

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 27 September 2000
(*Afternoon*)

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 27 September 2000

(Afternoon)

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): To lead our time for reflection today, I am delighted to welcome the former MP for Galloway, now Father George Thompson, the parish priest of St Peter's Catholic church, Dalbeattie.

Father George Thompson (St Peter's Catholic Church, Dalbeattie): Thank you, Sir David.

When my grandmother burned her girdle scones, she would cut up the farls as usual for the tea table but set them on the plate so that the unburned bits were turned towards her guests and the burned towards herself. She would say, "Aye turn the bonnie side tae London." Today, I hope that the Scottish housewife in similar plight would say, "Aye turn the bonnie side tae Embro!" I will do my best this afternoon.

In St John's gospel, it is written that:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"—

and later that:

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

What a taciturn God: just one Word, while we live in a world awash with words. Yet here am I adding more to the ocean and, after I am gone, I dare say that some of you will be pouring in more.

Poets, politicians and priests are some of the folk whose trade is in words. Poets are craftsmen—wordsmiths. They hone and chisel at their words until they have expressed as nearly as they can the beauty that has gripped them and the precise meaning that they intend to convey.

Politicians and priests often have neither the inspiration nor the time to hone and chisel at their words until they approach perfection. Politicians sometimes find their wordcraft rushed and botched by the need to get into tomorrow's papers. Great poetry will never be written in soundbites, though they might affect the composition of our next Scottish Parliament—or so, at least, our soundbiters hope.

Priests do not usually find their words dissected in tomorrow's papers, and certainly not in an era

when our national newspapers feel able to do without religious affairs correspondents. Yet priests are aware that they will have to answer for misuse of words to the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ.

If our torrential output blunts the cutting edge of words, where will poets, politicians and priests find the language that we will need, when we have to convince our respective constituencies of the urgency of matters of life and death for our planet and our species, such as the reckless depletion of non-renewable resources, the folly of the arms trade and the destruction of the environment? If we accustom folk to the use of weasel words in everyday matters, where will we find the clear, clean, precise and honest words that we will need then to carry conviction?

Language has made us human beings. Let us treasure it. Let us care for it. Let us seek to leave it more humane than we found it.

Now a prayer:

God, you have given us your Word to be with us forever. Grant us the grace to use our human words for your glory and for the upbuilding of the community of Scotland in freedom, justice and peace. We ask this through him who is your Word to us and our word to you, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally a blessing, which I give to you with all my heart and, through you, to everyone who lives in Scotland:

May the peace and blessing of Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you all and remain with you forever.

Amen.

Justice Expenditure

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Our next item of business is a statement by Mr Jim Wallace, on justice expenditure. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions during it.

14:35

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice (Mr Jim Wallace): This is the first meeting of the Parliament since the weekend, so perhaps this is an appropriate opportunity to congratulate Mr John Swinney and Ms Roseanna Cunningham on their respective elections to office. *[Applause.]*

Last Wednesday, Jack McConnell set out the Executive's draft budget for the next financial year and our spending plans for the subsequent two years. This afternoon, I will set out our plans for justice.

My aims are clear: a Scotland where people feel safer and are safer; a fairer Scotland; and a more open and accountable Scotland, with a justice system fit for a modern society. That means giving the police and fire services the tools to do the job; tackling the causes of crime to reduce offending; a modern and efficient court system; and prisons that rehabilitate rather than simply return offenders to reoffend.

In the current financial year, the Scottish justice budget for central and local government expenditure stands at £1,575 million. The extra resources that I am announcing today mean that, by 2003, that figure will rise to £1,847 million. Put simply, that is the best ever spending package for Scottish justice. It means an additional £87 million next year, an extra £172 million the following year and an extra £229.5 million in 2003-04. That adds up to an increase of £488.5 million—nearly half a billion pounds—over the next three years. In real terms, planned expenditure on justice will be 12.8 per cent higher for central Government expenditure and 7.5 per cent higher for local authority expenditure in 2003-04 than in the current financial year. Those increases will allow further progress towards our commitment to a safer and fairer Scotland.

Effective operational policing requires both front-line officers and efficient central services to support them. Police funding is increasing to record levels. Local authority revenue funding for the police will increase by £23.7 million in 2001-02, by £59.3 million in 2002-03 and by £82.7 million in 2003-04. Central Government-funded police services have been allocated additional sums of £22.7 million in 2001-02, £35.6 million in

2002-03 and £35.3 million in 2003-04. Taking into account funding provided to the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency for up to 200 additional officers, those increases will allow a sustainable rise—to a record level—in the number of police officers. Officer numbers should be able to exceed the previous record figure of 15,050; that will lead to higher policing visibility and faster response times, have an impact on the crime rate and improve the detection rate.

It is essential that local police forces are fully supported by a range of centrally provided services. Before finalising the detailed allocations, I will have discussions with local authority representatives, but I can say today that additional funding will be invested in a range of services.

A well-trained police force is an efficient force. This settlement will ensure that the Scottish Police College will be able to cope with the higher number of students that will arise from the recruitment of additional officers. The Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency, which includes the Scottish Crime Squad, will now have an established, increasing baseline. The additional funding will also allow for investment in DNA testing and information technology services, and for assisting forces in the fight against organised crime. It will provide for the costs of implementing British Telecom's airwave service, the new police radio communications system, for the spending review period.

I can also announce an allocation of £3 million that will be necessary over three years to fund a fundamental overhaul of the Scottish Criminal Record Office's fingerprint service. That money will allow full implementation of the recent recommendations of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary.

A fairer and safer Scotland means better protection and support for victims of domestic abuse. That is why this settlement means continued funding of the domestic abuse service development fund, which funds community projects against domestic abuse. We have also ring-fenced funding for the recommendations that will flow from the report of the Scottish partnership on domestic abuse, which we expect to be submitted next month.

We have been able to increase the police local authority capital allocation by £26.7 million over three years. That represents a real-terms increase of 48 per cent by 2003-04 over the provision for the current financial year. The additional funding will give forces more buying power for vehicle and equipment replacement and capital building works, and will cover any local capital costs arising from the new radio system.

On prisons, it is not enough that we are vigilant

in preventing crime and catching criminals. We owe it to the Scottish community to take steps to prevent people from reoffending. We need prison programmes that return ex-offenders to the community with the right attitude skills. To that end, we will give the Scottish Prison Service £7 million more in 2001-02, £14 million more in 2002-03 and £29 million more in 2003-04. That is a real-terms increase overall of 6.2 per cent over the current year. The assiduous members among us—I am sure that that includes everyone present—will have noticed a printing error in the prisons funding figure for 2000-01 on page 28 of the document “Making a Difference for Scotland”, which was published last week. That should read £249 million, rather than £294 million.

The increase in funding will allow the implementation of initiatives associated with “Intervention and Integration for a Safer Society”, including the introduction of a sex offender programme for young offenders. It will enable the Scottish Prison Service to set up key links with community agencies to tackle housing, alcohol abuse, parenting skills, domestic violence, health promotion and employability issues for both young offenders and women prisoners. The service can continue with the successful prisoner programmes that address offending behaviour. Those include programmes dealing with sex offending, cognitive skills and anger management. The service will also be able to accelerate the modernisation of the prison estate, creating appropriate places for the projected long-term rise in prisoner population and providing access to night sanitation.

Within the SPS, increased allocation sums of £2 million, £4 million and £4 million in each year are earmarked for work with prisoners with a drug problem, with the objective of reducing the level of drug misuse in Scottish prisons. Those increases will enable the SPS to deliver the level of service that 21st century Scotland demands.

Building a safer Scotland requires a properly funded fire service, with effective training and modern equipment. We recognise that there has been concern within the service over funding of pensions, and we will provide funding to deal with that concern. We have increased support to local government for the fire service by £45 million over the review’s three-year cycle. That will mean an additional £8 million in the next financial year, £15 million in the year after that and £22 million in 2003-04. Those increases will help local authorities to address the problem of the exceptional increase in fire service pension costs that is expected over the next three years. Fire local authority capital is set to rise by £19 million over the review period—by £4 million, £7 million and £8 million. That will allow brigades to pursue vehicle and equipment replacement and building projects.

I also want more training, both basic and specialist, to be provided. I am pleased to announce a 56.4 per cent increase in real terms over the three-year period for fire service training and fire safety promotion. The baseline increases of £2.6 million, £2.4 million and £2.6 million will help us to meet increasing needs.

Building a safer society involves both tackling the underlying causes of crime and providing better support for victims and witnesses. We are funding a package of community justice services to do just that. The programme supports services for victims of crime and witnesses. It also funds community justice services that deliver alternatives to custody, such as probation orders, community service orders, drug testing and treatment orders and electronic tagging, mainly through local authorities. The additional provision of £51 million over the next three years will promote high-quality and effective disposals for use by the courts and will focus on key priority groups including young offenders, women and offenders with drug misuse or alcohol problems. We propose annual increases of £9.6 million in the next financial year, £18 million in 2002-03 and £23.5 million in 2003-04. By the third year of the review, that will amount to a real-terms increase of 43 per cent over the current year.

We also plan to contribute to the cross-cutting programme of expenditure on drugs policy; £9.5 million over three years is being ring-fenced within the criminal justice social work services programme to provide additional funding to deal with drug-related offences, with the long-term target of reducing drug-related and youth crime. The full cross-cutting programme will be announced separately.

During 2001, we will see significant developments in services for victims and witnesses. We plan to roll out the witness support service, which is proving to be a successful and worthwhile initiative, to all sheriff courts by 2003-04. We will pilot a scheme to provide better information for victims on the progress of cases and the release date of offenders. We will set up a unit within the justice department to take charge of the implementation of the victims’ strategy, to improve the co-ordination and provision of services for victims.

As I understand the Lord Advocate intimated to the Justice and Home Affairs Committee today, there will be a pilot of a new and innovative service—accountable to the Lord Advocate—for victims and witnesses in cases reported to the procurator fiscal. I have also implemented the Justice and Home Affairs Committee’s recommendation that baseline provision for the annual grant to Victim Support Scotland be increased to reflect the grant offered, rather than

having additional funds added in year. We will work with Victim Support Scotland to increase awareness of the support services that it offers and to make it easier to access.

We are committed to a modern and efficient courts system that is able to meet the demands of the 21st century. The Scottish Court Service will receive an increase of £12 million over the next three years, which breaks down to increases of £2 million, £4.5 million and £5.5 million. That provision will meet the continuing cost of the additional five supreme court and 19 permanent sheriff posts that have been created by the Executive since July last year, together with the appointment of part-time sheriffs to assist permanent sheriffs in meeting the demands of the courts programme.

The additional provision will also meet the cost of establishing the office of the public guardian to take forward the implementation of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. The additional funding will enable the recruitment of an additional 40 or so staff and will fund accommodation costs and essential computer equipment to allow the office to become operational from 1 April 2001.

As a consequence of those budget proposals, spending on justice will reach record levels and will therefore be able to make a real difference to the people of Scotland. To make that difference, we must ensure that we get the maximum benefit from all the resources that we are investing.

It is clear to me what people expect from a modern justice system. People want highly visible police forces that prevent and detect crime; they want our fire brigades to be well trained and well equipped; they want our courts to operate efficiently, effectively and fairly and our prisons to ensure that prisoners do not simply commit more crimes once they are released. People want the victims of crime to be given proper help and support.

Those are the Executive's priorities too. I commend the plans to the Parliament.

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I thank the minister for coming to Parliament to give his statement today, although I hope that he will forgive me if I reserve a more enthusiastic welcome until we have been able to go through the figures carefully. In the past, we have discovered that once the headlines have been and gone, things do not improve quite as dramatically as was indicated initially.

