and we have done our homework in relation to abortion. We have looked at the statistics in the United Kingdom but there is one thing that really bothers me about this subject and I've heard recently by the Chief Minister, who is on record as saying that we should consider sending young women and women to the United Kingdom to have abortions.*

*Now, frankly that in my view is at odds with the Supreme Court decision in relation to the Northern Irish question on abortion and not only is it at odds but it effectively says in the judgement, by one of the Supreme Court Judges, that it would demonstrate inhumane and degrading treatment to do that, to send Northern Irish women to England or Scotland to have abortions.*

*Now what has the Chief Minister, this is a complete political cop-out in relation to this issue. He lacks leadership on this question and he lacks complete integrity on this question.*

*What we have said, quite clearly, is that we will go to our party and take a view, take soundings and listen to what the people have brought into us and we will take a decision. It's not an easy decision to take. I know that even within our executive there will polarised views on this subject but it be one that we have the strength and political honesty to deal with."*

The decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Northern Ireland branded "inhumane and degrading" that women in Northern Ireland are FORCED to travel abroad, to the United Kingdom or elsewhere, for abortions - even in cases of fatal foetal abnormalities and other circumstances. The judgement did not deal at all with the possibility of women having the option of having such procedures undertaken either in Northern Ireland or elsewhere with full funding provided by the National Health Service.

In fact, the Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, has said that ONE of the mechanism being considered in the drafting of the Her Majesty's Government's Command Paper on abortion



is that women should be given the OPTION to travel outside Gibraltar, if they wish, to have an abortion carried out in the defined circumstances in which such a procedure might be permitted.

This potential option, allowing women to determine where to have a procedure, is identical to the position in respect of most procedures where sponsored patients are given a choice of location for treatment by the GHA.

Mr Phillip's wild attack on the Chief Minister is therefore a gross error in understanding either the judgement of the UK Supreme Court or the clear and unequivocal words of Mr Picardo.

Additionally, the statement by Mr Phillips, discloses his position must be that the GSD should agree to allow abortion in Gibraltar. That can be the only reading of his saying that in his view it would be - in keeping with his reading of the UK Supreme Court judgment - "inhuman and degrading" for women to be "required" to travel to the UK for an abortion. The only way to cure Mr Phillips' view would be for abortions to be allowed in Gibraltar. The Government does not support or criticise this view, as we are presently developing the Command Paper on this subject.

The position, however, clearly flies in the face of Mr Phillips saying that the GSD does not yet have a policy, given that, as its Parliamentary leader, he has already expressed a view of what is "inhuman and degrading".

Mr Picardo said: "I really do regret the wild, quite vicious and vitriolic way in which Mr Phillips has so inexpertly attacked me. He has failed to understand what I have said we are considering. Additionally he has sought to criticise me personally in respect of an area where his party has yet to announce a policy and where we have been working diligently since the decision in the Northern Ireland case. The hapless Mr Phillips gets the facts wrong on this sensitive and important issue. He then goes off at a tangent and hits his own party by disclosing they haven't even got a policy yet months after we set out our position and timetable and started work on our Command Paper although his statements suggest he is very much a pro-choice candidate. I am not surprised that people are writing the GSD off, given Elliott's weak and intellectually bereft statements on everything from his attack on GJBS to this socially important matter. I sincerely feel that the GSD is letting Gibraltar's democracy down. We need strong and effective opposition to hold the Government to account, not weak and ineffective chancers who are clearly more concerned with using politics to advance their own social standing. I look forward to meeting all the representative organisations who are taking a position on abortion again in coming days and weeks in order to hear their views on the draft Command Paper we will publish by the end of September / beginning of October. On this, as on so much else, we will continue to lead whilst the GSD cower away from taking a decision!"