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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 13 November 2014

Session 4

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 13 November 2014

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

Teachers (Number in Post)

1. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how many teachers are in post and how this compares with May 2007. (S4O-03683)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Between 2007 and 2010, the number of teaching posts fell by 3,077. Almost half of those posts—48.3 per cent—were lost in just eight Labour councils, and one in five of those posts was lost in just one council, Labour-run Glasgow City Council.

Since 2011, we have had an agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to maintain the pupil teacher ratio, which has remained at 13.5 in publicly funded schools, and the number of teachers has stabilised at around 51,000. That agreement remains in force for this year, and we are discussing future years with COSLA.

Despite that, Glasgow City Council has continued to cut the number of teachers, including by 146 in 2013. Therefore, the real question is perhaps why Labour keeps cutting the number of teachers.

Neil Bibby: The cabinet secretary can blame whoever he wants, but the facts speak for themselves: there has been a reduction of 4,000 in the number of teachers since 2007. Can he confirm that the number of teachers has fallen every year since 2007—since the SNP Government came to power—and every year since he became the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning?

Teachers, parents and pupils are concerned about the increasing pressure on the education system. The Educational Institute of Scotland has raised concerns about the possibility of pupils being sent home due to a lack of teaching supply. Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that no pupils will be sent home due to a lack of teaching supply—yes or no?

Michael Russell: The facts speak for themselves, and I gave Mr Bibby the facts. Glasgow City Council has continued to cut the number of teachers, but we have stabilised the number of teachers owing to an agreement that I

secured with COSLA—I think, yet again, without the support of the Labour Party, which never supports any reasonable actions to ensure that our schools operate well. If Mr Bibby would like to continue to support me in ensuring that COSLA members do not cut the number of teachers, I would welcome that support. The first thing that he could do is go and speak to Gordon Matheson and tell him to stop cutting the number of teachers.

Construction Industry (North East Scotland)

2. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support the construction industry in North East Scotland. (S4O-03684)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): We continue to support the construction industry in the north-east and throughout Scotland by investing in capital expenditure despite cuts of around one quarter to our capital budget by the United Kingdom Government.

In the north-east, investment in infrastructure has a share of the £10.8 billion local government allocation. There is continued investment in, for example, both Alford and Ellon academies, the new Inverurie health centre hub and the Aberdeen royal infirmary campus. There is also investment in the Aberdeen western peripheral route, the Balmedie to Tipperty scheme, the Aberdeen to Inverness rail improvements, the A96 Inveramsay bridge, the A947 mini-interchange hubs and Her Majesty's Prison Grampian, as well as in the building of Mearns academy in Aberdeenshire—and that is to name but a few. In the interests of time, Presiding Officer, I have not covered the many other investments in the north-east, nor those outside Aberdeen city and shire.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): I am grateful for your brevity, minister.

Richard Baker: I could suggest a few more. The construction of the Aberdeen western peripheral route offers significant opportunities for the construction industry in the north-east, which has seen closures and job losses over recent years. Can the minister assure me that, in concluding the final contract with the preferred bidder for the AWPR, the right emphasis will be placed on the use of community benefit clauses, which will help to create a level playing field for local businesses that bid for subcontracts? Will those clauses also be given the appropriate weighting in tenders? If they are weighted at a small fraction of the weighting that is given to cost, as has been the case in the past, that will weaken considerably the impact of their inclusion in those contracts.

Fergus Ewing: Mr Baker makes some reasonable points. He will be aware that I am not the minister who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of procurement contracts. However, I shall certainly have discussions with my colleague Keith Brown, who has that responsibility. I am pleased that the Labour Party recognises the great value of the investment in the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the Balmedie to Tippetty scheme, which are expected to bring in an additional £6 billion to the local economy and create 14,000 new jobs. I assure all members that those things are hugely welcomed by everyone in Aberdeen city and shire.

Mental Health (Treatment)

3. Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that anyone who may need help with a mental health problem can access appropriate help easily and receive treatment quickly. (S4O-03685)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): We have made significant progress in delivering the commitments in the “Mental Health Strategy for Scotland: 2012-15”. For example, Scotland was the first part of the United Kingdom to introduce a target—from December this year—for speed of access to mental health services.

We know that waits of up to one or two years were common before we introduced the targets. We still have further improvements to make, but the latest position shows that the average wait for access to psychological therapies is eight weeks and access to specialist child and adolescent mental health services is nine weeks. I am sure that the member would recognise that that is significant progress.

Alex Rowley: Given that the Scottish Association for Mental Health recently reported that in Scotland 25 per cent of people who experience a mental health problem will wait more than an a year before seeking help, and that an estimated 800,000 adults a year do not know where to access help, does the minister agree that having trained mental health first aiders in all our communities would help to quickly identify those who need assistance and direct them to support services? What is the Scottish Government doing to promote the mental health first aiders programme and increase the number of trained mental health first aiders in Scotland?

Michael Matheson: The member makes a good point. It is widely recognised that many individuals who may have a mental health problem leave an extended period before they seek assistance from clinicians. A key part of our strategy to encourage people to access help is the see me anti-stigma campaign to remove the stigma that is often

associated with mental health and which can act as a barrier to individuals seeking help.

The mental health first aiders programme has a valuable and important part to play. One of the areas of work that we will take forward as part of the mental health strategy is how to continue to improve access to mental health services, including the mental health first aid programme. I would be more than happy to discuss the matter in more depth with the member if he would find that helpful.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): In this week of remembrance, does the minister agree that organisations such as HorseBack UK are to be congratulated on providing mental health services for veterans? It is a most unusual, but very therapeutic service.

Michael Matheson: Yes. Such organisations have an important part to play. I recognise that the best way that we can continue to improve mental health services is by working with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies to ensure that we deliver the best possible services to those who can benefit from them.

Civil Service Jobs (Dundee)

4. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how many civil service jobs it has transferred to Dundee, or has established in the city, since 2007. (S4O-03686)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government currently has 105 members of staff working in the city of Dundee mainly within the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and Education Scotland and those staff move across the Scottish Government on assignment.

Jenny Marra: Labour transferred those staff to Dundee. The Scottish Government has not transferred one single civil service job to Dundee since it came to power in 2007. That is despite the fact that SNP members in Dundee have made their names by campaigning for Scottish civil service jobs to be transferred to our city. These are the press releases from Shona Robison—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Can we have a question, Miss Marra?

Jenny Marra: We are still waiting for the 750 renewables jobs that the SNP Government promised Dundee. What progress is the Government making on that?

Fergus Ewing: I am unaware of having received any specific suggestion from the member—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Fergus Ewing: I am unaware of having received any specific, positive or constructive suggestion from Jenny Marra or her party that involves relocating any specific public body or part thereof to Dundee. I gently point out that it is open to the Opposition to make policy proposals.

Dundee is a great city to which the Scottish Government is entirely devoted and of which it is supportive. That support has included £26 million of capital from NHS Scotland's pharmaceutical special service, the recent announcement of £20 million for Dundee community care centre, two new schools, the reprovisioning of the adolescent mental health in-patient service and, of course, the V and A on the Tay—a £45 million project—which will create local jobs and contribute significantly to the regeneration of the city.

The Government is entirely supportive of Dundee. We are investing in the city and will continue to do so.

The Presiding Officer: I gently point out to ministers and members that, if we are going to make progress, the questions and the answers need to be a bit shorter.

Primary School Children (Music Experience)

5. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what importance it places on the delivery of a high-quality music experience for primary school children. (S4O-03687)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): We attach great importance to the delivery of a high-quality music experience for all children, including those in primary schools. Every school pupil is entitled to a broad general education within curriculum for excellence. That includes specific experiences and outcomes in music education in the expressive arts curriculum area.

The provision and delivery of education services, including music, is for each local authority to decide based on local needs, circumstances and spending priorities. The Scottish Government has invested a total of £107.5 million in the youth music initiative over the past 12 years.

Bruce Crawford: Is the cabinet secretary aware that Stirling Council's Labour-Conservative administration has again proposed a savings option to remove specialist music teaching, which will have a huge impact on the musical experience of about 6,000 pupils? Does the Scottish Government share my view that to bring back that savings option only eight months after having discounted it will have a severe impact on the morale of the music teachers involved, will leave parents and parent council members feeling that

they have not been listened to and is no way to treat people?

Michael Russell: I hear noises off, which seem to be arguing that all education should be entirely run from the centre. That was the burden of Mr Bibby's question and is the burden of the muttering that I heard from Labour members when Mr Crawford asked his question. If that is the Labour members' position, let them advance it. If it is not, let us acknowledge that, when local authorities make their decisions, they are subject to review and, sometimes, criticism.

I am aware of the proposal. It is disappointing, particularly given the work of David Green, which was supported across all parties. Indeed, part of his report was launched at an event sponsored by a Labour MSP. A priority should be given to music education and I am sorry that the cut is back on the agenda. [*Interruption.*]

I hear Labour members still shouting about it. If they want a centralised service, let them call for it. If they do not, let them come up with an idea—any idea, because there are usually no ideas from Labour.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree that every local authority in Scotland faces another round of savage cuts and, therefore, has been forced to examine all potential savings, however unpalatable many of them are to every member of the Parliament? Does he also agree that, until the Government stops the council tax freeze—which is not a progressive tax measure and which Labour said in its manifesto would stop after two years—and releases local authorities from the straitjacket that it has imposed on them, councils will continue to have to examine unpalatable cuts?

Michael Russell: There are so many answers to that that I almost do not know where to start. Let me start with the Dunfermline by-election, in which the Labour Party argued that it had invented the council tax freeze. Now, apparently, Labour does not even want to acknowledge it.

The reality of the situation is that local authorities make their decisions on education in the context of a budget that has been protected by this Government. This Government has worked incredibly hard to protect that budget, but—and this is a big but—actions have consequences. Some months ago, Dr Simpson argued that we were better together. Let him prove it, because it looks to me as if, in financial terms, that simply is not true.

A937/A90 at Laurencekirk (Grade-separated Junction)

6. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what

progress is being made on the provision of a grade-separated junction for the A937/A90 at Laurencekirk. (S4O-03688)

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government is committed to identifying a robust solution for access to Laurencekirk as soon as possible and is currently working with partners the north east of Scotland transport partnership—Nestrans—and Aberdeenshire Council on that.

A public exhibition on the options at Laurencekirk is planned for January, at which the outcomes of the study will be shared prior to finalisation early next year. A decision will then be taken with our partners on a preferred solution that best meets the objectives for improving the A90 at Laurencekirk.

Nigel Don: I thank the minister for his reply, but I draw his attention to information that I have received from Transport Scotland on determining applications for planning consent in Laurencekirk. Transport Scotland states:

“we have maintained our position that no new development should proceed before a scheme of grade-separation is delivered.”

As I read that, that means that nobody can get a planning application for housing or a business passed until we have a grade-separated junction. How on earth are we going to get past that impasse?

Keith Brown: Planning decisions are, of course, taken by the planning authority. Transport Scotland is obliged to make recommendations, and its priority is and always will be to ensure that we maintain the road safety record on the road in question. There have been no fatal or serious accidents since 2005. We want to protect and continue that record.

However, the principle is that local authorities will take decisions on planning matters. For my part, I am willing to be as flexible as possible with the local authority in how we phase this. I have asked officials to establish a meeting with the local authority and with Nestrans to see whether we can advance the report that I mentioned as quickly as possible and come to a solution. People want to develop in the Laurencekirk area and we want to have the best possible road safety record. Those two things should come together and I intend to ensure that that happens.

Living Wage (Small Businesses)

7. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it will encourage and support small businesses to pay employees the living wage. (S4O-03689)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government fully supports the living wage campaign and we recognise the real difference that the living wage can make to the people of Scotland. The Scottish Government is the first and only Government in the United Kingdom to include the living wage in its pay policy and we have done so for the past five years. Although we cannot set pay levels in the private sector, we encourage all public, private and third sector organisations to ensure that all staff on lower incomes receive a fair level of pay. To that effect, the Scottish Government is funding a pilot by the Poverty Alliance with the aim of increasing the number of employers across Scotland who pay the living wage. I am pleased to say that the number of accredited companies in Scotland has tripled since that work began earlier this year.

Bob Doris: I welcome the progress that has been made, but many people, including me, believe that, over time, Scotland’s minimum wage should be brought into line with the living wage. Does the minister agree that control over all the levers of taxation—particularly, in this instance, national insurance—could support businesses in moving towards the living wage and that, ultimately, control over the minimum wage should be devolved to Scotland so that, in future, we can work towards putting the living wage on a statutory footing for all workers in Scotland, whether in the public sector or the private sector?

Fergus Ewing: Members will be unsurprised to learn that I agree entirely with Mr Doris’s sentiments and views, because the UK national minimum wage has not increased in real terms in nearly a decade, and every year since 2008 it has failed to increase in line with the cost of living. Of course the Scottish Government is clear that we need substantive new powers to address the issue of low pay. I am delighted that—since this is the last occasion on which I can say so—our esteemed First Minister announced plans to establish a fair work convention on 15 October 2014. What another golden legacy to add to his collection.

The Presiding Officer: Before we come to the next item of business, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery the speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Mrs Maja Gojkovic. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

11:59

Engagements

1. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02376)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I am told that this is my 215th session of First Minister's question time. Later today, I will be proud to meet a group of young carers who have designed the young carers tartan, which I am proudly wearing. They have experience in care and have designed the tartan with Black Cherry Studio, which is a Scottish print design company. The design has been registered with the Scottish register of tartans and is available to anyone who has been in care. It is hoped that that will encourage more people with experience of care to claim their identity positively. I am proud to wear that tartan today.

Jackie Baillie: Today is, of course, Alex Salmond's last appearance at First Minister's question time. His time as Scotland's longest-serving First Minister will be properly acknowledged next Tuesday. In the meantime, I invite him just once to astound us all and actually answer a question—but briefly. Can I ask the First Minister, if he could describe himself in just one word, what would that be?

The First Minister: No. [*Laughter.*]

One word seems hardly adequate for that task, although I say to Fergus Ewing that his words might have been better addressed to the coming First Minister rather than the departing one.

Jackie Baillie: As ever, the First Minister is in denial. I asked for one word, but I got a whole dictionary full.

There are many words that I could have used to describe the First Minister, such as "humble", "sensitive", "modest", "meek" or perhaps even "bashful".

It is interesting that the First Minister did not use the word "proud". If I were him, I would not be entirely proud of the Government's record, either. Teacher numbers, college places and national health service bed numbers are down, and waiting lists are up. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order.

Jackie Baillie: This week, the First Minister has been giving advice to Nicola Sturgeon about who should be in her Cabinet. He knows that I always like to be helpful, so let me offer suggestions on perhaps who to keep out. How about Mike Russell

for failing Scotland's young people, Alex Neil for failing Scotland's patients, or perhaps even Kenny MacAskill, who has been relegated today to the second row, for the many failings that appear on his charge sheet? Given their record of failure, which members of the First Minister's Cabinet would he recommend should keep their jobs when his deputy takes over?

The First Minister: If there is a mood to miss, Jackie Baillie has an unerring ability to miss it.

I have been doing some research on these matters. Over the years, the Labour Party has called for the resignation of each and every one of my cabinet secretaries. The only person it has not called on to resign is me—and I am the one who is resigning. Does that not represent the Labour Party's unerring ability to miss the target on each and every occasion?

Jackie Baillie: First Minister, I think that I have captured the mood—you are going anyway.

The First Minister usually heaps such praise on his ministers. Clearly, they are in exceptionally good company. That admiration is usually reserved for Vladimir Putin or Rupert Murdoch.

The First Minister says that he is resigning because he lost the referendum campaign and believes that somebody has to take responsibility for that defeat. The referendum was his life's ambition. He spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on the referendum. He put Scotland on pause and, despite a derided United Kingdom coalition, he still lost by 400,000 votes.

The First Minister is going and the person who actually ran the yes campaign, Nicola Sturgeon, gets the keys to Bute house. However, Nicola Sturgeon's record in government is not too clever, either. Child poverty and fuel poverty are growing, and house building is at its lowest level since the second world war.

We are told that the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister are joined at the hip. Is it not therefore the case that changing the First Minister will make very little difference?

The First Minister: I do not think that talking about changing leaders is the Labour Party's strongest suit. Jackie Baillie is actually the 10th leader or caretaker leader I have faced over the dispatch box, and all of them have had the grace and charity with which she addresses the chamber. Nicola Sturgeon should be assured that, on the track record, once she becomes First Minister, the Labour Party will not ask for her resignation, because it only asks for the resignation of the Deputy First Minister and other cabinet secretaries.

The Administration has a substantial record of achievement over the past seven years. However,

in many ways, it does not matter what I think about it—surely the issue is what the people of Scotland think about it. I remind Jackie Baillie that the Government was re-elected with an overall majority in a proportional Parliament. If we believe the more recent indications, that support seems to be growing, not diminishing. All in all, I think that I would rather stand here as First Minister, albeit departing, than as the 10th leader or caretaker leader who has faced me over the dispatch box.

Jackie Baillie: I noticed the praise that the First Minister heaped on the Deputy First Minister, although perhaps he meant to do so only

“in terms of the debate”,

which might be a useful title for his autobiography.

I say genuinely that today marks the end of an era. No one can deny Alex Salmond’s passion for Scotland or his love of his country, but the tragedy is that he was so blinkered by his passion for independence that the powers that he already had to tackle poverty, reduce inequality and deliver social justice were pushed into second place. For the past seven years, the First Minister has used his age-old excuse that, somehow, it was Westminster’s fault. However, we hear that he wants to go back there and that he even believes that he could be the Deputy Prime Minister. He has gone from urging Scots to vote for Nick Clegg to wanting to be Nick Clegg.

Is it not the case that the First Minister’s real legacy is leaving Scotland more divided than ever? Before he answers, I know from his first response that brevity is not his strong point, so let me offer one final word to the First Minister: cheerio!

The First Minister: How can I break the mood? I say to Jackie Baillie that whoever stands for the Scottish National Party in the Westminster Parliament would seem, according to the present polls, to have a reasonable chance of success.

There have been substantial achievements, and I will name but two. The reintroduction of free education in Scotland strikes me as one. Looking forward, there is the introduction of free school meals in primary 1 to 3, again in the teeth of Labour opposition. I think that that is a substantial move forward in Scottish society.

