

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 6 September 2000  
(*Afternoon*)

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6 September 2000

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6 September 2000

## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 6 September 2000*

*(Afternoon)*

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** We welcome to lead our time for reflection today Rev Douglas Alexander, the minister emeritus of Bishopton.

**Rev Douglas N Alexander BD (Minister Emeritus, Bishopton):** Thank you, Sir David, for the honour of your invitation. I feel already that, as the telephone people would say, I am among friends—and family.

The island of Iona lies just up the west coast, as so many of you here know. The island is only about three miles long by one mile wide. Yet it has a special place, not only in the geography but in the history of our country. Famously, it has been said of the island of Iona that there was the birthplace of the Scottish nation, and the cradle of the Scottish Church.

Today, in this place, as this Parliament embarks on the voyage of its second full year, we can reflect for a moment on what was a well-established custom on Iona in the very early days. This custom was to do with the spreading of the good news—of the gospel.

Traditionally, a group of 12 would be sent out by coracle to sail the seas and go to distant lands. Twelve of a crew: note the symbolism of discipleship. The 12 were invariably made up of six pairs: two would be picked for their expertise in house-building; two would be chosen for their knowledge of crops and of sowing; two would be proficient in healing, in a primitive, early-medical sort of way; and, yes, two would be experts in the scriptures and in the ways of devotion and prayer. But they were only two out of the whole group of 12.

The result was that when the whole group arrived in some lonely village or some distant land, they brought good news: good news about better ways of building houses; good news about better ways of growing crops; good news about better ways of health; and, of course, good news about God and about tending to the life of the spirit.

It was a message of wholeness, and of holiness—for true holiness is always to do with wholeness: good news for all the people, in all

kinds of ways.

Good government and the gospel itself are first cousins, and always have been. So, as ever, public service is a high calling. May you be challenged by it, constantly.

Public service will mean that each of you recognise that, all together in this Parliament, you are all—sometimes—in the same boat. May you find the compassion to honour that.

At the start of the second year's journey, a prayer:

God of all goodness: make us masters of ourselves, that we may become the servants of others. God of all goodness, journey with us. Amen.

## Business Motion

### **The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):**

Before we come to our first item of business, I take this opportunity, on behalf of the whole Parliament, to welcome back in good health our First Minister. *[Applause.]*

The first item of business today is consideration of business motion S1M-1147, in the name of Tom McCabe, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out the business programme, and of two amendments to that motion.

14:36

**The Minister for Parliament (Mr Tom McCabe):** The business motion before Parliament today reflects decisions taken in the all-party Parliamentary Bureau. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that details of the discussions and the decisions taken in the bureau found their way into the media before the motion could be lodged. The Executive hears a lot from Opposition parties about the Executive giving Parliament its proper place. It seems that members of the Conservative party and the Scottish National Party conveniently forget that they also have obligations to this chamber.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I ask you to remind Mr McCabe that the Parliamentary Bureau is not an all-party bureau.

**Mr McCabe:** You will know better than I do, Presiding Officer, that, according to the standing orders of the Parliament, it is indeed an all-party bureau. It is unfortunate that, after a year's experience, Mr Sheridan has still not learned that.

The motion is straightforward, but I take this opportunity to clarify the position regarding the ministerial statement. I shall not, at this point, attempt to address the two amendments that have been lodged, but I shall respond to them after they have been moved.

Prior to the summer recess, the bureau indicated that the first day's business on resuming would be stage 3 consideration of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill. We altered that decision at the request of the Subordinate Legislation Committee, to allow members more time to consider that committee's report. Today, the Executive proposes a further change to the business motion to include a statement on the independent inquiry into the severe situation that has emerged in the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

This is the earliest opportunity for the Minister for Children and Education to explain the facts to

Parliament and to answer questions on what is undoubtedly a very serious situation. The initial Executive proposal for a 45-minute statement was based on experience to date of statements on extremely high-profile issues, such as section 2A, which took only 32 minutes. As far as I am aware, there has been only one occasion in the life of this Parliament on which a statement has lasted longer than 45 minutes. I have indicated to the Presiding Officer that, if he wishes to use his discretion to extend that time to call as many members as want to ask questions, neither the minister nor the Executive would have any objection.

Calls have been made for a debate at this time, but those calls are premature. Any debate should be informed by the facts that emerge from the independent inquiry into the SQA and the inquiry to be undertaken by this Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee. At this juncture, the most appropriate way to proceed is for the minister to offer Parliament a statement outlining the facts as we currently know them and to respond to any questions that members may have.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 6 September 2000

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Ministerial Statement on Independent Inquiry into Problems with Exam Results
<i>followed by</i>	Debate on the Creative Economy
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business – debate on the subject of S1M-952 Malcolm Chisholm: Dementia Awareness Week

Thursday 7 September 2000

9.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Stage 3 Debate on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill
2.30 pm	Question Time
3.10 pm	First Minister's Question Time
3.30 pm	Continuation of Stage 3 Debate on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business – debate on the subject of S1M-1111 Irene McGugan: Programme of Action for Scots and Gaelic in the European Year of Languages

Wednesday 13 September 2000

2.30 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Ministerial Statement and Debate on the Scottish Executive's Programme  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1124 Shona Robison: Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Thursday 14 September 2000

9.30 am Ministerial Statement  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate on the Transport (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Financial Resolution in respect of the Transport (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motion  
 2.30 pm Question Time  
 3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time  
 3.30 pm Debate on the Framework for Economic Development in Scotland  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1122 Maureen Macmillan: Screening for Prostate Cancer

Wednesday 20 September 2000

2.30 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Question Time  
 3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time  
 3.30 pm Ministerial Statement and Debate on Spending Strategy  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-959 Alex Johnstone: St. Vigeans Primary School, Arbroath

Thursday 21 September 2000

9.30 am Executive Business  
*followed by* Business Motion  
 2.30 pm Social Inclusion, Housing and Voluntary Sector Committee Debate on Housing Stock Transfer  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-958 Michael McMahon: Palliative Care

14:39

**Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):**  
 My amendment would alter the business motion to

provide for a full day's debate tomorrow on the crisis that is affecting the examination system in Scotland. The Minister for Parliament has just said that we should not have the debate until we have been informed by the parliamentary inquiry. I think that we should have the debate because we should be informed by the views of the parents, teachers and children throughout Scotland who are giving us information to which this Parliament should be responding.

The Minister for Parliament did not strike much of a note of consensus. I should remind him that, even though four parties—not all the parties—are on the Parliamentary Bureau, that does not mean that every decision of the bureau has all-party agreement. If we follow the extension of his line of argument and accept his definition of “all-party”, we will discover that, as long as the Liberal Democrats support their partners on the Executive—and they invariably do—the Executive parties control every item that this Parliament can or cannot provide for.

Members of this Parliament are fond of saying that we should not follow Westminster practices. They are absolutely correct to do so. I have been at Westminster for 13 years and definitely think that we should not follow those practices. However, even at Westminster, where the Executive has too much control over the parliamentary chamber, the Speaker has the opportunity to place any subject of importance that reflects parliamentary concern before the Parliament, despite what the Government says. How can it be that, after just a year of operation, we find ourselves more restricted than even that restricted Parliament on the River Thames? The Presiding Officer of this Parliament should have such an ability to respond to public concern.

Each and every one of us with constituents who have been affected by this crisis should have it within our own ability and conscience to respond to public concern. On Saturday, I saw the parents of Katrina Ritchie, who is one of a number of students studying higher graphic design at Peterhead Academy. All of those students have been told that they have failed, because the SQA cannot add up the results properly. They have had the information that there was a mistake in the results since 14 August, but they have heard nothing else. Fortunately for Katrina, her university of choice—Robert Gordon University—is ignoring the results and admitting her and other students anyway. Fortunately for Katrina, her parent is a teacher and has been able to guide her through this process of anxiety. However, nothing that we ever do will remove the anxiety, hurt and disappointment that she felt when she phoned up the SQA helpline to be told that she had failed the subject of her choice and that her life chances were apparently ruined.

Although we cannot change such a moment, as a Parliament we can respond to public concern. A statement, even one lasting not less than 45 minutes, is not adequate. I see that the First Minister is becoming anxious—he should be anxious about the state of his Administration. A parliamentary inquiry is not a substitute for a parliamentary debate; it should not be a means of removing the issue from the parliamentary agenda. We are the Parliament of Scotland, not a parish council or a local authority. We have an obligation that goes beyond our parties, and such an obligation should see us voting for this amendment and having the debate that the parents, teachers and pupils of Scotland want the Parliament to have tomorrow.

I move amendment S1M-1147.2, under Thursday 7 September 2000, to delete:

"Stage 3 Debate on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill"

and insert:

"Debate on the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the crisis of year 2000 Higher and Standard Grade results",

and delete:

"Continuation of Stage 3 Debate on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill"

and insert:

"Continuation of Debate on the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the crisis of year 2000 Higher and Standard Grade results".

14:43

**David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** Moving my amendment opposing today's business motion is not something that I do lightly. However, I firmly believe that if we do not debate the current problems in our education and examination system as a matter of urgency—indeed, as the first priority of this Parliament on its resumption of business—the Scottish Executive will be guilty of treating this Parliament, and by extension the Scottish people, with contempt.

Of course, if the Scottish National Party had supported our no confidence motion, the motion would now appear on the business bulletin, and Labour and Liberal Democrat members would have been put in the position of voting it down. Instead, they have been able to hide behind the sop of a question-and-answer session at a time when the Scottish public are demanding a full-scale debate in this chamber.

The SNP failure to support our motion is, frankly, disappointing. Nicola Sturgeon pretends that it is all a matter of tactics, to hide the fact that she was too busy running John Swinney's campaign to have thought of it herself. So she takes the huff, refuses to support our motion and an opportunity

is missed.

**Mr Salmond:** Will Mr McLetchie give way?

**David McLetchie:** No.

The Liberal Democrats' silence on this matter has been deafening. When everybody else was crying out for action from the Executive as the reputation of our education system was dragged through the mud, they kept their heads down. That is strange for a party that is always boasting of its commitment to education. Finally, on 31 August, Mr Jenkins, the Liberal Democrat member of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, and a former teacher of considerable experience, said that young people should be awarded results on the basis of their estimated grades. That, of course, is in flat contradiction to what the minister, Mr Galbraith, has said, which is that the normal assessment and appeals procedures should apply.

If Mr Jenkins has no confidence in Mr Galbraith's solution, why does he not support our motion of no confidence in the minister? The answer is that his party is reverting to its usual position of docile subservience to Labour and, instead of backing our call in the Parliamentary Bureau for a full debate on the issue, Mr Smith loyally whelps at Mr McCabe's command.

**Mr Salmond:** Will the member give way?

**David McLetchie:** No.

The failure to stage an urgent debate on the exam fiasco is appalling. Instead, we have a debate on the creative economy. That is yet another example of the arrogance of the Labour-Liberal Democrat Executive. Sadly, it is exactly the failure to address properly the issues that are of real concern to the Scottish people that has led to massive public disillusionment with the Parliament and has enhanced its reputation for irrelevance.

Frankly, it is no surprise that people hold that view. When we cannot mark exams properly, when people are waiting longer than ever for an operation and when the rural economy is in crisis, it seems to most people out there that all that we can offer is the repeal of section 28, a ban on fox-hunting and the contempt for parliamentary government that is displayed in the business motion.

Mr McCabe says that a motion of no confidence is premature at this stage. If it is premature to criticise Mr Galbraith, it must also be premature to praise him from the rooftops, as Mr Blair did when he wafted through Scotland last week and said that Mr Galbraith was outstanding. It is not the minister, but the correct exam results for the young people of Scotland that are outstanding.

On 16 June last year, the First Minister said:

"We want to make this Parliament what it can be—the democratic crucible in which we can test our ideas, seek new inspiration and stand to account on our record."—*[Official Report, 16 June 1999; Vol 1, c 405.]*

Those were fine words, well spoken and said with sincere conviction. It is a great pity that the Executive's business motion today makes a mockery of them.

The reputation of our education system lies in tatters and our exam system and assessment procedures are tainted. Sam's exams have been marked a failure by the people of Scotland. The minister is not the solution; he is part of the problem. It does not particularly matter to me whether we debate a Conservative motion of no confidence, an SNP motion, or a motion from the Executive endorsing the minister's actions to date, which it so cravenly and spinelessly refuses to lodge. The mechanism does not matter, but the people of Scotland demand and deserve a full-scale debate on this issue, and those who vote against such a debate should hang their heads in shame.