Indeed, we had an experience of that this morning, to which the minister referred. When the Justice and Home Affairs Committee questioned the Lord Advocate about the headline figure, he told us about the Crown Office budget of £22.5 million over three years. That turns out to be £22.5

million at current prices, using the method of triple counting over the three years. When that figure is broken down, it does not look quite as generous. By the end of the question and answer session, the Lord Advocate was reduced to responding, "Well, that's what Jack McConnell thinks he's giving me."

We look forward to going through the figures with a very fine-toothed comb indeed. I hope that the minister's optimistic estimate of the increase in the number of police officers on our streets will happen in practice, although I notice he was rather cautious in his statement, saying that the number "should be able to exceed" the previous figure of 15,000. One would at least hope that the number would reach that previous figure; an extension on that would be regarded as a major bonus.

On prison funding, the minister outlined a long list of areas that required expenditure, and said what the increased expenditure was expected to cover, but he did not specifically mention slopping out in Scotland's prisons. I raise that matter now because of the imminent implementation of the Human Rights Act 1998. Has the minister made an estimate of the cost of ending slopping out now, should there be a challenge to that practice after 3 October and were that challenge to be—as is widely anticipated—successful? What time scale does he envisage for ending slopping out, given the likelihood of that challenge? How does that potential challenge fit into the figures that the minister has given us today? A small amount of money seems to be expected to cover a great many things, including the ending of slopping out. I do not see how it can all be achieved.

Mr Wallace: I was going to thank Roseanna Cunningham for her comments; I think that there was something there to thank her for.

Roseanna Cunningham said that she wants to examine the figures in more detail. I am sure that Angus MacKay and I will be only too pleased to appear before the Justice and Home Affairs Committee, which I think that her colleague, Mr Morgan, will be convening, to answer in more detail on the figures.

She mentioned that I referred quite carefully to police numbers and expected police numbers. She will be the first to acknowledge that responsibility for implementing operational matters lies with chief constables. Although the Executive can make the funding available, what the chief constables do with that money is an operational matter for them.

We made £8.9 million of funding available in May this year to employ more police officers and there has already been a significant increase in recruitment in many forces. There was a concern that that funding was a one-off. With this settlement, we have ensured that the funding can

be sustained through the period of the spending review. That sum was sufficient to provide 300 additional police officer places. In addition to that, there is money from the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency for both central deployment and local force deployment, for an additional 200 officers, which will make 500 officers in all. That is a matter for the chief constables, but the funding is there for them to do that.

I mentioned access to night sanitation in my statement. There is a view that we must continue to make progress towards ending slopping out. Some 25 per cent of prisoner places do not have access to night sanitation. As Ms Cunningham and the Parliament will know, the estates review is being undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. Once that review is complete and proposals have been put to ministers, I will have a better idea of—and will be better able to indicate—the likely time scale for ending slopping out. I can indicate that £10 million extra capital funding has been provided to accelerate the ending of slopping out. However, Ms Cunningham may recall from evidence that was given to her committee that ending that practice is about not only resources, but places being available to decant prisoners to while the necessary refurbishment work is done.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for passing me a copy of his statement. It reached me just before I had to go to meet Prestwick Academy students, who are in the Parliament today. As Roseanna Cunningham said, that hardly gave us a great deal of time to examine the figures in detail.

The Conservatives welcome the additional funding for justice. It is nothing less than we expected, given the massive escalation in taxation imposed by Gordon Brown. As far as we are concerned, there is a need to make up for the underfunding of the past three years.

Will the minister expand on his comments on police numbers and the issues surrounding pensions in the police and fire services? How many retirements are expected in the police and fire services during the next four years and how will that impact on police and fire service numbers?

Will the minister confirm that fire and police pensions—lump sum payments and on-going pension commitments—are funded from operational budgets? Does he accept that anticipated retirements in Strathclyde fire brigade, for example, will result in an escalation in lump sum payments from £1 million in the current year to £4 million per year for the next three years, with a fourfold increase in month-by-month payments? Will the minister assure me that that cost will be met and that there will not be a shortfall in later years?

Given that the minister has emphasised the importance of local authorities' contribution to fire and police services, does he intend to ring-fence the money that will be supplied to the local authorities? Will he identify the additional cost of training? Do today's spending pledges represent a gain or a net loss? Has consideration been given to allowing officers who are fit enough and who wish to continue beyond the compulsory retirement age of 55 to do so? Would that bring financial advantage?

What provisions have been made for the additional and unforeseen implications of compliance with the European convention on human rights? Does the minister consider that, irrespective of those implications, the justice budget is receiving a net gain? Roseanna Cunningham raised the subject of slopping out in prisons such as Barlinnie and I add my voice to her call.

Finally, the minister and Roseanna Cunningham referred to the Lord Advocate, who said this morning that serious crime was becoming harder to prosecute and harder to investigate. That suggests that considerably greater resources are needed. Does the new budget allocation cater for that in a way that means a real-terms uplift?

Mr Wallace: I welcome Mr Gallie's initial welcome. On police numbers, I do not have too much to add to the answer that I gave Roseanna Cunningham. I indicated that that is an operational matter for chief constables. Mr Gallie linked that to potential retirements. It is a question of providing enough money not solely to recruit a particular number of officers, but to have them in place, taking account of the fact that there are inevitably retirements in any given year. That is what is important.

Mr Gallie will recall that when I gave the figures for the fire service, I said that we were conscious of the fact that there are pay and pensions pressures on the fire authorities. It is for the fire authorities to decide how best to direct their resources. The increases that have been announced—£8 million next year, £15 million the year after that and £22 million in 2003-04—will take in a number of things, but we were mindful of the pensions pressures when we set the budget.

Mr Gallie asked about ring fencing. As he knows, the grant-aided expenditure that is set for the police is matched by the Executive pound for pound, although if the local authority wanted to go above GAE, that would have to be found from the local authority's own resources.

There is provision for fire service training, which will increase by around £2 million in each of the next three years. That is intended to buy the necessary level of progression and specialist

training from the fire service college; it provides for the development of facilities and delivery of recruitment and other training at the Scottish Fire Service Training School.

On ECHR, the impact of the temporary sheriffs case—the provision of new full-time and part-time sheriffs—has been taken into account in the budget. We have undertaken an audit and, as Mr Gallie knows, we will introduce legislation in the near future to take account of the European convention on human rights, although from memory—I add that caveat—I do not think that the expenditure consequences are significant.

The Presiding Officer: A lot of members would like to ask questions, so I appeal for short exchanges.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): I welcome the Minister for Justice's statement in respect of additional police numbers. However, I am concerned about the method of allocating police officers in areas such as my constituency, where there has been a significant increase in violent crime. Will he consider ring-fencing an allocation for police numbers in areas where crime is at its highest, such as Blackhill in my constituency?

What funding will be allocated to victims of crime, particularly those who are going through the court system? I am concerned by the poor liaison with victims of crime during trials. I am also concerned by the level of support that is available and the arrangements that are in place for them.

Mr Wallace: I emphasise that, under the tripartite arrangement between police boards, chief constables and the Executive, deployment of police is an operational matter for chief constables to determine. We are making the resources available. In addition to the GAE, the money that I indicated would be provided this financial year as a top-up will allow police forces and chief constables to increase the number of officers. That money will be supplied as a separate item. It would be improper for ministers to direct chief constables. We abandoned establishment numbers some years ago, but we are making a clear indication that resources are being made available and we expect to see an increased number of police officers engaged in front-line services.

Mr Martin asked about funding for victims. In the current year, Victim Support Scotland receives a grant of £2.2 million from the Scottish Executive. I have indicated that we are fully funding Victim Support in the baseline—we are not topping up the money as we have done in previous years—in response to a recommendation from the Justice and Home Affairs Committee. Victim Support Scotland's grant amounts to around £30 per victim

contacted in Scotland, compared with £10 in England and Wales.

There are two further issues. First, I am aware of the problems under the Data Protection Act 1998 of the police passing on names to Victim Support Scotland. That is being looked at. Secondly, we are anxious to use the benefits of modern technology and information technology to get a flow of information from the police and the procurator fiscal service to victims. That project is provided for in this funding settlement.

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): I welcome the tenor of the statement and in particular the fact that Victim Support resources are being put on a coherent basis. Will the £17.8 million for reviews and consultation exercises, which is mentioned on page 29 of "Making a Difference for Scotland", allow for the cost of a police complaints system and the proposed new judicial appointments system, in addition to what is mentioned on that page?

Mr Wallace: I welcome Mr Robson's comments. I assure him that the settlement provides for the establishment of the office of the Scottish information commissioner, which follows on from freedom of information legislation. Moreover, funding has been secured over a three-year period to allow for expenditure that might arise from reviews and consultations such as the forthcoming consultations on the introduction of an independent element into police complaints. It will also allow for expenditure on any costs—although I suspect that they will not be considerable—arising from judicial appointments, on the working group that has been set up to look at charities law, and on the establishment of a joint working fund to promote cross-cutting initiatives in the Scottish criminal justice system.

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): In his statement, the Minister for Justice said that local authority revenue funding for the police would increase by £26 million over three years. However, by my calculations, the increase will be only £11 million over that period.

Will the minister assure me that we will not have a repeat of the situation that we have in Central Scotland police, where the lack of expenditure available for capital projects is forcing the police to consider private finance initiative funding for the desperately needed Falkirk police station? Will he also assure me that, with regard to the prison budget, there will be no further PFI-financed prisons in Scotland and that the budget will cover the provision of any additional prison space that is required?

Mr Wallace: There is a considerable uplift in the capital that is available for police work, but that does not rule out the use of private capital. That is

not to say that the use of private capital is expected, but it would be folly to rule it out. There is substantially more money available. Whether that will affect the situation in Falkirk will depend on the negotiations that will take place between the Executive and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. I assure him that the distribution will be worked out fairly.

As I indicated to the Justice and Home Affairs Committee this month, we await the estates review. However, on the further use of private prisons, nothing has been ruled in and nothing has been ruled out.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I welcome the minister's statement, particularly the announcement of an increase in funding for the police. I was struck by two points. One was that the increase in resources and the allocation of those resources are matters for the chief constables. I appreciate that that is the case, but I was also struck by the fact that the minister mentioned that the public want a highly visible police force. He is absolutely right in that assertion.

Will the Executive consider giving guidelines to chief constables that would allow them to allocate police officers to beat patrols? My experience—and I am sure that it is shared by many members—is that the kind of crime that most often affects people and that raises the perception that there is crime in the streets is what might normally be referred to as petty crime—vandalism, loitering, breaking into cars and causing disruption in neighbourhoods.

Mr Wallace: Although those are operational matters for the chief constables, discussions relating to them take place. Many chief constables have mentioned the importance of a visible police presence. That can have a deterrent effect, but it can also reassure law-abiding citizens.

I am sorry, but I cannot remember the second part of the question.

Patricia Ferguson: I asked whether guidelines might be given to chief constables on high visibility.

Mr Wallace: I would not suggest that there will be a formal list of guidelines, but discussions take place on the matter that the member raises and her point is well understood by chief constables.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): As the minister is aware, on 11 September, Clive Fairweather gave evidence to the Justice and Home Affairs Committee about Barlinnie prison, which has 17.5 per cent overcrowding. The fact that the refurbishment programme there has been put on hold links to Roseanna Cunningham's question about slopping out. Given Clive

Fairweather's extreme concerns, which he could not have stressed more than he did, what assurance can the minister give us that, in this budget, the problems at Barlinnie will be given the priority that Clive Fairweather thinks they require?

Mr Wallace: I have already indicated that ending slopping out and increasing access to night sanitation is a priority and an objective. Resources have been made available to ensure that that happens. Until we get the outcome of the estates review, it would be impossible for me to give a time scale for that. Christine Grahame should be reassured by the fact that I specifically mentioned the matter in my statement. We attach considerable importance to it.

Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): From which budget heading are resources allocated for the provision of dedicated forensic mortuary facilities so that people who are already traumatised by the murder or other form of sudden death of their relative can identify their loved one in appropriate circumstances, safe in the knowledge that the remains will be treated with dignity and respect? Will the minister confirm that there is no statutory requirement in Scots law on local authorities or anyone else to provide such dedicated facilities? Is the Scottish Executive happy with the uneven provision of such facilities across Scotland? If not, does the Executive intend to do anything about it?

Mr Wallace: I think that I will have to write a detailed answer to the points that Mr McAllion raises. I am aware that there is an issue about mortuary facilities in Dundee. I think that resources for such facilities come from the allocation that is made to local authorities, but I will clarify that point and write to him.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the minister's announcement that extra money will be given to police forces in Scotland. However, as he will be aware, there is a running sore in the north-east of Scotland due to the fact that, down the years, Grampian police have received the second-lowest level of funding per capita in Scotland, despite the fact that Aberdeen is the house-breaking capital of Scotland and other crime figures are rising, and that the police force has additional responsibilities in policing Balmoral and the North sea. Can he assure us that, following the distribution of the extra cash that has been announced today, Grampian police will not have the second-lowest level of funding in Scotland?

Mr Wallace: The distribution of the resources that I have announced today has still to take place. As Mr Lochhead is aware, there has been a debate on this matter, and I can assure him that the funding formula for the allocation of police GAE among the eight forces is under review. I

have no doubt that the points that he makes about the circumstances in Grampian, as well as those made by Lothian and Borders police about policing the capital and by Dumfries and Galloway constabulary about the A74 and A75, are all relevant factors. I am sure that every other constabulary has some relevant factors.

Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab): I add my welcome to those that have already been expressed for the considerable extra money that is being invested in Scotland's criminal justice system, and in particular in the Scottish Criminal Record Office. However, will those additional resources be sufficient to restore public confidence in the fingerprint bureau of the Scottish Criminal Record Office, which has been damaged by recent events, including the misidentification of critical fingerprint evidence in cases such as that involving one of my constituents?

Mr Wallace: As I said in my statement, £1 million in each of the next three years will be provided to address the recommendations that the chief inspector of constabulary made about the fingerprint bureau. Money alone is not the answer, but it is important to note that we are making resources available. It is encouraging that the working group that was set up by the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland has accepted and is working through the recommendations in the chief inspector of constabulary's report.

As I have said, we need a fundamental overhaul of not just the fingerprint service in the Scottish Criminal Record Office, but a number of centrally provided police services. They must be placed in a much more certain statutory framework.

Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con): The minister should relax, as I will not come at him with as many questions as my colleague did.

The minister mentioned the Scottish Fire Service Training School at Gullane. Can he confirm that a change of name is being considered for that training school? I notice in his statement that his idea of meeting increasing needs is to decrease the amounts over three years.

On police numbers, I welcome the increase in police funding and the implications for recruitment. I look forward to the day when I can say that the police are getting younger not just because I am getting older.

Mr Wallace: I understand that the name of the Scottish Fire Service Training School is under consideration. I am not sure what Mrs McIntosh's second question was.

Mrs McIntosh: The minister referred to increasing needs but decreasing amounts.

Mr Wallace: There is an overall increase in funding.

I hope that there will be more police recruits. Interestingly, that does not mean that the police will get younger. When I had the opportunity to see the 80 recruits to Strathclyde police this month, it was interesting to note that they were not just young people, newly out of school, but included graduates and people who had followed other careers. That is very welcome, because those people bring considerable experience from different areas of life.

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP): During the minister's statement, I took down a couple of points in shorthand. I think that he gave a figure of £10 million to aid the creation of more night sanitation. I assume that that is a Scottish figure, yet Barlinnie alone would need £5 million per hall. He also gave a figure of 25 per cent for prisoners without night sanitation access. I would like him to make it clear that that is a Scottish figure. In Barlinnie, 80 per cent of prisoners do not have access to night sanitation—there are 800 men to 75 toilets. The minister should be clearer in his statements about Barlinnie.

The minister has mentioned information technology, but does he have any proposals to help the police to tackle the dark side of the web, as it is called, and to track those people who deal in child pornography?

Mr Wallace: I cannot indicate the proportion of the total amount that I have announced today that will be spent specifically in Barlinnie, as that is a matter for the Scottish Prison Service and will be part and parcel of the estates review. Dorothy-Grace Elder initiated a members' business debate on Barlinnie and slopping out, and I think that members across the Parliament share her concerns. That is why we have specifically allocated extra capital funding for the Scottish Prison Service.

Dorothy-Grace Elder mentioned child pornography and, in that context, I will pick up a point that Phil Gallie made about serious crime. We are conscious of the fact that child pornography and other serious crimes, in which very clever criminals are using modern techniques, pose a real challenge to law and order and to our police forces. That is why, in addition to the money that we are giving to local police forces, we are putting more resources into central police support services. That is a recognition of the fact that important, intelligence-led policing is required to combat serious challenges from some very sophisticated criminals.

The Creative Economy

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We move now to our main debate this afternoon, which is on the creative economy. I call Nicol Stephen to move motion S1M-1213.

15:17

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Nicol Stephen): I am pleased to have the opportunity to open this debate. Since the Parliament was established, it has, on many occasions, debated issues of importance to Scotland's economy. Today's debate focuses on an aspect of our economy that has traditionally attracted less attention than it deserves—perhaps because to regard it as a sector runs counter to traditional economic views, and perhaps because it often defies conventional economic thinking. It has sometimes been neglected; this debate should go some way towards correcting that error.

The creative economy is of huge and growing significance to Scotland's competitive future in the 21st century. Scotland's creative industries are estimated by Scottish Enterprise to turn over £5 billion per year, which is around 4 per cent of the total Scottish economy. The sector employs 100,000 of Scotland's brightest, sparkiest and most talented people. The growth potential and export potential are huge. Scottish Enterprise's target is for 15 per cent of all Scottish exports to come from this sector alone within the next five years. Another thing that marks the sector out is that, at present, it is made up mainly of small companies, of which there are many—one estimate suggests that one in eight companies in Scotland is engaged in the creative industries.

When we mention the potential of those industries, we must remember what that potential means. We must remember that Jobs and Wozniak started Apple computers from a garage. Its design value still marks Apple out as a leader among the creative industries. Sony started with one man's ambitions in the electronics industry, producing radios in the post-war period. Sony now owns film studios and broadcasting companies, and produces leading-edge creative products such as the Walkman, the widescreen television and the Walkphone. Initially, Disney, arguably the most creative of them all, was one man's dream—now it is a global empire.

What are we talking about when we refer to the creative industries? The sector is broad and diverse and fails to fit the conventional classification of an economic sector. The sector is changing rapidly. The creative industries include: advertising, architecture, crafts, design, fashion,

film, computer games—which I am told should now be called interactive leisure software—music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio, which I can now listen to on the internet. The industries touch all sectors.

Design is not just adverts and brochures—not even glossy publications from the Scottish Executive or Scottish Enterprise—but encompasses industrial and product design. The Glasgow collection comprises more than 53 industrial and consumer products that have been developed in Scotland, 20 of which are in full production. Design includes web design; in the coming months and years, design will be central to the success of every ambitious company that wants to expand its markets worldwide. That is why the roles of the Design Council and the millennium products initiative are so important—several of the millennium products come from Scotland.

Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Given what the minister has said about the sector and Scottish Enterprise's target of increasing the sector's share of exports by 15 per cent, which sectors—in Scottish Enterprise's plans—are expected to see their share of exports fall as a result?

Nicol Stephen: When there is growth in one area there is a fall in another. I do not know the answer to that question. I want to see growth in the creative industries sector, just as I want to see the overall cake increase in size. If the cake grows and there are more exports, every sector will gain in volume and profitability.

Seventy-one per cent of export businesses believe that design and innovation play a significant role in their success. A hundred per cent of companies that have a corporate identity—that is every company, because they all have corporate identities, whether they believe it or not—have design values that shape our view of their organisations. This is not an issue just for companies such as British Airways, Virgin, Shell, the Body Shop or BP-Amoco—now BP with a sunflower.

What is exciting about the potential of the creative industries is that now, more than ever, they will help to create and shape our futures. This is no longer just about creating a new product or shaping the building in which we live or work—although there is still huge interest in the work of architects, the structures that they produce and the buildings that rise from holes in the ground. The development of digital technology and the arrival of the global knowledge economy present huge, new opportunities for most of the creative industries. The projections of growth in those areas that have a digital base are massive—about 20 per cent per annum.

Technological development means that previously separate media and technologies are now converging. The same images and sequences can be used and interpreted in different media so that the distinctions between video, film, television, telephone and internet are being blurred. The first signs are already to be seen: computer games make use of digital animation similar to the techniques used in "Toy Story", "Walking with Dinosaurs" or the latest Schwarzenegger film.

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: Yes. However, before I do so, I congratulate Kenny MacAskill on his new appointment.

Mr MacAskill: I thank the minister for his congratulations.

The minister referred to glossy documents. Page 7 of the Scottish Enterprise document on the creative economy refers to a dynamic business environment, which will be

"achieved by the creation of links within the sector . . . Incubation facilities for the development of new ideas and the transfer of ideas across the sector".

What are they, where will they be located, when will we get them and how much will it cost?

Nicol Stephen: Those are good questions and I shall go into specifics as I progress with my speech. Scottish Enterprise's proposals are flexible and I want every part of Scotland to benefit from the moneys that are being set aside to develop the industry. As Kenny MacAskill knows, there are opportunities and successful companies that want to develop in every part of Scotland.

Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP): The minister said that the advantages of this brave new world would extend to all of Scotland, but he must know that that will be greatly dependent on the availability of information and communications technologies infrastructure. Is not rural Scotland beginning to fall behind in some of that new infrastructure—not just asymmetric digital subscriber lines, but even integrated services digital network lines?

Nicol Stephen: I am conscious of that concern. I think that it is a real one and I have already told Parliament that we must consider ways of combining public and private sector resources and funds to ensure that we spread the new technologies to all parts of Scotland.

The true potential of those technologies, and of the new media that they are giving rise to, is understood only in a limited way at present. However, it is certain that the industry is hungry for development, content, stories and ideas of all

sorts. It is also hungry for skills, which are currently in short supply. For us to make the most of the opportunities, we will depend on innovative and creative talent being nurtured here in Scotland within a dynamic business environment. That does not mean a Government minister setting out examples of what is to be achieved. The very nature of the industry is that it is creative, innovative and sometimes spontaneous. Those are the conditions that the Executive is committed to creating.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister tell us what plans he is making to help creative industries to arise spontaneously?

Nicol Stephen: I shall come to that shortly, but I would like to develop my argument a little further and mention some of the companies that are currently involved. I shall refer specifically to Pacific Quay in Glasgow and mention other developments as well.

The potential clearly exists and a lot of work is being done. The Creative Scotland website is mentioned in the—on this occasion—non-glossy document and I encourage all members to visit it.

Scotland already has a significant presence in the creative industries—not only in new, leading-edge technology, but in fashion, crafts and design. Names such as Ortak and Jean Muir are as well known in London and New York as they are at home. We have established and are developing film and broadcasting industries. Companies such as Ideal World and Wark Clements are ready to exploit the arrival of digital television and export their skills throughout the UK and further afield.