Despite all the leaders I have faced from the Labour Party, there is a continuing failure of that party to address the decline or collapse in its fortunes. I will add a final piece of advice to Jackie Baillie, which she can translate to her leader, whoever it may be. People in Scotland no longer know what the Labour Party stands for, but they know who it stood with in the referendum campaign. Any political party that is in alliance with the Tory party is destined for destruction in

Scotland, and that is exactly what is happening to the branch office that is before us now.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-02375)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no current plans, and I would have to be reasonably quick if I was going to do so.

Ruth Davidson: I am sure that the First Minister will join me in welcoming the good news yesterday that showed that employment is up and unemployment is down and that earnings are outstripping inflation. That is a credit to both of Scotland’s Governments.

It would, of course, be churlish of politicians not to recognise success. However, it is more damaging not to recognise where work needs to be done. In Scotland, our levels of educational attainment are stagnating; there is no improvement in reducing reconviction rates among offenders; the gap in research and development funding between Scotland and other European Union nations is as big as ever; and people’s satisfaction with their public services is worsening.

The First Minister has once again today recited polls as a measure of success, but do those facts not show up a record that falls well short of his claims?

The First Minister: There have been substantial achievements in education and health, which are key public services. People’s respect for the health service is increasing. It is a fantastic testament to our health service, our doctors, our nurses and other staff throughout the service that, in these times of austerity, they have achieved that. Of course, educational attainment in Scotland is rising, not falling, and the successful introduction of the curriculum for excellence gives us great hope for the future.

I should correct my earlier answer, because I intend to send another letter to the Prime Minister today, asking him exactly to explain the remarks of the head of the navy, Admiral Zambellas, who seemed to cast doubt on whether the contracts for the global combat ships will be awarded to the Clyde yards. I am sure that Ruth Davidson will join me in saying that those remarks were deeply troubling. They come not from some functionary in the Ministry of Defence but from the head of the navy, and this Parliament will demand that the commitments and promises that have been made to the Clyde workers are honoured.

Ruth Davidson: The First Minister well knows that admirals do not award contracts; the MOD does.

It is interesting that the First Minister challenged the facts that I provided to him on all of those areas of policy, because I was reading from his own Government's assessment of his own Government's performance, as contained in the Scottish Government report card called "Scotland Performs" that I took off his own Government's website this morning. It says that it provides

"an 'at a glance' snapshot of how Scotland and the Government are doing."

In a section entitled, "Performance at a Glance", there are 11 key targets that the Scottish National Party Government has rightly set itself and with which it measures its progress. Only two show any performance improvement whatsoever. On the other hand, performance is worsening with regard to raising economic growth to the United Kingdom level; matching the gross domestic product growth rate of small EU countries; productivity; and healthy life expectancy.

Those are the measures that the First Minister set in order to judge the performance of his devolved Administration, and he has failed. For seven years, he has stood there and said, "Only with the powers of independence." However, the people of Scotland looked at that plan, too, and they said that his performance was not up to much, either.

One last time, therefore, I ask the First Minister: is that really a record that is worthy of so much self-satisfaction?

The First Minister: I point out that the Scotland performs website shows that there have been substantial rises in the vast majority of the indices since 2007.

I want to pick up on one point of detail. I was surprised by the comparator between UK and Scottish growth, because Scotland had a shallower recession and a faster recovery. I found out that the figures were surprising not because Scotland has fallen behind the UK but because the UK has revised its statistics.

In his keenness and anxiety to revise the UK statistics—the Scottish ones have not yet been revised—George Osborne included the black economy, which involves a range of matters that it would not be delicate to go into in this Parliament. He also included charitable work, which, given the Tories' treatment of the third sector, I thought was a bit rich.

As a result of that, George Osborne managed to inflate the UK growth figures—and what happened? To the Government's surprise, the UK was landed with a £1.7 billion bill by the European Union—not because the economy had improved but because the Government had instructed the officials and statisticians to change the statistics.

It is not surprising to any of us that the Tory party defends its record by including the black economy in the figures. That is what it has been doing for a generation.

Let me say something in true generosity of spirit to Ruth Davidson. I know that she has not, as yet at least, managed to revive the fortunes of the Scottish Conservative Party. I thought that the 8 per cent in last week's opinion polls was a particularly unlikely figure, but the Conservatives certainly seem to be heading in the direction of single figures. However, she has had a single, almost monumental, political triumph: she has destroyed the fortunes of the other Opposition parties in this Parliament. She destroyed the fortunes of the Liberal party by going into coalition with it at Westminster. She destroyed the fortunes of the Labour Party through the better together alliance. In that respect, using the criteria of destroying other Opposition political parties, Ruth Davidson is undoubtedly the most brilliant political leader in the history of the Scottish Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: I call Willie Rennie.

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Presiding Officer, thank you for the opportunity to say a few short words. I join other people inside and outside Parliament in paying tribute to the personal achievement of the First Minister. We will get a fuller opportunity next week to elaborate on that.

It has been a long journey since the days of 2004 when Alex Salmond rejected standing for his party's leadership, saying:

"If nominated I'll decline. If drafted I'll defer. And if elected I'll resign".

Presiding Officer, can I just check that he is definitely going?

The First Minister: I was quoting the wrong American general. I mean to quote General MacArthur when he said "I shall return". I got my generals mixed up. [*Interruption.*] Nicola Sturgeon wants to know what the answer to Mr Rennie's question is. That is the first time that I have been heckled by the SNP demanding answers.

I welcome Willie Rennie back to his place in the Parliament and thank him for his kind remarks. One of the first things that I found in Bute house—in a cupboard—was a silver tray that had been presented to the Rt Hon John Scott Maclay on the inauguration of the Forth road bridge in 1958. I did some research. John Scott Maclay was not a Conservative; he was the last of the National Liberals and had been appointed by Harold Macmillan to that position. I am told by senior civil servants that he used to go about St Andrew's house saying, "I have made a decision. I shall now go and consult the Conservative Party."

There is—is there not?—a moral tale in the Rt Hon John Scott Maclay, a National Liberal, being in alliance with the Conservative Party. He was the last of his kind.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): What potential impact on jobs at the Scotstoun yard in my constituency of Glasgow Anniesland could the Ministry of Defence's considerations on building the type 26 frigates in France have?

The First Minister: Ruth Davidson is overrelaxed about that matter. We are not talking about some mid-ranking official; we are talking about the First Sea Lord, and what he said had cast doubt on where the order would be placed and the country it would be placed in. That is exactly what the First Sea Lord had to say.

If the order were not placed, it would have an impact on thousands of jobs, but I think—and I hope that the Parliament can unite on this—it would be a total, absolute and complete betrayal. We cannot shrug these things off and say that it does not matter what the First Sea Lord says. The First Sea Lord is presumably in a good position to know the state of the contract negotiations. That is why this Parliament, with a resonant voice, should say that it would be totally unacceptable for those orders not to come to the Clyde yards.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Serco's latest profit warning this week in confirmation that it is writing down £1.5 billion in losses on various public contracts comes as a result of what its chief executive suggested were two strategic mis-steps: diversifying away from core business; and focusing too much on winning new business. One example of both is the contract awarded to Serco by the Scottish ministers in 2012 to provide ferry services to the Northern Isles.

Given this week's revelations, what reassurance can the First Minister offer my constituents that there will be no knock-on impact on Serco's ability to continue delivering lifeline ferry services to the communities that Tavish Scott and I represent? Will the Scottish Government review the way that the contract was tendered to ensure that each bid was considered appropriately and that each bidder was offering something that they could deliver?

The First Minister: The reassurance is this: Serco will be held absolutely to the terms of the contract. I am sure that my successor and, indeed, the transport minister will be able to reassure the local member that that will absolutely be the case. Serco is of course under new leadership, but nonetheless it will be held to the contract and that will be enforced.

European Council (Fisheries Negotiations)

3. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what response he has

received from the Prime Minister to his recent correspondence regarding European Council fisheries negotiations. (S4F-02378)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have had a totally unsatisfactory response from the Prime Minister. At Monday's agriculture and fisheries council meeting, the main issue of fisheries policy under discussion was the deep-sea stock regulation. Scotland has a dominant interest in that activity; landings of the species concerned by vessels that are members of Scottish producer organisations represent in the region of 95 per cent of all United Kingdom landings this year.

In my view, which is supported by the Labour Party on this occasion, it was absurd that the Prime Minister put the interests of this vital Scottish industry in the hands of an unelected peer—Lord Rupert Ponsonby, the seventh Baron de Mauley. The key thing about Baron de Mauley is that he has no interest or experience whatsoever in fisheries. The fact that that breaks a clear commitment given by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in 2010 is totally unacceptable but, in the light of the Conservative Party's attitude to wider issues in Scotland, perhaps not totally surprising.

Angus MacDonald: Does the First Minister agree that if we are a "family of nations", as David Cameron has described the UK, it is only right that the UK Government should respect the devolution settlement as it affects foreign policy, particularly on issues of such importance to Scotland as fisheries, in the same way as states such as Belgium have done for some time?

The First Minister: Yes, I do. That is exactly the point that was raised at the joint ministerial committee on Europe back in 2010. As the Europe minister, Fiona Hyslop attended that meeting, so she can verify everything that I have to say. When the position was explained with regard to how few times Scottish ministers were able to represent key Scottish interests in arguing for a UK position in the fishing negotiations, the then incoming Prime Minister said that he would put that right; he said that he could see the strongest argument for that happening on key issues. However, it has happened once over the past four years, although Richard Lochhead has attended each and every fisheries council and is by far the most experienced fisheries minister in the European continent, never mind in these islands.

It is totally unacceptable that a commitment that was so blithely given in 2010 should not be adhered to in a vital negotiation in 2014. As I said, there might be a lesson for Scotland in wider matters that, unless the Prime Minister's feet are held to the fire, commitments will not be redeemed.

Health and Safety Legislation (Devolution)

4. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North)

(SNP): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government considers that the devolution of health and safety legislation would lead to more prosecutions where serious injury or death has occurred. (S4F-02379)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Parliament would be wise to pay close attention to the words of Grahame Smith, the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, who said:

“We believe that this is due to lack of proactive inspections, a policy forced on the HSE by a Government who refuse to acknowledge the need of the HSE to be autonomous”.

Those comments are significant, as is the STUC submission to the Smith commission.

Kenneth Gibson: As the First Minister knows, Scotland has more workplace fatalities proportionally than the rest of the United Kingdom, because of the numbers that we have employed in high-risk sectors such as construction, fishing and agriculture. Does he agree that the 35 per cent cut in the Health and Safety Executive budget that the UK coalition Government has made has directly impacted not only on the number of prosecutions, 98 per cent of which are successful, but on the delivery of justice for the victims of workplace accidents and their families?

The First Minister: It cannot be a coincidence that the cuts to the Health and Safety Executive budget have coincided with a dramatic fall in the number of prosecutions. That was one of the key arguments that the STUC put forward when arguing that the devolution of responsibility for health and safety would allow us to have a system that protects workers wherever they work but does not constrain businesses through undue regulation. That is a highly serious matter, which Kenneth Gibson is right to raise in the chamber.

Legal Assistance

5. Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):

To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Law Society of Scotland's discussion paper, "Legal Assistance in Scotland", which says that the current system is not fit for purpose. (S4F-02386)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Legal Aid Board makes hundreds of thousands of grants of legal assistance each year, whether to help people to deal with welfare benefit problems or to help those who are accused of criminal offences to defend themselves. Expenditure on legal assistance last year was £150.5 million. The Scottish Legal Aid Board's annual report shows that, since 2011, changes to

the legal system have saved the public purse £52 million. However, there is still more to do.

The Law Society's paper is intended to open up discussion. We have a shared perspective on some points, such as the need for simplification, and we will of course take a detailed look at the Law Society's proposals over the coming weeks, with a view to assessing their potential impact on public funds and on those who rely on legal aid.

Graeme Pearson: The First Minister may remember that I raised concerns last year about proposed changes to legal aid. The president of the Law Society of Scotland said this week that legal aid cuts are likely to curb rights to justice for people on low and modest incomes who rely on legal aid. Does the First Minister agree that the prospect of citizens of modest means being denied access, as the Law Society suggests, while career criminals repeatedly access legal aid unfettered is indefensible and a foreseeable consequence arising from Mr MacAskill's changes? Will the First Minister use whatever influence he has to ensure that the situation is addressed by his successor urgently?

The First Minister: As Graeme Pearson knows, expenditure on legal assistance in Scotland has been held at £150 million since 2007. Of course, that is not what has happened south of the border, where there have been substantial cuts. *[Interruption.]* Labour members should understand that, under the Barnett formula, the consequential that come to Scotland are directed by expenditure in England. Unless they put forward a position where the great resources of Scotland are available for the Scottish people to direct our own spending, I am afraid that such matters are relevant.

Graeme Pearson should also understand that, although we were extremely interested in some aspects of the Law Society's paper, such as the need for simplification, the paper has proved deeply controversial. He can see that from the debate that is opening up, in which people are pointing out that many areas of civil law are vital as part of legal aid assistance and criminal lawyers are pointing out that the fundamental right of people to defend themselves against a criminal charge is the essence of a free society.

There are no easy answers to the questions at present, but Graeme Pearson can rest assured that this Government and the Government of the immediate future will protect the right of the people of Scotland to legal assistance so that they can pursue their claims for justice.

Underground Coal Gasification (Licences)

6. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish

Government's position is on underground coal gasification and whether any licences have been granted for exploration. (S4F-02392)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Coal Authority, which is, of course, a United Kingdom non-departmental public body that is sponsored by the Department of Energy and Climate Change, has issued six licences for underground coal gasification in Scotland. All those licences are offshore or in estuaries. However, no underground coal gasification project can proceed in Scotland without a range of other permissions, including local planning and environmental consents, which, of course, are devolved issues.

Alison Johnstone: The First Minister will be aware of the scientific consensus that we already have far too many fossil fuels to burn safely. Does he agree that his legacy should be a Scotland that meets its climate change targets, leads the world in climate justice and delivers thousands more new jobs in renewables? Does he agree that the Scottish Government must use the powers that it has to stop the damaging and destructive distraction of unconventional gas extraction in Scotland?

The First Minister: The Scottish Government recognises Alison Johnstone's concerns, but it also recognises that we have to see the potential for new energy technologies, and the potential synergies between technologies such as underground coal gasification and carbon capture and storage, whereby CO₂ emissions could be captured at source and transported for storage offshore, making it an extremely effective environmental process.

As Alison Johnstone will know, Scotland has world-leading expertise in carbon capture and storage. We have an excellent comparative advantage, such as access to vast offshore storage of CO₂. However, we have been very clear that, when it comes to new technologies, we need to proceed cautiously and take an evidence-based approach to ensure that the environment is protected and, above all, that local communities' concerns are properly taken into account.

Alison Johnstone will accept that whatever other criticisms might have been levelled at the Administration over the past seven and a half years, lack of enthusiasm for renewable energy could not be one of them. I am sure that she, like me, looks forward to celebrating a milestone that we are sure will be achieved in the very near future, when 50 per cent of Scotland's effective demand for electricity is likely to be secured from renewable sources. That has been a transformative initiative over the past seven years. I am sure that Alison Johnstone and I have common cause in and enthusiasm for that record.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Yesterday, the world-renowned energy expert Professor Dieter Helm of the University of Oxford described Alex Salmond's energy policy as "nonsense". Will the First Minister advise his successor to rethink that nonsense policy?

The First Minister: The Conservative Party in the United Kingdom coalition described Liberal Democrat energy policy as nonsense, and the Liberal Democrats in the coalition at Westminster described the Conservative Party's energy policy as nonsense. The energy policy that we have been able to pursue in Scotland, which has seen a surge forward in renewable energy, is extremely effective.

Of course, it would be fantastic if other areas of energy policy were under the control of this Parliament. I would like, for example, not to have seen the total chaos that has resulted in the electricity markets—as a result of coalition policies at Westminster—which is threatening the people of England with blackouts or brownouts in the very near future. I would like to have seen things like oil and gas under the control of the Scottish Parliament, so that the great natural resources of Scotland could be invested in the future of the Scottish economy.

How disappointing it is that although, once upon a time, Murdo Fraser was in the vanguard of Scottish Conservative thinking—if that is not a contradiction in terms—he now meekly, in this probable last question to me, comes to the chamber to diminish the ability of this Parliament and a future Administration to control energy policy, when we are light years ahead of what has happened to what has remained at Westminster.

The Presiding Officer: That ends the last First Minister's questions by First Minister Alex Salmond. [*Applause.*]

Home Safety Kits

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11329, in the name of Clare Adamson, on home safety kits. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible, and I remind guests leaving the gallery that if they could do so quietly, it would be much appreciated.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the evidence relating to home safety equipment fitting schemes and considers that there is a need for local schemes to be administered; notes that young children are most likely to be involved in accidents in their own homes in Central Scotland and across the country but that often the correct safety equipment, with supporting education, can prevent unnecessary suffering from burns and scalds, falls and poisonings; acknowledges the forthcoming evaluation report on Scotland's Home Safety Equipment Scheme, and notes the ongoing contributions by ROSPA to accident prevention and safety awareness in the home.

12:34

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

First, I thank the members who supported the motion and those who will speak in the debate.

It is the stated wish of the Scottish Government that Scotland be the best place in the world to grow up—an ambition that I am sure is shared across the chamber. However, if we are to achieve that ambition we must first acknowledge and tackle the areas in which Scotland's report card could be better. As a councillor in North Lanarkshire, I was nominated to be a member of the Scottish Accident Prevention Council's home safety committee. It was in that role that I became aware that in the area of non-intentional injury Scotland's record could be much better. Indeed, the European child safety alliance's country report card made for challenging reading at the time.

The alliance's latest report in 2012 was produced as part of the TACTICS—tools to address childhood trauma, injury and children's safety—project. The project is described as a

“large scale, multi-year initiative working to provide better information, practical tools and resources to support adoption and implementation of evidence-based good practices for the prevention of injury to children and youth in Europe.”

The European public health alliance and partners in more than 30 countries are involved in the project, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents—RoSPA—in Scotland. One of the project's objectives is to review and expand the set of child safety action plan

indicators that continue to monitor and benchmark progress in reducing child and adolescent injury as countries move from planning to implementation of good practices.