I move amendment S1M-1147.1, under Wednesday 6 September 2000, delete:

"Debate on the Creative Economy"

and insert:

"Debate on the subject of S1M-1128 Brian Monteith: Motion of No Confidence: That the Parliament has no confidence in the Minister for Children and Education".

14:49

**Mr McCabe:** It is unfortunate that Mr Salmond chose to denigrate the good work of elected representatives in local councils and community councils the length and breadth of Scotland in order to make his already weak case.

It seems strange that, if Mr Salmond considers this to be such an important issue, he should lodge an amendment to alter the business for the second rather than the first day of our proceedings. If one thinks about it a bit more, the explanation becomes obvious. His non-Executive coalition partners in the Conservative party have lodged another amendment and Mr Salmond is terrified to compete for their time.

**Mr Salmond:** Will the minister give way?

**Mr McCabe:** No. Mr Salmond has wasted enough time.

What Mr Salmond proposes would delay the parliamentary passage of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Bill—a bill that safeguards and assists the police in their fight against crime. Mr Salmond is guilty not only of opportunism, but of dangerous opportunism.

I have already explained fully why we do not

consider it appropriate to debate the exam issue at this time. The statement about to be made by my colleague, Sam Galbraith, will be the first step on the path towards a debate to be held after the two inquiries are complete and the Parliament is fully informed. That will be the proper time to debate the subject. Now is not the time to provide an opportunity for the leader of the SNP to make a valedictory speech.

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** Will the minister give way?

**Mr McCabe:** No, I will not. Ms Sturgeon has wasted enough time.

I have listened to what Mr McLetchie has had to say and I am sure that the people of Scotland are well aware that he is hanging on the coat tails of the SNP. He mentions two subjects, one of which has not yet been discussed in the Scottish Parliament. I know that he has little relevance to the people of Scotland, but he should at least have paid attention to the work of the Parliament over its first year. He does not seem to have noticed that we have passed 11 bills into law.

Mr Salmond and Mr McLetchie have both taken the opportunity to get this off their chest. One can only hope that having done so, they will encourage their members to participate impartially in the parliamentary inquiry. That is important for our parliamentary democracy. It is certainly more important than the pre-emptive comments of Ms Sturgeon of the SNP. I quote directly from one of the many statements that she has made in the past two weeks:

"there will only be one possible outcome—Sam Galbraith's removal from office".

Perhaps it is Ms Sturgeon who should consider her position and her inability to take part in an impartial and objective inquiry.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Will the minister give way?

**Mr McCabe:** No, I will not. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Let us hear the minister.

**Mr McCabe:** There is a final and important point to be made in respect of both amendments. They have been lodged in the names of the party leaders, who seem to have lost confidence in the work of their business managers, overruling their work within the Parliamentary Bureau. In so doing, they have created an interesting precedent. If non-Executive parties can attempt to alter the proposed Executive business within Executive time, we will see how they react if the Executive parties attempt to alter the business proposed in non-Executive time.

**Mr Salmond:** On a point of order. Presiding Officer, you should listen very carefully to the

remarks of a person who has the title of Minister for Parliament. He has directly threatened Opposition parties, by saying that if we lodge motions that he does not like, he will steal our non-Executive time. That remark can be termed many things, but it is certainly not parliamentary. That is Executive dictatorship and control of parliamentary time and should be ruled out of order.

**The Presiding Officer:** Nothing that was said was actually out of order. Please carry on, minister.

**Mr McCabe:** It is remarkable that Mr Salmond is not aware that what he accuses me of is exactly what he proposes in his amendment.

To conclude, when this Parliament is informed by the outcome of the two inquiries, the Executive will welcome and encourage a full debate on the issue. It will do so for the right reasons: a search for the facts about what went wrong and a search for solutions to prevent it from happening again. We will leave blatant opportunism to the Conservatives and the SNP.

I call on members to resist these risible and opportunistic amendments and to support the motion.

**The Presiding Officer:** I have notice of one member wishing to speak against the business motion.

14:55

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** It is very clear—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Mr Swinney:** It is clear that before Mr McCabe came to this Parliament there could not have been a lot of debating in South Lanarkshire Council, because debating normally involves engaging the arguments that people put forward. There was not much evidence of that in what he said.

Some decent things happened today before Mr McCabe started. Two parliamentary committees decided to undertake major inquiries into the fiasco that we are now dealing with. The Education, Culture and Sport Committee decided to look into the issue of school qualifications, and the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee decided to look into the governance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Many people in Scotland will be reassured by those actions, but they will be surprised, on the first day that the Parliament comes back after the summer recess, that the type of excuses that we have had from Mr McCabe are the order of the day and that we do not have a full-scale parliamentary debate scheduled to discuss these issues.

Mr McCabe made an important point during his

comments on the role of members on the committee inquiries. He urged members of my party and members of the Conservative party to be impartial and dispassionate with the evidence. I hope that the same will apply to Liberal Democrat and Labour committee members and in equal margin. I see that the First Minister is giving me his assurance that that will be the case. I look forward warmly to seeing that realised in the months to come.

Scheduled in front of us today is a debate on the creative economy. With the greatest respect to the contribution that Mr McLeish will be likely to make to that debate, it could wait. We could have had a debate on the issue before us. If Mr McCabe had agreed to it in the Parliamentary Bureau a few weeks ago, we could have had a statement followed by a debate. It is fairly common practice in Parliament to get some of the factual information from the minister and then to chew it over in a parliamentary debate. What was wrong with doing that this afternoon? What we have had is the Executive putting forward the minimum agenda possible to keep this issue under control upon Parliament's return. Our duty as an Opposition is to make sure that these issues are brought to the floor of the Parliament. The business motion today does not do that.

In the discussion that we have had so far about the Parliamentary Bureau, a number of interesting issues have begun to bubble to the surface. All the aspirations of the consultative steering group to have the agenda of Parliament reflect the consensus view of Parliament have been stamped on by the Executive using its natural majority in the bureau to stop legitimate requests for debate from the Opposition parties. If that is the way in which this Parliament will proceed, it will be a different Parliament from the one that the Executive parties promised when this Parliament was established.

When there is such enormous public concern about these issues, the fact that the coalition parties are prepared to suppress legitimate debate on this subject is a matter of enormous public concern. This issue should be out in the public domain, with ministers being tested in this Parliament on the issues that are at stake. The issues should not be put aside by ministers who are unwilling to face the music in Parliament and answer for the mistakes that they have made over the summer.

**The Presiding Officer:** Before I put the questions, I will return to Mr Salmond's point of order. Nothing that Mr McCabe said was itself out of order, but what he proposed might well be out of order if it were carried out, because rule 5.6.1(b), on the Parliamentary Bureau, says:

"In proposing the business programme, the



Parliamentary Bureau shall ensure that . . . on 16 half sitting days in each Parliamentary year, meetings of the Parliament consider business chosen by political parties which are not represented in the Scottish Executive”.

That is the position.

**Mr Salmond:** Further to my point of order, now that he knows the standing orders that protect Opposition parties, will the Minister for Parliament get the opportunity to withdraw the threat that he made five minutes ago?

**The Presiding Officer:** As I said, nothing that the Minister for Parliament said was out of order.

**Mr McCabe:** In reply to the question, under no circumstances will the Executive parties give up their right under standing orders to move amendments to non-Executive proposals for debate.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr McCabe, do you wish to reply to Mr Swinney?

**Mr McCabe:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** I now have three questions to put to the chamber. The first question is, that amendment S1M-1147.2, in the name of Alex Salmond, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

The result of the division is: For 58, Against 64, Abstentions 2.

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** On a point of order. My voting console is not working. Can I move to another console? I do not think that my vote was recorded. [*Interruption.*]

**Mr Salmond:** On a point of order. If there is some doubt about the Liberal consoles, and given the relative closeness of the vote, should we not take the vote again?

**The Presiding Officer:** Does any other member have doubt about whether their vote was recorded? [*Interruption.*] Due to the fact that there was a majority of only six in that vote, we will take it again. I ask all members to check their consoles.

The question is, that amendment S1M-1147.2, in the name of Alex Salmond, be agreed to.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
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)  
Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
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)  
McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
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)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

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, 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)  
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, Ettrick 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)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, 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)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 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, 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)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 58, Against 65, Abstentions 2. There is a difference of one vote.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I understand that all the machinery is now functioning correctly. As members have not used their voting cards for some weeks, I urge them to wipe them on their trousers—or skirts—before they use them.

**Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP):** On a point of order. Some of us are not wearing trousers.

**The Presiding Officer:** I added, “or skirts”.

The second question is, that amendment S1M-1147.1, in the name of David McLetchie, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 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)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (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)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Dewar, Donald (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMahon, 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 21, Against 105, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** I put the main question, which is that the business motion in the name of Tom McCabe be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members: No.**

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

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, 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)  
 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, Ettrick 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)  
 McMahon, 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, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (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)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
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) (Con)  
Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
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)  
McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
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)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 70, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to.*

## Exam Results

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** We move to the next item of business, which is a statement by Sam Galbraith on an independent inquiry into problems with exam results. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement. There should, therefore, be no interventions.

15:06

**The Minister for Children and Education (Mr Sam Galbraith):** In the four weeks since this year's exam results were issued, serious problems—indeed, very serious problems—have emerged. There has been widespread and understandable concern and much media coverage. Many instant analyses and snap judgments have been made and much has been said about accountability.

May I once again offer my sincere apologies to all those who have been affected by what has happened. It was not of the students' making, nor was it of the teachers', schools' and colleges' making. It should not have happened.

Our first duties are to the young people—to look at the issues clearly and dispassionately on their behalf. I will begin, therefore, by stating what the Scottish Qualifications Authority has given me to understand is the position today. The last outstanding queries concerning the results of university applicants were resolved on 25 August. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service confirmed today that 2.6 per cent more Scottish candidates now have assured university places than at the same point last year—a total of 23,694.

The SQA has completed its checks and has confirmed final grades for all of this year's higher and certificate of sixth year studies candidates. It has also confirmed final grades in all but 85 standard grade cases and has promised to complete the last of those by Friday at the latest. Schools and colleges were asked to submit all urgent appeals by 31 August. Examination of those appeals has begun.

That is the position today. After all the understandable concern and coverage of the past few weeks, everyone has the right to know how the problems arose, how they have been addressed on behalf of this year's candidates and where we go next.

However, I want first to thank education professionals from schools, colleges and universities who—at very short notice and under great pressure—worked with the SQA to address the problems that we faced a few weeks ago. I am

very grateful to every one of them.

This morning, the Education, Culture and Sport Committee decided to go ahead with an inquiry into this year's exam results. I welcome that and look forward to giving evidence, because I believe that it is very important that the full and complex truth of this year's events is evaluated impartially. The committee will consider all aspects in great detail, but this afternoon I will give an account of the picture as it emerged and the way in which we tackled it.

Members will be aware that the concept of higher still was decided upon by the previous Administration in 1994. In April 1997, after consultation, it set up the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which amalgamated the Scottish Vocational Education Council—SCOTVEC—and the Scottish Examinations Board. That created a new non-departmental public body—the old word was quango—which, as members will appreciate, appoints and controls its own staff, who are not civil servants.

When higher still was being introduced, teachers made repeated representations about the difficulties that they faced in making it work in the classroom. As a result, the previous Administration and the subsequent Labour Administration each allowed a year's delay to meet teachers' concerns. The Labour Government also provided considerable additional resources—some £40 million—to address the problem. The teachers and the schools delivered for their pupils and I wish to express my thanks to them all for their considerable efforts in doing so.

The difficulties that we have addressed and are still addressing lay elsewhere. In March, I was concerned by reports that I received from schools and colleges that told me of problems with electronic transfer of information to the SQA. At my request, a senior member of the Scottish Executive's information technology directorate met the SQA, reviewed the situation and made recommendations. Also at my request, my officials followed that up by meetings with the SQA. Again, we were offered reassurances that the matter was being resolved by the SQA. My officials continued to press the SQA. Repeated assurances were given in those meetings, in written statements and in SQA board and committee papers. Let me give members some quotations from the SQA. On 10 May, it told us in writing that

"All significant internal problems have been rectified".

The next day, in a paper to one of its own committee meetings, it said that

"overall there is every reason to believe that the diet will go smoothly."

In June it became clear that the SQA was having difficulty in recruiting sufficient exam

markers in some subjects. It also became clear from our contact with schools and colleges that, despite the SQA's reassurances, the authority was substantially behind schedule in collecting internal assessment data from schools and colleges. At my request, officials pursued those matters with the SQA. I ensured that I was kept fully informed.