More recently, Scottish computer games companies have established an important niche. That is an area in which Scotland punches significantly above its weight. Companies such as VIS entertainment and Red Lemon Studios are already significant players. VIS has grown rapidly over the past four or five years from a company with only a handful of employees to one that now employs 100 people. It has developed an international reputation and profile, with many leading titles, such as Carmaggedon and Earthworm Jim. Red Lemon Studios expects to double its present 35 employees in the next year and has already had major hits with Braveheart and Aironauts.

Other companies such as Black ID, Digital Animations and Digital Bridges are also building strong reputations for high-quality and innovative work. Scotland's ability to build on the achievements of those companies will be assisted by the recently announced Scottish Enterprise strategy, which will invest up to £25 million to develop the sector. There will be support for

projects to develop the infrastructure on which the industries depend, to give access to new international opportunities and to develop skills and new business and research alliances in the sector.

A number of significant developments are planned. The creation of a digital media campus at Pacific Quay in Glasgow will bring together in close proximity a number of leading companies in the field, allowing them to share facilities and to network and feed off one another. There are also important plans, as part of that development, for a film studio, and Scottish Screen has just submitted a business plan to the Scottish Executive. I want a film studio in Scotland, and the Executive and Scottish Enterprise will be assessing the proposal and holding further discussions over the coming weeks.

Mr Monteith: Will the minister tell the chamber whether the business plan is for a film studio that will in any way be run by Scottish Screen, or is it merely the specification of what kind of film studio is required?

Nicol Stephen: The details are in the business plan, but we intend to look at it further and develop it. I think that we all want a good-quality film studio in Scotland, but we need to look at the best way of achieving that.

A creative industries campus on Tayside will be developed—building on the existing interactive Tayside partnership—which will aim to establish a natural hub for the computer games and electronic entertainment industry. Another important development that is already under way is the school of music and recording technology in Ayrshire.

Two other strands of the strategy are worth considering in a little detail. We need to do more internationally. There will therefore be an international marketing strategy, led by Scottish Trade International, to ensure that we exploit to the full overseas exhibitions and other opportunities. Centres in London and New York will be developed, as those cities remain the main commissioning and business centres in the industry. Complementing that will be opportunities for professionals to have international exchanges to enhance skills and create new alliances.

The development and exploitation of new technologies depend on high-quality research and development. The proposed development on Tayside reflects the important contribution of the University of Abertay to the design of interactive technologies. Three Scottish universities—Edinburgh, St Andrews and Glasgow—have five-star ratings for software research. Other universities and colleges are also engaged in work that has significant commercial potential. A central

part of the strategy will be to support the commercialisation of research ideas.

I could go wider. New initiatives such as Project Alba and Dolly the sheep could claim to be part of the creative industries. I would not challenge that. Science is creative and the very best science is exciting science. Science creates the products of tomorrow. We need to get more people into science and teach them the importance of the softer skills that can help to bring science to life, such as product design and marketing and the use of creativity and innovation. Our science centres, such as the Big Idea and the new Glasgow science centre, are important.

Scotland's creative industries are a broad category and the strategy is broad and ambitious. It aims to increase the sector by 10 per cent each year over the next five years and to raise Scottish exports dramatically. It aims to create major new centres of excellence in Glasgow and Dundee. Most important, it gives recognition to a sector that has been neglected for too long.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the increasing contribution of the creative industries to the Scottish economy and the potential for further growth in this sector; notes the Executive's wish to ensure that the creative and business skills on which these industries depend are fully and properly nurtured in Scotland's people; welcomes Scottish Enterprise's £25 million development strategy to support this sector of the economy and promote its continuing expansion; and therefore endorses the determination of the Executive to ensure the conditions in which Scotland's creative industries will continue to flourish in rapidly growing world markets.

15:33

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): We welcome the initiative and accept that it offers an exciting opportunity for Scotland, with a very particular significance for the creative aspect of the Scottish economy. The minister has alluded to the figures involved—the 100,000 employed in the creative industries, a turnover of £5 billion per annum and 4 per cent of Scottish gross domestic product. Those are certainly very important dimensions to take into account. That, coupled with the anticipated growth rates, would lead us all to agree that this is a huge opportunity for Scotland.

My slight quandary is on definition, which I think must be addressed. The Scottish Executive's definition of creative industries includes

"Design, games, film, new media, publishing, advertising, radio and television, music and architecture".

Scottish Enterprise extends that to the arts and cultural industries and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to the traditional arts and music sectors.

For someone who finds the high-tech, multimedia age abrasively challenging and at times downright frightening and who herself may never actually get funky or become a net head, I am immensely admiring of those who embrace such facilities, which have undoubted relevance to the expansion of the creative industries. I hope that something equally important will not be overlooked in this thrusting quest.

I return to the definition of the creative industries, at least as I have been best able to identify it. We have a huge and unexploited reserve of culture, arts, literature, music, tradition and history in Scotland. That reserve is unique to our country. If I may, I will follow in the vein that was set by Father George Thompson this afternoon. I will quote from the preface to a cookery book, which states:

"The object of this book is not to provide a complete compendium of Scottish Cookery, ancient or modern . . . but rather to preserve the recipes of our old national dishes, many of which, in this age of standardisation, are in danger of falling into an undeserved oblivion."

The same preface goes on to say that

"the pageant of Scottish History is shadowed in the kitchen."

I think that there will be all-party agreement among the women in the chamber that there is a lot of sense in that.

Was that preface written last week or last year? No—it was written in 1929 by F Marion McNeill, who was a legendary figure in Scots cuisine long before Gary Rhodes and Gordon Ramsay had ever been heard of and certainly long before Delia Smith was eating lumps out of Anthony Worrall Thomson.

The book is part of our heritage—its content is certainly creative. The minister might care to brighten his day with some parlies or auld man's milk, recipes for both of which are included in the book. If he is fearful of trying them, parlies were a kind of gingerbread that was eaten by members of the Scottish Parliament. Auld man's milk sounds a little more hopeful—it is made from cream, rum, whisky, brandy, eggs, nutmeg and lemon zest.

My point is that the creative industries have a huge opportunity to re-explore, re-present and bring to a worldwide audience much of our history and culture, which is, as I said, unique to Scotland. We must be careful that in our thrusting quest for the new—which is necessary and desirable—we are ever mindful of what already exists. We must ensure that we use all our facilities and opportunities to advertise, re-present and repromote Scotland's rich creative reserves.

Andrew Wilson: I congratulate Annabel Goldie on her noble aims, but my experience in the debate makes me feel as if I have slipped into a

parallel universe in the past 20 minutes. Miss Goldie mentions in the amendment in her name that it would be good to see taxes kept as low as possible to encourage the creative industries. In the interests of the debate, does she agree with Brian Monteith that it would be a good idea to give Parliament the power to keep taxes as low as possible, rather than that power being confined to Westminster?

Miss Goldie: Mr Wilson makes that point with such tedious repetitiveness that I hesitate to waste time on responding to it. As I have said, Mr Monteith expressed his personal view—which is certainly not Conservative party policy. On the contrary, Conservative party policy is to introduce no new or higher taxes. Mr Wilson will not find many businessmen who will disagree with that.

On the Executive's initiative, I will emphasise two more points. There are some very bold plans in the document and some admirable ambitions, but it is vital that we track and measure the progress of the initiative.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I have read the document. Will Annabel Goldie point out to me a bold plan? I could not find one, but she might have been able to find one among all the graphics.

Miss Goldie: Perhaps I am a little less grudging than Mr Russell. We are talking about the ambition of trying to reach out to a worldwide market. We are given to understand that the potential for such expansion exists. The document contains a strategy, but it is not for me to defend the Executive's initiative—the Executive must do that.

My point is specific. We are talking about significant sums of public money. The intention is to increase the sector by 30 per cent in the next five years and raise exports from the sector to about 50 per cent of total Scottish exports. That is fine as an end objective, but what will we do to monitor progress in the meantime? We must check progress at least annually. Everybody will want to know how the initiative is proceeding on the ground and whether tangible benefits, actual or foreseeable, will become obvious.

My final point is raised in my amendment and has been repeatedly made by the Conservative party in this chamber. As I have said frequently to the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, if we speak to business, we find that what is burdening business and the general economy in Scotland is levels of tax, red tape and regulatory burdens. The creative industries will not be immune to those levels and will be subject to exactly the same pressures and problems.

I have felt it necessary to lodge my amendment simply to reflect that, without the recognition of those very real difficulties, the other aspirations

will be extremely difficult to implement practically. I have already suggested to Mr McLeish that he should use his audit impact assessment unit in the department of enterprise and lifelong learning to start to investigate the current effect of some regulatory burdens on Scottish industry. I ask Mr Stephen again to consider that suggestion and to consult his colleague Mr McLeish on it.

I move amendment S1M-1213.2, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"notes that the best way to expand this sector, as with all other sectors of the economy, is to ensure that tax, red tape and regulatory burdens are kept at as low a level as possible; and urges the Scottish Executive to work in close conjunction with Her Majesty's Government in order to reduce such burdens which have increased considerably since May 1997."

15:41

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): We have heard the future and it is mind-blowing—or perhaps mind-boggling. I have always thought that what, where, when and how were fairly basic matters when putting forward a strategy. When I was asked yesterday to speak in the creative economy debate, I wondered what the phrase "creative economy" meant. I consulted the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines "creative" as

"able to create . . . inventive, imaginative, showing imagination as well as routine skill"

and "economy" as the administration or condition of the concerns and resources of the community. That means that "creative economy" can be defined as the inventive, imaginative administration of the concerns and resources of the community.

That sounds good. But what is the subtext of the motion when its terms are expanded and boiled down? The motion talks about

"£25 million development strategy to support . . . and to ensure conditions in which creative industries will continue to flourish rapidly in growing world markets".

So we are talking about £25 million and a wish list. Is that right, adequate or sufficient? For example, page 7 of the document talks about incubation facilities. However, the minister is not able to tell us about these facilities, where they will be located or how much they will be given.

Although we support the motion as such and accept the benefits of creating a creative headline, the document and the motion do not address any needs. First, £25 million is a drop in the ocean. World markets have been mentioned, but £25 million will not allow anyone to compete in the football transfer market, never mind in the global economy. We have to run to catch up with the competition; for example, we are falling behind the US and south-east Asia. We have much hard work

to do and cannot simply wish the situation better. We need mechanisms and structures to improve that.

For a start, we need a philosophy and theory about what we are trying to achieve, not simply a wish list. We require some definition of what we are trying to do, perhaps by providing financial and structural assistance to ensure maximum benefit for the stimulation and support of these industries, to allow us to compete in a global economy.

Furthermore, we require a structure to facilitate improvements from top to bottom and to maximise benefit. How do we improve basic keyboard skills at the very bottom? How do we expand and improve the opportunity to enhance information technology and the creative skills base? How do we nurture and retain our current talent, which, in some instances, is moving?

None of those issues is being addressed. Instead of £25 million, what about a steady stream and a pool that industries can drink from rather than letting them die of thirst?

Nicol Stephen: How much would Kenny MacAskill commit to this initiative?

Mr MacAskill: We would probably take some money from the oil revenue that the Labour Government is currently salting into tax cuts. I do not have the books here, but the fact of the matter is that £25 million will not address the situation. Furthermore, I should tell the minister that other small nations do far better than the big nation that he is so proud of.

I have two anecdotes about the situation as it is and the situation as it can be. My brother went to stay in the state of Texas, where every child is keyboard literate by the time they leave junior school for high school. How does that contrast with the position in Scotland? Sixty-five per cent of children in primary 7 achieve level D for reading. Level D is the curriculum guideline on which attainment in literacy is measured. Therefore, 35 per cent of children do not achieve that level of literacy, and only 43.7 per cent achieve level D in writing. Texans send keyboard-literate kids to high school, but in Scotland we send too many illiterate kids to high school. We should be ashamed of that. We have a skills shortage, not just at the top but at the bottom. If we want to address that issue, not just in manufacturing and on production lines, we must give kids the opportunity to gain keyboard skills, which will allow them to compete.