We are often fond of comparing ourselves to Nordic countries, but the latest European report card shows that non-intentional injury is a leading cause of death among children and adolescents aged zero to 19 in Scotland. In 2009, 106 children and adolescents in that age group died as a result of injury. If the rate of injury deaths in Scotland could have been reduced to the level in the Netherlands, which is one of the safest countries in Europe, it is estimated that 47 of those lives might have been saved.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Scotland recently produced the report “A policy response for Scotland to the report ‘Why children die: death in infants, children, and young people in the UK’”. Recommendation 8 in the section entitled “Reducing deaths from injuries and poisoning” is:

“Local authorities and health boards should prioritise children's safety, and through utilising resources such as health visitors and home safety equipment schemes, educate and equip parents and carers to keep their children safe, with a focus on water safety, blind cord safety, and safe sleeping.”

Given that we are undoubtedly dealing with a social justice issue, I was delighted to learn earlier this year about a Scottish Government project that works in conjunction with RoSPA to tackle the issues in Scotland. I take this opportunity to welcome to the gallery some of the staff from RoSPA Scotland. I put on record my thanks to them for acting as the secretariat of the cross-party group on accident prevention and safety awareness and for their continued support of the group.

Scotland's home safety equipment scheme was a pilot project that aimed to provide home safety equipment to families in specific areas in Scotland. The project was based on the success of a similar project in England that was created by RoSPA and which resulted in 66,000 families in England receiving safety education and equipment. The project in Scotland supplied and fitted home safety equipment for 800 families. Each family also received a resource pack of information that helped to raise awareness of accidents and how they can be prevented. That awareness raising complemented the equipment provided by the scheme, which included safety gates, window restrictors, non-slip bath and shower mats, fire guards, locks for kitchen cupboards, corner cushions, blind cleats and door jammers.

Investment in the scheme has contributed towards the health and wellbeing of young children by providing families with the skills and knowledge

that they need to make informed decisions on injury prevention, allowing children to develop in a secure environment and ensuring a healthy and safe future. The areas involved in the project included the Western Isles, Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian, Midlothian, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverclyde.

However, as with all such issues, the question is how we can prove that something works—how do we prove the negative of an accident having been prevented? I am delighted today to highlight some of the key findings of an independent evaluation of the scheme, which was conducted by SMCi Associates on behalf of RoSPA.

Scotland's home safety equipment scheme was a preventative scheme that reached 841 vulnerable families and a total of 1,616 vulnerable children under the age of five over the course of 13 months. Each family had an average of nine items of safety equipment and the cost of delivering the scheme was £295 per family, or £153 for each child. We can compare that with the cost of hospital treatment of a child aged up to four who has suffered a non-fatal home accident, which the most recent data estimates to be £10,000.

Some 99 per cent of the families that were involved considered that their home was safer. When professional stakeholders including family support practitioners, health visitors and fire officers were asked for their views, 85 per cent said that the scheme helped to make children safer and healthier, 76 per cent said that it prevented accidents and unintentional injuries in the home and 75 per cent said that it prevented accidents and unintentional injuries to children under the age of five. One of the parents who participated said:

"I had been stressing about getting safety gates and other equipment in my home for a while but could not afford it. I was overjoyed when I heard about this scheme. Thank you!"

The scheme also helped to identify risks, as an individual home safety risk assessment was built into its delivery model, tailoring the project to each individual family. The home safety risk assessment included a prescription for the provision and professional installation of equipment through the scheme, ensuring that boxes did not remain unopened and equipment uninstalled in homes. All 841 clients had equipment fitted, with an average of nine items per family. The scheme also offered a home fire safety visit conducted by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Awareness of home safety was also a key element in delivery, and most of the people

involved became more aware of the risks around their home.

I am grateful for the opportunity to highlight this valuable pilot project today, and I look forward to the debate. I am interested to hear from the minister how Scotland's home safety equipment scheme will develop in future.

12:42

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife (Lab)): I congratulate Clare Adamson on securing this members' business debate on home safety kits. We can all agree that the issue needs our attention and consideration in order to prevent accidents and, in some cases, deaths in the home, many of which are totally preventable through simple safety awareness, understanding and equipment. I also put on record my personal admiration for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, whose tireless work in trying to prevent accidents around the home has been saving lives for more than 100 years.

The success of Scotland's home safety equipment scheme speaks for itself. Clare Adamson mentioned some of the statistics. Some 85 per cent of the professionals involved, including family support practitioners, fire officers and health visitors, said that it helped make children healthier and safer, and 75 per cent said that it prevented accidents involving children under five. As for the families, almost 100 per cent of them felt safer as a result of the project.

I want to emphasise the importance of health visitors because of the current contention around the named person legislation, which built on the Labour Administration's getting it right for every child proposals and which the court is discussing today. I will not talk about the court case, but the view has been expressed to me that the named person provision is an interference with the family. However, home safety is a good example of the named person's importance, because health visitors who go into households can put people in touch with groups such as RoSPA that could supply appropriate equipment to ensure that homes are fit for purpose for young people.

Scotland does not have a good record on child deaths. As Clare Adamson said, at least 47 deaths could have been prevented in 2009 if we were at the standard of the best of the European countries, which she reminded us is the Netherlands.

This is not just about families and children; it is also about the cost to the national health service. Our NHS is under massive pressure, and anything that reduces that has to be welcomed. I welcome the fact that the Government has finally announced that we are going to have four major

trauma units. That will prevent some deaths related to the 1,200 most serious accidents in Scotland. The major trauma units in England have demonstrably reduced mortality by 20 per cent.

The cost of the scheme is about £235 per household—or about £153 per child, given that the 800 vulnerable families who were involved in the scheme had a total of 1,616 children between them. Indeed, given that the cost of treating a child who has suffered a home accident can be as much as £10,500, the investment in such schemes, following an assessment, is clearly worth while.

I want to spend what time I have left talking about the campaign to ban looped blind cords that my colleague Gordon Banks has been supporting in Clackmannanshire. In 2008, a two-year-old girl in Clackmannanshire tragically became entangled in such a cord, resulting in loss of life. At the time, it was estimated that every year two people died as a result of getting caught in such cords. America has already realised how much of a danger those cords are to children; indeed, it banned them 15 years ago. Gordon Banks has been supporting the young girl's parents, who have been campaigning tirelessly for the same rules to apply in the United Kingdom. I do not know whether that issue can be dealt with under devolved powers, but it seems to me that Government action, at least to raise awareness, might be helpful.

It can never be acceptable for our nation to delay taking action when there is such a simple remedy to prevent the death of children. I am pleased that the campaign has had some success, with the announcement by the European Commission of new rules to improve the safety of blinds, but I know that Gordon Banks continues to fear that until the industry fully designs out looped blind cords, the threat cannot be completely removed.

The cost of investing in such schemes or campaigns is far outstripped by the cost that might be incurred by the public purse because of accidents. More important, however, is the effect on all those families. The home safety kits, which can contain as few as nine pieces of often quite simple and professionally fitted equipment, greatly reduce the risk of injury, and the fact that 99 per cent of families felt safer is testament to the scheme's success.

I encourage the minister to consider further possibilities for rolling the scheme out further and to ensure that health visitors and named persons assess every household for a kit in order to reduce Scotland's rather poor record on child deaths.

12:47

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank Clare Adamson for lodging the motion for debate and highlighting an important issue that affects thousands of young children and their families in Scotland every year.

Although the number of deaths attributed to accidents in the home has decreased dramatically over the past 20 years, far too many children are still killed or injured in accidents that are often easily prevented. A few simple pieces of equipment, backed by education for parents on how to identify hazards, can be all that it takes to make the difference between life and death for many children in their own homes. For that reason, I support the roll-out of Scotland's home safety equipment scheme across the country.

The average family home contains a number of hazards that might not appear particularly dangerous initially but which can cause severe injury or even death. Young children under five are particularly vulnerable; because of their naturally inquisitive nature and because children in that age bracket tend to spend more time at home, the home is, in fact, the most common place for them to have an accident.

Anyone with experience of toddlers knows only too well how much mischief a little one can get into when their parent's back is turned, even just for a moment. A kitchen cupboard or a flight of stairs can prove very tempting for a young child with a sense of adventure who has not yet fully developed a natural instinct for danger; in some instances, that can result in accidents involving poisoning, choking, suffocation, falls, burns or scalds.

NHS Fife, which serves my constituency, recorded in 2010-11 132 emergency hospital admissions of children under five years old as a result of unintentional injury in the home. Many of those accidents could have been easily prevented with just a few simple measures; indeed, equipment such as door jammers, safety gates, fire guards, blind cleats and window restrictors can be all that it takes to make our homes accident proof.

However, many families lack knowledge about how to prevent accidents at home. Families also lack the money to buy the safety equipment that is required. That is why Scotland's home safety equipment scheme has been valuable to so many disadvantaged families in the pilot areas.

The most obvious advantage of home safety kits is their potential to save lives, but there are wider benefits. Reducing the number of accidents in the home eases the burden on NHS emergency treatment and follow-up care. That is a key consideration at a time when acute services are

under increasing pressure and budgetary restraints.

Another positive outcome of the scheme is the reassurance that it provides to parents and carers by equipping them with knowledge and understanding of hazards in the home, as well as tools to help prevent accidents from occurring. The scheme offers people peace of mind that the family home is as safe as it can be.

I applaud the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents for its innovative home safety equipment scheme in England, which was the inspiration behind the pilot project in Scotland. I also commend the Scottish Government, RoSPA in Scotland, the local authorities in the pilot areas and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for their collective efforts and commitment to making the scheme a success.

Fife was not chosen as a pilot area for the scheme, which is unfortunate, because that would have been advantageous to many families in my constituency. The scheme should be rolled out throughout Scotland, so that every disadvantaged family can receive assistance to protect their children from preventable accidents in the home.

I thank Clare Adamson again for helping to raise awareness of home safety kits by lodging the motion for debate. I look forward to reading the forthcoming evaluation report on Scotland's home safety equipment scheme, which I hope can be used as a tool for improving and enhancing the scheme, with a view to expanding it across Scotland in the near future.

12:51

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I congratulate Clare Adamson on bringing the matter to the Parliament today and I offer my support in principle for the objectives behind her motion.

I also congratulate RoSPA on its work over the years. Indeed, I first became aware of RoSPA through its involvement in the production of the public information films that were shown on television back in the 1960s, in the days when we had only two channels and there was nothing very exciting on. The falls, scalds and electrocutions that took place in those films were a lesson to a young child that there was danger in the home. It became increasingly obvious that there was no shortage of evidence to support the claim—often made and known to be accurate—that the home is one of the most dangerous environments that we experience.

Awareness of the dangers that we face in the home still plays an important role for individuals—adults and children. Increasingly, new dangers

come along. Everybody is fairly clear that if there is a young child in the house, getting the fire guards and stair gates up is a priority, but there are other dangers. Members talked about the danger of looped cords on blinds, and people are increasingly aware of that issue. Modern heating systems can become faulty and produce carbon monoxide, which is another danger in the home that we need to be aware of.

I fully support the principle behind the motion: informing people of dangers and ensuring that safety equipment is available to them is a vital step in improving safety in the home, for adults and for children. However, personal responsibility must remain at the forefront of our minds. We need to ensure that people are aware of danger and do not fall into the trap of thinking that someone has absolved them of responsibility.

Therefore, I will finish on a typically Tory note. We cannot wrap our children in cotton wool. We can make the environment as safe as we can, but we must make children understand the danger that they are in and take responsibility for not subjecting themselves to danger, even at an early age. We all grow up far too early in this modern world, but we can never be too young to understand the limits of our own mortality.

For that reason, I would like us to follow the example of that period back in the 1960s, when there were perhaps more opportunities on television for the occasional public information film to frighten young children, as I was then, into realising that there are dangers out there and we should behave a bit more responsibly.

12:55

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell):

Like the other members who have participated in the debate, I put on record my thanks to Clare Adamson for sponsoring the debate and to all those members who supported the motion, which enabled us to have this important debate. I also recognise Clare's wider work in convening the cross-party group on accident prevention and safety awareness—that is not the most succinct of titles, but it is an important group to have in the Parliament and I was pleased to attend a recent meeting.

Like Richard Simpson and Alex Johnstone, I thank RoSPA for its tireless work over many years to promote safety in our homes. When RoSPA approached the Scottish Government with the proposals for the Scottish home safety equipment scheme, we were pleased to be able to provide funding for the scheme. Other members have outlined the costings associated with it. The aims of the scheme and the approach taken chimed incredibly well with the Government's approach,

which is about prevention and early intervention. They also chimed with our aim to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in.

In response to the points that Richard Simpson raised, I will address the child-centred GIRFEC approach that is set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, although I will have to be careful because of the on-going legal challenge to a particular part of the act. I recognise the potential for the named person to signpost families to get extra support, particularly in relation to safety. As someone who is about to re-engage with the midwife and health visitor services, and given my experience with my own wee boy, I know the importance of the advice and support that health visitors and midwives can give to families at times of particular vulnerability. Richard Simpson's point is well made that we must use all our activities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people across Scotland.

That chimes particularly well with the aims of our early years collaborative. The Government is firmly focused on reducing inequalities and making sure that every child—the EC in GIRFEC stands for “every child”—has the best start in life and is ready to succeed. That is why we have developed the policies that we have and why we introduced the legislation that I just mentioned. As Richard Simpson says, it was not just the Government that thought of GIRFEC; the approach has been supported across the chamber.

However, the sad fact is that unintentional injury disproportionately affects the most vulnerable groups in society, notably children, older people and those who live in areas of deprivation. As the report points out, there is a substantial financial cost of that both to the NHS and to wider society—an estimated £2 billion cost to Scottish society annually when all groups are taken into account. The most recent data available show that, for a child up to the age of four, the cost of a non-fatal accident that happens at home but is treated in hospital is £10,600—Clare Adamson also mentioned that figure.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to focus on the finances alone. Unintentional injury is the major cause of death in childhood, and each incident represents a young life and its potential lost, not to mention the traumatic effect on parents, siblings and wider family members. Sadly, the rate of death from injury is consistently around a third higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, and there is good evidence to show that the rate of reduction of child injury in the UK lags far behind the rates in other European countries. As Clare Adamson stated, if the rate in Scotland were the same as the rate in the Netherlands, 47 young people's lives would have been saved and they would have been able to go on to flourish and

contribute to Scottish society. We need to reflect on the human cost of these tragedies.

We cannot be complacent, as there is still much for us to do in this area. As Clare Adamson said, Scotland could do better. In reflecting on what Alex Johnstone said, I think that there is a balance to find in making sure that we do not wrap up our children in cotton wool. There is a slight difference, but I appreciate that, in our work on the play agenda and getting children outdoors, we must allow children to experience and manage risk, so that they go on and manage that better as adults in later life. However, today is about making sure that we create the safety parameters for children in their homes and recognise RoSPA's work and its instructive evaluation report.

All of us in the chamber, as well as those working with, supporting and nurturing children and young people, want to make Scotland the best place to grow up in. Part of that must be to make sure that our children are safe. The Scottish home safety equipment scheme has taken us a bit of the way along that path. I think that we can agree that the evaluation report published today demonstrates the success of the scheme.

We count that success on a number of different levels. First, there is the number of home safety kits fitted: 841 families and 1,616 children under the age of five are safer. Importantly, kits include blind cord cleats. I commend the work of Gordon Banks MP and my colleague Keith Brown in raising awareness about the dangers of blind cords. In my own family, we have taken action to ensure that our wee one does not run the risk of the dangers of blind cords without cleats. We must ensure that the legacy of the tragedy to which Dr Simpson referred is that awareness is raised and more lives are saved as a result of the actions that the Government takes.

People are safe not only because of the kits but because of the holistic approach that is taken by RoSPA and the local teams in providing a home safety risk assessment and home safety awareness for parents and carers. That in itself is a remarkable achievement. I am aware that we cannot measure what has not happened and, in some ways, we will never know what the full impact of the kits has been, but common sense tells us that lives will have been saved and injuries prevented. As someone has said, there are no randomised control trials to tell people that wearing a parachute when they jump out of an aeroplane is a good thing to do.

The quotes from the parents that have been included in the evaluation report illustrate how much parents have welcomed the scheme. I return to the views of the parent whom Clare Adamson quoted:

"I had been stressing about getting safety gates and other equipment in my home for a while but could not afford it. I was overjoyed when I heard about this scheme. Thank you!"

On David Torrance's point about people needing eyes in the back of their head when bringing up a wee one, we should not have a situation whereby social inequality and the lack of income prevents a person from making their homes as safe as it can be. We need to sharpen our focus across Government and make sure that our anti-poverty measures recognise the recommendations that are outlined in the RoSPA report.

Although we can count the number of kits fitted and the number of families visited, there are other successes from the scheme that cannot be counted or measured in a traditional way. Indeed, relationships have been built between professionals and families that will provide a springboard for further interaction; and links are made between different professional groups that did not know each other before but which all have a shared interest in making sure families are safe and healthy. Perhaps that is a signal that we need to involve staff groups beyond the obvious ones of health, social work and education in our GIRFEC training and approach to ensure that we truly get it right for every child.

Furthermore, the increased knowledge and confidence on the part of parents and carers will, in itself, contribute to children's safety. There is also the increase in staff capacity to deliver the scheme in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills and, in some cases, gaining a recognised qualification.

We are delighted with the scheme's success and we commend RoSPA for the initiative. I know that it has not all been plain sailing and that there have been a few challenges along the way. However, we can learn from the challenges. I know that the evaluation report makes some suggestions about how we can build on the legacy of the project and I urge community planning partnerships to study and consider those suggestions. Even in times of financial challenge, there is a need to move towards a prevention and early intervention agenda.

I again thank Clare Adamson for her sponsorship of the debate and commend RoSPA for its work on the scheme. I also thank all the other members who have contributed so fully in the time that they have during a members' business debate to make sure that we have a shared agenda not only to make Scotland the best place to grow up in but to reverse the unfortunate trends that we have seen and move us towards being one of the safest places to grow up in.

13:04

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time.

Scottish Parliamentary Pension Scheme (Investments)

1. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what proportion of the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme is invested in the fossil fuel, defence and tobacco industries. (S4O-03697)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I share the member's interest in this matter, having been a trustee of the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme for over three years.

