

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 13 May 1999
(*Afternoon*)

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 13 May 1999

(Afternoon)

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:31*]

First Minister

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): This afternoon's business will be devoted to the selection of the nominee for appointment as First Minister. Business is scheduled to be completed by 5.30 pm. If it is not completed by then, the standing orders allow the meeting to continue so that we can complete the selection process. However, if business is completed before 5.30 pm, I shall close the meeting.

The Scotland Act 1998 requires the Parliament to nominate one of its members for appointment by Her Majesty as First Minister. The selection of a nominee will be conducted in accordance with the provisions of rule 11.10 of the standing orders.

Before we begin the selection process, you may find it helpful if I outline the voting process and explain how the electronic voting system works, as this will be the first time that you have used the system for parliamentary business.

To register a vote, you should insert your card in the console at the desk with the picture facing you, so that you can gaze at it with admiration all afternoon. Inserting the card will activate the voting and microphone systems. The red light on the console should go out when you insert the card. You are nothing without that piece of plastic—I cannot stress that enough. You can neither vote nor speak without it, so it is important that you have it. If any technical problems arise, rather than raising a point of order, please tell the clerks at the back of the chamber, who will be able to help you.

If you want to speak, you must press the white microphone button once. That indicates a request to speak on the screen on my desk. However, you cannot speak until called to do so—the white button does not activate the microphone. When you speak, you should stand. If members want to make a point of order, they should activate the white button and stand to call for a point of order. They can then speak when I call them to speak.

I shall now explain the voting process for this afternoon's selection of a nominee for appointment as First Minister. I have received four valid nominations for appointment as First Minister. They are, in alphabetical order:

Dennis Canavan
Donald Dewar
David McLetchie
Mr Alex Salmond

I shall shortly ask those members who wish to cast their vote for Dennis Canavan to do so. You should remember that there will be four rounds of voting. Members will have 30 seconds in which to cast their vote. Before the voting period, I shall invite each member to speak in support of his candidacy for up to two minutes. Once voting for all candidates has taken place, I will ask those members who have not voted, but who wish to record an abstention, to do so.

Members should vote only once, and should use only the yes button. If any member casts more than one yes vote, the votes will be treated as spoilt, and none of them will be counted.

Once the voting has been completed and the result verified, I shall announce the number of votes cast, the number of votes for each of the candidates and the number of abstentions. Any candidate who receives more votes than the total number of votes for all the other candidates in that round shall be selected as the Parliament's nominee. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, I shall announce that the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated from the process and that a further round of voting will be held for the remaining candidates. Members will again be able to vote yes for one of the candidates or to abstain.

I should remind members that, for the result to be valid, more than a quarter of all members—that is, at least 33 members—must have voted. That includes members who abstain. Members should also be aware that, if all the candidates in any round of voting receive the same number of votes, the rules provide that no candidate is selected. In that case, it would be necessary for me to adjourn the meeting to allow the timing for a new selection period to be determined.

I remind you that you can vote only once. Members wishing to record an abstention will have the chance to do so at the end of the voting.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I wish to raise a point of order about the time that has been allocated for each of the candidates' presentation.

You are aware that we were informed only a few moments ago that the time for presentations was to be restricted to two minutes. That runs counter to the information that we had this morning, when no time limit was to be imposed. I accept that you, as the Presiding Officer, and all the members would not want us to be here until the wee small hours; but I would have thought it appropriate to allow 10 minutes for each of the four candidates, which would amount to only 40 minutes. Given that yesterday we met all day and a lot of time was

taken up with manual voting, I am sure that it would be refreshing to have some political discussion and debate in the chamber. Therefore I respectfully request that you use your discretion to allow 10 minutes for each of the candidates to speak.

The Presiding Officer: I considered that matter this morning. I have to inform the Parliament that there was no agreement among the candidates as to what should happen. The standing orders are silent on the matter—there do not have to be any speeches.

Frankly, we are not engaged in a political debate this afternoon; we are engaged in an election. I do not have to allow any speeches at all. However, I have decided to allow each of the candidates to make a two-minute address. That seems to be a reasonable compromise in the circumstances. Some of the candidates were happier that we should proceed straight to the ballot, as we did yesterday.