I have been advised by the electronics industry that it also has problems, as simply not enough people who are computer and technology literate come through the education system. Has the Executive addressed that issue?

I am told that the school system has been slow

to keep up with developing trends. At a recent Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee meeting, a witness complained that children were being taught redundant computer languages. I support the teaching of Latin, given the benefit that, as a lawyer, I received from that language, but, in the 21st century, it may be a waste of scarce resources to teach a redundant computer language when the technology has moved on.

I am also told that some teaching bodies have written to the minister to complain about the lack of technology subjects in the curriculum and about the fact that those subjects are the first victims when budgets are cut. The Executive is not addressing any of those issues.

What about the situation as it could be?

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Mr MacAskill: Yes.

Pauline McNeill: I thank the member for giving way before he moves on to a new point.

I take on board the points about education that Mr MacAskill made, but this afternoon we are not here to debate education. I put it to him that, rightly or wrongly, we are here to debate something different and to recognise that we have a creative economy. There are people in Scotland who have special skills and we must create a structure in which they can thrive.

We heard earlier about Red Lemon Studios, which is a company that is based in my constituency. By and large, the entire staff of that company is aged under 25, which is fantastic. Surely we should be talking Scotland up rather than talking it down. We must recognise that we are trying to create the structure, although we may not have got it 100 per cent right yet.

Mr MacAskill: I will pay tribute where it is due, but the points that I made were given to me by the electronics industry in Scotland. I asked the industry what it thought the problems were and the brief that I received from the industry was that it perceives the problems to be a lack of skills in the education sector. It is not enough to examine the good points and wish away the fundamental structural problems.

The view that I am articulating is not built on my personal prejudice or invective, nor is it based on the policy of the Scottish National Party. It is based on the policy position of those in the electronics industry who say to me, "This is the problem that we have."

Miss Goldie: My intervention will be brief, as I wish simply to assist in the debate.

During the recent inquiry carried out by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee into

the new economy—the e-economy—we received direct from the electronic companies the information that keyboard skills were not so much the problem as attitude to business, attitude to enterprise and ability to relate with customers. Those issues are of much more significant concern than the basic ability of many youngsters to operate a keyboard.

Mr MacAskill: Those issues go hand in hand and the e-mail that I received was courteous enough to mention that fact. I agree with Annabel Goldie's point, which I take on board, that the issues are complementary. However, people say: "Small countries cannot compete. This is a big world with big markets, and you need to be in the big league."

Years ago, we used to pride ourselves in Scotland when the term "Clyde-built" meant quality and strength. In the 20th century, "Clyde-built" was a world term—one could use it abroad and people knew what was meant. I have a Nokia mobile phone, but Nokia is not only a Finnish company—it is a small village in Finland near the location where the phones are manufactured. Nokia actually exists. We have moved on from the terminology of the 20th century. Apart from whisky, what product do we manufacture in this nation of 5 million people that is a world brand term in the 21st century? Nokia is one of the top five world brand terms, along with Coca-Cola and others.

People say, "Well, you're too small. You couldnae do it," but how can Finland manufacture a world brand product given that it is a country of 5 million people that is geographically distant from its markets? Perhaps the Finns won a world lottery—except that a world lottery does not exist. Perhaps they discovered oil. Perhaps that is what transformed Finland, and perhaps that is why the Finnish people, in the 21st century, have a global brand name that they can be proud of, while our shipyard industry has withered on the vine and disappeared into the Clyde. Maybe, just maybe, there are hundreds of thousands, or millions of pounds-worth—billions of pounds-worth in the future—of oil in the Gulf of Finland for the Finnish people to access.

The fact is that the Finns did it by driving forward, by targeting, by resourcing and by funding. They did it by being able, when they were producing documents and strategies, to answer questions about how they would do it, where they would do it, when they would do it and how much it would cost them. It was not done using a glossy document that keeps a printer and a graphic designer in their jobs.

What should we have? We must recognise that we need a philosophy in order to create a structure, to provide funding and resourcing. We need improvement at school level, an integration

in higher education, the provision of support for centres of excellence, the recruitment of new talent and skills and the retention of existing talent and skills. We are losing businessmen and businesswomen and companies to Ireland because they are being headhunted or taken away.

We do not accept the Tories' amendment. We do not accept it and we will vote against it, because we view it as simplistic. Of course red tape needs to be cut down, but regulation has its place. We believe that, in any society, it is not just a question of the creation of a vibrant economy, but of how the weakest are looked after. We worry that when the Tories press for the ending of red tape, they put at risk the lives of individuals in an attack on health and safety matters, which are fundamental to a democratic and decent society.

We also believe that those matters are complementary and necessary; we do not believe that cutting taxes is simply a good thing on its own. In the end, we have to address matters without moving towards a society with a Dutch auction—as will happen down in Westminster—between Portillo and Brown. We are voting against the amendment because we do not seek a society in which we know the price of everything and the value of nothing. We will support the motion, as it at least acknowledges that there is a problem but that there are also opportunities, although they do not go as far or come as fast as we would like.

The document is not about a creative economy, but it is a piece of creative writing. In considering it and marking it, we should say, "Could and should do better," with more fact and less fiction, more reality and less rhetoric. It does not need to be this way; it can and should be different. I say to Ms McNeill that other small nations such as Finland have shown the way. Fundamentally, that is where the lesson for this nation lies.

15:53

Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab): I actually agreed with a lot of what Mr MacAskill had to say, particularly about this being a question of vision. I am not going to say that we as a small nation cannot do it, as Mr MacAskill put it; we are saying that we can do it. The Texas analogy is interesting, and demonstrates the wider benefit of the economic and political union with a bigger entity.

There was a time when the ideas of wealth creation and social justice seemed incompatible in Scotland. The Labour party in power has, I believe, dispelled that myth, and has ensured that the creation of wealth is being used to give chances and opportunities to those who had none, and to redistribute resources to those who need

them. We call that social inclusion, and a vital part of that is for everyone to be able to take part in the cultural life of their communities. By supporting the creative industries in a way that only Labour can, we are expanding that virtuous circle of wealth creation and social and cultural inclusion.

In the current climate created by Labour, which is ideal for steady growth, we will specifically give support—as described by the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning—to help those creative industries flourish. We recognise the vital role played by the creative industries as part of a productive, successful economy. The creative industries are anticipated to grow significantly faster than the economy as a whole, and there is every indication that that trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

Labour wants to seize that opportunity for greater wealth and job creation, with the creative industries having the potential to strengthen the economy, to widen lifelong learning, to offer opportunities for people returning into the work force and to regenerate our communities, as part of the Scottish Enterprise clusters plan.

I was pleased to see ministers commit themselves to creating a proper platform for the exchange of intellectual property rights. We have been slow to find ways of protecting the most valuable asset of the new economy—knowledge. By developing a system that allows intellectual property rights to be shared and exchanged legally and efficiently, we will limit the huge losses to the music and media industries that result from copying and bootlegging. I imagine that there can be nothing more discouraging than spending money and time creating something of value, only to have it ripped off by bootleggers.

I was also pleased by the development of the cluster approach to economic growth in this sector. That involves related industries operating as a group, being at same time one another's customers, competitors, partners, suppliers or research and development sources. Partners in a cluster continue to compete, but they also share the benefits of innovative ideas and practices that make all of them more competitive. Clusters depend on collaboration rather than competition. In many ways, they are the antithesis of the laissez-faire Thatcherite economics of the past. They enable economies better to create the conditions that are necessary for companies to compete on the basis of innovation, higher value added and rising productivity, all of which support the rising wages and standards to which Labour is committed.

The energy and ideas that are created by growing industries work best when they can be shared and supported by like-minded people. We in the Labour party have always been aware that

competition can be wasteful in some circumstances. Instead of Scottish companies always competing with one another, together they will compete better in the global market to which Kenny MacAskill referred if they collaborate with one another, where possible, and identify win-win solutions. The cluster approach in Scotland that has been pioneered by Scottish Enterprise currently applies to a range of sectors. The overall aim is to ensure that Scotland's small, open economy thrives in an increasingly competitive global economy.

In the United Kingdom, Scotland is considered a world leader in the creation and success of innovative cluster strategies. The Department of Trade and Industry has strongly endorsed that approach. Every one of the new English development agencies has the promotion of clusters and networks as a key part of its strategic plan. We are ambitious for these industries, as we are ambitious for Scotland. We aim over the next five years to increase the value of this sector by 30 per cent. By achieving that, we will create not only jobs but more opportunities for people to hear music, read books, watch movies and see plays. We will work with and guide the market to ensure that that happens.

I turn now to the Tory amendment. When it comes to regulation, the creative industries are not significantly different from other sectors of the economy. Since coming to power, the Labour Government has created the best economic environment for indigenous business growth and inward investment for a generation. The new 10p starting rate of corporation tax was introduced in April and came on top of cuts in the main and small business rates of corporation tax to their lowest ever levels—lower than the levels in any of our competitors. We have taken further steps to boost productivity, such as cutting capital gains tax, to create the most favourable environment that Britain has ever seen for encouraging entrepreneurs, rewarding risk taking and extending share ownership.

The truth is that Britain has one of the most lightly regulated labour markets in the world and, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, one of the most lightly regulated product markets. To meet our manifesto commitment to cut red tape, an objective that we support, we have established the improving regulation in Scotland unit to free Scottish business from needless regulation.

Labour has delivered for business, turning a huge borrowing requirement into a budget surplus.

Mr MacAskill: Labour is spending more money on bailing out the millennium dome than Allan Wilson is proud of spending on this strategy. It is spending £40 million on bailing out the dome, but

£25 million on something that the member has described as fundamental. Does he think that that is right?

Allan Wilson: If that is the sort of contribution that we can expect from Mr MacAskill, Mr Swinney will have to do better than arranging the deck chairs on the nationalist Titanic. Not a penny of public money has been invested in the dome. All of it is lottery money. In this debate we are talking about investing in creative industries from within our budget.

I conclude with a testimony to the efforts of the Labour Government to providing the business environment that will enable the creative industries to flourish. Interest rates are near their historic low, and long-term rates have now converged with the euro zone rates; indeed, they are probably slightly lower. Ten years ago, under the Tories, they were 3.7 per cent higher. Unemployment is at its lowest level since 1974, the last time we had a Labour Government. There is no coincidence there.

I support the motion and present a win-win scenario for the Scottish nation: economic prosperity and widening opportunity; low rates of personal taxation; and record levels of public investment. I support the motion and reject the amendment.

16:00

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):

I agree with the minister that the debate provides an ideal opportunity for the creative industries to be properly acknowledged by the Parliament and recognised as an integral part of Scotland's knowledge economy.

The starting point must be education and the development of talent. Access to the arts as an integral part of the school curriculum allows creative potential to develop that will ultimately impact favourably on the economy. We know that children who have had that early exposure benefit greatly from their rounded educational experience. It is a pity, therefore, that local government budget restrictions mean that many teachers of art, music and drama—for example in Aberdeenshire—have lost their jobs.

I know that those working in the creative industries are enthusiastic about spending time in schools and colleges. The issue for the Executive's various strategies is how they promote and develop that enthusiasm. I remind the minister that other countries promote proper long-term management of the development of artistic excellence. In Ireland, for example, state allowances and tax breaks are provided to outstanding artists, musicians and writers. To date, that has not begun to be considered in Scotland.