The Scottish parliamentary pension scheme invests in the Baillie Gifford managed pension fund and, from May 2012, it has also invested in the Baillie Gifford diversified growth fund. In total, those funds currently hold approximately 4 per cent of assets in oil and gas producers, 1 per cent in oil equipment services and distribution, 2 per cent in tobacco and 4 per cent in defence.

John Finnie: I thank my colleague David Stewart for that comprehensive reply. He will be aware that very fine words about peace have emanated from here but we find that we are investing in the arms industry; our nation faces health challenges but we are investing British American Tobacco; and climate challenge is a major issue but we are investing in BP, Total and Shell.

Those are public moneys that are going to corporations at the expense of citizens, and that will have implications for Scotland and beyond. I think that Scotland wants us to be good global citizens, so will the member agree to prepare an early report for members' consideration, laying out how divestment in those unethical areas could be undertaken?

David Stewart: Perhaps I can give a bit more background about the scheme to try to answer the member's question.

The trustees of the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme appointed Baillie Gifford as fund managers for the scheme and have delegated the

responsibility for day-to-day investment management to them.

The pension contributions are invested in a pooled fund, which means that the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme is one of a number of investors in the fund. Under those arrangements, the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme does not directly own any stocks and therefore cannot direct investment.

In order to do that, the scheme would need to change to a segregated portfolio arrangement, but doing so would be a decision for the fund trustees and depend on a number of factors, such as the practicalities of such a change, any cost implications and whether the value of the fund was sufficient to support a segregated arrangement.

I will take the opportunity to write to the trustees of the Scottish parliamentary pension scheme to ask them to consider the matter in much more detail.

Budget Scrutiny (Resources)

2. Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what resources it provides to allow members to scrutinise the Scottish Government's budget. (S4O-03693)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): In 2009, the financial scrutiny unit was set up by the Scottish Parliament information centre to support the committees and individual members to understand and scrutinise the Scottish budget.

With pressures on public finances and with new tax powers on their way to the Parliament, financial scrutiny is a vital function of the Parliament. I thank Cara Hilton for her question, not least because it will allow me to highlight the recent development of some online interactive tools that are now available on the Parliament's website and that will assist all members.

One tool uses graphics to allow members to explore the budget at a very detailed level—right down to level 4—and to see year-to-year changes at a glance; and another tool allows members and, indeed, members of the public to vary rates, bands and some of the underlying assumptions in relation to the new land and buildings transactions tax. I think that the SPCB would very much welcome feedback from members and, indeed, the public on how useful they find those innovations.

Cara Hilton: In light of the extra powers that will be on the way to Holyrood soon, what additional tools will be available to members to enable them to better scrutinise the Government in respect of new powers that might be on the way on tax and welfare?

Liam McArthur: That is a valid question that I think many have been asking.

I think that we will have to await the outcome of the Smith commission before we progress any more specific work on the new powers and the consequences and implications for the Parliament and its committees. Having said that, SPICe provided briefings on a number of fiscal and welfare issues during the pre-referendum period and has already built up considerable expertise. SPICe will also tap into expertise available outside the Parliament, including in our universities and internationally. However, we will obviously keep the matter under constant review over the coming months.

Parliamentary Complex (Passes)

3. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it plans to review the number of passes issued to people who do not work in the parliamentary complex. (S4O-036960)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The security office, on behalf of the corporate body, continuously reviews the issuing of passes. That process forms a critical part of the overall security measures and is based on the advice received from the security services.

As requested by the corporate body, the security office is currently reviewing the policies around the issuing of passes, including to those who do not work in the parliamentary complex.

John Wilson: Can the member indicate how many passes have been issued to people who do not work in the complex? Can he assure me that the issuing of sponsored passes will be reviewed more regularly so that we do not face the accusation that sponsored passes allow another form of lobbying to take place in the Parliament?

David Stewart: I will write to the member on the specific points, but perhaps it will be useful if I give the wider picture.

The year, the corporate body introduced changes to the criteria attached to the regular visitor pass category, which is known as the parliamentary support pass for MSP-sponsored applications. The primary change is that, for the visitor to qualify for a pass, the sponsor is required to confirm the parliamentary purpose for which the pass will be used and that the visitor will attend Parliament at least weekly, with the condition that parliamentary support pass holders do not use their access to the Parliament to act as lobbyists—paid or unpaid—for any individual or organisation that might seek to influence the political process. The pass is issued for an initial period of three months instead of 12 months, which was the period under the original arrangements.

Similarly, for other, non-parliamentary building users, the requirement for the continuance of a pass will be challenged at the point of receipt of an application for renewal.

Garden Level Restaurant (Cashless Payments)

4. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what its position is on offering a small discount or other incentives to encourage the use of cashless payments in the garden level restaurant. (S4O-03695)

Liz Smith (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): There are no plans to offer a discount for using the cashless system. However, we encourage everyone who uses the restaurant to use their card as it is about five times quicker than paying by cash. The more the card is used, the better it will be for everybody, particularly when the restaurant is busy.

John Mason: I very much agree with Liz Smith's enthusiasm for using the cashless system. I noticed that there were considerable queues today. There have been polite notices for some time, which people are ignoring. Maybe there should be a penalty for people who insist on paying by cash.

Liz Smith: The member makes an interesting point. That is not something that the corporate body has considered, but the member makes a good point about the issue in general. There have been concerns in the past that we have sometimes run into difficulties because it has been so busy. The corporate body has undertaken to perhaps look at the "tap and go" or "wave and pay" system in the future, and we will certainly take on board the member's comments.

MSP Family Members (Employment)

5. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what decision it has made on the employment of family members of MSPs and whether this complies with the requirements of European laws on employment, discrimination and human rights and whether the legal requirements of any consequent redundancies will be complied with. (S4O-03698)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The SPCB discussed the expenses scheme's transitional arrangements in respect of members employing close family members at its meeting on 4 June 2014 and it agreed to return to the issue later in the year. I reassure the member that the SPCB will, of course, ensure that any decision that it makes complies with the relevant legislation.

Chic Brodie: In the event of job redundancies, I wonder what rules will be put in place to assist MSPs on the basis that there cannot be a like-for-like job replacement under redundancy law. How will the administrative support jobs be different?

Liam McArthur: I certainly understand the background to Mr Brodie's question. It is worth reflecting on the fact that the McIntosh review contained recommendations for a transitional provision that was intended to allow the existing arrangements for any family member of staff who had been employed to continue until three months after the date of the next Scottish Parliament elections. Of course, the date for the next election has been moved by 12 months, and the corporate body is actively considering how to give effect to the intention that the transitional scheme should run until three months after the next election. It is a matter that we will return to.

As for the support that will be provided to anyone who is affected by the decision, the corporate body will be cognisant of its responsibilities in that respect and will provide any appropriate support that we can. I should, however, underscore the fact that the McIntosh review's recommendations on this matter were subject to legal advice and we are confident that any recommendation from the corporate body will be consistent with any relevant legal requirements that are placed upon us.

Margo MacDonald (Contribution to Parliament)

6. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what consideration it has given to commemorating and celebrating the contribution of Margo MacDonald to the Parliament. (S4O-03694)

Liz Smith (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): Everyone in this Parliament appreciates the very considerable contribution made by Margo MacDonald to the Parliament, just as we also value the considerable contributions made by other members who have passed away during this parliamentary session, namely Brian Adam, David McLetchie and Helen Eadie. The SPCB has no policy of commemorating the lives of members or former members who have died, but it is something upon which we are happy to reflect.

Christine Grahame: I think that there is a rationale behind saying that it would be invidious to single out one MSP, no matter how individualistic and significant her contribution had been to Scottish politics at large. In the 15 years that I have been here, seven sitting MSPs have died in service, and I suggest that in its coming meetings the corporate body give some thought to putting in place a discreet plaque or memorial that would list the MSPs—from all parts of the

chamber—who have died in service, starting with Donald Dewar, ending with Margo MacDonald and the other MSPs in between.

Liz Smith: I am grateful to the member for her considerate and sensitive supplementary question. The SPCB should reflect on the issue and we can undertake to do so.

Travel (Journeys between Mainland Scotland and London)

7. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body how many journeys between mainland Scotland and London were made by road, rail, coach and air in the last year for which figures are available. (S4O-03700)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I can tell Alison Johnstone that, in 2013-14, 21 return journeys were made between Scotland and London and reimbursed under the members' expenses scheme. Fifteen of those journeys were by air and six were by rail.

Alison Johnstone: I thank the member for those figures. Speedy travel to London is, of course, sometimes necessary, but it is vital that we as a Parliament keep reducing our climate emissions. Does the SPCB have any further plans to reduce air miles? For example, in my time on the committee of which I am a member, we have had one videoconferencing session. Are there any plans to expand videoconferencing, to increase the available facilities and to promote their use by committees and other organisations?

Liam McArthur: Alison Johnstone makes a very fair point about our own responsibilities in reducing our climate emissions, given the legislation that we passed in the previous parliamentary session. The corporate body takes this issue exceptionally seriously and reports on it regularly. As I understand it, our track record shows that we have increased the amount of videoconferencing, where appropriate, but there is clearly more that we could be doing.

As for the member's specific question, the choice of the appropriate method of transport is ultimately the responsibility of individual members and, in making that choice, members are required to act in accordance with the principles of reimbursement in the members' expenses scheme and should be satisfied that the expenses represent value for money and were incurred having due regard to efficiency and effectiveness. However, it will do us no harm to continually reinforce the message about our own responsibilities with regard to the environmental challenges that we face, and the corporate body will continue to do that.

Cleaning (Wall and Hanging Glass Panels)

8. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what action it is taking to clean the wall and hanging glass panels in the chamber. (S4O-03699)

They are above you. [*Laughter.*]

Liz Smith (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): The high-level hanging glass panels and walls in the chamber are cleaned annually, during the February recess.

Richard Lyle: I thank the member, although that was not my understanding. I will certainly check that. Is the work put out to tender or is it done in house?

Members: Do you want the job? [*Laughter.*]

Liz Smith: This is an important issue—I am sure of that. A reason why the panels and walls are cleaned annually is that it is an extremely expensive job, which takes five to seven days to do properly. For that reason, it is done during the February recess, when there is plenty of time.

The cleaning is carried out by the high-level fabric maintenance contractor, Trac International Limited.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to the corporate body. I say to the two members that I was unable to call that I am sorry, but we must move on.

Progressive Workplace Policies

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11507, in the name of Angela Constance, on progressive workplace policies to boost productivity, growth and jobs.

14:46

The Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment (Angela Constance): When I published the working together review group's report "Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland" on 13 August, I welcomed the group's findings and said that the Government would

"fully consider the report and the recommendations, engaging business and trade unions directly"

before preparing

"a formal response."—[*Official Report*, 13 August 2014; c 33379.]

Today provides an opportunity for all parties in the Parliament to contribute to that process and to our plans for a fair work convention.

When the First Minister announced the establishment of a fair work convention at the Scottish Trades Union Congress's decent work, dignified lives conference, Grahame Smith, STUC general secretary, said:

"The STUC enthusiastically welcomes the First Minister's announcement today. The establishment of a Scottish Fair Work Convention, a key recommendation of the Working Together Review, signals a new approach to fair pay and industrial relations in Scotland. The approach stands in stark contrast to the policies of the UK Government."

I welcome that recognition that we are focused on what is best for Scotland. I have repeatedly stressed that this Government will work tirelessly to build a labour market and economy that are resilient, adaptable and responsive to change, because that is key to ensuring that Scotland's businesses compete internationally and deliver long-term prosperity and high-quality jobs.

We need to support growth that reduces inequalities and helps everyone, particularly women and young people, to realise their potential. We need growth that reduces disparities between different parts of Scotland. We need growth that is sustainable and resilient.

The labour market statistics that were published yesterday demonstrate the impact of Scotland's distinctive policy approach. Our economy continues to grow stronger, we are outperforming the United Kingdom on employment, underemployment and inactivity rates, and the gap between male and female employment has fallen to 5.4 per cent. I am pleased that there is also

progress on youth employment, but of course far more needs to be done.

This Government is always focused on securing the best outcomes for Scotland. We believe—and the working together review confirmed—that progressive workplace policies can help to improve a firm's productivity and innovation and can aid sustainable growth. Well-rewarded and sustained employment is the best route out of poverty and the best way to tackle inequality.

That is the context for today's debate. Indeed, it was the context last week when the working together review was discussed at the business in the Parliament conference. It was living wage week, of course, and many businesses were keen to learn more about living wage accreditation. There was also strong interest in fair work and progressive policies that boost productivity, and there was an appetite to learn more about the specifics of what has worked in other businesses.

The focus on the living wage as one significant example of a progressive workplace policy understandably emerged because Rachel McEwen of SSE talked of the company's experience of the living wage and what it had delivered for its business. It was heartening to hear her talk of the positive feedback from many SSE employees, not just from those who had seen a rise in their income. That is consistent with the view of KPMG's UK head of facilities, Guy Stallard, who is on record as saying:

"Offering a Living Wage is good business sense".

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): SSE's living wage story is compelling. SSE has given the living wage to its contractors as well, and is at pains to point out that European Union procurement law is similar for both public bodies and energy companies. In the light of SSE's progress, will the cabinet secretary undertake to look again at how she can offer the living wage to Government contractors?

Angela Constance: Ms Marra makes an interesting point. We touched on procurement in last week's debate on the living wage and at the business in the Parliament conference, and I heard SSE reflect on its experiences. The Government's position, as articulated by the Deputy First Minister over many months, is that we must operate within the context of EU law. The stumbling block is the fact that our national minimum wage is set in statute and at a different rate from the living wage. We have had many debates about the limits of EU law, and the Government will always look to learn from the experiences of others.

I hope that Ms Marra can be reassured by the fact that this Government was the first—indeed, the only—Government to introduce the living wage

for all its staff. We have taken a good step forward with the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 and we are in the process of introducing statutory guidance. There are also other schemes such as procurement pilot projects and the living wage accreditation scheme. We are not resting on our laurels but are always looking for ways to ensure that Scotland becomes a living wage country.

Rachel McEwen also captured the mood of the room when she recognised that different approaches will work for different businesses and that individual organisations are best placed to make their own choices, working with their employees and trade unions. That said, those choices are likely to deliver better outcomes for all if they are underpinned by a commitment to fair work and access to information about what has worked elsewhere. That resonates with the case studies that featured in the working together review and, indeed, other examples.

I recently met the owner of Get It Done Cleaning, which is the first cleaning company in Scotland to be accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. He spoke eloquently and made a compelling case for the benefits that paying the living wage had on his business and how it led to more motivated employees, which, in turn, resulted in an improvement in staff retention levels. He further spoke of how paying the living wage and having the accreditation became a unique selling point to customers and helped to set his business apart from those of competitors.

When I visited Inspiring Scotland this summer, I heard at first hand from some of its workers about the vital role that flexible and family-friendly working arrangements play in helping people to manage the twin responsibilities of work and caring. That was matched by the chief executive's account of how much those employees contribute to the organisation and how everyone would lose out if the organisation were not able to offer that balance between work and family commitments.

Fair work is an important issue that impacts directly on business competitiveness and on the lives of individual workers across Scotland. There will be a fair work convention involving trade unions and employer representatives, and my discussions—with the STUC yesterday and with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry and the Confederation of British Industry Scotland in the coming weeks—are about what the convention will do and how it will deliver.

The working together review group recommended that a fair employment framework should be developed through a new stakeholder body with representation from trade unions and employers; that the framework should be based on the what works principles, with clear

responsibilities for unions, employers, employees and workers; and that it should seek to provide support for diversity in the workplace, with particular regard to women and young people. We must also think about removing barriers for other members of the community—whether they are from the black and ethnic minority community or are workers with a disability—to getting into work and making progress in work.

This Government also wishes to influence improvements in the national minimum wage. Earlier this week, the Deputy First Minister highlighted that a number of major charities, such as Engender, the Poverty Alliance, Children 1st and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, support our proposals for the Scottish Parliament to have control over that important policy area. The STUC is another important advocate for the devolution of workplace regulation. I am confident that the Smith commission will carefully consider the evidence presented by all those bodies.

Drawing on all those influences, the fair work convention should support diversity, equality and increased and sustainable economic growth by providing independent advice to the Scottish Government on matters relating to industrial relations, fair work, the national minimum wage and the living wage.

In discussions, I will seek views on the draft remit, which is:

“to develop, promote and sustain a fair employment framework for Scotland, including specifically:

- finding and broadcasting evidence of effective industrial relations practice;
- helping to improve dialogue between unions, employers, public bodies and Government; and
- providing evidence-based recommendations on minimum wage rates and policies that help as many low-paid workers as possible and contribute to increased sustainable economic growth.”

I would very much welcome members’ views on that outline of a draft fair employment framework, whether during the debate or subsequently.

I would also welcome views on the STUC view that the remit should be explicit about the fair work convention’s role in, for example, exploring the potential to extend collective bargaining; promoting equality and environmental reps in Scotland’s workplaces; and developing a joint training programme for unions and management.

Those specific proposals featured in the working together report and could contribute substantively to the four strategic themes. As members will recall, the first theme is building industrial relations capacity and capability to boost productivity and grow jobs; the second is supporting fair work; the

third is helping unions, employees and employers to work together in workplaces across Scotland; and the fourth is taking an evidence-based approach, learning from what works in Scottish workplaces and from best practice internationally.

I endorse workplace training and development, and employers and employees having a shared commitment to the growth of their organisations and communities.

I stress that I will listen closely to the views that emerge from the debate. I also make it clear that I will not compromise on the outcomes that we seek to deliver for the people of Scotland. Fair work helps individuals, families and communities; it helps companies to become more competitive; it boosts productivity; and it creates jobs. Well-rewarded and sustained employment is the best route out of poverty and the best way to tackle inequality.

I end with a quote from Adam Smith’s “The Wealth of Nations” that features in the working together review group’s report. It is this:

“No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.”

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the report of the Working Together Review Group; recognises that well-rewarded and sustained employment, progressive workplace policies and innovation provide the best route out of poverty and the best way to tackle inequality and boost productivity; supports the review group’s prioritisation of capacity building, dialogue, shared commitment and real opportunities for unions, employees and employers to work together, and endorses the decision to establish a fair work convention.