I have already apologised for the fact that my decision to allow a two-minute address was not fully conveyed to you; I am sorry.

Tommy Sheridan: Mr Presiding Officer, I accept your apology for the fact that we were not informed earlier and I accept that you cannot be held responsible for everything. However, I have to object to the idea that this is not a political discussion. We are about to appoint the First Minister for Scotland. That is a very political appointment and surely all the candidates should have the right to present their cases to win the support of each and every MSP in this chamber. If possible, I would like to put it to the vote that each of the properly nominated candidates has 10 minutes in which to present his case. I do not know whether we can formally put it to the vote; I think that that would be at your discretion.

Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con)
rose—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Wallace, is your point of order on the same subject?

Ben Wallace: No, it is not.

The Presiding Officer: I will dispose of Mr Sheridan's point of order first. Does anyone else wish to speak on the same point?

All I can say is that I have a remarkably elastic watch, but it will not be elastic enough to stretch to 10 minutes. I trust that members will accept that ruling.

Ben Wallace: Is it not the case that this election—unlike your own, in which everybody knew who they were voting for—is being fixed? This election is forcing a number of members to vote blindly on an issue; they do not know the

principles or the outcome. Is it not also the case that Liberal Democrat MSPs are being forced to sell out Scottish students and people in schools? They are voting blindly, as they do not know the deal.

The Presiding Officer: One of the worst habits of the House of Commons in the past decade has been the bogus use of points of order. I propose to be very strict; points of argument are not points of order. Points of order are for the occupant of the chair; if we degenerate into the habit of using them as points of argument, we shall develop some of the worst habits of a place that some of us have been glad to leave. [*Applause.*]

We will proceed to the first round of voting. I call Dennis Canavan to speak to his nomination.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): First, I thank Tommy Sheridan and Robin Harper for proposing and seconding me. I also thank my constituents in Falkirk West and the voters throughout Central Scotland who supported me in the second ballot and helped to reinforce the message from the voters of Falkirk West. I find myself in the unique situation of having won a seat in the Parliament on both ballots, but it may come as some consolation to other members that I intend to take only one seat and register only one vote.

I am also unique in being the only member of the Parliament who is not a member of any party. In view of that fact, and in view of the fact that no party has an overall majority in the Parliament, there may be some advantage in our having a leader of the Administration who is a member with no vested interest in any party. [*Laughter.*] Members may laugh, but I could have brokered a better agreement than the shabby deal that the leader of the Scottish Labour party and the Liberal Democrats seem to have cobbled up behind closed doors. Part of the problem seems to be that somebody was pulling the strings down in London.

Take tuition fees, for example. The majority of members of this Parliament were elected on a clear commitment to abolish tuition fees; that commitment was given to the people of Scotland. Now there is to be a review—a review is just Westminster-speak for a fudge. We have just had a review—it was called an election. We, the people who want to abolish tuition fees, won the election. I would like to see the abolition of tuition fees combined with the restoration of student grants, particularly for students from low-income families.

I am against this review and this Lib-Lab pact, because we do not know what is in it apart from the fudge on tuition fees. We are being asked not just to elect a First Minister, but—if we vote for Donald Dewar—to buy a pig in a poke. When I went to the document office of the Parliament this

morning and asked what was in the Lib-Lab agreement, nobody could tell me.

I will say what I think should be in any cross-party agreement: we need more action on jobs, more action on public services and the retention and financing of public services without recourse to the private finance initiative. We need the restoration of a free education system throughout Scotland. We need to improve our national health service and ensure that it remains the property of the people, is accountable to the people and responds to the needs of the people. Above all, we need a First Minister for Scotland who will speak for Scotland instead of someone who will act as Tony Blair's puppet.

If members of the Scottish Parliament accord me the privilege of electing me as First Minister, I shall do my best to speak and act for Scotland and I shall fight, first and foremost, for the interests of the people of Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much indeed, and thank you for respecting the limits to my elastic watch.