New opportunities are being opened up by new technology. We need to be in a position to take advantage of that, with a structure and a plan that will result in real achievement. We have a rich literary tradition in Scotland which could be exploited more via new technology. The music industry is thriving in Scotland and there is massive potential in the recording industry. After the UK, Sweden, with a population of 8 million, has the largest recording industry in Europe—underlining the point that size is irrelevant.

In today's press, a cogent argument is set out for the development of a proper recording studio—ostensibly for film soundtracks—to complement the establishment of the Scottish film studio. I hope that the Executive's largesse will extend to supporting both projects.

Scotland has plenty of talent, but there is no doubt that it could benefit from being linked to business experience and skills. In fact, skills are the crucial factor in all of this: market knowledge skills, creative technology and interactive skills, production skills, technical skills and commercial skills.

Links between the arts and business would provide spin-off benefits all round. Artists' skills could improve the performance of business and give employment opportunities to artists. Will the minister encourage businesses to consider how they could use artists to help their businesses grow? There could be a role for designers, and for actors in public speaking and presentation.

I suggest to the Executive that there is a danger of becoming obsessed with new technology and industries. It could be argued that those are sectors that are already performing quite well, resulting—dare I say it—in the Executive making little effort and taking all the credit. The Government must not neglect traditional industries, such as cashmere and weaving, which are struggling to survive in the current economic climate. Tourism would be badly affected if traditional creative industries were neglected, because many people are attracted to Scotland by those very industries.

In conclusion, I hope that the individual artist is supported and not ignored. Sheena Wellington noted recently—on the Creative Scotland website in fact—that

"A common and serious failing of many organisations with responsibility for investment is not that they cannot think big but that they actually cannot think small. Iain Banks writing in North Queensferry, Aly Bain playing in Aberdeen or Adelaide, the poet in Stromness, the video artist in Kelty, the painter in Dumfries are the true creators. Pacific Quay may well be a wonderful project but it is far from being the be all and end all of the Creative Industries in Scotland."

16:05

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): The creative industries—as we now know them—have always existed in their own right, but are now clustered together so that we can identify aims and objectives common to all of them. The driving force for the better behind those industries has been the interface with technology.

I will talk exclusively about the Scottish popular music industry, which illustrates what I have just said. Clued-up members of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee might recall—Brian Monteith might know about this—that White Town went straight to No 1 in the charts. It was later revealed that a young Asian had digitally mastered the whole track in his bedroom, yet the record sold all over the world. That shows how dramatically things have changed. We cannot afford to ignore what is happening in the Scottish music industry. It is no longer a matter of Ringo, Paul, George and John getting their band together.

Mr Monteith: Is Pauline McNeill suggesting that the £25 million should be invested in bedrooms, rather than Pacific Quay and other projects?

Pauline McNeill: I expected Brian Monteith to make a more mature point.

We cannot continue to ignore the fact that Scotland has so much home-grown talent. Notable bands such as Travis and Garbage, which played at the opening of the Scottish Parliament, were signed outside Scotland. As many members know, it is my intention—I have not got round to it yet—to set up a cross-party group on the popular music industry. I think that Brian Monteith has signed up to participate; I hope that he will do so.

It is crucial that the Scottish Executive gets support for the industry right. Ken Macintosh and I went to the bother of bringing some Scottish musicians together to compile a submission on the national cultural strategy. Some good points were made, which we could take further. About 120,000 people are employed in the music and related industries. We ask the Executive to consider several proposals. We have mentioned facilities in schools for musicians. I am afraid to say that we think about traditional musical instruments; we do not recognise that the many young people who play the drums or guitar must be considered equally important and we must make provision for them in schools. If someone's life choice is to be a musician, careers advisers should be prepared to acknowledge that that is a legitimate choice for them.

I know that broadcasting is a reserved matter, but we must talk to the UK Government about some issues. There are national and local radio stations which pay no attention to the fact that we have home-grown Scottish talent and feel no

obligation to play those artists. It causes me sadness that Beat 106, a radio station that was born in Scotland, has been sold to an independent company. It was a real example of Scotland's success.

Michael Russell: Pauline McNeill makes an excellent point. Does she agree that it is time that the Radio Authority acted upon the discretion that it has to ensure that those who get licences cannot sell them out at huge profits within weeks of achieving them? That is directly contrary to what the Radio Authority wanted, but it does not yet have the power to do anything about that.

Pauline McNeill: I agree with Mike Russell's comments. I would go further. In other European countries, it is part of the conditions of licence that 5 per cent of output should be music that is indigenous to that country. I do not know why that should not apply in Scotland. Perhaps ministers could take that up at UK level.

Allan Wilson talked about intellectual property. We cannot ignore MP3, a new technology which means that someone can download music from the internet whether it belongs to them or not. Artists are crying out for us to do something about that. Another issue is performance royalties. Monitoring is irregular and artists do not get royalties every time that something of theirs is played.

It is crucial for the Executive and the Parliament to get it right by including the Scottish music industry in the creative strategy because it is one of the few areas that will appeal to young people. Supporting the music industry is a policy with which the young can identify. We must be imaginative with our resources. It is not simply a matter of whether we put in £25 million or £50 million. There are audiences that want to listen to music—young people and schools—and there are resources out there. If we can match the two, we can drive forward to bring objectives together.

In conclusion, I want to give a wee bit of warning. The Scottish Executive has got to get the strategy right. Failure will be a problem. The musicians to whom I have spoken have no faith that the Scottish Arts Council will deliver. I know that the Scottish Arts Council has said lots of nice things about how inclusive it wants to be, but the strategy still comes across as a middle-class phenomenon. If we want to be true to the principles of social inclusion, we must get the strategy right. Sadly, there is no mention in the cultural strategy of the Scottish music industry, despite the fact that many people said that it should be included.

Finally, the existence of the new deal for musicians shows that the Scottish Executive recognises that being a musician is a legitimate

career choice. That is something that we should celebrate.

16:11

Nick Johnston (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Let me start by thanking Allan Wilson for his acknowledgement of the Conservative Government's role in setting in stone an economy that has endured three years of Labour administration and the rapacity of Gordon Brown.

There is widespread recognition of the positive role that cultural enterprise plays in Scottish life and the Scottish economy. That the Executive has recognised the industry's needs, however belatedly, is to be welcomed. We must encourage this fast-growing sector, but money is not enough. There must be a change in attitude and environment to enable the cultural industries to flourish. As Annabel Goldie said, the cultural industries are no different from other businesses. To flourish, they need stability in the economy, a level playing field and freedom from bureaucracy. Like many other businesses at inception, they also need someone to listen and sources of funding.

I want to concentrate on an organisation that should feature more prominently in the Executive's thinking. NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, was set up by Chris Smith in 1998 and has been endowed with £200 million of lottery funding. Its vision is to break down the barriers faced by artists, scientists and inventors. It is driven by the belief that creativity is vital to a nation and that talent needs nurturing.

The organisation aims to seek out talent and excellence and to focus on individuals to allow them to achieve their potential, whether in music, science or the arts. NESTA seeks to generate returns by investing in the future and exploiting new ideas, and helping people to capitalise on the social and commercial potential of their ideas. NESTA's ethos is dear to my heart: it expects a return and the organisation expects to achieve self-funding status within five years.

Most heartening is that NESTA's stated aim is to take risks, which is why I believe that the initiative is to be welcomed. Its mandate is to be adventurous and daring and it is prepared to invest in marginal activity on the premise that even though some projects will fail, more will succeed, and that that success will more than compensate.

NESTA is allowed to give long-term funding—three to five-year support—and believes in sustaining businesses by sharing ideas and innovations. I will give two examples of successful initiatives in Scotland. May Miles Thomas from Glasgow works with digital film, which will revolutionise how movies are made, distributed and seen. Her grant of £48,000 will enable her to

deliver toolkits for the digital film industry. Frank McConnel, a dancer from the Highlands, works to create innovative dance workshops in Highland communities.

I have focused on NESTA because it fulfils the aims that are vital in public investment to nurture new creativity in business. First, it gives long-term support. Secondly, it is risk taking rather than risk averse. Thirdly, it is self-funding in the short term. Fourthly, it seeks out innovation and fills the gaps in existing provision. Fifthly, it offers targeted and measurable support.

While the Conservative party broadly welcomes the Executive's proposals, we urge it to adopt the principles of NESTA and to ensure that the investment reaches those who are the brightest and best in the creative field, so that they are able to flourish in a Scotland that appreciates and nurtures them.

Finally, no doubt the business community will have noted that Mr MacAskill, in his first action as education and lifelong learning spokesman, is to vote against Miss Annabel Goldie's amendment. Surely that proves that only the Scottish Conservatives listen to the concerns of the business community in Scotland, and only the Scottish Conservatives can provide an Opposition voice for business. I am afraid that yet again, the SNP will fail the business community in Scotland.

16:16

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I am sorry that the debate was rescheduled. People have dismissed the debate in my hearing and said, "Oh, it is just about the creative economy. What's that?" That dismissive attitude is unfortunate. Is it something to do with people's attitude to creativity and artistic endeavour? I regret that attitude and I am glad that the tone of the debate is different.

The minister and Miss Goldie gave statistics that show how substantial the creative sector is. It is an important and dynamic sector which links information technology with arts-based activities such as film making. It is growing fast and, as Allan Wilson pointed out, the details of how it affects the economy are fantastic. There are also important spin-offs for tourism. I agree with every word that Irene McGugan said. I may return to that later, because she put the case well.

I welcome a new look at the sector, because Scottish Enterprise and the business community need to change their views on it. I welcome the clusters approach embodied in the document. I welcome also the climate that is being fostered by the cultural strategy and the strategy for architecture. There is considerable room for development, but we should try to shift the

concentration of those industries away from the south-east of England.

At a meeting with the director general of the BBC, I was pleased to be given a clear indication of his intention and determination to move along with the decentralisation of management and production at the BBC. He will be spending more money on programming, and he is well aware of the potential for expansion and high-quality work in Scotland. That would be a major boost for the creative industries in Scotland, and would increase production and performance opportunities, with the knock-on effect that Pauline McNeill would want of increased opportunities for music groups.

From a big organisation such as the BBC, I will move to the other end of the range. The other day I was pleased to see a press release about the joint project between the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise for a creative industry company development programme. Scottish-based record companies and book publishers are to get a helping hand, first with an initial grant and then possibly with another grant. That is an excellent idea and the right thing to do, but the total funding of £120,000 is derisory. It will help a small number of companies with a wee initial grant, and then give a couple of companies something more substantial. That is a great idea, but I hope that it will be expanded and work well.

It is important that funding bodies work together in this sphere, in the way that Scottish Enterprise and the SAC are working together. Already, there are industries in which we cannot separate the industry aspect from the creative aspect. Irene McGugan mentioned the textile industry, which is involved with computer-aided design. At its best it is artistic, but traditionally we would also think of it as an industry.

We must change the way in which the local enterprise companies think. In my constituency recently, people have wanted to set up a film studio, a record studio, a manufacturing base for a newly designed relaxation chair and so on. Every one of the people who were involved in those projects felt that the enterprise company did not quite understand where they were coming from and did not recognise the risks that had to be taken if the projects were to have a chance. I hope that the document and the debate will help to change the thinking of the LECs.

If we are to produce the bright, sparky and talented people about whom the minister talked, we must create opportunities and foster their skills, as Irene McGugan and others have said. We must develop skills in schools and we must have colleges with appropriate courses—someone from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama told me that it was having difficulty finding funding to set up television and film courses. We must

change the way we think in order to encourage talented individuals and groups. Scotland cannot afford to do without them. They enhance citizens' lives and—given the kind of boost that the Executive has outlined—will enhance our economy.

16:21

Kate MacLean (Dundee West) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the creative economy. The attitude of the Opposition parties is unfortunate, as a level of unanimity in this chamber would have sent out a positive and constructive message to the various sectors that we depend on to deliver a meaningful strategy in the creative economy.