14:59

Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con): This debate about workplace policies to boost productivity, growth and jobs is much needed. We all agree that it is desirable for rewarding and lasting employment to be available to our entire workforce—that much is clear. I welcome the cross-party recognition that innovation plays a vital role in increasing productivity. However, it is apparent that forcing the advancement of unions’ reach and power is not the best means of facilitating sustainable employment and healthy workplace relations. That is why I oppose the member for Almond Valley’s motion and have lodged my amendment.

Before I explain my reasons for disagreeing with the motion, it will be useful for me to highlight the successes that the Government—I am talking about the UK Government—can facilitate when it comes to productivity, pay, jobs and growth. Figures that the Office for National Statistics released only yesterday show that productivity in

the UK workforce is increasing and that growth in average pay is exceeding inflation.

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): Before Cameron Buchanan goes on to the ONS, will he comment on the statement by the Bank of England's chief economist that the

"fall in real wages since their pre-recession peak ... is unprecedented since at least the mid-1800s"?

Does he accept that, contrary to what he suggests, George Osborne has failed to protect the living standards of the people of Scotland?

Cameron Buchanan: I do not accept that because it is yesterday's news and not exactly what we are talking about now.

Unemployment in the July-to-September period was down 115,000 on the previous quarter. Furthermore, employment in Scotland increased by 22,000 over the three months to September, which reduced the unemployment rate to 5.9 per cent. That is all occurring while the British economy grows at the fastest rate among developed countries. That is obviously all good news and, although there is further to go, I hope that members will join me in welcoming it.

The working together review group certainly aimed to answer some interesting questions, but its report has come up with the wrong answers. It recommends policies that are too interventionist and too expensive.

It is all very well to say that we support well-rewarded employment and effective communication, but practical considerations must be addressed. The report's recommendation to require the presence of equality and environmental representatives in all public sector workplaces is at the least an unnecessary intrusion on workplaces. On top of that, the report suggests that all public sector bodies should be required to establish fit-for-purpose vehicles to engage formally with unions and should be required to include in their annual reports a section on their approach to industrial relations.

The intention may be good but, in my experience, extra layers of bureaucracy can severely hinder the effective delivery of an organisation's objectives. Such time-consuming impositions can all too easily lead to the opposite effect from that intended, as resources are spent on administration rather than invested in skills and productivity, which can lead to increased pay.

Jenny Marra: Does Cameron Buchanan accept that international evidence shows that workplaces that have good, constructive and regular conversations with, and representation of, their trade unions have the highest productivity rates and better working conditions?

Cameron Buchanan: I am coming to that.

The report casually recommends the spending of substantial sums of public money. Paying for education for union representatives through colleges and leadership development programmes, as well as the provisions for equality and environmental representatives, would demand significant funding from the Scottish Government that perhaps goes beyond what is necessary. Unions are largely self-financed and it is not clear that the Government should redirect funds from elsewhere.

The report focuses on the public sector at the private sector's expense. As the Scottish Chambers of Commerce pointed out, a lot of Scottish Government focus in recent years has been on the public sector, where it has greater control. The limited attention that the report of the working together review group gives to private sector employees is a concern, as three quarters of jobs are in the private sector and the Government could do more to help.

I agree completely with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce that the biggest issue that affects productivity in the private sector is the skills shortage. The Government would do well to aim policies at improving education to address that, as well as supporting business-to-business co-operation.

My views on workplace policies differ from those of the member for Almond Valley. I make it absolutely clear that I support the aim of facilitating constructive and more effective dialogue between unions, employees and employers. That is important for all involved, and experience has shown that working together can lead to outcomes that are in the best interests of employees, employers and the wider economy.

As the CBI has pointed out, the economic downturn highlighted the fact that flexible working practices and a more individualised model of employment relations enable employers and employees to work together to keep people in work. That helped to foster an environment of co-operative employment relations that was critical to the economic recovery. As the economy continues to grow, maintaining that positive relationship in the workplace is key.

A number of ideas could build on that atmosphere of co-operation, and it is clear to me that the most effective avenue would be to foster conditions that enable constructive dialogue between employers and employees without dictating how and when that dialogue should take place. The crucial point is that businesses and public organisations are best placed to decide on and implement the structure of workplace relations. Such flexibility is invaluable, and I feel

the need to repeat that movements to exert Government interference would be a hindrance rather than a helpful development.

Accordingly, I urge my fellow members to vote against the member for Almond Valley's motion, because the recommendations that it endorses would direct public money towards interventions that could hinder performance and which are not in the interests of employers or employees. To deliver healthy employee relations and a stronger, stable economy, we must only foster the conditions for effective communication and allow organisations to decide for themselves what best practice is. Productivity, growth and jobs would be boosted by that approach, and I urge members to support my amendment.

I move amendment S4M-11507.1, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"recognises that sustained employment and innovation provide the best route out of poverty and the best way to boost productivity; welcomes the substantial rise in the personal allowance and real-terms rise in the national minimum wage as well as recent increases in productivity and record employment figures under the current UK government, and considers that effective communication between unions, employees and employers should be welcomed."

15:06

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government for bringing this debate to the chamber. It is important because it centres on progressive workplace policies, which are important because they are about improving people's working lives. All of us agree on how important the dignity of work is for our community. I congratulate the former minister Jim Mather and the STUC on producing the working together review and on the hours of work and consultation that they did on it.

Progressive workplace policies are crucial for many reasons. A central strand that runs through all the suggestions that are made in the report is—as the Government and the Conservatives have touched on—the key theme of productivity. Productivity is the cornerstone of a progressive workplace policy because it bookends the elements that make a workplace progressive, equal and sustainable. A progressive workplace policy comes from the need for more efficient and innovative production, and successful production is a result of such progressive policies. As Paul Krugman said in his book "The Age of Diminishing Expectations",

"Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. A country's ability to improve its standard of living over time depends almost entirely on its ability to raise its output per worker."

The Scottish Government recognises that fact. It has set a target for Scotland to rank in the top quartile for productivity against our key trading partners in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development by 2017, but at the moment Scotland is still ranked 17th out of 32 countries. Scotland's relative position has remained broadly unchanged over the past four years, so a more innovative approach is clearly required. The report recognises that and is a good start towards that improvement.

Increasing the productivity of a business means that it can compete on high skill levels and wages in a race to the top, which creates the middle-income jobs that we need to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. The previous UK Labour Government made good progress on closing the productivity gap, but there is still a great deal left to do, and Scotland and the UK have roughly the same ranking in the OECD. The Labour Party wholeheartedly endorses that key aspect of the report and hopes that it will be carried forward by the Scottish Government. We commit to implementing the recommendations in the report if we are elected to government in Holyrood in 2016.

Some of the recommendations in the report cover equality.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): For clarity, is that a commitment to implement all 30 recommendations in the report?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give Jenny Marra time back for that intervention.

Jenny Marra: Yes, it is. That is a commitment to implement the working together review.

Equality is crucial, as we still witness a pay gap. Despite the improvements that were reported on yesterday, it is still a challenge for women to get the skills, training and decent-waged jobs that they need. We have debated that many times in the chamber. The equality representatives recommendation in the report is a good step forward. The same applies to a fair employment framework. I was pleased that the cabinet secretary said that she will listen to all parties on that.

Recommendation 25 in the report would mean that more people with a trade union background sat on public boards and that female participation on those boards was increased. The cabinet secretary knows that that issue is close to my heart and is part of the Labour Party's agenda, because public boards make many critical decisions about public spending and services but are largely unknown and are not entirely representative across our communities.

Chic Brodie: Many companies do not have trade union representation. What should happen

to employees vis-à-vis board positions in those companies?

Jenny Marra: We would have to think long and hard about that. I am sure that the cabinet secretary will consider the matter.

Equality in the workplace has been discussed in the chamber in the past few weeks, from our request that public authorities direct at least one contract to a supported business to our request for the living wage to be a requirement in all public sector contracts. The Government rejected both requests for legislative action to improve equality. I am very interested to note how many of the 30 recommendations in the report the Government intends to enact.

The working together review highlights the incredible importance of unions in driving equality in the workplace. It says:

“unions are not simply representatives of a sectional interest, but can act as ‘swords of justice’ in the workplace and elsewhere, generating positive individual and social outcomes.”

The review suggests closer working between the Government and the unions, and a push for better communication, to improve equality through diversity and a mutually beneficial relationship.

As I have said, productivity is the central crux of the things that make a workplace successful and afford our workers and the public the most basic rights. All the recommendations can be enacted with political will or enacted immediately. The powers are vested in the Parliament and are in the Scottish Government’s hands. We can immediately begin to push matters forward.

For that reason, Labour is pleased to support the Government’s motion, but we look forward to hearing more detail during the debate on how the Scottish National Party intends to implement the suggestions in the report so that the potential of progressive workplaces comes to fruition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We turn to the open debate. Speeches should be around six minutes. There is a bit of time in hand to compensate members for interventions if they wish to take them.

15:13

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Back in 1977, I picked up a copy of “SNP & you: aims & policy of the Scottish National Party”. Page 12 of that document stated, in the section on “Manpower and Industrial Relations”:

“The SNP is strongly committed to the principle of direct employee participation in decision-making in industry and believes that greater democratisation in the workplace is long overdue.”

It also promoted the establishment of

“An Economic Council representing unions, employers and Government”

and established the SNP’s commitment to the minimum wage by stating:

“The SNP supports a statutory minimum earnings level.”

The final paragraph highlighted that

“A major increase in facilities for training and re-training is essential, together with a more effectively planned and co-ordinated training service”.

It took 30 years and the election of an SNP Government before staff who were covered by the public sector pay policy were paid the living wage. It was the first Government in the UK to do that.

Modern apprenticeships are at record levels, and plans are in place to increase their number further. Despite those advances, we are trying to improve the living standards of the people of Scotland with one hand tied behind our back. The problem is that employment legislation, which covers the minimum wage, the living wage and zero-hours contracts, is still reserved to Westminster. We are unable to introduce legislation here at Holyrood on the very issues that impact on the living standards of many Scots.

However, the working together review group report “Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland” makes a number of recommendations that are in tune with those earlier SNP policies. The Scottish Government established the Mather review in February to examine how better working environments can be created for employees across the country. The report, published in August, contains 30 recommendations, including a key recommendation to establish a fair work convention. The First Minister announced at the STUC conference in October that an independent fair work convention would be established to develop, promote and sustain a fair employment framework for Scotland. The fair work convention will encourage dialogue among unions, employers, public sector bodies and Government in order to promote good industrial relations. It will also be tasked with influencing UK policy on the minimum wage and the promotion of the living wage.

The report was welcomed by the STUC, which recognised that it had

“the potential for extending collective bargaining and for democratising workplaces and industry.”

Also commenting on the review group’s report was Professor Ewart Keep of the centre on skills, knowledge and organisational performance, at the University of Oxford, who made a number of points in an article published on the future of the UK and Scotland website. One was:

“when it comes to employment relations/industrial relations policy, the issues in Scotland are being conceived of and debated in ways that are strongly dissimilar from England.”

Another was:

“It is not simply that the Coalition Government would neither be willing to commission nor act upon anything akin to the Working Together Review and its findings, but that some within the Labour Party at Westminster would also probably find the Review’s report slightly uncomfortable and unsettling reading. Its underlying assumptions about what the accepted ‘best practice’ model of industrial relations might look like are simply too radical and too strongly located within a Northern European social democratic and social partnership tradition to be liable to play well with the Neo-Liberal media and employer interests that politicians have become used to deferring to.”

Finally, he wrote:

“Scotland’s approach, at least as laid out in the Review’s report, argues otherwise, suggesting that for reasons of both equity and efficiency what happens in the workplace really matters to government and to wider society. As the Review points out, many of the Scottish Government’s long-term economic and social goals are unlikely to be achieved if productivity and economic performance do not improve, and the fruits of such gains are not more widely and equitably shared across the population. Better workplace industrial relations have an important role to play in delivering these objectives, and the Review sets out one model for how this might be achieved.”

The Scottish Parliament information centre briefing “Workplace policies to boost productivity, growth and jobs” highlighted that, based on gross domestic product per hour worked,

“Scotland has higher productivity rates than most other regions of the UK except London and the South East of England.”

The OECD compared the 32 developed countries on their relative efficiency using GDP per hour worked. Scotland was ranked 17th out of the 32 countries, with the UK in 19th place. The top three places went to Norway, Luxembourg and Ireland. If we are to emulate the small northern European countries that occupy the top three slots, we must increase productivity. That can happen only if the people who are expected to deliver that increased productivity feel that they will benefit from the increased sales and profits.

The Scottish Government’s submission to the Smith commission calls for powers over employment and employability to be devolved to this Parliament. With powers over employment law and the minimum wage, we could ensure that the people of Scotland receive a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work. With those devolved powers, we could finally complete the journey we started with the publication of “SNP & you” back in 1977.

15:19

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): The argument for progressive workplace policies for

decent, non-exploitative and well-paid work stands on its own. However, I want to begin by developing a couple of themes that emerged from yesterday’s debate on welfare and the experience of some of Scotland’s most vulnerable citizens.

In particular, I want to pick up on a point that the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats put forward to defend their welfare reforms. Speakers from both parties pointed out that welfare spending in Scotland was not falling but increasing. Also, at a time of welfare cuts, unemployment is falling and employment is rising. That might strike most as counterintuitive, but the explanation behind it is interesting. Of course, pensions account for much of the increase, as the number of older people increases. However, more strikingly, in-work benefits—most noticeably, tax credits and housing benefit—are rising.

That leads directly to the second point, which follows a comment that was made by Murdo Fraser in a joint interview that we gave yesterday. He said that work is the best route out of poverty. On the face of it, I could not agree with him more, and I suspect that there will be hardly a soul on the Labour benches, and probably not on the SNP benches either, who disagrees with that sentiment. However, as a factual statement, it is not entirely true. Work does not automatically take people out of poverty. As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others have pointed out, for the first time ever, the majority of households who are living in poverty have someone in that household who is holding down a job.

What is happening is that people are working, but they either are in part-time or temporary work or have such low-paid jobs that they cannot even afford to pay their rent. In fact, worse than that, people who have been in employment for some time but have had their wages frozen or their overtime cut are finding themselves slipping backwards and are becoming less well-off with every day’s work rather than becoming more prosperous.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Will the member give way?

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Ken Macintosh: Mr McArthur was first.

Liam McArthur: I was slightly quicker to my feet than Mr Hepburn.

I do not dispute the fact that the complexity of the issue does not lend itself to soundbites, but does Mr Macintosh accept that a rise of 40 per cent in real terms in the amount that is spent on housing benefit, over a period of 10 years of economic growth, is not necessarily a sign of success, nor something that is sustainable?

Ken Macintosh: I agree with both the member's points. The question that must be asked in relation to welfare reform is, do we really want to live in a country where someone can hold down a job yet not earn enough money to pay their rent? That is the very point that I was trying to make. That is not the best use of taxpayers' money. Not only are taxpayers having to help families, but we are having to subsidise employers to maintain employment practices that we wish to end. That is the point that I am trying to get to. We are actually paying for things that we do not want to see in the workplace.

Jamie Hepburn: I agree with what Mr Macintosh has just said, but I want to take him back to what he said about the motion being somewhat inconsistent with what is happening. The motion recognises that

"well-rewarded and sustained employment"

is the best route out of poverty. The motion is not exactly inconsistent with the point that he is making.

I make that point gently, because I agree with what the member is saying.

Ken Macintosh: I am not arguing against the motion. In fact, I think that we are voting for the motion, so I am not quite sure what Jamie Hepburn is getting at. Anyway, I take his point.

The point that I was trying to make, building on yesterday's welfare debate, is that we are spending a lot of Government money supporting practices that are not only bad for people but are bad for the sort of sustainable employment practices that we want to have.

There are any number of reasons why we want to have progressive, fair and sustainable employment policies. The question of what we can do about that is where it all becomes slightly trickier. I do not doubt that many in the SNP have approached this issue in good faith. Alongside the very good work of our former parliamentary colleague, Jim Mather, in leading the working together review group, John Swinney was responsible for establishing the national performance framework. For those who are still unfamiliar with the NPF, it is akin to Oxfam's humankind index and other such indices that focus on measuring our wellbeing rather than other, less helpful determinants such as gross domestic product. For me, the NPF is an attempt, at least, to relate the decisions around Government spending more closely to outcomes, to the way in which we lead our lives and to the policies on tackling poverty, reducing inequality and improving employment practices that we support.

There are other initiatives, such as the STUC's decent work campaign and the ethical finance

round table, which is driven by the Islamic Finance Council and Tods Murray, to which the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth has offered exploratory support. I see many of those initiatives sitting alongside our debate today and as part of what I see as our model for building the model economy.

How do we translate those good intentions into actions? That is where I find the Scottish Government's record to be at its weakest. The NPF has yet to be applied as a budget tool. In other words, it is difficult to see any specific budget decision that has been taken as a result of the NPF as opposed to traditional policy processes. For example, we had any number of opportunities under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill to take stronger action on the living wage and on wage differentials.

There is a disjoint between a Government party that often talks about how strongly it opposes private finance initiative or public-private partnership projects and then invests billions of pounds—huge sums of public money—through the Scottish Futures Trust in exactly those sorts of schemes and, in some cases, in employing firms that are clearly suspected of being blacklisters, as Neil Findlay pointed out yesterday. Do ministers not recognise the contradiction between our all agreeing here today on tax transparency and on everyone—individuals and companies—paying their taxes and then giving tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to companies such as Amazon, which does not or will not pay its taxes and, worse, fails to recognise trade unions and uses zero-hours contracts?

Even on supply-side measures, none of us wants Scots to go into dead-end or low-skilled jobs, but the most striking feature of recent SNP budgets has been their targeting of Scotland's colleges. Those are the very institutions that do most to build the skills that we need, to invest in people and to give people the confidence that they need to succeed, but they have suffered the largest cuts.

I will not end on that note. I have no doubt that there is a strong majority for progressive employment policies in the Scottish Parliament, particularly among the Labour and SNP members. Today's debate is yet another step in the right direction. The fair work commission alongside the working together review are positive moves that will lead to recommendations and, I hope, to action. Any such moves will have Labour's support.

15:27

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the debate. The key word for me is

“productivity”. I also welcome most of the working together review paper that was produced by the review group under the esteemed leadership of Jim Mather and the STUC.