Members who wish to cast their vote for Dennis Canavan should be ready to do so now. The system has been activated. You can press your yes button to vote. You may either vote yes or not vote at all. You have 30 seconds in which to cast your vote for Mr Canavan.

Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): On a point of order. Would it not be more common to hear all the speeches before the voting?

Members: Yes.

The Presiding Officer: For reasons connected with the electronics, I am afraid that we are limited in what we are able to do. There will otherwise be large gaps, but if you are prepared to accept large gaps, we can do as you suggest.

Mr Salmond: Having managed to raise the first successful point of order, I think that the democracy of the proceedings is more important than the gaps and I therefore ask that the voting be done that way.

The Presiding Officer: The point is that, under the standing orders, each election is a separate one. The election is for Mr Canavan or against him. That is the way it is set out. I am sorry, but I am bound by the standing orders and that is how they instruct us to proceed. It is not a competitive election among four candidates.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order. There is a provision in the standing orders that, if the electronic system is not satisfactory for the vote, voting can be conducted by normal ballot. I request that you consider that option.

The Presiding Officer: That is a very interesting suggestion, which I might adopt, although I would prefer to stick to the mechanical method of voting.

If it is the will of the Parliament that we should hear all four candidates first, I am quite happy to arrange for that. [MEMBERS: "Yes."]

If I may reveal a confidence, I hope that the Procedures Committee will look at the standing orders as soon as possible, because yesterday's proceedings and today's are governed by the standing orders that have been handed down to us.

In the circumstances, we shall cancel the vote for the moment.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order. I propose that there be a vote as to whether the standing orders are approved. Without the standing orders being approved, it is open to members to decide whether or not we follow the points of order made by Mr Salmond and Michael Russell before proceeding to vote in the way that you have suggested.

The Presiding Officer: The standing orders are laid down in statute and we have to go through the appointment of a Procedures Committee, which will revise them and come back to the Parliament. I am afraid that we are all in the same position. However, I shall do my best, within the standing orders, to meet the wishes of members. They have expressed a wish to hear all four candidates before voting and, since it was my decision that there should be speeches, I think that that is quite reasonable.

Tommy Sheridan: There are standing orders and there is common sense. I thought that everybody had consented to hearing all four candidates.

The Presiding Officer: I have just agreed to that.

Tommy Sheridan: Members on this side of the chamber hope that, once people have heard Dennis speak, they will agree to vote for him.

The Presiding Officer: All right. Let us proceed to the next speaker in alphabetical order: Donald Dewar. The floor is yours.

Donald Dewar (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): All my political life, I have worked with others to achieve this Parliament. Many of my allies and many colleagues in that cause are here today.

I am proud of what we have done, and I am proud of what Scotland has done. Scotland's Parliament is no longer a political pamphlet, a campaign trail or a waving flag. It is here; it is real.

We are indeed a country with a past. The past has shaped us, but our task now is to shape the future. I hope that we can all co-operate to do that.

We need a Government that can deliver the priorities and the hopes of the people, which were defined by the votes cast last week in the elections to this Parliament and by the popular will that carried the referendum—the popular will on which the authority of this Parliament itself is built.

Each of us is privileged to serve as a member of this Parliament. I would very much like to serve Scotland as First Minister. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much. The next candidate is David McLetchie. The floor is yours.

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): I am well aware that, unless there is a sudden, widespread and highly unlikely outbreak of common sense, my candidacy for First Minister will not succeed this afternoon. However, I will lay down two important and symbolic markers for this Parliament and for my party.

First, my candidacy will symbolise our determination to be a constructive Opposition in the Parliament, working to make it a success for Scotland in the context of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Conservatives are the unionist alternative to the Lib-Lab Government that has been stitched up behind the backs of the voters, just as, time and again during the election campaign, we predicted.

With respect to the singular achievements of three individual members of the Parliament, as from today Scotland no longer has a four-party system; rather, it has a three-party system. The fortunes of Labour and of the Liberal Democrats are inextricably linked, and are on the wane. We should thank Mr Dewar and Mr Wallace for this simplification, but it comes with a hefty price tag: the second deception and betrayal of our young people and their families—this time by the Liberal Democrats—and the continuation of Labour's £3,000 tax on learning. Others may bend out of self-interest, but we are resolute in our determination to bring the matter of tuition fees to this chamber at the earliest opportunity and to see them abolished in Scotland.

