



PRESS RELEASE

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Government Calls On Mr Clinton to Refute His Accusation

HM Government of Gibraltar notes Mr Clinton's latest outburst on Parliamentary committees, and further notes his suggestion that the Chief Minister is 'clutching at straws.' Mr Clinton labours under the misapprehension that what works elsewhere in the Commonwealth will automatically work just as well in Gibraltar. He seems to think that "Westminster has a Public Affairs Committee so, clearly, Gibraltar would benefit from having one as well."

Sadly, life isn't as easy as that. In fact, Westminster currently has 108 Parliamentary Committees (source: www.parliament.uk) which can be filled by around 1450 Members of Parliament - 650 MPs from the House of Commons and around 800 peers from the House of Lords. No doubt Mr Clinton would like to match Westminster and have lots more Parliamentary committees but, by necessity, they would all be filled by the same 17 MPs: every hour spent in a committee by a Government MP is an hour mirred in theoretical discussion and lost to delivering for people and in implementing the Government's manifesto.

Under the GSLP/Liberal Government, Parliament now meets every month which should give Mr Clinton ample opportunity to ask his questions and to engage in debate. The Government demands that Mr Clinton refutes his claim that, it "refuses to answer questions in Parliament regardless of supplementaries." Nothing could be further from the truth: the Government gives scores of highly detailed answers in every session of Parliament. Perhaps Mr Clinton doesn't like the answers because they illustrate this community's success? Perhaps it is he who would prefer to see us all fail to prove his macabre economic theories true, whatever the human cost? Perhaps it is he who is now 'clutching at straws?'

The Chief Minister said: 'On one very significant point, however, I am in total agreement with Mr Clinton: the forthcoming budget debate will certainly be one for the people of Gibraltar to watch. Indeed, I believe they will watch it with considerable pleasure and pride. Gibraltar is doing extraordinarily well and Mr Clinton and his GSD pals don't seem to like that. They are rooting for our common failure so that their hair brained theories are proved right. They won't have cause to celebrate any time soon.'

'We won't allow the GSD to create a system which is designed to allow them to interrogate and berate civil servants and which gets ministers off the hook. A public accounts committee is in effect a mechanism for the cross examination of controlling officers, it is NOT about political accountability. We believe that the buck stops with ministers and that is why we make ourselves



fully accountable in the Parliament. We will not hide behind civil servants. A system to push senior civil servants, controlling officers and other non political individuals to the front line of political cross examination and interrogation is not going to benefit this community, even if it excites Mr Clinton's inner accountant.'