After that, meetings between my officials and SQA staff took place on 27 June, 7 July, 14 July, 21 July, 28 July, 2 August, 4 August and 9 August—a total of eight meetings. Those were backed up by many other contacts during which our concerns were expressed repeatedly and the SQA was questioned time and again on its contingency plans. All that was in addition to continued daily contact.

It was in that context that I met the chairman and the chief executive of the SQA on 25 July. At that meeting I offered increased resources to meet any difficulties, but those were declined. The option to delay issuing results by one week was discussed. A few days later, the SQA decided not to pursue that option. At that meeting, I also received personal assurances that although some data were still missing, the matter was being addressed, that the numbers that were involved were declining rapidly and that the SQA hoped to issue a covering letter with the certificate of any candidate who had incomplete results.

On 9 August—only one day before candidates expected to open their envelopes—the SQA reassured my officials confidently that all the certificates would be issued on time and that only 1 per cent of candidates—around 1,500—would receive incomplete results. My officials were also reassured that those results were now, however, to be issued without any letter of explanation and that the missing data would be obtained quickly.

Members will not be surprised to hear that, given all the reassurances that I received during the previous weeks and months, I considered it totally unacceptable that 1,500 candidates would receive incomplete results. Because of that and because—much more worryingly—the SQA could not even tell me who those 1,500 candidates were, that day I ordered a full independent inquiry. I did that against the initial inclination of the SQA, which wanted to hold its own inquiry and pointed out—as it had done often—that it was an independent organisation.

The very next day—10 August, the day that the results came out—evidence emerged that potentially many more than 1,500 candidates had received incomplete results. What was even worse—especially in the light of the SQA's recent repeated assurances—was that I learned to my dismay that significant numbers of certificates had not been posted at all.

On 12 August, the chief executive of the SQA resigned. On Sunday 13 August, I met the chairman and senior staff from the SQA. By that time, events had rendered the stated position of the SQA untenable. The chairman recognised that; he also recognised that to move forward the SQA had to accept guidance. Therefore, at that meeting my officials and I developed with the SQA an operational plan to put right what had gone wrong. On the same day the SQA representatives and I met the secretary of the Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals to discuss how best to protect the interests of young people who were applying to university. COSHEP gave an undertaking that no young person would be disadvantaged by what had happened. That followed from my statement of 11 August that

"No-one will miss out on a university place because of these problems."

We backed that up with further action to ensure that universities and colleges were given the necessary flexibility. I reiterate that, as of today, 2.6 per cent more students have been accepted for university education than had been accepted at the same time last year.

On 14 August the SQA board appointed Bill Morton as interim chief executive. Over the next few days, to address concerns about computer processing of results, the SQA carried out extensive tests on its computer systems. Those did not identify any fundamental system defects.

We expected problems across the various exam levels but—at my insistence—candidates who were seeking places at university were our first priority. The SQA therefore sought first to identify every higher or sixth year studies candidate who had assessment information missing, then to complete the information and confirm all results as quickly as possible. Within that group, university applicants had the highest priority. Similar processes were mapped out in relation to intermediate and standard grade candidates.

The validation process showed that 5,700—4 per cent—of results at higher and certificate of sixth year studies grade were incomplete. For example, in the well-publicised case of the Russian higher class, which included some native Russian speakers, the results of the class's oral assessments had not been entered, so no awards had been made. Similarly, almost 5,000—less than 1 per cent—of standard grade results were also incomplete and 4,500 intermediate courses were similarly affected. Those validation checks, followed by the confirmation of final results, represent the first stage of the SQA's response to the problems that it had not previously identified, but which were now obvious to all.

For those candidates who still have concerns,

the appeals process is under way. The process of appeals is well established: schools and colleges submit evidence of candidates' coursework or prelim performance and if necessary their scripts are reviewed.

Last year there were 47,000 individual subject appeals and about 40 per cent were successful. Obviously this year appeal numbers will be higher. We have arranged—via the SQA and directors of education—to put in place detailed plans that are phased to meet candidates' most urgent needs first.

We are co-operating with directors of education to ensure that teachers will be available to serve as examiners without undue disruption to schools. To maintain confidence in the appeals process and its standards, I have arranged that the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland will provide independent monitoring. That association has played a valuable and constructive role in working with the Executive to ensure that plans for an expanded appeals system are sound.

In building on that, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and the SQA have accepted my proposal that four senior directors of education should monitor all aspects of delivery of the appeals system. They will make sure that the system matches the plans and is carried out in a way that commands public and professional confidence. The directors will have full access to the process, including the right to make spot checks.

I have also made special arrangements for representatives of teachers to be kept involved and informed. Schools and colleges—and, more particularly, candidates—can have confidence that the process for dealing with increased numbers of appeals will be robust.

Schools and colleges submitted evidence for urgent appeals—mainly on behalf of university and college entrance candidates—by the deadline, which was yesterday. Those 6,250 appeals will be handled first and, I am assured by the SQA, completed by 20 September. Overall, the estimated 120,000 appeals will be dealt with as quickly as possible, over a period of weeks.

That, with the outcomes to which I referred earlier, is what we have done on behalf of this year's candidates. Now we must ensure that schools, colleges, candidates and candidates' families never face such problems again. The new chief executive of the SQA has already begun a full internal operational review and I have agreed to his request for one of my officials to serve on that review, which will be completed by the end of the month.

However, we all need much more reassurance

than that internal exercise—however illuminating—might provide. That is why I ordered a full independent inquiry, even before candidates had received their results. That inquiry—carried out by experts on information handling, computing and management—has been out to tender. I can now tell Parliament that Deloitte Touche was appointed yesterday to conduct it. Deloitte Touche will report by 31 October and its findings will, of course, be made public.

The remit of the inquiry covers all aspects of the production of this year's results. It will consider links with schools and colleges and every aspect of data handling in the SQA. The inquiry will, of course, pay particular attention to the quality control mechanism for marking. Head teachers, college principals, directors of education and teachers who are involved in marking will be involved, as will SQA staff. We will find out exactly what went wrong.

Concerns have been expressed about marking standards and the way in which checks on those were carried out. We must not confuse marking standards with the administration of marking. The SQA acknowledges that there were flaws in marking administration. Eight cases of probationer teachers being used have been identified out of more than 7,000 markers. That should not have happened, but it has not compromised marking standards. The marking of those teachers was assessed as part of normal quality assurance procedures. Six were rated in the highest category of marker—grade A—and the other two were rated in the second highest category. Where doubts remain about individual results, the appeals system—which is strengthened this year for the extra challenge that it faces—will provide further reassurance.

Understandably, the status of the SQA has come into question. Henry McLeish and I have therefore brought forward the policy and financial management review of the SQA, which in the ordinary course of events would not have taken place until 2002. That review will address fundamental questions about the way in which the organisation is constituted and its relationship with the education department and ministers. All options will be considered, but final decisions will have to rest with Parliament.

All results for this year's higher and sixth year studies candidates are now complete. We have dealt with the problems of university entrance qualifications and we know that UCAS acceptances are already greater than they were last year. Standard grade results are all but complete and a strengthened and prioritised appeals process has begun.

The problems should, of course, never have arisen. I have described in some detail my

sustained but frustrated efforts in dealing with the SQA since March. Time and again my officials and I raised specific concerns. Time and again we were offered reassurances that were worthless at the end of the day. Even in the period immediately preceding 10 August and the emergence of the full extent of the SQA's failure, a reliable response to my repeated calls for detailed information was not forthcoming. Subsequent revelations are a matter for grave concern.

Again I have apologised—in detail and in public—to the young people and their parents whose summer has been blighted by the anxiety and uncertainty that was caused by the SQA's handling of their exams and their results. I have explained to members what steps I took as the problems began to emerge and what action I am taking in their wake. I hope that I have made clear to members and to all concerned my determination that such things will never happen again.

**The Presiding Officer:** I ask those who wish to question the minister to press their request-to-speak buttons now and remind members that the Parliament has decided that this will be a question time, not a debate.

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** Listening to the minister's statement, I cannot help but think that even now he does not fully appreciate the enormity of the crisis and the effect it has had on thousands of young people—not just on their summers but on their entire lives. Is the minister aware that even today, some four weeks after the exam results were due, there are young people who do not have the correct results and who therefore cannot make decisions about their immediate future?

Is the minister aware of the example of Glenrothes High School—in Henry McLeish's constituency—which only this morning received the higher still results for computing? The delay has meant that pupils have missed the 31 August deadline for urgent appeals. Is he aware that 12 pupils in that school are waiting for completed intermediate 2 results in information systems, despite the school having sent its assessment information to the SQA on six occasions? Can the minister tell us today how many young people in Scotland are in that position? Will he give us a date on which every young person at every level of examination will have in their possession a completed certificate? Those are the questions that people want to be answered.

The minister mentioned accountability. The relationship he has described today, between his department and the SQA, does not sound to me like an arm's-length relationship. It does, however, give rise to a number of questions, such as why—I hope he will answer this—over a period of six

months, he accepted the SQA's assurances even though those assurances were in stark contradiction to the repeated warnings he was receiving from teachers, pupils and parents that all was not well in the SQA and that the exam results would not be delivered on time. What questions were his officials asking the SQA? What positive action was he, as the person responsible for the education system, taking to try to avert the crisis?

So that we can be sure of the minister's full co-operation with the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's inquiry, will he give the Parliament a categorical assurance that he will make available to the committee all papers, correspondence and notes of meetings and of phone calls within his department and between his department and the SQA since the start of this year, so that we can make an assessment of whether the buck stops with the SQA, with his officials or, as most people in Scotland believe, with the minister himself?

**Mr Galbraith:** All through this episode, I awaited some constructive comments or criticism from the Opposition's education spokesperson. None was forthcoming and, again, none has been forthcoming today. We have once again heard the same litany of issues that she has raised before, all of which I have addressed in my statement.

On the issue of Glenrothes High School, staff are still accepting urgent appeals. Let me also repeat what I said in my statement. The SQA has completed its checks and confirmed final grades for all of this year's higher and certificate of sixth year studies candidates. It has also confirmed final grades in all but 85 standard grade cases and promised to complete the last of those by Friday at the latest. It is still working on the intermediate grades.

Ms Sturgeon asked me what we will make available. I have already answered a parliamentary question to the effect that we will make all the necessary material available for the committee. We want the committee to be open, fair and impartial. I hope that that impartiality will apply to all members of the committee.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the minister for making his statement available in advance. The statement refers to snap judgments and accountability. When the exam shambles began to unravel, I called on the Education, Culture and Sport Committee to initiate an inquiry. I made no resignation call. Indeed, my No 1 fan, the First Minister, said:

"In fairness, even Brian Monteith, the Conservative education spokesman, said it was important that we establish the facts and take the necessary steps to put matters right."

Today, the minister has attempted to explain how he sought to put matters right; how he sought

to take control of the situation and stay around to sort the mess out. Talking about exam certificates, the minister stated on 12 August:

"everything will be done on time and students will be able to get the places they're entitled to".

With his backing, the SQA announced that all discrepancies would be resolved by 18 August, but that was not achieved until 25 August, a full week later. Indeed, as we heard from Nicola Sturgeon, and as I can testify myself, there is reliable information that some pupils, in Stirling for instance, did not receive their results until 29 August—or are still waiting now.

Will the minister admit that after his promise that the exam chaos would be sorted, it worsened significantly and there were fresh revelations almost daily? Does he recall how the number affected by the higher results problem, which he initially dismissed as small and due in part to the misunderstanding of those reading the certificates, grew—after his assurances—from 1,400 to 5,000?

Is the minister aware of reports of corrected certificates still showing the same problems and the same mistakes as before? Is the minister aware that due to his failure to resolve the problem before 18 August, some students will have missed out on clearing places to which they would otherwise have been entitled?

Does the minister comprehend not only that there was chaos at the SQA, but that, as a Government minister, his crisis management was woefully short of the standards we should expect and that he is guilty of presiding over the worst education crisis in living memory? In short, does he comprehend that his handling of this education disaster was a failure? Will he accept that he has failed thousands of pupils, parents and teachers and that the only way to restore credibility in the Scottish education system is to move over, let another minister take the helm and resign?

**Mr Galbraith:** Again, that contribution was mostly a statement of "facts" that were not true, without any specific question. There have been many scare stories and many hares have been set running. Rather foolishly, Mr Monteith followed one or two of them. He raised again the issue of certificates that were sent out, supposedly corrected, but in fact not corrected. That story was absolutely false. Mr Monteith called for my resignation, but the story was false and he should not have made a fool of himself.