The second principle that I wish to affirm by standing for this office is the determination of the Scottish Conservatives to be not just a parliamentary party in Scotland, but a party which aspires to government in Scotland again. Today, our ambition will almost certainly not be fulfilled, but it is a goal which I am determined we will one day achieve. It is with great pride that, as the first in my party to do so, I submit my candidacy for this office to this Parliament. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Alex Salmond.

Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I am making the fourth speech, and that rather makes the point that this is a Parliament of minorities—some are bigger than others, but none the less it is a Parliament of minorities. After last week's vote, it was said to me that seven out of 10 people had not voted for the Scottish National party. That is true, but six out of 10 people did not vote for the Labour party. In the second vote the figure was two out of three. Incidentally, that was the lowest Labour vote in Scotland since 1931.

There are majority positions in the platform that we put forward. There is a majority in this Parliament, on a free vote, to abolish tuition fees and to restore support to students from low-income families. It would be a dreadful start for this new Parliament if that majority was somehow frustrated by some deal that has been done behind the scenes. Mr Canavan said that we should all know about the deal. What concerns me even more is that some Liberal members may not know the full extent of the deal. For the Parliament's sake, it would be a bad start if that majority position, for which people voted last week, was frustrated this week. We should vote to allow the majority will to prevail, and, to me, tuition fees are non-negotiable.

There is a degree of concern about the threat that the private finance initiative poses to vital public services such as health and education. That concern extends outwith the SNP and into the ranks of other parties in this Parliament. That concern, and the support in this Parliament for the proper funding of public services, should be reflected. As a candidate for First Minister, I would like to reflect it.

After last week's local elections, there is mounting concern—perhaps majority concern in this Parliament—about why there is not proportional representation for local government in Scotland. I would like to see that reflected in the way in which an Administration pursues its policies in Scotland.

On some minority issues, such as giving people in Scotland the right to vote for national freedom and independence, we hope to build a majority. However, over and above those individual issues there is an overriding one that should be part and parcel of the hopes of every member of this chamber; that whoever is elected should be Scotland's First Minister and not play second fiddle to forces in London, whether that be the Prime Minister or his press secretary, who seemed to take such an interest in the negotiations that were going on.

Mr Dewar said that whoever is elected First Minister should be Scotland's servant. I very much

agree with that, but whoever is nominated for appointment as First Minister by this chamber should also be Scotland's voice, and I am proud to put my nomination forward. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much.

I ask for members' patience while we deal with the new system of voting, with which we are all unfamiliar. The voting will be in alphabetical sequence for the four candidates: that is, Dennis Canavan, Donald Dewar, David McLetchie and Mr Alex Salmond. They have been nominated for selection as the Parliament's nominee for appointment as the First Minister.

The first vote is for Dennis Canavan. Those who wish to vote for him have 30 seconds in which to press the yes button on the console.

Members voted.

14:56

The Presiding Officer: The time for voting is concluded. We must allow a pause for the vote to be registered.

Those who wish to vote for Donald Dewar have 30 seconds in which to do so and should press the yes button on the console now.

Members voted.

14:58

The Presiding Officer: The voting is closed.

The next vote is for David McLetchie. Those who wish to vote for him should do so by pressing the yes button now.

Members voted.

14:59

The Presiding Officer: The voting time is concluded.

Those who wish to vote for Mr Alex Salmond should be ready to do so. Members have 30 seconds in which to vote. They should press the yes button now.

Members voted.

15:00

The Presiding Officer: The time for voting is concluded.

Apparently someone has pressed the wrong button. [*Laughter.*] In time we shall all know how to correct a mistake, but given that we do not yet understand how to do that, that vote will be cancelled. I was not going to identify anybody, Dr Ewing. [*Laughter.*] The mother of the Parliament

should be allowed a little leeway, so we shall take that vote again.