The Conservatives have lodged a rather pointless amendment. I know that most politicians would not decide that, if they had nothing to say they should say nothing, but the Conservatives would have been wise to do so today.

Kenny MacAskill tries to give the impression in the chamber that he has a monopoly on caring about what happens to the people of Scotland. That is not the case. The fact that we spend one afternoon debating the creative economy does not mean that we do not care about standards in schools or the fact that our children might not be as computer literate as children elsewhere. I remind members that strategies are in place that will address some of those points. It is disingenuous to give a contrary impression.

Mr MacAskill: Can Kate MacLean tell me what the Executive is doing to ensure that every child will leave primary school keyboard literate? How much is the Executive spending on that? When will those policies be delivered?

Kate MacLean: I do not know exactly how much the Executive is spending on that. I know that an early intervention scheme is in place in primary schools to try to raise the standard of reading, which was one of the issues that Mr MacAskill raised. There is also funding to put computers into every classroom in this country. There are plans to get computers to poorer families. Public money is going into internet cafés and public information networks to allow every member of the public access to the internet. Those are only a few of the initiatives that are in place. I am sorry that I do not have the figures to hand, but I am sure that I can find them out and write to Mr MacAskill.

Mr MacAskill: Will the member give way?

Kate MacLean: No. I answered Mr MacAskill's question and will not give way unless the question is substantially different.

I agree with Annabel Goldie on the definition of the creative industries. The Scottish Executive's

definition does not include art and culture. I prefer Scottish Enterprise's definition, which does. Tragically few young artists in Scotland are able to get work that is even tenuously related to their talents. Art and culture should be included in any economic development strategy for the creative economy and I ask the minister to address why that has not happened.

My experiences in Dundee convince me of the importance of that point. To listen to the Opposition parties, one would think that Labour was trying to create a creative economy. One exists already and good examples of it can be found all over Scotland, particularly in Dundee. It is unfortunate that members of the SNP, which is supposed to stand up for Scotland, often choose to give examples of good practice in places other than Scotland.

The creative industries—including art and culture—have led regeneration efforts in Dundee. They have changed the way in which local people perceive their community and have been a major contributory factor to the transformation of Dundee's image. I know that the perception of some people, particularly in the media, has not caught up with the reality of what is happening in Dundee, but the important role that the creative industries have played and will continue to play in the well-being of the city has long been recognised by the council, Scottish Enterprise Tayside and other partners. For some time, the Dundee partnership has had an arts, leisure and tourism sub-group and more recently it has set up a creative industries sub-group. There is a good history of the public, private and academic sectors working together to develop creative industries in Dundee.

It is fair to say—I think that the minister did so—that Dundee is well placed to play a leading role in the creative industries sector in Scotland. We have key cultural centres, such as Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee Repertory Theatre—which is one of only three repertory theatres in the UK employing full-time actors—and the recently opened Sensation science centre.

We have world-class educational facilities. Duncan of Jordanstone College is well known for design, media and electronic imagery. The University of Abertay in Dundee is well known for computer games development and virtual reality, and has been mentioned today because the creative industries campus will be based there. Dundee College has the only accredited qualification for contemporary dance outwith London and is well known for multi-media.

As the minister said, there is a growing number of computer games and entertainment development companies in Dundee, such as Visual Sciences, which created Lemmings—I think

everybody has heard of that; Rage Software, which created Grand Theft Auto; and VIS entertainment, which was mentioned by the minister.

I will wind up—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Briefly, please.

Kate MacLean: Four per cent of gross domestic product is perhaps not a huge amount. However, I do not think that anybody should underestimate the significant contribution that the creative industries make to the economy, regeneration, social inclusion and civic pride. I have seen that happen in Dundee and am happy to support the Executive today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That speech ran on a bit. If Richard Lochhead keeps to four minutes, there will be time for a brief speech from Robin Harper.

16:27

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I appreciated the value of the creative industries to Scotland when I saw the front page of the first edition of *business a.m.*, and read that Chris van der Kuyl, who founded VIS entertainment, which Nicol Stephen mentioned, is about to float the company for £80 million. What was appalling about that was that he is the same age as I am. I now wish that I had not stopped playing Space Invaders on my ZX81 computer back in the 1980s to go and deliver SNP leaflets. Perhaps I am taking a less profitable route.

I support any strategy to promote the creative industries in Scotland. They have been responsible for the creation of many indigenous companies, which can only be good for Scotland. They provide many people with the personal satisfaction of being able to express themselves creatively while making a living from doing what they love.

The creative industries will lead to more inward investment in Scotland. People will set up companies in this country if there is creative talent here. Perhaps more important, a successful creative industry in Scotland could stop the brain drain—we could move from brain drain to brain retain. We have heard of software companies in Scotland that are going overseas to poach the best talent. That is very good.

The enterprise network and our venture capitalists must do their utmost to co-ordinate an approach to ensure that our small companies can get off the ground and our talented people can go self-employed.

I intended to mention Tayside and I am doing

that not just because Kate MacLean attacked the SNP for not mentioning local examples. Dundee is in my parliamentary region. One has only to consider what is happening in Dundee to see the benefits of the creative industries. Last year I read an article stating that the software sector alone is growing by 15 per cent a year and will create an extra 30,000 jobs in the next 10 years.

Tayside is certainly tapping into the benefits. We have projects such as interactive Tayside, as mentioned by Nicol Stephen in his opening speech. We have the international centre for computers and virtual entertainment, based at the University of Abertay in Dundee, which works with the games and electronics industries and which is extremely valuable. The University of Abertay is also piloting the creative industries entrepreneur programme, which promotes self-employment for young people with tremendous creative talents who are leaving university and which introduces them to the business world. Those are the sort of things that we need more of throughout the country, not just in Dundee; we want them in Aberdeen and in other cities. I can see the benefits of such projects on my own doorstep.

We must look to the future, and education is the key. We are talking not only about high-level education, for example the software course at the University of Abertay which is very successful; we are talking about the primary school level. We are talking not only about software and games design; we are talking about arts and music, as other speakers have mentioned. It is imperative that we encourage talented people so that Scotland can get an economic and cultural contribution from them. However, as Irene McGugan mentioned, there have been massive cuts in specialist provision in schools in Aberdeenshire. In the primary school sector in Aberdeenshire in 1998, we had 52 full-time equivalent specialists; now we have only 29. That is because of the Government's policy decision to cut local government funding—a decision that is hitting the country's ability to develop the creative industry sector. Music, art and drama teaching are all suffering.

I was at a wedding recently at which a tremendous fiddler played in the band. She said that if she had not had the tuition when she was at primary school in Aberdeenshire, she would not be going to the Royal Academy of Music in London, as she is just about to do. She is a talented person who was encouraged while at primary school, but other people will lose out because of the Government's policy.

There is a lack of co-ordination in the television and film sectors. We must get all our enterprise companies and local authorities to develop that. Glasgow, Edinburgh and the Highlands and

Islands have strategies, but other areas do not.

Let us not promote the creative industries in Scotland at the expense of our more traditional industries. The whisky industry, the food industry and the offshore sector are creative industries too. Let us not put all our eggs in one basket by putting all our cash into some creative industries while forgetting about our more traditional industries.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): I call Robin Harper for a brief contribution of just two minutes.

16:32

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): This will be brief, because I have only one point that I want to make. I want to hammer home the point that Irene McGugan, Richard Lochhead and Ian Jenkins have already made: that assistance in primary schools for art, music, drama, physical education, home economics and outdoor education is in a parlous state. Those subjects have steadily declined over the past 20 years.

Before I was elected to this Parliament, I was a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland and was president of my local association. I was intimately associated with trying to give advice and assistance to the few peripatetic primary specialists who were left in Lothian region—there were between 20 and 30 of them to cover about 200 primary schools. The situation is approaching, I would say, disaster level. At one point, there was extremely good provision in that area, but now it is withering on the vine. One of the reasons for that is that education authority after education authority is employing primary specialists on temporary short-term contracts so that, when they lose their jobs, they lose them without trace because it is difficult for unions to defend them. Something has to be done about that. There has to be some joined-up thinking between what is happening in the Parliament and what is happening in education.

It is quite bizarre, when we want to produce rounded people in the creative arts, that in many secondary schools it is not possible, either at standard or at higher grade, to do both art and music, because of the way that timetables work in those schools.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to winding-up speeches.

16:34

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I would like to begin by welcoming to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee Alex Neil and Kenny MacAskill. Kenny was leading for the SNP today. It is just a great pity that he brought the same

speech with him from the Transport and the Environment Committee to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee.

During the recess, I and two of my colleagues on the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee spent a day at the Alba Centre in Livingston, where we witnessed some of the best design engineers at work, creating tomorrow's new consumer products. State-of-the-art design engineering was taking place here in Scotland. Those engineers were taking pure research and knowledge created in our universities and using it to create and design the next generation of consumer products in one of the fastest-growing and most competitive markets in the world. Worldwide growth rates for the creative industries are forecast at between 5 per cent and 20 per cent per annum. The new technologies offer Scotland a unique opportunity to expand into world markets.

However, if Scotland is to seize the opportunity, we must produce graduates with the proper skills. I am glad that the minister recognised that there is a skills shortage in Scotland. That was a central message that we took away from the Alba Centre when we visited. We need to encourage more pupils to take up the hard sciences. Currently, in Scotland, the numbers of students in those subjects are declining, rather than increasing. That is a great worry.

When asked to identify what needed to be done, Professor Beaumont of the Alba Centre said that he thought that engineering in Scotland had an image problem because it was perceived as an old-fashioned, heavy industry, concerned with metal bashing. Nothing could be further from the truth. Professor Beaumont contrasted the situation in Scotland with that in India, where children aspire to become engineers because engineering has a high-tech image. He felt that the problems in producing quality engineers in Scotland stem from our schools. It is not only that there is a lack of pupils studying maths and physics, but there is inappropriate teaching of those subjects.

The irony is that design engineering is a career that can offer high starting salaries of around £24,000 per annum to the best graduates. Perhaps that is another career that Richard Lochhead should have considered when he was younger. Design engineering offers great travel opportunities and a varied career path.

Professor Beaumont offered several recommendations on how we should improve the situation. First, he suggested a sustained drive to improve the image of engineering. Secondly, he suggested that a clear message be put out to schoolchildren, stressing the benefits of an engineering career. Although there have been many such initiatives, very few have been successful and there needs to be greater co-

ordination in that respect.

Thirdly, Professor Beaumont suggested preferential funding arrangements for students considering engineering, in order to increase the number of undergraduates and graduates. That is something that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee may want to investigate as we consider the student grants legislation. I hope that the new convener will take that on board. It was also suggested that physics and maths courses in schools are overly concerned with providing facts and figures, rather than encouraging pupils to think creatively.

Traditionally, design has been linked with subjects such as art and crafts, but it should also be a feature of the science disciplines. It was felt that such a cross-cutting of subjects would help to produce more imaginative courses.

Those were some of the key issues that arose during our visit. I will feed them back into the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's discussion on how to develop e-commerce in Scotland. I am sure that Rhona Brankin is aware of those issues and I hope that she will address them in her summing-up speech.

If Scotland is serious about seizing some of the unique opportunities that present themselves as a result of the worldwide growth of the creative industries, we must ensure that we have the maximum number of students and graduates with the right skills. That is fundamental in ensuring Scotland's place as a world player in world markets.

16:38

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): Something funny happens to politicians when they are confronted with culture. We have seen a graphic example of that today. I am not criticising individuals—some people might take it that way—but this has been one of the dullest, most boring debates that we have ever had. [*Interruption.*] I exempt Pauline McNeill's comments from that observation—I will come to that in a moment.