What COSHEP said about clearing places was in my statement and I should not have to say it again. We made available to the universities the flexibility necessary to vary their cap by increased amounts, and we made guarantees about money. I repeat what I said in my statement: as of today, 2.6 per cent more Scottish students have achieved



places at university than had done at the same time last year.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I thank the minister for his statement. I also welcome the longer time we have to put questions to him, which my party pushed for during the past few days. We are proud to have delivered that to the Parliament. Here is a thought for the SNP and the Tories: does this kind of question time not put the minister more on the spot than would some sound and fury debate in which more noise than light would be generated? I stand four square behind the decision that the inquiry be held by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

**Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** We have heard that before.

**Mr Stone:** Mr Quinan is going to hear it again. This Parliament is founded on its committees: they are paramount. Any attempt to undermine them is entirely wrong. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Could we have a question please.

**Mr Stone:** If I could have a moment of silence from members, I would ask a question.

We must all put this situation right. Unfortunately, there is a question mark—perhaps it is a question of perception—over the validity and the standard of the year 2000 qualifications. Rightly or wrongly, there is a public perception that there is something not quite right here. *[Interruption.]*

When young people go out to apply for jobs in years to come, it would be unfortunate if employers said, “You have year 2000 qualifications. Oh dear. Perhaps they are not quite right.” Something that was, to steal a phrase from Mr Mike Russell, whom I thank, the gold standard of Scottish education has been—perhaps not rightly, perhaps it is only a perception—somewhat devalued.

The minister will agree that we must restore confidence in, and the standing of, these qualifications. It may be merely a case of putting a message out to employers. Does the minister accept that we have a problem? What can we do to address it?

**Mr Galbraith:** I very much agree: there is concern and that concern is understandable. It is not, of course, helped by a number of individuals going round making wild claims based on no evidence and running down the current system, the pupils and the results they have achieved. We have to re-establish confidence. We are in the process of doing that through the various mechanisms that I have outlined.

**Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab):** I too welcome the information that the minister has been able to provide us with today; I look forward to his providing even more when he appears in front of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

I would like to follow up the point Jamie Stone made. While we all have great sympathy for students who received their results late or who received incorrect results, these events have a wider implication: a shadow is being cast on the results of a number of students. I therefore ask the minister two things. First, would it be satisfactory to provide those students, teachers and schools with their scripts so that confidence in how the scripts have been marked can be reaffirmed?

Secondly, has there been any identifiable clustering of problems relating to the release of results for particular subjects? If so, has that been related to the coursework that was undertaken?

**Mr Galbraith:** I thank the member for her comments. The appeals mechanism deals with the question of scripts that she raises. There is a set-out procedure that will be monitored closely by the directors of education. Making scripts available is a wider issue that, as the member is aware, the SQA this year decided to consult on and consider.

We have traced many reports of clustering of problems and found out that not many of them stand up to scrutiny. We were able to track down only one episode of clustering, which related to the standard grade in physical education. That case has been dealt with.

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** A week ago, I issued a press statement to say that I was not calling for the minister's resignation. I am not doing so because I want to ask him an important question.

Teachers are responsible through the year for assessing their pupils. Their assessments are generally pretty sound, having been discussed by the teachers of the classes and the heads of the departments, who come to their conclusions. The students then sit examinations to put a stamp on the process.

In view of what has happened in the past couple of months, would the minister be prepared to instruct the SQA to give precedence, in the 120,000 appeals that it is dealing with, to the teachers' assessments? Also, to allow pupils to get on with applying for jobs and college places, would he be prepared to allow schools to issue interim certificates based on their assessments of pupils' attainments and qualities over the year?

**Mr Galbraith:** As I think I explained, and as will now be clear to everyone, I have absolutely no powers to instruct the SQA to do anything. After

consultation, the Executive can give it directions in matters relating to the carrying out of its function as laid out in statute, but we have no powers other than that.

I will deal with the question about teachers' assessments. As Mr Harper will know, the Scottish examination system is based on external moderation, by means of an exam, of internal assessment by the teacher. The higher still has tried to extend that internal assessment. In an appeal, the teacher's assessment is the crucial part. Provided that the teacher's assessment is correct, that is what is taken as the final mark. I am sure that Mr Harper agrees that that must remain the position. If we move from that position, we devalue the appeals system. The situation will be overseen by the directors of education.

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Presiding Officer, you might like to note that if the original plan for a 45-minute session had been adhered to, I would not have been able to ask a question and neither would members you will call after me.

I presume that the minister will accept automatically that if any of the detail in his statement, particularly that relating to providing information to schools and pupils, proves to be inaccurate—in other words, if it is proved that schools and pupils are still waiting for information, anecdotal evidence for which we are receiving today—he will find his position even more untenable than it is now.

Having read and listened to the statement, I note that the words "assurance" or "reassurance" occur seven times. The minister lives in a bizarre world in which, having heard the complaints, difficulties and comments from the teaching profession and others year after year, he does nothing simply because the officials he sends out come back and tell him that everything is fine. Why did he do nothing on 17 June; 7, 14, 21 and 28 July; or 2, 4 and 9 August? On each of those occasions his officials met the SQA and, clearly, the reassurances were not enough.

Would the minister like to take some advice from one of his predecessors; someone I rarely quote with approval—Brian Wilson? When he ceased to be the Scottish Office minister with responsibility for education, he said about higher still:

"I do accept this is an area in which I should have been more sceptical about the reassurances which were brought to me".

Is not the job of the Minister for Children and Education to be more sceptical? Is it not to do something, rather than be reassured? There are thousands of pupils in Scotland today who are far from reassured.

**Mr Galbraith:** The information I provided in my

statement was given as openly, fairly and honestly as I could possibly have given it. I repeat: the SQA has completed its checks and confirmed final grades for all this year's higher and CSYS candidates. It has also confirmed final grades for all but 85 standard grades; it has promised to complete the last of those by Friday.

I wish to deal with the other issue the member raised. What would be clear to most fair people from my statement are the efforts we pursued with the SQA, the questions that we asked of it and our insisting that things—albeit things over which we have limited powers—were done. We went on and on, daily, day in, day out. No one, but no one, could have done more than that and I challenge anyone to say otherwise.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** I thank the minister and welcome what he said on the assurances about the appeals system and on the checks and spot checks that are to be in place. However, I am very concerned about the real issue: getting confidence back in the SQA. The only way we will do that is by getting the examination scripts back to the schools. This time, there is obviously difficulty in doing that. I hope that the minister will not wait for the SQA's own consultation—which was his reply to Mary Mulligan's question—but will seriously consider that action, to restore confidence in the SQA as soon as possible.

The other major demand raised by head teachers in my constituency is that the internal assessment system for higher still be examined, not only from the point of view of teachers' work loads, but with regard to how the results are handled between schools and the SQA.

**Mr Galbraith:** Mary Mulligan has already addressed the matter of scripts going back to schools. The schools tell us that they are not able to cope with that. I say again that the important thing is that the normal process is followed so that the appeals mechanism remains robust and reliable and so that we have confidence in it. I agree that it is important to re-establish confidence in the system, but we do not do that by drifting out of the normal procedures.

Dr Jackson mentioned the volume of internal assessment. It is important to distinguish between higher still and the problems at the SQA. Despite the fears that many of them had, teachers taught the higher still courses, the students worked and the teachers delivered the internal assessments. The problems happened after that. The one group that delivered on higher still was the teachers.

In line with what Henry McLeish and I said back in March, we have instituted a review of the first year of higher still. That review will be carried out.

**David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con):** Mr

Galbraith said that he felt let down by assurances given by the SQA that were not followed up. I hope that I am a fair person, but I feel let down by the minister. When, on 19 June, on behalf of the rector of Lockerbie Academy I raised issues about the administration of marking, he gave me an assurance that he would continue to monitor the situation. On the basis of what he has said today, it is clear he did not monitor the situation in the proactive way that any fair and reasonable person would have expected; all he did was get more reassurances from the SQA. Should not he have been doing something more proactive?

**Mr Galbraith:** Reading my statement, seeing the meetings that we had and seeing what we did, most fair people would not agree with that. We pursued the issue of marking. We offered the SQA assistance. We offered it staff. We asked what else we could do on its behalf. Repeatedly we were told that it had this matter dealt with. What else were we to do? We kept pressing the issue with it and we did everything in our power to deal with the situation. I think that it is correct and fair for me to claim that we did everything possible in the circumstances.

**Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP):** This is not the first statement that the minister has had to make to the chamber; I recall that there was one on Scottish Opera's £3 million deficit and three on the Hampden fiasco. How can he now reassure pupils and parents that they can have any confidence when he says that he will stay and sort out the problem? Does he think that perhaps he is the problem—or is he just a jinx?

**Mr Galbraith:** I am sure that people outside this chamber will be amazed and disappointed that a member of the SNP is making such a cheap political point out of a very serious issue. I and this Executive saved Scottish Opera and saved Hampden for the nation. We will also save the SQA.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** Is the minister aware that many people in our communities have serious concerns about the practice and competence of the SQA and find it simply impossible to understand how it came to be that a body with such a huge responsibility is not directly responsible to ministers, to the Executive and to Parliament for its actions? Does he agree that we must immediately address people's concerns that somebody must be called to account for what has happened?

The minister said that he does not have the power to instruct the SQA. Does he understand that many people feel that it would be better if he had such a power—not to instruct on marking, but to set the parameters within which the SQA must operate? Will he assure me that the Executive will take steps to ensure that the flawed accountability

that runs through far too many of our public bodies is challenged and that those public bodies are brought back under transparent public control and accountability?

**Mr Galbraith:** I agree with much of what Johann Lamont says. I must point out that the SQA was set up under an act of Parliament in 1996 and, to my knowledge—although I may be wrong—no one objected to it: not the nationalists, not the Liberals and, I am pretty certain, not my party. Nobody objected to it. The SQA was set up under statute, with the powers that were given to it. We have tried to work within that structure.

Ministers cannot—I hope that members are not suggesting that they should—act outwith their powers. However, we have set up a review of the SQA, during which all options will be considered. The final decision will have to rest with this Parliament, and we shall have to consider the SQA's accountability.

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Does the minister recognise the gut-wrenching anger, dismay and sense of betrayal that teachers across Scotland feel, having spent years preparing themselves, and a year preparing their pupils, for an exam that many of them had great reservations about, only to find that the body that was supposed to be in charge of the whole thing was simply not up to the job? That causes a real crisis of confidence in Scottish education, which is not the fault of the people on the ground.

Having made an issue of the appeals system in recent days, I welcome the minister's assurance about the resourcing and planning that is now being put in place to deal with the great number of appeals that is now expected. I hope that his confidence is well placed, and I hope that structures are in place that will substantially help to restore confidence.

Who decided that the concordance checks and balances that are an inherent part of the system would not be put into operation this year? Was there a deliberate decision, or was the procedure just scrubbed because there was not enough time? Is the minister convinced that the appeals procedure that has been put in place is sufficiently robust and flexible to recognise that, in the absence of concordance procedures, the appeals will be different from normal, when concordance procedures have been a prelude to the first issue of exam results?

**Mr Galbraith:** The inquiry will deal with the concordance system, but that is a technical matter related to SQA exam results and there are no circumstances in which ministers could or would interfere with that. I hope that no one is suggesting that ministers should interfere with marking.

As for appeals, there is already an extremely robust and flexible system that I hope will deal with all the issues that the member has raised.

**Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP):** Will the minister assure us that, while he will of course observe the letter of the law, he will see fit to change the law if it is rotten? It appears that the misguided legislation drawn up under a previous Administration is not fitting the bill in Scotland. We have evidence of that, even before the inquiries start. We simply want an assurance that the minister has the courage to say: "This ain't working. I'm going to fix it."

Furthermore, the minister mentioned in his statement that seven probationer teachers were identified as markers, which should not have been the case. How many teachers who had not been instrumental in either constructing the new higher still courses or teaching them recently were recruited as markers without the normal training period for marking?

**Mr Galbraith:** The member will perhaps agree that I do not lack courage, and I am certainly prepared to make the decisions that she mentions.

I will repeat what I have already said about the SQA. It was set up by the Conservatives; however, I may be wrong, but I do not remember any of the rest of us, including the SNP, objecting to it at the time.

The issue of marking will be dealt with by the independent inquiry to find out whether administrative procedures were not followed. However, there were many checks and balances; and if there were some administrative problems—and there were only administrative problems—there is no reason to doubt the actual marking of that script at that time, provided that the checks and balances were in place. I rely on and very much trust the professionalism of the teachers who carried out the marking.

**Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab):** It seems clear from the minister's statement that the system of school qualifications seriously failed in early August, with ministers being unaware of the seriousness of those failures and the Parliament unaware that any problems existed with the SQA. Does the minister accept that that is simply not good enough in a democracy? Although I hear his comments that no one objected to the SQA in 1996, does he agree that, four years on, he would be hard put to find anyone in Scotland who does not object to the SQA carrying on as before? Will he therefore assure us that the status quo is not an option and that, as a matter of priority, the Executive will re-establish clear lines of political accountability for this and the other quangos that run large parts of Scotland?

**Mr Galbraith:** The status quo will not be an

option on these matters, which is why we have introduced the quinquennial review. Any final decisions about that will rest with this chamber.

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West):** Why did the minister not give a more positive response to the suggestions of his own Labour colleagues Mary Mulligan and Sylvia Jackson? If the minister is unable or unwilling to instruct the SQA, will he at least ask the SQA to ensure that all candidates have the right to see their marked examination papers in order to try to restore some confidence in the assessment system? At present, there is a widespread lack of confidence in the SQA, and no confidence whatsoever in Sam Galbraith.

**Mr Galbraith:** That matter has already been raised, and I have dealt with it. It is important that the appeals mechanism is carried out and overseen properly, and that we do not deviate from the norm. Otherwise, we will just bring the system into disrepute and further call into question the validity of these issues.

On the whole question of making scripts available, that is a wide-ranging issue on which the SQA had planned to consult. I am sure that the body will be willing to do so.

**Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** As the minister's summary of events was somewhat of the recent variety, can I ask him to cast his mind back to 1998 when teachers' warnings about higher still were ignored by him, Brian Wilson and Helen Liddell? Those warnings were not even communicated to this Parliament. It seems that there has always been secrecy, which is surely the fault of the minister. Will he simply blame the SQA? Is that not a quango that is ready for the bonfire?

**Mr Galbraith:** Once again, I emphasise that it is important to distinguish between higher still and the problems in the SQA. On the warnings that were given and issues that were raised in 1998, I have pointed out that higher still was delayed by the previous Administration for one year, as it was by the previous Conservative Administration. We invested up to £40 million to respond to the issues that were raised.

I emphasise again that, despite their fears and worries, the teachers delivered on higher still, and I am grateful to them for doing so. They taught the courses, the students studied and the assessments were done. The problem came when they got into the SQA. It is important to remember that higher still worked, but that the SQA failed to manage the data. That is an important distinction. If the SQA and higher still are confused, we do great discredit to higher still on the basis of what happened in the SQA.

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** I thank the minister for his statement. However, the

minister will be aware that the way in which information was presented on the certificates added to the uncertainty that young people experienced. Will the design and content of the certificates be reviewed in time for the issue of results next year?

**Mr Galbraith:** Yes. The SQA tells me that it consulted on the design of the certificate. However, the certificate is complex and undoubtedly the SQA did not explain it clearly, which led to some confusion. Of course, there will be consultation on next year's certificate, with a view to reordering it.

**Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con):** I will pursue the statement that the minister said that he gave on 11 August and that he repeated today. He said that no pupil would miss out on a university place as a result of what has happened. Can he assure us that no prospective university entrant will lose a place that was offered conditionally where it has been necessary for the grades on which that offer was based to be corrected? In other words, can he assure us that nobody will lose the place that they were entitled to receive?

Secondly, how is the minister monitoring the process, which he advises us exists, under which potential university entrants' highers and sixth year studies grades were scrutinised and under which their appeals are now being prioritised? How is that process being tracked? Is it being done manually in the SQA and, if so, is the minister satisfied that in practice the SQA is able to identify all those pupils and to prioritise them? Does the process depend on the application of some software package and, if so, is it the same software package that has been deficient in recent months? The people who are still going through the process are entitled to be certain that the minister is correct in saying that the SQA can identify and prioritise all those pupils.

**Mr Galbraith:** Mr Tosh will know that all places that are offered conditionally are kept open until the results are available, and on that basis no person should have lost out on their conditional acceptance.

On Mr Tosh's second question, there is a system in place. I understand that that system is not based on a software package that failed in the past, but that it is a manual system. We are constantly tracking the process. If I receive any further information, I will let him know.

**Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP):** How can the system cope with 120,000 appeals at the busy start to a new term? It does not take a brain surgeon to realise that the whole system has massive problems. What will he do for parents such as my constituent, Vic Anderson, who just

does not believe his daughter's exam results? Will the minister make exam scripts available to schools where parents request them? The parents do not trust the SQA or the minister, but they trust the schools. Will the minister ensure that exam scripts are made available to the schools so that some trust is brought back into the system? Can the minister answer Mr Canavan's question?

**Mr Galbraith:** Schools are working with pupils all the time. That is an example of a question that we have already answered on previous occasions.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab):** Will the minister elaborate on the agreement with COSHEP? Will students get into the precise course of their choice if they now find that they have achieved the necessary grades? It is important that the students get into the correct courses. If those courses are full, will the Executive fund additional places in those courses?

On the issue raised by Johann Lamont, John McAllion, Margo MacDonald and others, will the minister recommend that the Scottish Executive undertake a more extensive review of all non-departmental public bodies? Whether we like it or not, the Scottish public hold the Executive responsible for the actions of such bodies. Will he recommend a full review of all NDPBs?

**Mr Galbraith:** That is a major task. The member has raised an important issue. These quangos are set up at arm's length, but whatever we do, we are still held accountable and that raises big questions.

The first point that Dr Simpson raised was substantive. As I said in my statement, we have given universities flexibility on the cap—we have said that they will not be financially disadvantaged. COSHEP has told all universities that even those students who did not achieve the grades for their conditional place and entered the clearing system later should be treated as if they had entered the clearing system at the right time.

**The Presiding Officer:** I inform members that we have spent an hour on the statement. I know that many members would still like to speak, but I must also protect what is in danger of being an uncreative debate on the creative economy. However, I will let the current debate run for another 10 minutes.

**Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con):** On a point of order. Presiding Officer, I understood that you undertook that all members who wished to ask questions on this matter would be allowed to do so.

**The Presiding Officer:** I can assure the member that I said no such thing. However, I would like to fit in as many members as possible. I call Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.

**Mr Tosh:** On a point of order.

**The Presiding Officer:** That will only hold up proceedings.

**Mr Tosh:** I understood that, in moving the business motion, Mr McCabe indicated that the Executive was prepared to amend it in order to allow all questions to be answered.

**The Presiding Officer:** No. Because there is no timetable in the business motion, the matter is in my hands. I must strike a balance between the statement and the debate that is to follow. However, I am anxious to allow many more members to speak.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** On a point of order.

**The Presiding Officer:** I point out that every point of order takes up time from the questions.

**Bruce Crawford:** The answers given by the minister have raised more questions than they have provided answers. We need more time to do this job. When will we have the opportunity to ask the minister more questions, particularly on whether he had powers to instruct this organisation and, if not, whether his willpower or the force of his office could have been used to make the board produce results?

**The Presiding Officer:** Let us get on with more questions.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** Will the minister accept that if too many reforms are brought in too quickly, there will be problems with co-ordination and implementation? Will he also accept that what we now require is decisive leadership in order to restore confidence in Scotland's examination system?

**Mr Galbraith:** Yes. I agree with some of Lord James's comments. However, I remind him that it was the Conservative Government that introduced higher still. I do not know whether he was the education minister at the time, but he may well have been responsible for such matters for some of the time. It was a Conservative Government that set up the SQA in 1997.

I point out that higher still was not rushed or introduced too quickly—it has taken six years for us to reach this point. The question may be how on earth it took us so long to introduce this necessary change.

**Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab):** I thank the minister for his statement and some of the clarifications that he has given this afternoon. Many members have raised the point that the minister has given assurances that all the highers results are in place. However, part of the problem is that that has not yet been communicated to all the

candidates who sat the exams. As recently as 11 o'clock this morning, I had a telephone call from a constituent asking when that information would be passed from the people collating the results to the telephone line that deals with candidates' inquiries. Perhaps the minister will take that back for clarification.

I also have a question on the role of the board of the SQA. This afternoon, all the minister's references have been to the SQA as a body. I would like clarification about whether the minister has held discussions with officials of the SQA, the members of the board or both. To put it bluntly, I want to know what the board was doing during this time.

**Mr Galbraith:** I said that the checks on highers and sixth year studies have been completed and the final grades have been confirmed. The last were confirmed today. The communication of the final results to candidates is still going on.

The board, which is the body charged with the legal and statutory responsibility for running the SQA, will have to answer for itself at the inquiry. However, if it had the same difficulty that I had in obtaining information, I can understand the problems that it had.

**Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I echo the points that others made about the powers that the minister did or did not have over the SQA. I will ask a simple question: what powers does the minister have over the SQA? What powers did he have to do anything? Was he impotent because of the way in which the SQA was set up? What powers does this Parliament have over the SQA?

A question was raised with me by one of my local head teachers, who made their views about problems in the system known not only to the local authority, but to Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools. What was the role of the HMI in this matter? It is clear from comments that have been made that inspectors were told that something was rotten in the system. What feedback did the minister receive from them on this matter?

**Mr Galbraith:** Ministers' powers over the SQA are laid out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 and are contained in the corporate plan. Ministers have powers, after consulting the SQA, to give directions to the SQA regarding its functions and the discharge of those functions. Those functions are laid out in statute and relate to what the SQA does, not how it does it. That is a clear and important distinction. Any minister trying to do other than what is allowed for in the act would be acting outwith their powers. The SQA can be offered advice, it can take it, and it can ask for advice, which clearly happened once its position became untenable. The SQA has to provide us

with information. That is all laid out clearly in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996.

The inspectorate has no role in the examination area of the SQA. Many of the complaints that the inspectors have received relate to higher still. That is a separate issue. Higher still was carried out and teachers got the assessments in on time. The problem came when the assessments reached the SQA.

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I wish the minister to clarify some issues regarding appeals. The volume of appeals concerns many parents in my area. I welcome the fact that appeals have been prioritised and that urgent cases are being dealt with first, but even the non-urgent cases affect pupils' choice of subject in later years.

Various bodies and MSPs have proposed ideas to speed up the system, the most notable of which is that, in some way, schools could mark their own appeals. That has obvious attractions, particularly for standard grades, because schools have a good track record in predicting their pupils' results, and therefore could be relied upon to mark appeals accurately. However, as the minister knows, because I have written to him on this subject, and in particular on higher still, there are grave reservations about—

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. You have had a long run. You may have a quick question.

**Mr Macintosh:** I have grave reservations about maintaining standards if that were done, but we should do parents a service and remove the uncertainty over whether we are going to—  
[MEMBERS: "Question."] This is a question. Will the minister remove parents' uncertainty over which option might be pursued? Will the minister come to a decision quickly and inform the Parliament whether he is—  
[Interruption.] The question to the minister is, will he rule out or rule in the idea that schools could be used to mark their own appeals?

**Mr Galbraith:** I am not sure that I managed to hear all that because of the noise from across the way.

It is important that the appeals mechanism is held to account and is carried out properly; otherwise, we will just discredit it. We cannot allow that to happen. The appeals system is based on the teachers' assessment, provided that they have evidence to justify that assessment. It must be considered in that way. I would not like to deviate from that; otherwise, we would corrupt the appeals system.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** I shall try to speak as loudly as possible, so that the minister can hear me. I respectfully remind him that he may have inherited both the SQA and the higher still

arrangements, but three years ago the Government decided to run with both of them.

In relation to the arguments surrounding the position of the SQA, would the minister agree that the problem facing us today is due partly to the failure of politicians such as himself to carry out the commitments that they made to the people of Scotland in 1996, before the general election? I remind him of the statement of his former colleague George Robertson—now Bomber George—who said that there would be a bonfire of the quangos. Does the minister agree that there should have been a bonfire of the quangos instead of the 18 per cent rise in the number of quangos that has occurred in Scotland since 1997?

Does the minister further agree with the statement from a principal teacher at Belmont Academy, in South Ayrshire, who wrote to me three days ago to say:

"I have been a teacher for 25 years. I have seen many innovations come and go. Nothing has challenged the credibility of the Scottish education system like Higher Still?"

Finally, does the minister agree that this higher still problem was not made in the Scottish Parliament, but in the Westminster Parliament by his colleagues Mr Wilson and Mrs Liddell, and that, with respect, when he goes, they should go with him?

**Mr Galbraith:** The Scottish people will be greatly annoyed that, in this serious position, we get nothing more than a political rant once again from Mr Sheridan. I have a proud record on quangos, having halved the number of NHS trusts, and we will consider the rest sensibly. If Mr Sheridan thinks that the solution is easy, that is because he has simplistic solutions to everything, none of which ever works. Mr Sheridan's ranting is not my concern. My job is to continue to try to resolve this problem.

**Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** In the light of the fact that the minister has given us a lot of the history of this situation, will he encourage his predecessors to present themselves before the Parliament's committee of inquiry, so that they can give an account of the way in which they helped to make the system go wrong?

**Mr Galbraith:** That is a matter for those individuals, but I presume that Mr Lang and Mr Forsyth are included in that suggestion.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** In the context of the comments that he has made about the marking system, does the minister acknowledge that, when pupils are presented for exams next year, there will be more intermediate courses and advanced highers to mark? What assurances can he give that the system will improve and be able to cope with the increase in the number of courses

that will have to be marked next year?

**Mr Galbraith:** That is the important task before us and the key issue to which we have already turned our minds. It will be important to get the answers from the various inquiries that are being conducted, to determine what went wrong so that it can be put right. The clock is ticking and we have turned our minds to that issue already.

**Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab):** Johann Lamont and others raised the issue of the degree of accountability. I welcome the policy and management review that the minister is conducting in conjunction with Henry McLeish. As a consequence of that review, will he, jointly with his colleague, consider the appointment of a commissioner who could interface and introduce a degree of operational accountability to the affairs of the SQA?

**Mr Galbraith:** We will review all the options. Nothing is ruled out and nothing is ruled in. That is one issue that is to be considered, and is part of the system that is used in England. Final decisions on that course of action will rest with this Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** We have an unusual situation. More members want to ask questions than will fit on my monitor screen. In view of that fact, I suggest to the Minister for Parliament that we—unhappily—postpone the debate on the creative economy until a later date. *[Interruption.]* Order. That is for the convenience of the chamber. I hope, therefore, to run the question session until 4.45 pm. There will be no decision time, as no motions will have been put to the chamber. We will then go on to members' business. I hope that that compromise is acceptable to everybody.

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's answer to Richard Simpson, especially on giving flexibility to universities and on the clearing system. However, will he monitor the impact on further and higher education colleges, especially in recruitment to higher national certificate and higher national diploma courses, as the colleges' funding will follow that recruitment?

**Mr Galbraith:** We have already given a commitment that all our reassurances to the higher education sector apply also to the further education sector and that that sector will not be financially disadvantaged.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** I wish to pick up Tavish Scott's point about next year's diet of exams—we must not take our eye off that ball. I gather that there is already some slippage in the preliminary work that should be done for the 2001 process. Are people being diverted from clearing up this year's mess to ensure that we are up to the time scale for the 2001 diet?

I would also like some feedback on data handling and transfer. That is where the system seems to have gone wrong, in that the data were being produced on time by the schools and fed to the SQA, but appear to have hit some sort of barrier. The systems were not robust enough to cope. Has that been sorted out?

I was pleased to hear that extra resources will go to the appeals procedure, as that is where I hope the situation will be sorted out and credibility restored. However, there are certain things that the appeals procedure will not pick up—for example, where someone has worked very hard between the preliminary and final exams and has achieved a better result in the final exam than could have been predicted from the preliminary exam.

Sending scripts back to schools is not a good idea, but perhaps in the interests of fairness to all candidates and of restoring credibility to the system, we could organise a re-marking exercise. If teachers were asked in the right way, they might be prepared to co-operate.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. In fairness, I must appeal for shorter questions.

**Mr Galbraith:** There is no basis for a re-marking exercise. The trouble lay with the administration of the marking but not, I am told, with the marking. Year after year, candidates receive better results than they deserve, if we consider their prelims. My view is, "Good luck to them."

Nora Radcliffe was correct that the problem lay in what happened to the data once they reached the SQA. We must await the final results of the inquiries before we know the answer to that. It would be wrong to do too much before we know what the problem is. However, we are determined to resolve that matter.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** Further to the points that were made by Mary Mulligan, Sylvia Jackson and others, does the minister accept that times have perhaps changed? Will he ascertain what rights there are under the European convention on human rights for a youngster who has lost confidence in the SQA to have copies of his exam papers returned, so that he can have them scrutinised by an independent assessor?

**Mr Galbraith:** That is an issue that would make a large number of lawyers a large amount of money. However, it is a serious question—Mr Gallie is correct on that. A number of serious questions relating to the European convention on human rights apply not only to this year's exams, but to exams over the years throughout the United Kingdom. We are getting a large smile from Mr McLetchie, while he thinks about the amount of money that lawyers could make from that.



**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):**

I am sure that I am not the only member in the chamber who is a little confused about the minister's assurances. If he cannot, as he stated earlier, instruct the SQA, how on earth can he stand here today and offer any assurances about anything the SQA may or may not do?

**Mr Galbraith:** As I explained in my statement—it is a pity that members do not listen—after what happened on 10 August, it became clear to the SQA that its position was no longer tenable. The SQA was therefore willing to take our advice and instructions at that stage—indeed, it had to be prepared to take our advice and it has done so. The SQA has a new evolving management and that is the basis on which we are taking matters forward.

**Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab):** I share the minister's comments about the sterling work that has been done by teachers in the process. The minister is right to indicate that the inquiries that will be carried out are the proper place to consider what went wrong in the administration.

Tavish Scott made the point, which other members have echoed, that we have a problem for the coming year that we must consider. Notwithstanding the proper distinction that the minister makes between the issues relating to higher still and the shambles in the SQA, is he aware of concerns over higher still's assessment requirements? Can he advise Parliament of any measures that will be taken to review the higher still assessment arrangements to reduce pressure on the system and to avoid an overload in the coming year?

**Mr Galbraith:** That is an important question. Henry McLeish and I announced in March this year that we would review the first year's working of higher still. That review will, of course, include the assessment process.

As Hugh Henry knows, I have dealt with the problem in assessments for English and—as a result of that problem—I have allowed a delay of one further year, which is at the schools' discretion, for the introduction of higher still.

**John Young (West of Scotland) (Con):** The minister has just answered the question that I was going to put to him—

**The Presiding Officer:** As I have said, it is not compulsory to ask a question.

**John Young:** However, on several occasions the minister made the point that the previous Government had introduced the higher still concept. Perhaps I am being cynical, but I got the impression that the minister might have been blaming the Tories for the current fiasco.

Is the minister happy with higher still? Can he

envisage the introduction of changes to the exam?

**Mr Galbraith:** Unlike many others, I have never sought to blame anyone in this matter. That would be most inappropriate. It is a nasty feature in Scotland at the moment that, in every situation, people look for others to blame. That should not be our response—we should find out what went wrong and resolve matters.

I thought it important to point out the facts: higher still and the SQA were set up by the previous Administration. I was also fair enough to point out that none of us in the chamber, as far as I am aware, objected to that. Higher still has been approved and accepted by almost everyone in the educational establishment. There have been teething troubles with its introduction, but it is a sound and fair mechanism that blends vocational and academic qualification. It stops the waste and loss that goes on between fourth and fifth years, when some pupils are unable to take highs, and it addresses seriously the standards and lack of achievement of a large number of pupils. It is a good system, which is beginning to work well.

**Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP):** The minister has indicated that access to higher education in Scotland will not be compromised, but will those who want to study outside Scotland lose out as a result of the fiasco? If so, how many will lose out and what can the minister do about it?

**Mr Galbraith:** The figure that I gave, of 2.6 per cent more entrants to university this year than last year, applies to Scotland. That figure also applies to students in English universities.

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** For the sake of the integrity of the Parliament, it is fundamental that we deal with the issue in a non-partisan, non-party political way. This morning and this afternoon, it has been telling that Ms McLeod and Ms Sturgeon have prejudiced the outcome of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's inquiry by calling for the resignation of a minister. We either have an inquiry or we do not. If members prejudice that inquiry, they prejudice the parliamentary process that we are involved in and by which John Swinney set so much store when he spoke.

As the member of the committee who asked this morning for the minister's Executive papers to be made available, I welcome his assurances that those papers will be available to the committee for scrutiny.

On appeals, there is great concern among students about whether the appeals mechanism will be able to cope. I understand that extra resources have been put in and that the date of 20 September is in place. However, there is particular concern among students who want to study medicine and whose applications to UCAS must

be in by 15 October, that that deadline might not be met. Can the minister assure the chamber that those students will be given priority by the SQA, so that they are able to supply their applications by the deadline of 15 October?

**Mr Galbraith:** The urgent appeals are for those with university places and the deadline is to have them dealt with by 20 September. The SQA assures me that it will be able to meet that deadline.

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** Over the past couple of days I have spoken to all the secondary schools in my constituency. The message from them is that the introduction of higher still is integral to some of the problems that have arisen during the past month or two. They believe that the development programme was wrong from the start, that materials for subjects were coming in late and that changes were made to assessment criteria after children had been assessed. I hope that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee will examine those issues when it conducts its inquiry.

A couple of strange anomalies came up. Head teachers reported problems with higher still English. Rothesay Academy introduced it this year; 50 pupils sat it and around 30 failed. The winner of the school's gold medal for English failed the higher still English exam. Normally, 12 pupils from Rothesay Academy would appeal, but this year 60 will do so. There is a problem with higher still and especially with the introduction of higher still English. I hope that both the Executive and the Education, Culture and Sport Committee will examine that matter.

**Mr Galbraith:** Each time that specific problems have been raised with us, we have run those to ground. In most cases there was an explanation for the problems. We have done that and I am sure that we will be willing to do it again.

I say again that it is important to make the distinction between the matter that George Lyon raised—which is problems with the introduction of higher still—and what happened at the SQA. Higher still was introduced, the assessments took place and they were taken in. The problem came with getting the data into the machine once they had reached the SQA. That is where the problem lay—not in the schools.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** I heard the minister's assurances that sufficient funds will be available to process appeals, but I am sure that the minister will agree that the number of appeals this year will be unprecedented. Can he assure us that there will be sufficient funds? I have concerns that are similar to Mrs Gillon's. I am concerned not only about medical students, but about students who

want to study at Stirling University who would start their courses on 11 September. If their appeals are not processed, will they lose their places? Will the minister address that point?

**Mr Galbraith:** The Stirling issue is not new. It has always been there and there are mechanisms for dealing with it.

From the start we have made it clear that money was not an issue and that if the SQA required resources, in whatever form, those resources would be made available. That remains the position.

**Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP):** The minister said in his statement that in March one of his IT officials reviewed the situation and made some recommendations. How serious were the flaws that that official found? Did he make a risk assessment of the situation? Did he say that there was any chance of the system not working in the way that it has not worked, or did he say that it would work? What action did the minister take then? Was a running check kept on the implementation of the recommendations that were made by his official? Have all those recommendations been implemented? If not, when did the minister find out that they had not been implemented? If they were implemented, does not that indicate that the review was not sufficient? Should not the alarm bells have rung much more loudly in March?

**Mr Galbraith:** The official said that the problems were not serious and that, provided the SQA stuck to its plan, they could be dealt with. We followed up the assessment on several occasions, including at meetings at which we were assured that the necessary measures had been taken. In my statement I quoted from the written statement that we received, which indicated that all the internal problems had been dealt with.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** In his statement the minister mentioned a number of reviews: the full internal operational review of the SQA; the independent inquiry by the team of experts; and the bringing forward of the quinquennial review, in which—he said—all options would be considered. There will also be two inquiries by parliamentary committees—by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, into the issuing of examination results, and by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, into the governance of the SQA. How will the results of those reviews be brought together? In particular, how will the parliamentary committee inquiries be informed of the deliberations of the other reviews? It is important that the parliamentary inquiries are as well informed as possible. I support the view of Johann Lamont, Margo MacDonald and others that, if issues relating to the accountability,

transparency and legislative basis of the SQA come to light as a result of the inquiries, the Executive should propose legislative changes as a matter of urgency. Will the Executive consider doing that because, as the minister said, we want to ensure that such a shambles never happens again?

**Mr Galbraith:** An internal inquiry is taking place and its findings will be made available to the independent inquiry that is being conducted by Deloitte Touche, so that those findings may shape its recommendations. Deloitte Touche's findings will be submitted to me and made available to the committees.

We have brought forward the quinquennial review of the SQA, which will consider various options for that body's future. The member is correct to say that any suggested changes to the SQA would have to be brought before Parliament, as they would require a change to statute. The ultimate power to decide on such changes will rest with Parliament.

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** Presiding Officer, I congratulate you on the wise decision that you made in the chair this afternoon.

**The Presiding Officer:** Flattery will get you everywhere.

**Mr Davidson:** The minister gave us assurances about COSHEP, but COSHEP does not include English universities. Does he accept that some students will have lost places that they would otherwise have had? In that case, what has he done to date on their behalf to try to remedy that?