I hope that members will forgive me if I seek to draw on my personal experience of running companies across eight countries in Europe, and my attendant education in workplace matters, and then, on returning to Scotland, my role as a company troubleshooter/doctor—call it what you will—assisting companies that were facing financial or managerial difficulties. From that experience, it became clear to me that to achieve growth—to grow and sustain employment, to optimise profitable growth and to secure greater returns for employees, owners and all stakeholders—the potential for conflict between capital, in the form of owners and shareholders and, in some cases, management, and labour, in the form of trade unions and/or non-unionised employees, which is still going on in some quarters in the UK, had to be eradicated or at least minimised.

My experience—primarily with work councils in Germany—was that bringing together capital and labour to work more closely required the greater participation of employees in the formulation of working practices; encouragement for employees to do some of the decision making; and their minor equity participation in the company of which they were a part. In Fife, in one company that I was involved in turning around, having got rid of the board, employees who had more than one year of employment with the company were allotted board shares. It was a minority shareholding but it was still shares and involvement in the company's equity. There was no pension fund, but there has been capital growth in the shares and the company's profitable revenues have grown three times—most of that since I left—over the past eight years, in which time the company has been under strong management by former employees. That capital growth should and will secure a pot of income for the employees when they retire and sell their shares back to the company.

Members might say, “That's the private sector. What about the public sector?” There was once a proposal that in public sector organisations with a committed cost base, in the event of the cost coming in below that, part of the financial benefit should revert to the employees who, as I have said, should be participating in the decision making—in the public sector as well as in the private sector.

There is no greater evidence of that kind of participation than in the rapidly burgeoning social enterprise sector, which is now producing 5 per cent of Scotland's GDP. There are many employee stakeholders in that sector, which gives

an indication of how full participation in developing productivity benefits employees. That contribution can come about only through the further enlightenment of shareholders, management and employees—be they unionised or non-unionised—in the workplace. That is highlighted in the review group paper on developing capability in industrial relations. Communication and understanding are absolutely key to what, ostensibly, should be a capital and labour joint operation to promote success, just as the review paper requests that the STUC, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish funding council should lead the charge on employees—whether union led or not—and middle management securing the learning to fulfil the ever-changing demands and economies of the workplace and the community and democracy within it.

Gavin Brown: I am grateful to the member for giving way. He said at the start of his speech that he agreed with most of the working together review. With which parts does he not agree?

Chic Brodie: I did not say that I disagreed with any of it. There are many companies in which, as I said in my question to Ms Marra, there is no trade union base. We have to encapsulate democracy in those organisations and encourage employee elections of representatives to—dare I call them this—works councils. The employee's voice must be heard, which is also in the interest of the owners and shareholders, because that shared commitment boosts productivity, as I have indicated.

Thereby, employees all become stakeholders and partners in the enterprise, whether in the private or public sector, in relation to which I talked not about a revenue base but about a committed cost base. Participation in decisions, equity share and communication are pointers to a fairer, more equal and more constructive work environment.

The establishment of a fair work convention to promote equality, partnership and co-operation will be the foundation on which we can face the social and economic challenges and take the opportunities that the global economy—and our place in it—will throw up. It is not just about securing fair pay, although that is obviously key, but about embracing the financial and relationship dividends that will flow from the convention and from the provisions that I suggested earlier in my speech.

The success of any business demands recurring innovation, product renewal and diversification, capital investment, efficiency and strong marketing and selling, but at the end of the day all that must be underpinned by the ethos that having the high-wage, high-productivity economy that I believe we all want, married to sustainable growth in employment demand, necessitates fair, just and

equal industrial relations borne out of good process and good communications.

Finally, the onus is on all employers and on management and employees in the private and public sector alike to make that communication and process an urgent priority. The working together review group has taken a good step forward. We now have to move very fast.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. I have given two members substantially over their time for interventions. I now have a little bit of time for interventions.

15:35

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I, too, welcome the debate and I add my thanks to Jim Mather and the STUC for producing the report. It was good to see Jim back in the Scottish Parliament last week, no doubt sharing with those of us attending the business in the Parliament conference the latest gems from his most up-to-date reading list.

In his foreword to the report, Jim Mather speaks of the pressing need to reverse inequalities and

“expand the pervasiveness of constructive industrial relations ... to create gains for all”.

He argues that

“doing so will help us to face all future challenges with the confidence that our most important resources—our people—are being given every opportunity to realise their—and our—fullest potential.”

That is a point that Jenny Marra underlined in her remarks and I could not agree more. It is why the Liberal Democrats have put the pursuit of a stronger economy and a fairer society and creating opportunity for all at the centre of our policy perspectives.

I think that it is now generally agreed that the most consistently successful businesses and organisations here and across the world are characterised by progressive workplace practices—by the way in which employees are treated, valued, encouraged and indeed supported to take on responsibility. The cabinet secretary used the example of SSE—I was delighted to hear of its experience and I congratulate my good friend and former colleague Rachel McEwen, who I think was also right to point out that it is a case of horses for courses. Different approaches will work for different companies and different organisations. However, there is also much to be gained from sharing the good practice that is quite clearly out there.

As Cameron Buchanan’s amendment encourages us to do, we should perhaps see the debate in the light of yesterday’s continued good economic news—unemployment is down,

employment is up and 2.6 million Scots are now in work. After all, the report was about progressive workplace policies to boost productivity, growth and jobs. It would be unfortunate were SNP members to claim credit for the upturn, having blamed everyone else for the downturn and condemned most of the measures that were taken to try to get our economy back on its feet after the 2008 crash.

Ken Macintosh gave a characteristically reasonable appraisal of welfare reform. The point that I was making in relation to housing benefit, for example, was that we saw a vast increase—40 per cent in real terms—in housing benefit during a period of Labour administration when we had uninterrupted economic growth. Therefore, it is something that is long overdue for challenge. That is not to deny some of the concerns that Ken Macintosh has about in-work poverty, which is clearly still evident.

It is right that we consider how we wish the emerging economic growth to be shaped. In that respect, the report is exceptionally helpful. The Lib Dems in coalition have done much to make the workplace fairer and the economy stronger. Our future is more certain as a result. We have listened to the Low Pay Commission recommendations and there has been a real-terms increase in the national minimum wage. The income tax threshold has been raised to £10,000, giving a tax cut to more than 2 million low and middle earners and lifting 220,000 people out of paying tax altogether.

I also welcomed the working together review’s focus on equality. The Royal Society of Edinburgh concluded in its report “Tapping all our Talents” that

“a doubling of women’s high-level skill contribution to the economy would be worth as much as £170 million per annum to Scotland’s national income.”

The number of women in work has risen to a historic high in recent times. There are 427,000 more women in employment and almost 100,000 more women in self-employment since May 2010, but clearly there is a great deal more that we can do, given the base that we were coming from. We have seen progress in terms of shared parental leave, which was a key demand of the “Tapping all our Talents” report, which again was front of mind at the science in the Parliament event yesterday. We have seen a new tax-free childcare scheme, which could benefit almost 160,000 Scottish families from next year. Those initiatives have helped and continue to help to build a more stable labour market and a larger labour force.

To build a resilient labour force, though, we need to focus unremittingly on skills. The review group makes some helpful observations in that respect. It talks about the need to

“ensure that unions are fully involved at strategic and operational level in the implementation”

of the excellent Wood report. I am sure that the cabinet secretary would whole-heartedly support that.

It is regrettable, however, that we have seen cuts to the college sector, which have borne down most heavily on women workers and on older workers, and a reduction in the number of part-time courses, which is inhibiting the efforts of many of those seeking to upskill and remain or get into the labour market. On gender equality, in the appointment of regional college boards the college sector has not punched anything like its weight.

There is a shared purpose here, though. We may disagree on certain aspects of the report or the conclusions that we draw from it. There even appears to be some disagreement within the Government ranks. That is much to be applauded. Maybe this is the new dawn that we are all being promised with the election of a new leader.

The report says that we can learn from the many high-performing countries and private and public organisations. We should continue to do that, to ensure that we pick up on evolving best practice and innovation. We need to work with the unions and representative organisations and across all sectors to find innovative solutions that can help us to address the challenges that we face. The report is a sound foundation for that continued effort. Again, I thank Jim Mather and the STUC for their contribution to the debate and to helping us, as we seek to achieve our collective objective of creating a stronger economy and a fairer society.

15:41

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in this afternoon’s debate on “Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland”. I read the report the other day and I have looked at the 30 recommendations. Although I agree with them, I do not just glibly accept them. That would do the drafters of the report a disservice. We have to engage with the recommendations constructively, develop them and take them forward, or else they are just words for their own sake. They have to be implemented and be meaningful. Saying that we accept the recommendations does not mean that we can just roll them out and get on with it; that is not how these things work.

I pay tribute to Jim Mather and other review members. In Jim Mather’s powerful foreword to the report, he sums up the need for the review. He says:

“In recent years, I have thought deeply about the matters at the core of our remit and that has forced me to read

widely and do my own research. Increasingly that meant that I was somewhat overdue in making my own contribution to the debate. So, I hope that this Report helps to rectify that omission in a most constructive way because it is better and more comprehensive than any solo effort could have been.”

Jim Mather made a huge contribution to public life. However, before he started the review, he felt that there was more that he could do as an individual but that he could not do it on his own—it had to be teamwork. That is precisely what the report gives us, as a broad range of skills from a broad range of sectors has contributed to the recommendations. That is vital.

I would like to look at some of the recommendations. Recommendation 11 is that

“A fair employment framework should be developed through a stakeholder body”—

a body that the review group rightly suggests should be set up. The recommendation focuses on women and young people. I understand why, and I support that. However, as I am the convener of the cross-party group on racial equality, members would expect me to ask, “What about black and minority ethnic workers?” Further, given welfare reform, members would expect me to ask about disabled workers in the workplace.

That is not to slight the specific challenges that face women and young people in the workplace. Nevertheless, we need a more rounded picture, and more information about how we can develop targets and outcomes for women and young people that do not make disabled and black and minority ethnic workers feel undervalued. It is about the mainstreaming of equalities within that approach. Although I draw attention to that point, I support the recommendation.

Likewise, on mainstreaming, recommendation 8 is that there should be a single minister—a single point of contact—in the Scottish Government in relation to industrial relations. Again, that is an excellent idea, but I have a little caveat on mainstreaming. Every minister and cabinet secretary has a front-line duty within their remit to ensure that they get things as right as they can, but an individual minister having a cross-cutting remit could be a very powerful device working in partnership across portfolios. However, such a post would have to be meaningful and have a direction.

I will give members an example of that from my experience. The cross-party group on racial equality in Scotland identified from data that apprenticeships via Skills Development Scotland were potentially not reaching people from the black and minority ethnic communities. When we communicated that to Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland, they sought to address the issue. However, it was our cross-party

group that identified the issue for them. That shows that, even with the best will in the world, there are always omissions on issues such as apprenticeships, which are of course directly a workforce issue.

Staying with the issue of apprenticeships, I note that recommendation 1 refers to “union-led learning”. I am proud to say that the Scottish Government has signalled its intention to boost even further the current record level of apprenticeships. How we funnel that through businesses and companies in the private and public sectors in conjunction with our union partners and colleagues in order to identify workplace priorities for apprenticeships is vital. It is about how we bring meaning to that. I think that we could link the growth in apprenticeships to workplace-led learning with unions in the driving seat.

I intend this debate to be consensual, but I want to bring up a point that I have raised previously about Labour’s comments on apprenticeships. I do not mean this point to be party political; it is about developing the issue. However, when figures came out showing that a lot of people who were getting apprenticeships were already in jobs, the Labour Party jumped on that and said how terrible it was. However, I think that the Labour Party later acknowledged that it was just wrong about that, which was big of it. [*Interruption.*]

Well, I hope that the Labour Party identified that it was wrong and has learned the lessons, because the issue is skills progression whether someone is unemployed or in work. Apprenticeships should be available to all sectors in the workplace and should not be just for people who are unemployed. The unions have a key role to play in developing apprenticeships from within the workplace. I am happy to talk offline to my Labour colleagues who looked confused and explain to them why their view was wrong at the time.

Ken Macintosh: Our intervention at the time was to prevent the Scottish Government from claiming that every apprenticeship was a job, which is what it was trying to do.

Bob Doris: I will talk offline about that rather than waste the precious time that I have left to develop a serious point, but I think that Ken Macintosh is wrong about that.

Recommendation 23 says quite rightly:

“All public sector bodies should be required to include a section in their annual reports on their approach to industrial relations and its impact on workplace and workforce matters.”

Recommendation 24 talks about having worker representatives

“on the board of every public sector body.”

The words “local authorities” jumped into my mind in relation to that because of the huge reforms that they are going through and the huge amount of outsourcing that they quite often do with arm’s-length organisations and third sector organisations, which quite frankly is sometimes seen as a way of cutting back on pay and conditions for certain workers. I will not make any point on that other than to ask how we ensure that unions are actively involved at a senior level in local authorities when they are debating structural change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Would you like to draw to a close, please?

Bob Doris: We have to find a mechanism for unions to do that.

Finally, there was some positive analysis in the report of how the public sector has dealt with structural change. I was going to talk about the huge structural reforms that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has had to deal with, but do not worry, Presiding Officer, because I am not going to. The process was not perfect, but the board has been commended for the practical way in which it engaged with workforce representatives and trade unions to see through what could have been a tricky and painful reorganisation—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is for another day.

Bob Doris: —but which was a successful one that has benefited patients and the workforce.

15:49

Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): I, too, rise to speak in favour of the motion. I welcome the report and the fair work convention that has been announced, but it is important that we see some timescales being put in place. Otherwise, the danger is that the report will be kicked into the long grass. Many meetings have taken place and there are recommendations in the report that the majority of members will agree with. We should move to implement them quickly, so it is important to have a timetable.

Angela Constance: As a point of information, I think that I am on record as saying that I will come back to the Parliament at the beginning of next year with the Government’s final response to this very detailed report.

Alex Rowley: That is to be welcomed. I hope that, as part of that response, we will get a clear timetable for how the recommendations will be taken forward and put in place.

Looking at the current situation, I draw attention to a couple of issues. First, there is an increase in

the use of agency workers right across Scotland. Unite the union and the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians have lobbied the Parliament to try to highlight that increase, particularly in the building sector.

A constituent approached me just a few days ago and told me his situation. He is a former miner who has been working for a number of different agencies. The tragedy is that the agencies tend to employ people, taking a cut, and then pay them off after a period of time. Last year, my constituent worked for Amazon. He worked up until Christmas on a contract and it was then extended for another month. Recently, he was paid off, and he went along to the agencies only to be told that he was on an Amazon list of people not to be employed this year.

That is not the way to treat any worker, and something needs to be done about it. The Government has put millions of pounds into Amazon, and when it puts millions of pounds into such companies it should be able to influence their employment practices.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I agree with what the member said about Amazon. Does he agree that submissions to the Smith commission should state that employment law should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament so that we can stop the practices that he mentioned?

Alex Rowley: I cannot comment on our party's input to the Smith commission. Those discussions need to take place. What I can say is that I hope that all the parties are going into those discussions with an open mind. If that is a key issue that is coming up, our party should certainly have an open mind in looking at it.

Secondly, I want to talk about the living wage. The Poverty Alliance says that employers who pay the living wage have reported a 25 per cent fall in absenteeism. Some 80 per cent of those employers believe that payment of the living wage has enhanced the quality of their staff's work, two thirds say that it has had a significant impact on recruitment and retention in their organisation and 70 per cent believe that it has increased consumer awareness of their organisation's commitment to being an ethical employer. Those are all major benefits of paying the living wage that lead to better productivity. That is at the core of the report, as Jenny Marra said.

I lodged a question some months ago to ask the Government what discussions it had had with the care home sector about the implications of introducing the living wage. The response that I got was that there had not been detailed discussions. I highlight that because a constituent came to my surgery in Lochgelly just a few weeks ago and talked to me about his wife, who suffers

from dementia and has a private company coming in and providing care. Over 10 months, 10 different carers had come in. If employers pay lower wages, people will try to find work elsewhere, so the point about the retention of workers is important in the care sector.

As we know, the introduction of the living wage would benefit 400,000 workers in Scotland, 29,000 of whom are in the care sector. As someone whose family has experienced the care that those workers provide, I often ask, "How much is a care worker worth?" I think that they are certainly worth more than the living wage. If the Government were to say that it could not do that, I think that my colleague Hugh Henry, who is not the chamber today, would simply point to Renfrewshire Council—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must draw to a close, please.

Alex Rowley: When that council looked at the balance of—and the mismatch in—care, it introduced the living wage. If Renfrewshire Council can do that, I assume that the Scottish Government can do it, too.

The report is to be welcomed, but we need to make progress. I welcome the news that a timetable will be issued in January, and I look forward to seeing it.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. I must ask for six-minute speeches, please.

15:55

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): Like many other people, I suppose, I am a member of a trade union. I have been a trade unionist all my life, first as a teacher and now as a member of the Musicians Union. Trade unions serve workers in very different kinds of bodies, and they play a great variety of roles in our lives. Unfortunately, many more trade unions today represent workers in the public sector, and there are far fewer trade unions in the private sector than there were in the past.

As organised bodies that represent important trades and professions, unions have to be involved in decision making in respective workplaces. The recommendation in the report that we are discussing—that a trade union portfolio be created in Government and that it be the focus of a Cabinet minister—bears scrutiny. My colleague Bob Doris said that all ministers are responsible for this matter, but it would be good to have that kind of focus so that we can not just deliver this aspect of social justice but extend more progressive approaches to employment such as worker ownership that are a step beyond what the report deals with.

Unions play a strong part in championing working people and work on issues such as gender equality, diversity representation and bettering working conditions. Why do we need that, particularly now? For a start, Oxfam has pointed out that the UK's five richest families have more wealth than the poorest 20 per cent of the population. There is an obvious need, therefore, to find models in which workers get a fair share of the proceeds.

In fact, a look at the beneficial models that we have in Scotland—and which are mentioned in the working together review report—is long overdue. The report highlights the case study of Tullis Russell and Unite in Fife, which is a very good example not only of a situation where the unions are closely involved but of a worker-owned organisation that has been very successful. We should recognise that having employee-owned companies is a very good step; they not only solve the problem of company succession by eliminating the possibility of the founder or owner leaving, but keep business more localised.