Members who wish to vote for Mr Alex Salmond should press the yes button now.

Members voted.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members and, indeed, visitors in the gallery, that all electronic equipment should be switched off—we have enough trouble with our own.

15:01

The time for voting is over.

That concludes voting for all the candidates, but any members who have not voted and who wish to record an abstention can do so now by pressing the yes button.

Members who wish to record an abstention should press the yes button now.

Dennis Canavan: On a point of order, Mr Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: I cannot take a point of order during a vote, but I shall do so in a second.

15:02

The time for voting is closed.

Dennis Canavan: On a point of order, Mr Presiding Officer. There is an abstain button on the console; for future reference, will you advise us whether to press yes if we want to abstain, or to press abstain if we want to abstain?

The Presiding Officer: I can assure you that in debates on other issues, the abstain button will mean abstain. In this particular case, the yes button is being used as a way of recording a vote. I did not invent the system. [*Laughter.*] I ask members to be patient; we have to wait because we must check the electronic lists, to ensure that nobody has cast more than one vote.

The number of votes cast is as follows:

Dennis Canavan	3
Donald Dewar	71
David McLetchie	17
Mr Alex Salmond	35

VOTES FOR DENNIS CANAVAN

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

VOTES FOR DONALD DEWAR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Dewar, Donald (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Ms Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Ms Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Ian (Ayr) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

VOTES FOR DAVID McLETCHE

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Mr Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

VOTES FOR MR ALEX SALMOND

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: As the result is valid, and as Donald Dewar received more votes than the total number of votes for all the other candidates, I declare that he is selected as the Parliament's nominee for appointment as the First Minister. *[Applause.]*

As required by section 46(4) of the Scotland Act 1998, I shall now recommend to Her Majesty that she appoint Donald Dewar as the First Minister.

Donald Dewar: I would like to thank all my

colleagues—I use that term to encompass the whole chamber—for their support.

It is a great privilege—there is no misunderstanding that—to have placed upon me the leadership of the first Government of Scotland's new Parliament. It is a privilege that carries great responsibilities; I have no doubt about that. The people of Scotland look to us to use the Parliament to give them a better life and a better future. On that, we have common aims.

We have had great powers granted to us: powers to develop a world-class education system; powers to build a modern health service; powers to unlock opportunities and to bind communities that have been torn apart by deprivation and social pressures. I promise that I will work with those who will work with me to use those powers for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

We in this place have a particular role. This must be a Parliament of Scotland's people. We must look beyond the walls of this place to the people of Scotland. I pledge that I will lead a Government that will listen and respond to what the people of Scotland tell us. Co-operation is always possible where there are common aims and values, even though there may be great and dividing differences in other areas. I want to harness that potential good will, not just on behalf of this Parliament and those who have the privilege of serving in it, but on behalf of the people of Scotland.

Thank you.

[*Applause.*]

Mr Salmond: I would like to be the first to congratulate Donald on his elevation to the position of Scotland's first First Minister. It is no small thing to be the First Minister of Scotland in its first Administration for 300 years.

I have known Donald for a considerable time, usually on opposing ends of debates and arguments in television studios. One thing I can say is that although I know and hope that Donald will speak for Scotland, he will certainly eat for Scotland at every opportunity. At this juncture, I wish him well. He should not look so surprised—this is well meant. I wish the Administration well in terms of the policies it wants to pursue; as yet, I do not know what the full terms of the Administration are, and I suspect that a number of people are waiting to ask the same question.

I would like to say a few words about the nature of opposition. There has been some debate about how we can have the new consensus politics and still have vigorous debate. I suggest that we can have both. Those of us who have served in Westminster know full well what people mean

when they talk about yah-boo reflex reaction politics. It is possible for us to avoid that in this new chamber. Therefore, as Leader of the Opposition, let me say that when the Administration proposes things that we think are in the interests of the Scottish people, we will not criticise for the sake of it. However, there will still be substantial issues—some of which Mr Canavan and I outlined a little earlier—that will provoke real political debate. That is necessary and part and parcel of any democratic chamber.