**Mr Galbraith:** I do not accept that. I remind Mr Davidson of the figure that I gave for the number of students at English universities coming from Scotland. It is 2.6 per cent higher this year than it was last year.

**Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP):** The minister has been uncharacteristically charitable this afternoon in not wishing to apportion blame. Cynics might say that that is because his name might be top of the blame list. Will he reassure us that people who have lost their jobs because of this gigantic mess—unlike the minister, who has been more fortunate—will not be rewarded with grotesquely inflated golden handshakes?

**Mr Galbraith:** Yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** The last two questions will be from David McLetchie and Alex Salmond.

**David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** I would like the minister to clarify something in his statement. On page 8 he states:

"On 12th August the Chief Executive of the SQA resigned."

My recollection of press comment at the time that the announcement was made was that the chief executive was said to have left by mutual consent. As the minister will appreciate, there is a considerable difference between resigning and leaving by mutual consent. If someone resigns, they are not entitled to any compensation for the termination of their employment, but if they leave by mutual consent, a termination package may be negotiated. There were reports that £80,000 to £100,000 was paid to Mr Tuck because his departure was by mutual consent. Many people in Scotland would feel that it was inappropriate to finance that out of public money, given the catalogue of failures that the minister has described today. Can the minister clarify his statement? Did Mr Tuck resign or did he leave by mutual consent?

**Mr Galbraith:** There is obviously a distinction in the matter that I did not quite appreciate. Mr Tuck's terms and conditions and the arrangements that he makes with the SQA are a matter not for me, but for the SQA. Mr Tuck was employed not by me, but by the SQA. Mr McLetchie should address his question to the chairman of the SQA.

**Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** A large number of questions remain unanswered, particularly questions about the appeal process and the Executive's definition of ministerial responsibility. I have two specific questions. In the minister's statement he said that now, as of this moment, all higher and sixth year studies results had been confirmed by the SQA, but under questioning he seemed to concede that some candidates might not yet be in possession of the confirmed results. Can he confirm that some pupils do not, at this moment, have their confirmed results?

In response to Mr Canavan, the minister said that he had no power of instruction over the SQA, but in response to Miss Robison he said that the new management of the SQA was taking his instruction. Which is it—instruction or no instruction; accountability or no accountability?

**Mr Galbraith:** I am afraid that the soon-to-be-ex-leader of the nationalist party—

**Dr Winnie Ewing:** He is not yet the ex-leader.

**Mr Galbraith:** The soon-to-be-ex-leader once again indulges in his barrack-room lawyer nit-picking.

**David McLetchie:** He is not a lawyer.

**Mr Galbraith:** He thinks he is. There is no inconsistency in either of those points. I said that the SQA had confirmed the results. The results are not necessarily all in the hands of the individuals concerned. The last higher result was confirmed this morning. The results are not yet all

in the hands of the individuals concerned and I did not say that that was the case.

On instruction, as I made clear in my statement, after the problems came to light after 10 August I met with the SQA and it was agreed that the stated position of the SQA was untenable. The SQA was then willing to take our advice and instructions, on the basis of the position at that time. I hope that that is now clear to Mr Salmond. I thought that I had made that clear in my statement—I went out of my way to say it but I am glad to be given the opportunity to clarify both those points so that there can be no basis for further confusion or for silly political posturing by the soon-to-be-ex-leader of the nationalist party.

**The Presiding Officer:** The statement has now run for an hour and 40 minutes, which is quite without precedent.

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** On a point of order. May I check whether my card is working? I had trouble with it before the recess and sent it off to be re-chipped—if that is the word—but I think that it is still not working.

**The Presiding Officer:** We will check it and come back to you.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Thank you. If not, please may I be noted as having been present?

**The Presiding Officer:** I will check the voting lists as well. I see that you are recorded as having voted, so your card has been successfully re-chipped.

I apologise to all those who have not been called. An hour and 40 minutes for such a session is without precedent and should not be taken as a precedent. In view of the fact that the situation arose when Parliament was in recess, it would have been irresponsible not to have the exchanges that we had this afternoon.

I now ask Henry McLeish whether he will withdraw motion S1M-1145.

**The Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Henry McLeish):** I withdraw the motion.

**The Presiding Officer:** Are we agreed?

**Members:** Yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** In that case and as there are no Parliamentary Bureau motions before us, we move to decision time. As there are no decisions to be taken, we move straight to members' business.

## Dementia Awareness Week

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** Members' business is a debate on motion S1M-952 in the name of Malcolm Chisholm.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament believes that the care of people with dementia represents one of the greatest challenges to health and welfare services throughout Scotland because of the prolonged and complex nature of the illness and the severity of its consequences for the large numbers affected and their families, and welcomes the initiative of Alzheimer Scotland—Action on Dementia during Dementia Awareness Week to highlight the need for better planning mechanisms to provide integrated and comprehensive health and social care services for this group of people.

16:44

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab):** Some members will have realised that this is not dementia awareness week, but I lodged the motion several months ago and I am pleased that it has been selected as the first members' business debate after the recess.

Until recently, I did not have much knowledge of dementia, partly because I have never known anyone with dementia. I accept that many of the people who speak after me today will have far more knowledge about it. I remind people that dementia is the fourth biggest killer in this country; it affects 60,000 Scots and that number is rising. About 55 per cent of that number have Alzheimer's disease.

Dementia is a devastating illness, which progressively destroys brain cells. It is extremely distressing for the person with dementia and for their carers. It affects memory, language, motor skills and behaviour and requires a vast amount of care. We should remember that 60 per cent of people with dementia are cared for in their homes.

I want to pay tribute to Alzheimer Scotland—Action on Dementia for all the work that it has done over the years in highlighting the issues and problems arising from dementia. I also want to congratulate Alzheimer Scotland on the important initiative that it launched in dementia awareness week, which is referred to in the motion.

I also acknowledge what has been achieved recently. I looked at Alzheimer Scotland's briefing to MSPs before the Scottish parliamentary election and noted the remark that

"laws relating to the management of money matters for those with dementia"—

and other incapable adults—

"date back to 1849 and laws relating to personal welfare date back to 1585."

I am sure that we are all delighted that one of the first acts to be passed by the Scottish Parliament was the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, which addressed those problems.

I pay tribute to the many superb initiatives throughout Scotland for the care of dementia sufferers. Margaret Smith, Dorothy-Grace Elder and I visited Craw Wood in the Borders at the beginning of the recess and I believe that Margaret Smith and Mary Scanlon visited another project in Inverness this week, which they commended in the Health and Community Care Committee this morning. The Midloch project in Glasgow was also commended in the Health and Community Care Committee this morning, which, by coincidence, Alzheimer Scotland attended. Today, while we highlight the continuing problems that arise, we must remember all the excellent new initiatives.

A Scottish needs assessment project report on dementia in 1997 pointed out:

"The authors wish to emphasise that people with dementia and their carers are currently a significantly disadvantaged group in terms of both the number and quality of services. This shortfall is particularly serious in view of the continuing increase in the number of people with dementia."

In the view of Alzheimer Scotland, that is still the situation today. This morning, I asked the organisation what the main barriers to progress were on services for people with dementia. Three things were highlighted: lack of information and data about how services are provided, lack of understanding of the complexity of the needs of people with dementia and, of course, funding problems.

The first problem was highlighted in 1997 by the Accounts Commission for Scotland in "The commissioning maze: Commissioning community care services", which identified the fact that people with dementia are one of seven main care groups, but that data on services to meet their needs are extremely poor. That problem must be addressed, because our starting point must be what exists at present.

Even more important, however, is where we want to go, which is where the Alzheimer Scotland template is so important. In the template, which was launched in dementia awareness week, the organisation has admirably and definitively outlined the range and volume of services that should be available in every area of Scotland. The template highlights diagnostic and assessment services, early-stage therapeutic services including drugs, early-stage support services including information, counselling and advocacy, and community care services including intensive home support and long-term care. I cannot go through the template in detail, but I will pick out

two or three of the main points.

First, Alzheimer Scotland emphasises the importance of early-stage support, because research indicates that early intervention can reduce morbidity and depression among people with dementia, reduce carer stress, reduce the need for crisis intervention and delay, or even prevent institutionalisation.

Secondly, the group emphasises the importance of integrated and specialised home care services, provided by the same, familiar team of care staff. Thirdly, the group feels that, when long-term care becomes necessary, people with dementia function better in small dementia units where they can be cared for by staff with dementia care training. That is exactly the kind of care that we saw at Craw Wood in July. Through all this, Alzheimer Scotland emphasises the importance of multidisciplinary working, with a lowering of the boundaries between professionals in health and social care services.

That leads us to the issue of funding and the Sutherland report in particular. Some members may wish to turn the whole debate into a debate about Sutherland. The report is clearly relevant, and many arguments in favour of Sutherland come from looking at the services for people with Alzheimer's. It is difficult to concentrate only on free nursing care when people with Alzheimer's gain more from personal care than from nursing care. The emphasis on multidisciplinary working also makes the formulation of free nursing care rather difficult, because people are not merely doing their traditional professional work. It is very unfair that people with Alzheimer's should pay for their illness when people with cancer and heart disease do not. However, it must also be pointed out that if money is put into eliminating charges for personal care, that same money, self-evidently, cannot be put into other services that dementia sufferers require, for example respite care.

We know that when resource transfers took place—they are still taking place—the beds used for respite were often forgotten. That resource was lost when long-stay national health service beds closed. We need new resources for new drugs. Several drugs, such as Aricept, are not available throughout Scotland. Sometimes there is a waiting list, and sometimes there is postcode prescribing. More resources are also required for the key early-stage services and for the specialised home support that I referred to earlier.

There are genuine dilemmas for the Executive and the Parliament when they address the Sutherland report over the next few weeks. Whatever the outcome, and whatever is charged for ultimately—we should remember that Sutherland himself advocated charging for housing and living costs, which is sometimes

forgotten—we ought to have more consistency in charging for community services and reasonable levels of charging, with a maximum level for each service that is charged for. It would also be reasonable for more income and capital to be disregarded when considering charges for both community services and long-term care.

I have probably gone on too long, given the number of people who want to speak.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson):** It is understandable that members get carried away when speaking on an important issue.

16:52

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I could start with some statistics—for example, the fact that 61,000 people suffer from dementia—but it is important to focus on the individuals who are dementia sufferers and their families, and the difficulties that the state places in their way by not operating fairly. I will come to Sutherland's views on that in a moment. People who look after either their parents or their spouse at home are unpaid carers who carry great burdens. They do so with love and affection, but they carry great burdens, both physically and emotionally. If the parent or spouse reaches the stage at which they have to go into a nursing or residential home, we all know what happens: if the people have assets, their house is sold from under their feet to pay the bills for personal care. Like Sutherland, I have no problem with people paying for their housing or living costs, but I am talking about personal care. It is wrong that people should have to pay such costs.

Even when a house has been transferred several years before into the name of older children in the family, the family is affected. Such a transfer does not protect the home, which can be clawed back by the state if the transfer is considered to be an attempt to avoid paying for personal care. That causes stress to a family at a time when dreadful decisions are being made about putting a husband or wife, or a mum or dad, into a home. That is a terrible decision to have to make. We have all met anxious people with great concerns about such decisions, which they have deferred until, perhaps, they had no option.

I will focus on three matters—quickly, so that as many others as possible can speak. First, the Scottish Parliament must implement the Sutherland report and make personal care free at the point of delivery wherever it takes place. We owe that to the Scottish people and a just society depends on it. We are talking about only £110 million, a figure that must be compared with the obscene amount of money that is being thrown at

the millennium dome. I know everyone thought that I might bring that up, but we must get our money priorities right. As Malcolm Chisholm says, it is unjust that only people with this illness pay for personal care.

The second matter is day care. I visited the Broomhill Day Centre, which integrates dementia sufferers with other elderly people who are there for respite. The centre has to grub around for funds from various sources such as the lottery, social work departments and voluntary organisations, but it performs a fundamental service in retaining elderly people in the community and sustaining their carers. I have lodged a question to ask whether the coalition will make a commitment at some point to make day care provision a statutory requirement and to underpin it with proper funding.

My third point relates to the carers who are faced with the dreadful decisions that I have mentioned. I want carers to be paid an allowance, the use of which would not be determined for them. It is a radical idea. They could blow their allowance on some clothes from Marks and Spencer or use it to take a week's holiday. That would give them a lift, a bit to themselves to keep them going while doing a task that they do with love and care but that often undermines their health, which can have an impact on their ability to care for their ailing relative.