In my constituency, Alness-based Aquascot began its transition to employee ownership in 2008 with the goal of completing the transition by 2016. This sort of thing does not happen overnight. The company's owners decided to leave in 2016, and they wanted the workforce of more than 100 people to run what is an important producer of food in our area and indeed for supermarkets such as Waitrose. Aquascot is a community of professionals in the food sector who are dedicated to high-quality local production; in 2012, at the halfway point in the transition to employee ownership, the employees owned 42 per cent of the company's share, and its turnover and staff numbers have risen.

When it comes to customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction, we know that the John Lewis Partnership—at the big end of the employee-ownership scale—is one of the best performers in Britain. We have to find out why that is so.

It is important that we recognise that trade unions have moved on a bit. I remember debates in the 1970s, when the STUC did not favour employee ownership at all. It is now much more open to new models.

We should look at the German model, in particular. In Germany, companies as large as Volkswagen have worker councils and worker directors, and labour relations and pay are much better. It is important that we integrate those things if we are to achieve the productivity that we all want to achieve. Scotland needs far more worker owners. The Aquascot concept can be taken a good deal further.

The Scottish Parliament, working in the interests of all Scots, must at an early stage seek to develop strongly progressive employment policies such as those that are discussed in the report. However, we need to go further, as I said. The trade unions and the Government, working together, are best placed to take things further.

We are being attacked from the neoliberal right and its individualised model of worker-manager relationships, which the member who moved the Tory amendment mentioned. That is the death of progressive wages and the death of the kind of atmosphere in the workplace that is essential to progressive employment.

We need to narrow the gap between pay at the top and pay at the bottom, following the model in the Nordic countries. In the developed world, the gap is widest in the Anglo-Saxon countries. There is a big lesson to be learned from the report.

16:01

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I welcome the report and support its fundamental principles and assumptions, which I take to be: first, that increased productivity and better workforce relations are complementary; and secondly, that economic and social challenges are more likely to be addressed successfully in an environment in which unions play their full part.

There are good examples in the public sector and the private sector, and I hope to talk about at least one such example. I agree with the cabinet secretary that the draft framework should broadcast effective industrial relations practice. The more that we know about that, the better.

However, we all know about problems and bad practices. We have heard quite a lot about low pay—the UK leader of my party has today been talking about zero-hours contracts and other matters that are a serious problem for many people in Scotland and the UK. In some workplaces there is bullying and stress, which have to be tackled, and endemic in workplaces is a lack of employee voice and involvement.

Those are the challenges that must be addressed. The report goes a long way towards dealing with the problems. I was delighted to hear Jenny Marra, on Labour's front bench, say that Labour is committed to implementing all the recommendations in the report. When the cabinet secretary sums up, it would be good if she could indicate whether the Scottish Government also intends to implement all the recommendations.

I hope that the report can be a focus for public debate about the state of industrial relations in Scotland and across the UK. When I read it, I was keen on the recommendation that there should be

“a stakeholder body”, to “provide leadership” and develop a “fair employment framework”. I take it that that is what the convention will do—if I have misunderstood that, the cabinet secretary will no doubt correct me.

The framework should certainly seek to provide support for diversity in the workplace, particularly with regard to women and young people. Like Jenny Marra, I am keen on having “Equality and Environmental ... Reps” in public sector workplaces. It might have been Cameron Buchanan who asked, “What about the private sector?” The reality is that some of the recommendations in the report can more easily be implemented in the public sector, for which the Government has direct responsibility, but that is not to say that equality and environmental reps would not be desirable in the private sector, too.

Another recommendation is that the Scottish Government should

“legislate to ensure that there is effective worker representation (from representative trade unions) on the board of every public sector body”.

I support that, but that is already the case in the NHS and has been since the previous Administration. I speak as someone who had some involvement in that, and I am pleased that the extensive NHS partnership working that was developed under the previous Administration and then legislated for in the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004 is praised so highly in the report. It is not known well enough that there is a Scottish partnership forum at the national level and other bodies dealing with specific matters at the local level.

There is a complex partnership arrangement in the NHS that started to be developed right at the start of the Scottish Parliament. Sections 4.29, 5.21 and 4.30 of the report refer to that in glowing terms, and recommendation 12 suggests that it should perhaps be translated into other sectors. We have a good example of such working in practice, and if Cameron Buchanan looked at that he might be a wee bit more positive about the potential of such partnership working.

Section 4.30 cites the example of the partnership information network, which goes way back to the early days of the Parliament and involves “unions and employers” working together to develop “model employment policies”. There is a whole series of those, and they include

“‘Embracing Equality, Diversity and Human Rights in NHS Scotland’; ‘Dealing with employee grievances in NHS Scotland’; ... and ‘Supporting work-life balance’.”

There is so much good practice there. In “Partnership in NHS Scotland 1999-2011”, Nicolas Bacon and Peter Samuel state:

“In our view, partnership in NHS Scotland has matured into probably the most ambitious and important contemporary innovation in British public sector industrial relations.”

It is a shame that more is not known about that. I declare a personal interest in my involvement in that work, but the current Government has developed it and can claim credit for the word “matured” in that quotation.

I think that I have a little bit of time left—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have one minute.

Malcolm Chisholm: I will finish by talking about the development of union-led learning through Scottish Union Learning and its development and learning funds. That work is important, and the report states that

“The STUC, SDS and SFC should agree an approach that ensures that union-led learning fulfils its full potential in addressing Scotland’s workplace and workforce development challenges.”

I do not have time to say everything that I wanted to say about that, but I note that a Scottish Union Learning and STUC report in 2011 highlighted the role of trade unions in ensuring effective skills utilisation. Among other conclusions, that report argued that effective skills utilisation has to

“allow workers a voice in the development of skills utilisation initiatives.”

It repeats the theme that, when employees and employers, workers and management, are involved collaboratively in working together, that has many benefits in terms of the development of the workforce and, crucially, increased productivity.

16:08

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): It is important that our society has industrial relations that ensure co-operation between employers and employees, and I very much welcome the work of the working together review. I place on record my thanks to those who were involved in that work, particularly the chair, our former colleague Jim Mather. All those who served in Parliament with Jim will testify to the energy that he brings to any task. It is clear that that has been the case with the working together review, and it is great to see him continuing to contribute to public life in Scotland.

I particularly welcome the term “working together”, which forms the review’s title. That sense of working together should typify the co-operative industrial relations that we should strive for. I believe that the Government has a good record in that regard and note that it has styled this as a debate about progressive workplace

policies. However, I look forward to a time when we view the values that are expressed in the motion, which talks about

“capacity building, dialogue, shared commitment and real opportunities for unions, employees and employers to work together”,

not as progressive but merely as standard practice.

Rob Gibson was correct to identify other parts of Europe where that model is used far more than is the case in the United Kingdom. Germany, which is Europe’s biggest economy, meets that co-operative model far better than anyone else, and anyone who suggests that that approach, which sees better trade union recognition, stymies economic activity need only look to that example to see why they are wrong. That practice should not be viewed as progressive per se; rather, that practice, which is not the normal practice of other countries, is what we should aim for.

I mentioned the Scottish Government’s track record. Its employment policies are pretty good, as are its relations with its workforce. It has policies on no compulsory redundancies and paying the living wage for all its employees, which covers 180,000 people working for the Scottish Government, its agencies and the national health service. We know that the new wage rate will apply from next year—that has been set out in the budget.

We also know that the Scottish Government has good industrial relations with the unions. We saw that when the Fire Brigades Union in England and Wales went on strike due to the UK Administration’s attitude during discussions and dialogue about the union’s concerns about pension changes, while the FBU in Scotland did not go on strike due to the good dialogue that was taking place with the Scottish Government.

We also saw that when Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, instructed UK Government departments to review the provision of trade union check-off facilities—the arrangements by which trade union subscriptions are collected directly from salaries—John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, explicitly ruled out that approach. That position was welcomed by Lynn Henderson, the Public and Commercial Services Union’s Scottish secretary, who said that John Swinney

“by not following this lead has demonstrated to tens of thousands of PCS members and hundreds of thousands of trade union members throughout Scotland that the Scottish Government refuses to impose vindictive Tory ideology on organised workers and trade unions.”

Of course, unlike Westminster, the Scottish Government has not reduced trade union facility time.

The Scottish Government is acting in a manner in which I want to see all employers in Scotland act as a bare minimum.

We also have the Scottish Government’s work to promote the living wage elsewhere. It is funding the Poverty Alliance to deliver a living wage accreditation scheme to promote the living wage and increase the number of private companies across Scotland that pay it. However, I want us to go further. The expert working group on welfare suggested that the minimum wage should be raised to the level of the living wage. The Scottish Government is sympathetic to that outlook. We have now moved to a process of further devolution, so I hope that we see powers vested here in this Parliament and that the group’s recommendations will be looked at positively.

The Welfare Reform Committee and the Finance Committee are taking evidence on the matter. At yesterday’s Finance Committee, Professor Jim Gallagher, who advised Labour’s devolution commission, said that he was against the devolution of minimum wage powers. However, Professor David Bell told the Welfare Reform Committee that powers could be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Given that Westminster has been poor at acting to ensure that the minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, we should be able to legislate in that area.

I welcome a number of the working together review group’s key report recommendations: a new body to provide leadership on industrial relations, including the sharing of best practice; union involvement in implementing the recommendations for the commission for developing Scotland’s young workforce; legislation to ensure worker representation on the board of every public sector body; and the inclusion by public sector bodies of a section in their annual report on their approach to industrial relations.

I look forward not only to the establishment of the fair work convention and looking at the recommendations, but to us moving towards becoming a fair work society.

16:14

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I, too, thank those who took part in and produced the review, in particular, Jim Mather—someone we all know well. They have produced an important piece of work, which will enhance and improve the working environment for all involved.

In particular, the report highlights opportunities for innovation in the workplace; existing good

practice; the opportunity to promote collective bargaining, which is very important; workplace democracy; and diversity and equality. Equality is an important aspect. It includes the participation of women, which a number of members have mentioned.

As a former shop steward, I welcome the fair work convention. It is an exciting proposal. I fully agree with the STUC and others that the Scottish Government and the STUC should review the memorandum of understanding and seek ways to improve engagement between unions, the Government and agencies. I include in that not only the public sector but the private sector, which is important in certain aspects.

Alex Rowley touched on that when he mentioned care homes. A number of care homes are privately run and are not bound by legislation, as publicly run care homes are. It is important that we include the private sector and the third sector. The third sector is sometimes forgotten about but it, too, employs an awful lot of people. Therefore, I would like the memorandum of understanding to include not only the public sector but the private and third sectors.

I will concentrate my remarks on the involvement of young people. A number of members, such as Malcolm Chisholm and Jamie Hepburn, have touched on that.

The involvement of young people in the working environment is important, as is getting unions into schools and colleges. I think that members have had contact with the youth committee of the STUC. Certainly, I have arranged to meet it in my constituency. It is working hard to push forward the youth agenda.

The reason that I have picked youth involvement is that, if we think back just a couple of weeks, we will remember how the referendum engaged young people in schools, colleges and universities—basically, everywhere that we went. We should expand on the interest that they showed in that and in politics. I do not mean party politics, just the fact that young people were so open to talk about what was going to happen in the referendum and the Parliament and how it would affect their lives. We should capture that openness while there is still massive interest.

I would like what the review suggests to be implemented. I will quote from some of its recommendations. Recommendation 1 is:

“The Scottish Government should continue to support the development of union-led learning through Scottish Union Learning ... and its Development and Learning Funds and publicise the benefits of those. The Scottish Trades Union Congress ... Skills Development Scotland ... and the Scottish Funding Council”—

it is important that we not forget that those are working at the moment—should also be enhanced.

Recommendation 2 says:

“Training for union representatives (shop stewards; learning reps; health and safety reps) provided through further education colleges should be funded through a fee remission arrangement.”

Recommendation 5 says:

“The STUC/TUC Education in Scotland should work collaboratively with appropriate providers to develop a Union Leadership Development Programme to enhance the capacity of current and future union leaders.”

That is important. When I became a shop steward, it was simply because I was interested in what was happening on the shop floor and, whether it was a good thing or a bad thing, my peers elected me to be the shop steward. I did not get any training for it, so it is a great idea to introduce some form of training. I fully support that.

Those recommendations should be taken on board. I also suggest that young people's knowledge of, and involvement in, trade unions would be greatly enhanced if the review's recommendations could be included where appropriate in the curriculum for excellence. I know that that is not the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment, but perhaps she could raise it with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. It would be interesting to young people in our schools.

Jenny Marra: I am sure that the member is aware that the STUC is undertaking a programme of visiting schools across Scotland and allowing senior pupils to engage with the values and work of the trade unions. Does she agree that that is an important programme?

Sandra White: I certainly do. The STUC has a teaching resource pack called “A Better Way to Work in Scotland”, which is being used in secondary schools. I think that the STUC's programme is a great idea. We sometimes concentrate too much on the fact that young kids in schools have to get qualifications so that they can go out to work, but if they can understand how trade unions work and how they can enhance their workplace and their working life, that can only be for the good.

I think that the working together review is a great report and I look forward to its recommendations being taken on board.

16:20

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this afternoon's debate on progressive workplace

policies and how they are used to boost productivity, growth and jobs. I also welcome the publication of the working together review group's report and the chance that the debate gives us to scrutinise, expand on and express our support for the recommendations in it.

For me, employment is a key part of who we are—our personal identity. Whenever we meet someone new, one of the first questions that we ask is often, "What do you do?" or "Where do you work?" With that in mind, it is important that we take pride in our work and who we work for. A large part of that is to do with how valued we feel by our employers.

That is why the issues that the report addresses are so crucial. If they are implemented properly, progressive workplace policies give people that sense of being valued and create in them a sense of pride in their work that cannot be bought. That sense of being valued leads to a happier and healthier workforce, a workforce that has less sickness absence and is more productive, and one that boosts growth for the company and the country.

That means that it is right that the Government should be taking a lead on issues such as tackling low pay, equal pay, zero-hours contracts, blacklisting and the living wage in public procurement. Blacklisting is still an issue while companies that have operated blacklists are awarded multimillion pound contracts from local government, the national health service and hubcos. The companies that have been involved in that practice have pushed people into poverty and despair and have wiped out a lifetime of working experience, all because the workers in question stood up for their fellow workers. Those companies have yet to issue an apology for how they operated and have yet to agree on any compensation. We should question why they continue to win public contracts when those issues are unresolved. I look forward to the publication of the Government's guidance, which I hope will give public bodies more power and confidence in taking a stand against blacklisting when they procure goods and services.

A positive relationship between trade unions and employers is key to developing the right policies in a particular workplace and, as a number of members have said, it is important that we talk to young people who are entering or who are just about to enter employment about the importance of being a trade union member.

In recommendation 13, the report says:

"The Scottish Government, local authorities and the STUC should engage appropriately to expand the reach of the Determined To Succeed/Better Way To Work—Unions into Schools and Colleges initiative and should ensure that unions are fully involved at strategic and operational level in

the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce."

I was able to take part in one of those unions-into-schools sessions in my old school in Cumbernauld to give my perspective on why it is important to be a trade union member, and I would gladly take part in such an event again. Most of the pupils we spoke to did not have a sense of why they would join a union. Although many of them knew that their parents were members, they did not know what they got from being in a union. From the right-wing press, they had the idea that trade unions went on strike when they felt like it and caused unnecessary disruption.

They did not know about the rights that they had or would have at work—even the pupils who worked part time. They did not know that there is a minimum wage for 16 to 17-year-olds; that young workers are entitled to a 30-minute break if they work for more than four and a half hours; that young people have the right to time off to go to college or to do training; and that they have the right to time off to do exams.

They were quite surprised by the things that are in place to protect and support them—the policies that are in place because of trade union campaigns. When I asked them what they would do if they were in work and their boss asked them to work late when they had to go to school the next day, what they would do if their boss asked them to come in on the day before they had an exam, or what they would do if their boss asked them to work continuously for a six, seven or eight-hour shift, most of them said that they would probably have no option other than to do what their boss told them to do.

That is when the importance of joining a trade union became clear. That became clear when the pupils realised that they needed the strength of their fellow workers to ensure that they were confident enough to demand what they were entitled to.

That highlights that, when it comes to the progressive workplace policies that we all want, unless workers are aware of their own strength through membership of a trade union, all the progressive workforce policies in the world can be meaningless.

I hope in particular that the Government takes forward the working group's recommendation on union learning in schools to continue the generations of pupils who leave school and become active in their trade unions.

16:26

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): The working together review, which we have been debating, is an important contribution to the wider

debate about the kind of society that we want to build in Scotland. It compels us to consider what kind of Scotland we wish to see and to ask, in doing so, what kind of Scotland is possible both economically and socially.

That question is in part answered by the recommendations in the review, which signpost us to what better workplace conditions should look like through the promotion of practices such as collective bargaining, workplace democracy, respect for diversity and equality, and the participation of women on equal terms with men in the workforce. My colleague Sandra White made that point. I was pleased that five of the eight members of the review group, which was chaired by Jim Mather, were women. That sends out its own positive message.

One of the key themes of the review was developing capacity and capability in industrial relations. The use of the term “industrial relations” rather than “employment relations” is about more than semantics; it is about defining an employee-employer relationship that is soundly based on genuine dialogue and partnership working for the benefit of both employees and employers.

The background, of course, is that the UK’s record on industrial relations is not good. The UK has the lowest level of industrial democracy among 28 European Union countries; only Lithuania is worse. That is measured by the European participation index, which looks at board-level representation, collective bargaining participation and trade union membership.

One illustration of the lack of good industrial relations is the absence of a strong employee voice in our companies’ boardrooms. That stands in stark contrast to the experience in other countries, most notably Denmark and Germany. Rob Gibson spoke about Volkswagen as a model of good practice, of course.

Denying workers democratic power in the workplace has gone hand in hand with a deterioration in the quality of working life that has been experienced by people in the United Kingdom. The UK has the second-lowest pay among advanced economies, the third-longest working hours in Europe and a lack of job security among workers compared with that of workers in many other countries. Strengthening the democratic voice of employees and embedding that in the structures of companies can bring positive benefits, such as the improved productivity and innovation that the cabinet secretary spoke about earlier.