In congratulating Donald today, I dedicate my party to being an innovative and determined Opposition. In many ways, such an Opposition is every bit as important to a new democracy as the Administration itself.

David McLetchie: On behalf of the Conservative party, I offer my congratulations to Donald Dewar on being the Parliament's nominee to Her Majesty the Queen for appointment as Scotland's First Minister. It is a great personal achievement on Donald's part and a great culmination to his career. On a personal level, I wish him fulfilment, added short-term lustre to a distinguished political career and, of course, a very happy retirement in 2003.

The Presiding Officer: I now call Mr Jim Wallace to speak.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Presiding Officer. Surely at this point you should take speeches from the party leaders. Dennis Canavan has made his point and he stood in the election on behalf of his party—

The Presiding Officer: Please sit down, Mr Gallie. I have said that I will not take bogus points of order. We can have plenty of points of argument later on. Mr Wallace, the floor is yours.

Mr Jim Wallace (Orkney) (LD): On behalf of my party, I congratulate Donald Dewar on his nomination as the Parliament's First Minister. We all recognise that that is a very important and responsible role and I wish him every success in discharging its responsibilities.

Mr Dewar said that he looked forward to working closely with colleagues. Depending on what my colleagues and his colleagues decide—perhaps later today—that working relationship may be very close indeed. I hope that it will be, because I believe that many of the aims that Mr Dewar has set out are shared not only by his party and by my party, but by many others in the Parliament. I hope that, together, we will show that the Parliament can make a difference to the people of Scotland—a difference for the better. We will be judged on that over the coming four years.

Dennis Canavan: I, too, would like to congratulate Donald on his nomination. I trust that

he will have listened to and will reflect on some of the things that I said earlier, as well as consider what other members will say in the important months and years that lie ahead. Above all, I hope that, as the First Minister for Scotland, Donald will show that he is a firm believer in open democracy, rather than in doing deals with certain people at dead of night or early in the morning. I hope that he will treat all members of the Parliament as equals. He is *primus in paribus*. I hope that he will act as the spokesperson for Scotland, rather than as somebody else's spokesperson in Scotland.

Once upon a time, Donald said that I was not good enough to sit in the Scottish Parliament. In the years that lie ahead, I only hope that he proves himself good enough to be Scotland's First Minister. Despite the fact that we have had profound political disagreements in the past and, no doubt, will have more in the future, to show that I bear him no personal malice I would like to shake his hand. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Your gesture was appreciated, Dennis, but if you do it again I will rule you out of order, as it is out of order to cross the well of the chamber. [*Laughter.*]

Tommy Sheridan: I rise in the spirit of the consensual nature of the Parliament. Robin and I are representatives of small political parties, and it is only proper that I remind David McLetchie that, regardless of what he or members of the other three parties think of the Lib-Lab pact, a further two political parties are represented in this chamber. I hope that they will remember that in the future.

As the representative of a small party, I think that it is important to congratulate Mr Dewar on his nomination as First Minister. I hope that the consensus on raising the living standards of ordinary working men and women across Scotland that was expressed during the campaign will become the priority of this Parliament. As long as bills are introduced with that in mind, the Scottish Socialist party will be willing to support Donald. [*Applause.*]

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): As the very last member to be elected to this Parliament, and as the first Green ever to be elected to any Parliament in Britain, I wish to offer my unqualified congratulations to Donald Dewar on his nomination to this post, which he so richly deserves.

Phil Gallie: I wish to raise a point of order.

The Presiding Officer: I hope that it is a real one this time, Mr Gallie.

Phil Gallie: I seek your aid on a particular issue. It may have come to the attention of many members that mail deliveries from our

constituencies or regions cannot be made under a freepost system. We will be given mail facilities in Edinburgh, but not in our areas. I appeal to you, Mr Presiding Officer, to examine this issue and to see whether you can help members to address this wrong.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Gallie. That was a genuine point of order. Under our standing orders, each party leader has to notify me of the name of their party's representative on the Parliamentary Bureau, which will meet for the first time on Monday, and an item on that issue will be on the agenda.

Meeting closed at 15:17.

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