On 14 September, a march of pensioners in Edinburgh will address not only the failure of the pension, which is another matter entirely, but the failure to implement the Sutherland report in England and the decision to refer to just nursing care.

I hope that Mr Gray listens to the pensioners and to the many cross-party voices in the Parliament and does the right thing by our older people.

16:57

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I am not sure whether I should declare an interest in this debate. All of us should, probably, because anyone who is idiotic enough to enter politics is a candidate for suffering from mental problems or forgetfulness in later years. I have already qualified by standing up on one occasion to pay tribute to Johann Lamont and failing to remember her name.

Many voluntary groups that help people who suffer from Alzheimer's have suffered cuts in real terms in recent years. I keep in close touch with a group that I helped to start up in the ward that I represented as a councillor. Its small grant has stood still for the past five years, which has resulted in a significant real-terms cut. The issue is

the funding of councils in general, as they fund many local groups.

Respite care and day care also involve funding by councils. Respite care is important. It has improved a little in some areas that I know about, but we must not forget the vital role that it plays and the fact that it can be assisted by relatively small sums of money. There is a national UK issue about carers. Some of my clever colleagues, such as Professor Steven Webb in Westminster, have made good suggestions about ways to help carers. However, the Scottish Parliament can do things to help respite care and day care.

The briefs produced by Alzheimer Scotland make clear the fact that no one has a grip on the issue. There must be a combined and joined-up government effort—this is a prize area for joined-up government. There have been numerous speeches on joined-up government, but practical examples of it are as near zero as makes no difference.

If someone suffers from dementia, they or their relatives have to pay for their illness, whereas if someone has a road accident and loses a limb or something, the state pays. That is just ridiculous. Dementia is a form of illness and disability like any other.

The Executive and the Parliament should go fully with the Sutherland report's recommendations as soon as possible. That would be a big expense, and the implementation of all the report's recommendations may not be possible in one year, but we must work hard towards that, because it is the only fair way to deal with the problem and to put resources into helping the growing aged population, which we will all join in due course.

17:00

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

I commend Malcolm Chisholm on securing the debate, which gives us the opportunity to ask whether dementia is treated on a par with other chronic illnesses under the national health service.

I quote from a leaflet on Alzheimer's disease:

"A person with dementia continues to be a person of worth and dignity and deserving the same respect as any other human being."

That is particularly important as far as this illness is concerned. Despite dementia care being person centred, a recent survey revealed that 80 per cent of social care workers, including care assistants, had no relevant training or qualifications. That is stated in Alzheimer Scotland's "Action on Dementia" briefing paper, which also states that 60 per cent of people who care for people with Alzheimer's suffer ill health or nervous problems

as a direct result of caring.

As Malcolm Chisholm mentioned, Margaret Smith and I visited the Mackenzie Centre in Inverness last week, as part of our community care inquiry. The centre is a particularly good partnership between organisations, offering care and essential support for people with dementia and their carers. It is a day centre that provides respite and stimulation, and helps to keep the mind active. The project is funded jointly by the health and social work services departments of Highland Council, and is managed by Alzheimer Scotland. The paid staff have all had specialist training in dementia. The problems that are faced at that centre probably epitomise the problems that are faced across Scotland.

A pilot project, funded by the Clutterbuck bequest fund, was recently run at the centre. It was very successful, and provided up to 50 hours of home care to people in the early stages of dementia, when intervention is essential—a point that Malcolm Chisholm recognised. The home care is also aimed at people who do not want to go into day care.

The social work services department of Highland Council examined closely the success of the project, but simply has no money. I commend the good practice in such projects, which helps to keep people in their homes and to ensure that they get companionship, nutritious food, mind stimulation, and care and support. It also saves money on residential and hospital care and ensures that patients receive treatment that is appropriate to their needs. It is sad, in this day and age, that where a recognised, successful project exists, we cannot find the money to support it.

I hope that the recommendations of the joint futures working group, the Executive response to the Sutherland commission and the recommendations of the community care inquiry report will ensure that such good, sensible practice, which is backed up by empirical data demonstrating success, will be made available to people with dementia across Scotland.

17:04

**Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab):** I begin by declaring that I am the joint holder of a research grant from the Alzheimer Society, to test the education of general practitioners in dementia.

In the early 1980s, I sat on the mental health programme planning group in the Scottish Office, one outcome of which was the Timbury report. Professor Timbury was absolutely committed to the support of dementia patients and their carers, and it is regrettable that, 20 years on, the care and support provided has not developed as fully as he would have liked.

We should acknowledge that dementia has been recognised as a separate condition only for about 40 years, which is quite a short time in medical terms. We should begin with early diagnosis and proceed to effective management regimes, which can significantly slow the progress of the illness, and manage its most debilitating features. Early diagnosis must be followed by comprehensive support, which exists in some areas. If the mental health framework is developed—we have had a firm commitment to its development from Iain Gray in previous debates—we will be able to be proud of the support that we give dementia patients and their families in Scotland.

Last week, I met carers from Central region at a question-and-answer session in Falkirk, which followed a previous session at a carers forum attended by 120 carers from the region. They expressed a number of concerns, particularly about respite care. Those families and carers desperately need a guarantee of adequate respite. Day care provision is another aspect of respite care. A carer's ability to lead his or her own life and remain in good health is crucial.

The second thing that has been brought to our attention by carers, but which is not a matter for this Parliament to deal with directly, is the complexity of the benefits system as it relates to dementia sufferers and their families. There are some serious problems that need to be addressed. The UK Government's one-stop benefits shop should help, and the proposed stakeholder pensions should provide recognition of the debt society owes to carers.

The compact that the Scottish Executive has developed with carers, and the further £5 million that has been provided in addition to the previous £5 million, should be helpful. Dementia groups are watching expenditure in this area carefully. The Executive's support for the dementia centre at the University of Stirling is welcome, as is the other unit in that university, funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

In responding to the Sutherland report "With Respect to Old Age", we have the opportunity to ensure that nursing care for dementia sufferers is recognised as an intensive form of personal care that is absolutely essential to those patients. We are faced with difficult choices about boundaries in personal care if we are not going to fund it fully, so I hope that the matter will be addressed very clearly in any Executive response to the report.

In the Health and Community Care Committee this morning, I highlighted the opportunity that I believe is presented to the Executive in responding to Sutherland to seek a much more radical solution embracing all long-stay care. I shall elaborate on that solution in the chamber and in other forums in the next week. We can be proud

of the fact that this Parliament's first social legislation was the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, which has been welcomed by Alzheimer groups.

Health is a mirage. As our predecessors dealt with infectious diseases, we have been faced with cardiovascular and cancer problems as our main priorities. As we tackle those—we are tackling them and treatment is improving—we will be faced with increasing numbers of patients with dementia. If this debate has helped to raise awareness, a start has been made. The start that the Executive has made in this area with the mental health framework is excellent; we must build on it.

17:08

**Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP):** I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing this debate and thank all those who have spoken about different facets of the problems.

Richard Simpson, Malcolm Chisholm, Mary Scanlon and I heard evidence at the Health and Community Care Committee meeting this morning from Alzheimer Scotland—Action on Dementia. The witnesses sketched various examples of cases. One story that caught my attention was about an old lady who constantly went up and down stairs looking for the bairns. The bairns were grown up and long gone and were probably parents and grandparents themselves, but she kept on looking for them. That is an extremely difficult type of case for carers to deal with at home.

At the other extreme, as I have heard from many nurses, there can be violence against nurses and carers. General practitioners have told me of once loving mothers who, when they developed dementia, turned round and spat in the face of the daughters caring for them, and of loving fathers who suddenly started striking out with their sticks at their carers or close relatives. Those carers are most likely to break down completely, physically and mentally.

We are subjecting carers to double the punishment by the meanness of our provision for them and our lack of recognition of what they suffer. For so many of them, it is a quite terrible life. I know people who sometimes care for two or three elderly persons with various degrees of dementia. In the Scottish population, there are 36,600 dementia sufferers at home, which means that the lives of approximately 36,000 families are altered by the presence of a person who, through no fault of their own, has the condition. People have to stump up for care.

Furthermore, I ask the Parliament to pay attention to the generation that is most likely to suffer from dementia; the generation to whom we



owe most and who went to work at the age of 14 and did not stop until they were 60 or 65. They have more than paid for their place in some good caring institution—and by good I do not mean one of those gigantic shelf-stacking hospitals hated by the elderly and visitors. We must fight for the retention of smaller community hospitals such as Blawarthill in Glasgow and for sensitivity in provision.

We saw examples of sensitivity in the Borders. An old car was beautifully restored in the garden of one particular nursing home, and the old people liked to sit in it and smell the leather, as it brought back happy memories for them. However, although we must move forward with such sensitivity, we must also spend the money. These people deserve it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call the minister to wind up, I would like to apologise to members whom I have not been able to call and thank the minister for agreeing to cut short his speech to allow other members to speak.

17:12

**The Deputy Minister for Community Care (Iain Gray):** I congratulate Mr Chisholm on securing today's debate. I am pleased that so many members have signed the motion and have either spoken or sought to speak on it. That reflects the growing interest in dementia, which is a great and important thing. Dementia is a disease that many fear and misunderstand. We have to overcome such fear and misunderstanding.

The Executive agrees with the motion: the care of people with dementia represents one of the greatest challenges to health and welfare services throughout Scotland. As several members have said, there are around 61,000 people in Scotland with dementia, and as Dorothy-Grace Elder said, two thirds of that number have mild dementia and often live in the community at home or with family. The third who have moderate to severe dementia tend to be in a care home or hospital. That means that many agencies such as health boards and trusts, local authorities and the voluntary sector have a responsibility to improve the quality of care for people with dementia.

Care is a complex of early-stage service support, medication where appropriate, counselling services, respite care, home care, day care, adaptations to housing or special needs housing and sometimes long-term care, all of which have been mentioned by many members.

That matrix of services makes the "Framework for Mental Health Services in Scotland" very relevant, as Dr Richard Simpson pointed out. Launched in September 1997, its continuing aim is to focus the efforts of all agencies to ensure that

the required complex of services is available. We have already said that there is still much work to be done on implementation of the framework, and the mental health and well-being support group continues to visit health board areas to push this work forward.

Furthermore, the proposed Scottish commission for the regulation of care will have a major role in ensuring and improving the quality of care available to people with dementia, in both day care and residential care. The importance of the quality of care was mentioned towards the end of the debate.

Indeed, the National Care Standards Committee is drawing up national standards by which all services will be regulated. The draft standards on care for older people have been prepared by a working group that has been chaired by Professor Marshall, who is the director of the Dementia Services Development Centre, and are out for consultation.

It is right that the motion should acknowledge that much of the progress in dementia care in Scotland has been driven by organisations such as Alzheimer Scotland and the Dementia Services Development Centre, which is based in Stirling. We should acknowledge Alzheimer Scotland's leading role in the Alliance for the Promotion of the Incapable Adults Bill, which worked so constructively with the Parliament in the passage of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

The Dementia Services Development Centre has done much innovative work in areas that have been referred to, such as training, and it has done some extremely important work on dementia-friendly design. Its work in both of those areas can be seen played out in day and residential care throughout Scotland.

A range of community care policy developments by the Scottish Executive will contribute to better services for people with dementia. They include joint working between agencies, supported by the modernising community care fund; the carers strategy, which was announced in November, and the developments that will flow from that; and, as Mary Scanlon mentioned, the work of the joint futures group, which will be developing its recommendations this month in four seminars around Scotland. Many of those developments are recommendations of the Royal Commission on Long Term Care of the Elderly. As has been said, the recommendations that are relevant to funding care will be progressed in the forthcoming spending review.

Mary Scanlon made the important point that those who have dementia should retain their dignity. It is central to our community care agenda that care should be designed to what users want.

That holds good for people with dementia. The Dementia Services Development Centre has nearly completed a two-year project seeking to develop ways in which people with dementia can be encouraged to express their own thoughts and feelings on the services that they receive and on how service practitioners and service providers listen and act on those views. That gives an important underpinning to the improvement of the quality of care.

Such innovative work is typical of the work of the centre and is one reason why we provide it with £133,900 a year. For some time, the centre has been planning a new building as the next stage in its development. More than £1 million has been raised by public appeal from individuals and from organisations in the Scottish financial and business community. I am glad to take this opportunity to announce that we are contributing £500,000 to allow the centre to proceed to the tendering stage.

We have hardly touched on a subject that has a broad range of aspects, but time is short. The Scottish Executive acknowledges that we can do much to improve the quality of care and services that is provided for people with dementia. We have begun the process of change, but we are only at the beginning. We will continue to support that process, to which this debate has contributed.

*Meeting closed at 17:18.*

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