Gordon MacDonald spoke about democratic participation in the workplace. One way in which we can develop capacity and capability in industrial relations is by developing board-level

representation for employees. That issue was highlighted in a report published by the Jimmy Reid Foundation entitled “Working Together: A vision for industrial democracy in a Common Weal economy”, which was co-authored by John Duffy, Gregor Gall and Jim Mather. It states:

“Board-Level ... Representation should begin at companies with 35 employees or more. All board representatives, employee and shareholder, should have equal rights and access to information.”

It suggests:

“One employee representative should be delegated by the recognised trade union, one should be ... from the Works Council”—

where that is appropriate—

“and the rest should be directly elected by all employees.”

The report goes on to advocate a co-operative rather than a coercive approach to fostering that form of industrial democracy. It states:

“We believe a model of this sort is beneficial for both employees and employers. However, we believe that a national consensus should be sought so implementation has the widest possible support from all sectors. We therefore propose a large, inclusive process ... to secure that support from both sides in industrial relations.”

I believe that that is the correct approach and one that we should support.

Ken Macintosh: Mr Eadie clearly welcomes the recommendations of the working together review. However, following Chic Brodie’s remarks, I am slightly unclear whether the SNP supports the implementation of all 30 recommendations. Is that Mr Eadie’s understanding of the SNP’s position?

Jim Eadie: I do not speak for the Government, but there would be no point in commissioning such a piece of work and not taking seriously the recommendations. Therefore, I would expect the Government to take forward as many of the recommendations as is practicable.

On the subject of the review’s recommendations, I welcome those on union-led learning, training for union representatives and the development of equality and environmental representatives in public sector workplaces. I also welcome the recommendation on a union leadership development programme, which members have referred to and which would enhance the capacity of current and future union leaders.

The review group made a number of recommendations on ways of supporting fair employment. It is critical that there is a recognition of the legitimate role of trade unions in workplaces and in wider civil society. Malcolm Chisholm spoke of the extensive partnership working that has been developed in NHS Scotland. Alex Rowley spoke about the home care sector. At paragraph 4.3.3,

the review group report refers to Unison's ethical care charter, which I think is a positive way forward in that it commits authorities to buying home care services only from providers that pay the living wage.

Chic Brodie spoke about the need for good process and communication and Liam McArthur said that the most consistently successful economies and companies are those that adopt good progressive workplace policies. Jamie Hepburn, in what was an excellent speech, expressed his aspiration that the co-operative approach to industrial relations would in time be seen not as progressive but as the norm, as it already is in much of Europe. Jenny Marra spoke eloquently about the role of trade unions.

The report said that much of the issue turns on "the quality of the union-management relationship".

Although that statement may appear axiomatic, it is in contrast to relevant direct experience in Scotland at Grangemouth and at shipyards in Govan, Scotstoun and Fife. For me, that is why we need a co-operative form of industrial relations and why I fully support the review group and the work that it has done.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches.

16:33

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): The debate has been worth while. I start by striking a note of consensus, as it seems to be approved by all parties that we should thank Jim Mather for his work on the report. Having shadowed him for four years in the previous session of Parliament, I know that he is always worth listening to, whether or not one agrees with him. I do not agree with all the conclusions of the report, but the individuals who were pulled together to produce it are beyond reproach and of high calibre. They, too, ought to be thanked for their work.

One of the most interesting points about the debate has been that the Scottish Government still does not seem to have a position on the review. We are in the unusual situation of the Labour Party having a rock-solid and clear policy position while the Scottish National Party appears to be all at sea.

We heard almost nothing from the cabinet secretary about the Scottish Government's response to the 30 recommendations. We heard some fairly rebellious statements from SNP back benchers—some went so far as to say that they agreed with only most of the report and one even dared to say that he does not speak for the Government when he speaks in a debate in the chamber.

Chic Brodie: For clarity, I said that I agree with most of the report, and I agree with all of it. I said that it could be extended to those who do not have union representation. As Jim Eadie said, there are companies with more than 35 employees where employees might not be trade union members. We do not want a division in society.

Gavin Brown: Presiding Officer, if you understand where Chic Brodie stands on the issue, you are a better man than I am. It is no wonder that he describes himself as a "company troubleshooter/doctor"—that is an exciting title if ever there was one.

It is important that, in the cabinet secretary's closing speech, we hear where the Government stands on the issues, because people—including me—were a little sceptical about the review's timing. It was set up in advance of the referendum, and we know that the review's members were pressed quite firmly to ensure that the report came out in August, ahead of the referendum. In his foreword, Mr Mather said that it had to be done in a short timescale. The fact that the members were forced to report in a short timescale but almost nothing has been done with the report in the three months since it was published has made cynics such as me a little more sceptical about the report's timing.

Angela Constance: Will Mr Brown address the UK Government's failed Carr report? The Mather commission and the Carr review were established around the same time last year. However, the Carr review made no recommendations because of the pejorative and ideological approach of the UK Government, which wanted to set up a review that was all about kicking trade unions.

Gavin Brown: I have to say that that is a typical intervention from the Scottish Government. The cabinet secretary completely ignores her report and any criticism of what her Government is responsible for and tries to deflect all the attention on to somebody and something else. When she winds up, she should focus on the Scottish Government's report and what it intends to do with the responsibilities that it has.

My colleague Cameron Buchanan pointed out a number of responses to the review, but there are positive aspects to it as well. It is right that we learn from best practice, whether that is in a workplace, an organisation or the country as a whole. The report makes a helpful note of what NHS Scotland has done over the past 10 years. It is difficult to disagree with recommendation 1, which says that the Government ought to continue to support the Scottish union learning fund. When I visited Aegon earlier this year, I was quite impressed by what I saw and thought that a pretty good job was being done.

The idea of having one minister to take responsibility for the issue is perfectly sensible, although I would include the caveat that it ought to be an existing minister, rather than a fresh appointment that increases the size of either the Cabinet or the ministerial team. To include the issue in the existing portfolio makes perfect sense. The idea of reviewing the memorandum of understanding regularly seems fair enough, too, as does the idea of improving data quality so that all of us have a better idea of the issues that face workplaces across Scotland.

Cameron Buchanan touched on the areas on which we have some disagreement with the conclusions. He suggested that, in some parts, the proposals could seem to be bureaucratic, which might well be true. For example, I question the value of forcing every workplace in the public sector and beyond to have an environmental representative who would have to have time off for training and whose training would cost money. The suggestion that industrial relations ought to be part of the procurement process has been with us for months and months, throughout the passage of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. The Scottish Government adopted a clear position on the issue, and I assume that that is one idea that it does not intend to take forward.

We could get bureaucratic if we started legislating on board representation for trade union members, and the idea of setting up a policy group specifically to increase the number of board members who have a trade union background also strikes me as a bit bureaucratic. There are cost demands, as my colleague Cameron Buchanan pointed out, whether they be for setting up an environmental workplace fund, an industrial relations modernisation fund or an industrial relations learning academy. Who would pay for all this? What would the cost be of each proposal? Would they all add value and do what we want, which is increasing productivity? That is what everyone in the chamber thinks is the most important thing to do.

There are positive aspects to the review, but there are other areas where we disagree with what has been proposed—hence the amendment in Cameron Buchanan's name.

16:40

Jenny Marra: Trade unions are a central part of Scotland's economic, social and civic landscape. With approximately 700,000 members in Scotland in 2013, unions are Scotland's largest civic movement, and we all know the vital role that they play in our communities.

As the review that we are debating states:

"By engaging at a national level, unions can positively influence wide-ranging social and environmental policies to encourage greater fairness and sustainability. Issues such as education, youth employment and climate change can be addressed in this manner."

It is the Scottish Government's role to maintain a clear dialogue with our trade unions to see the best results from such potential. That dialogue illustrates the essence of equality that must run through all progressive workplace policies if they are to be successful and sustainable.

Such constructive dialogue between our trade unions and the Scottish Government will also help to achieve some of the improvements that the working together review outlines in facilities, management of change, workplace learning and health and safety. By working together, employees, employers, unions and the Scottish Government can enrich civic society and drive the change towards progressive workplaces. As we have illustrated in the debate, with progressive workplaces comes a more equal society.

As Gavin Brown said, productivity is key to those workplaces, as is innovation. I was pleased to hear the departing First Minister touch on innovation in his opening speech for the business in Parliament conference, which took place last Friday in the chamber. The importance of innovation and productivity in our workplaces cannot be ignored. It is good for businesses, employees, employers and the job market.

I turn to some of the speeches that have been made in what has been an interesting and informed debate. I start with Liam McArthur, who highlighted how progressive workplace policies make for productive workplaces. He underlined better than any other speaker the importance of women's work to the economy and the need to focus unremittingly on skills. He and I share that interest.

Liam McArthur was right to highlight the cuts to college budgets. We know that there are 140,000 fewer college places than there were when the Government came to power, but the skills and workplaces that we are talking about mean that colleges should be the powerhouses of the modern industrial economy. Liam McArthur is right to point to that important issue. As I have said to the cabinet secretary on many occasions, the college cuts have disproportionately affected women, older workers and part-time courses for people returning to the workplace. It would be foolish of us to talk about progressive workplace policies but not to talk about opportunities for the skills and training that underpin those progressive workplaces.

On equality, Liam McArthur was right to point out the Government's recent appointments to college regional boards. I think that I am right in

saying that 10 out of the 12 college chair appointments were men and just two were women. That indicates the Scottish Government's commitment to gender equality. I hope that when we hear the response to the review in January we will hear more commitment.

Alex Rowley gave an interesting and good speech. He welcomed the fair work convention, as I did—every Labour member does. He suggested having timescales for the report's recommendations, which was a good point. Some of the recommendations could be implemented fairly quickly. All 30 could be implemented now, as the power is in the Government's hands. Angela Constance said that there will be a response at the start of next year. Alex Rowley was right to point out that he expects a timetable to be part of that response. I hope that the cabinet secretary can commit to that in her closing remarks.

Sandra White made an interesting speech. I always enjoy listening to her contributions in the chamber. She mentioned her own valuable experience of being elected as a shop steward—probably because of her innate passion and commitment to what was going on in the workplace and to her fellow workers—but having no specific training for the role. I see that at my surgeries, where trade union reps have told me that they feel that they need more training from their unions to represent their members properly. Sandra White was right to point out that training is key. Properly trained union representatives in our workplaces make life better for employees and employers and contribute to the success of our public services and businesses.

Malcolm Chisholm made an eloquent contribution, as always, in which he highlighted the issues of bullying in the workplace. I think that he was the only speaker to highlight that, but I hope and am sure that the cabinet secretary will reflect on that important issue as she develops the recommendations.

Malcolm Chisholm highlighted the work that the Labour Administration did when we were in government here on worker representation on NHS boards. In retrospect, it seems that that initiative is perhaps a bit overdue for being extended to other public sector bodies. That is recommendation 24. I certainly hope that, if the Government is not committing to all the recommendations, it will commit to that one.

That brings me to the point. How many of the 30 recommendations will the Scottish Government sign up to? Will we have to wait until January to hear about that? It would be useful if the cabinet secretary addressed the recommendations this afternoon.

The Government's announcement of a fair work convention is welcome. However, I sound a note of caution: it cannot be just a talking shop. For all the warmth that the Government has shown the review today, it came up short when it was asked to vote for the living wage in public sector contracts and to use procurement to bolster supported businesses just two weeks ago.

Although the Christie commission report was lauded by the SNP, it is, by and large, getting dusty on the shelf. There has been no major reform to public service since it was published in 2011, when the SNP Government welcomed it. The SNP has not shown any focus of great intensity on the preventative agenda, which the Christie commission recommended and which, in the long term, would save money.

The test for the working together review and for the fair work convention, as for the Christie report, is how willing the Government is to drive policy, make change happen and legislate when that is necessary. Cosy consensus in the chamber is all very well, and the majority in the Parliament stand four square behind the review and the Government motion, but the proof, as always, will be in whether we can make the change happen in our communities and our workplaces. The will to drive that change is largely in the Scottish Government's hands. Labour members are delighted to support the review, its recommendations and the Government motion.

16:49

Angela Constance: I once again put on record my thanks to Jim Mather and each and every one of the members of the working together review commission. It had 50:50 representation between employers and trade unions, the employers on it were evenly split between the public and private sector and it even had 50:50 representation between men and women. That is certainly a marker for the way to go in the future.

Like Liam McArthur, I am always very impressed by Mr Mather's reading list, although he will appreciate that, as a busy working mother, I enjoy listening to Mr Mather but rarely get the opportunity to read the books that he has the time to read.

This debate is an important part of the Scottish Government's engagement process. It is important that members across the chamber get an opportunity to identify their own options and ideas and are able to shape and influence the Government's response.

As requested by members, I will speak in a bit more detail about our response. It is important that we work together to build consensus. This afternoon has indeed mostly been constructive

and consensual, although I have to say that I was somewhat stunned at the beginning of the debate by some of Mr Buchanan's comments. I was also somewhat surprised that, at one point during proceedings, he fell asleep. A comment that I was particularly surprised by was that the Scottish Government is "forcing" the advancement of trade unionism. That, to me, sounded like a comment from a different era. I will leave Mr Buchanan with this quotation from Joseph Stiglitz:

"unions ... are vilified, and in many states there are explicit attempts to undermine them, but there is no recognition of the important role that they can play in countervailing other special interests and in defending the basic social protections that are necessary if workers are to accept change and to adjust to the changing economic environment."

The Government, like most MSPs in the chamber, is very much in favour of effective trade unionism and fair employment practice, not just because it is the right thing to do but because it is the smart thing to do for the sake of our economy.

It will not come as any surprise to Mr Buchanan that I will not be supporting the Tory amendment, because it fails to welcome the working together review. Also, crucially, it fails to endorse the establishment of a fair work convention. This Government's view is that economic competitiveness goes hand in hand with social justice and that there is indeed a direct connection between well-rewarded and sustainable employment, productivity and innovation and economic growth.

It was Grahame Smith who described the working together review as one of the most important pieces of work that he had been involved in, and I concur with that, but it was Bob Doris who got to the heart of the matter—it is about social partnership. It is about the Government, employers and trade unions working together. It is not for the Government to be prescriptive about the model of social partnership at this stage, but it is imperative that we work together—the Government, trade unionists and employers large and small, from all sectors, to devise our own system of social partnership here in Scotland.

Surely there is a compelling case for collectively working together and in common cause to ensure that we get that quality and productive dialogue between the Government, employers and trade unions.

I say to Alex Rowley, Jenny Marra, Malcolm Chisholm and indeed Mr Brown that the Government will give its final response in January and of course we will be mapping out the way forward—they can call it a timetable if they wish.

There is no recommendation in the report that I am averse to and I welcome people's recognition

that we have made quick progress with the announcement that we will establish a fair work convention. We have to recognise that many of the requirements need further discussion with both employers and trade union colleagues. I will give one recommendation that it is not for me to give a view on. Whether there is a single minister in charge of industrial relations is entirely a matter for the new First Minister.

Jenny Marra and other members spoke about the importance of productivity in Scotland, which has increased from 94 per cent of UK levels in 2007 to 101 per cent in 2012. [*Interruption.*] There is progress—we are moving in the right direction.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): One moment, cabinet secretary. There is far too much noise from members who are coming into the chamber. Please extend the cabinet secretary the courtesy of listening.

Angela Constance: It is important to emphasise that productivity levels in Scotland are moving in the right direction and that we are making progress. Of course there is much more to do, and that is why the working together review and the fair work convention will help to make further improvements.

Rob Gibson and Malcolm Chisholm enlivened the debate with some pragmatic case examples from their constituencies and experiences. Malcolm Chisholm is right to highlight the importance and effectiveness of the NHS governance models, with employee representatives as directors on the board. The Government is certainly looking seriously at that, so that we can see how that good practice could be extended elsewhere.

Jim Eadie spoke about what kind of Scotland we want to be. Many members, Gordon MacDonald in particular, mentioned the Smith commission and the desire to have more powers for the Parliament. Although I will not speculate about the outcomes of the Smith commission—all parties are participating in that process productively and maturely—it is important to highlight the survey that was undertaken by the Poverty Alliance. In particular, 91.5 per cent of respondents felt that Scotland should have the power to set and enforce the national minimum wage.

I call on all parties—as the Deputy First Minister did earlier this week—to commit to supporting the very positive proposals that have come from the major charities and third sector organisations, to get in line with civic Scotland and to recognise the importance of this place having the power to make recommendations regarding the national minimum wage.

Ken Macintosh was right: the cost of living has rocketed, wages have stagnated and in-work

poverty is very much the issue of today. It is simply not acceptable for folk to have to work for their poverty.

If I may encapsulate the aims of the fair work convention, they are to exert greater Scottish influence over the minimum wage; to champion good industrial relations, including payment of the living wage as the expectation, not the exception; to be a powerful advocate of the partnership approach that characterises industrial relations in Scotland at their best; and to highlight the fact that business productivity goes hand in hand with proper pay, with decent pay and with fair and equal pay.

My hope for the future is that the fair work convention, and indeed the Parliament, will most certainly not be talking shops but will be organisations with teeth and with the power to implement.

Mark Griffin spoke about how work is part of our identity. It is part of who and what we are. We must ensure that all our people are valued, rewarded and engaged in their work, and we must allow everyone to feel that they have a stake in the success of their workplace, their community and indeed their country. The Scottish Government is working to build that sort of economy and that sort of society.

After the energising process of the referendum, Scotland will never be the same—it will be a better place. We have the power to act, and when we as a Government have the power to act, we certainly do act to make a difference.

Jenny Marra: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is in the final 30 seconds of her speech.

Angela Constance: I hope that all members, as they have intimated today, will get behind the fair work convention and will ensure that it will make a difference to the working lives of people the length and breadth of Scotland.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-11507.1, in the name of Cameron Buchanan, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11507, in the name of Angela Constance, on progressive workplace policies, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)

Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 11, Against 93, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11507, in the name of Angela Constance, on progressive workplace policies, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)

McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 93, Against 11, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the report of the Working Together Review Group; recognises that well-rewarded and sustained employment, progressive workplace policies and innovation provide the best route out of poverty and the best way to tackle inequality and boost productivity; supports the review group's prioritisation of capacity building, dialogue, shared commitment and real opportunities for unions, employees and employers to work together, and endorses the decision to establish a fair work convention.

Meeting closed at 17:02.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

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