When politicians talk about culture, they get very serious and tongue-tied, and seem to forget that creativity is about excitement. One or two of us have worked in the creative industries—

Mr Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Yes. He wrote the SNP manifesto.

Michael Russell: I know that Andy Kerr was a stand-up comic in another life, but I am sure that even he would agree that, when the Scottish Executive describes the creative industries as including architecture, advertising, arts and cultural industries, design, film, interactive leisure software, music, new media, publishing, radio and

television, what it means is that it is about all the things that we enjoy and like participating in. It means the things—or most of the things—that give us pleasure.

The debate is about the important things in life, yet it has been sombre and slow. As Mr McCabe knows, it is, in the language of the Parliamentary Bureau—and I can say this now that I am no longer a member of the bureau—a filler. It is a filler that was to have been included in the timetable three weeks ago on 6 September, but which was lost because of a statement from Sam Galbraith. Now it is back again.

We knew that we were in for something problematic when we heard Nicol Stephen's speech. It was the nearest that I have heard in a political speech to "Finnegans Wake". It was simply a stream-of-consciousness recitation of all the companies that Nicol had ever heard of and, presumably, one or two that he had not heard of, added by his civil servants. He did not actually mean anything. We did not actually hear what the strategy was. We did not hear any excitement about it. What we heard was a civil service response to a document, and the document itself was bad enough—it is just some of the national cultural strategy.

Lawrence Durrell once observed that the worst thing that ever happened to the world of the arts was the invention of printing, because it gave an artificial respectability to the word. The worst thing that has ever happened to new Labour was the invention of design, because all that Labour ministers do is get designed documents, such as the one that is before us today. The document is almost unreadable; it is virtually impossible to understand what is in it because it has been designed out of existence.

Mr Monteith: Does Mike Russell agree that, if it were simply to continue producing documents and glossy brochures such as this, the Executive would indeed meet its targets for expanding the design market?

Michael Russell: Mr Monteith is probably right but, shockingly enough, the document produced for the national cultural strategy cost almost £60,000. We do not know how much today's document has cost. That money could have been used on the creative industries, but producing Executive documents such as this is not a creative industry.

The real problem with the debate has been a lack of vision and a lack of excitement. When Mr MacAskill talked about the proposals, he said that SNP members would support them—and we will. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the proposals; they will assist the creative industries.

However, they do not contain one shred of

excitement or vision. In fact, they do something quite damaging. They do what the national cultural strategy does. They say, "There, we've done it and it's over and done with. Let's move on to the next thing."

I see Rhona Brankin shaking her head and we shall hear from her in a moment, but the reality is that this strategy is a way of shoving into a convenient drawer some things that might get some good publicity. It is nothing to do with ensuring that individual creative artists—and everyone in Scotland has the potential to be a creative artist—can develop. There is no way in which today's document or the national cultural strategy can achieve that.

Pauline McNeill came close to the truth when she talked about the music industry and the way in which it absorbs the energies, time and talents of a whole range of young people who want to be creators. Those people can create in that way wherever they are, using low tech as well as high tech, just for the pleasure of it. Robin Harper made the wise point that to do that, young people must be encouraged at the earliest stages of their lives. It is really no good at all producing glossy documents while failing to remember that it is children who matter. If children learn the joy of creativity, they will contribute far more to the world than they would otherwise contribute.

Everybody in the chamber was disappointed by the Conservative contribution. I am very fond of Annabel Goldie, but it was typical of her to spend her speech quoting from a kailyard cookbook and calling for lower taxes. That is what we expect from the Scottish Tories, but we would like some involvement in creativity and a vision of Scotland.

Kate MacLean made some positive points about the need for unanimity on these issues. We can be unanimous; there is no point in amending the motion. It is an anodyne motion that simply says, "We'll do this. There's a document. We're spending £25 million." What we should be doing is coming together and saying that there is a whole world out there of things that we can help with—things that the Parliament was established to help with. We should be saying, "Let's go and do that." I regret the fact that the Scottish Conservatives will not join in with that unanimity today.

Miss Goldie: Mr Russell has been speaking for five minutes 56 seconds, and I have heard no indication whatever of what he or his party would do towards the expansion of the creative industries in Scotland. He may disparage my kailyard contribution, but I doubt whether those who are fond of Scottish literature and traditional culture will endorse his comment. They might be very offended by his description of what many people see as a quite legendary contribution to creative industry in its time. The point I was

making was that creative industry is difficult to define and that it has no barriers—it is to do with anything that has a creative spirit within it. His contribution so far has been remarkable for its absence of creativity.

Michael Russell: I yield to no one, not even to Annabel Goldie, in my admiration for the late Marion McNeill and the work that she did in Scottish cookery, but that is not what we are here to talk about today. For Annabel Goldie to have that as the main substance of her speech was perhaps disingenuous.

We should be able to unite on a strategy for creating a creative Scotland. There are lots of things that have not been done. The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport, in her reply, might address the issue of a national theatre in Scotland; it would be possible through the investment of £1 million to £2.5 million to create a national theatre, to create the people who will be involved in film and television. She might address the shortage of money in education, to do the things that Mr Harper and Irene McGugan talked about. She might address the way that investment in the creative industries is a matter not just of looking at projects such as Pacific Quay but of finding the right way to make sure that Scotland can play a full role in the world. That is not in the document "creativescotland".

We have a great deal to do. Nobody in their right mind would oppose Nicol Stephen's motion—but they would say, "Is that it?" Because if it is it, other people will have to come along later and do a great deal more. Fortunately, those people are on the SNP benches.

16:47

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I hope that we now have a clear understanding of what the creative economy is. From the debate today and the documentation, it is evident that the Scottish Executive has one definition, Scottish Enterprise has another, adding arts and culture, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise has yet another, adding traditional arts and music, which should also include crafts. I do not wish to exclude any of those areas, but if we are to achieve the consensus that Mike Russell called for, first we must understand what we are talking about.

When I speak to people in the business sector, time after time I hear the concern that the Parliament has no experience of, and does not understand, business. I am sorry to say that today's debate has given greater ammunition to that view. The idea that we as a Parliament, through the Scottish Executive and Scottish Enterprise, can pick an economic sector and make

it an international winner is not accepted in the business community. That is where there is a difference between our approach and that of the Executive and the SNP, and why we have chosen to amend the motion. We do not believe that it is possible to isolate certain sectors of the economy and declare them winners with our help. That is not to say that there should not be Government help, as we have outlined, to reduce legislation and the number of obstacles to the expansion of industry, but we do not think it is possible for agencies to pick and back winners. Pauline McNeill and Nicol Stephen epitomised that approach.

The creative economy is spontaneous, unpredictable and cannot be planned. The fact that music can be made in bedrooms, or that someone can invent the Dyson vacuum cleaner in a garden shed, shows that the creative spark is something in an individual, not something that is planned by the state. That is why I have questioned the suitability of backing grand projects such as Pacific Quay. The most important thing that the Parliament could do to help the creative economy would be to support the teaching of arts and humanities in schools.

As the Conservative amendment says, we should reduce immediately the burdens on businesses—businesses that exploit creative ideas for the benefit of the authors of those ideas and of their customers—that have applied in the past and that might apply at any time.

I worked with businesses in the creative economy for about 20 years. I mean not only my work with the Tory party, which created many of the ideas whose copyrights have been stolen by the current Government, but with design companies in marketing, advertising and public relations. I worked with names such as the Leith Agency, Northcross Ltd, EH6 Design Consultants, Tayburn Corporate, Scott Stern Associates and Faulds Advertising. All those companies are well known nationally and internationally and all are successful in their fields. They did not require great subsidies and leg-ups. They needed an open market and the creative spark that comes from employing high-quality people.

An example of how I believe the Executive has got it wrong is the film studio. I will deal with that in particular, in the hope that the minister might address the matter. If he is unable to give answers today, perhaps he might ponder the points that I will make.

Scottish Screen is backing a publicly funded studio at Pacific Quay and the Executive appears to be thirled to the idea. However, Scottish Enterprise's report—produced by Piedad plc—makes it clear in its detail that the Glasgow site is too small. Pacific Quay will provide two sound

stages, neither of which will be larger than 12,000 sq ft. The Piedad report recommended that there should be at least five sound stages of between 6,000 and 20,000 sq ft and that the number of stages should increase when the studio became successful. The minister must consider whether Pacific Quay is merely a hook to attract BBC television production to that site, rather than an international film studio.

Will the studio have room to expand if it is successful? I have reason to doubt that it will. Will it be large enough to make the £400,000 profit—not turnover—that it will require to wash its face? Will the film studio be able to accommodate the actors and technicians and their entourages? Anybody who has seen a film being produced in Glasgow, Edinburgh or anywhere in Scotland will realise that that brings a large number of people. Will the studio at Pacific Quay have the capacity to deal with the parking requirements of trailers, caravans and articulated lorries?

There are proposals for a £225 million film studio near Gleneagles; that makes the £25 million that we are discussing seem small. There are proposals for a film studio in the west of Edinburgh, which is often connected with Sean Connery. Will those proposals have the Executive's support if they are progressed or will they find that the Executive queers their pitches in favour of the Pacific Quay proposal?

Michael Russell: I will add a question to Mr Monteith's list. He or the minister may answer it. Has any study been done of the experience of other countries that have publicly funded film studios that have turned out to be too small or too inefficient? I ask with specific reference to the film studio at Bray in Ireland.

Mr Monteith: I thank Mike Russell for that intervention and the question that he posed. I am also thankful, of course, for the report on the subject that he will produce for the Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

Mike Russell makes his point well—the proposals for Pacific Quay would do no more than bring the smallest film studio into being.

Pauline McNeill: Mr Monteith keeps referring to a film studio at Pacific Quay, but the proposal is about more than that. It is about the whole BBC television network. If the BBC does not move there, there is a chance that there will be no media transmission from Scotland. I want that to be emphasised. A bridge is being built in my constituency to service that site—technicians and so on will be able to travel there.

Mr Monteith: I am delighted to hear Pauline McNeill back up my argument that Pacific Quay might well become nothing more than a glorified broadcasting studio, rather than an international

film studio.

It is worthy of a Government and its agencies to promote the establishment and flourishing of all economic sectors, be they rural, urban, technical, scientific, artistic or creative. However, to achieve that we need a sound economy based on low taxation and regulation, and a healthy investment in our education sector to ensure that people have the basis of the creative spark that creates the creative economy.

16:56

The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport (Rhona Brankin): The debate has provided a welcome opportunity to discuss the links between Scotland's creative and cultural life and its economic future, and the Executive is committed to providing the conditions where both can flourish.

We have celebrated some successes in those key areas today; let us spend a little time on some more. Ananova, the digitised newsreader, comes from Bellshill, whose previous favourite son was Gary MacAllister. Unlike Gary MacAllister, however, Ananova has her own website. She is the creation of the Digital Animations Group, which is one of the world's leading companies in the creation of digitised characters. We have heard about other examples such as Chris van der Kuyl's VIS entertainment and Muriel Gray's company, Ideal World.

There are also achievements to be proud of in the non-digital world. For example, three of the 10 finalists for the prestigious Jerwood prize for jewellery were Scottish artists. Squigee Textile Design—a Glasgow-based textile design studio set up two years ago by two young graduates with support from the Scottish Arts Council start-up scheme—has carried out major commissions in London, Sydney and the Hub in Edinburgh. It has appointed agents to handle its growing business in the UK, Europe and USA and is outsourcing its printing to allow more time for designing new collections.

Such Scottish successes are recognised in the UK. I have sat on the UK creative industries task force, which is chaired by Chris Smith, and our approach in Scotland is looked on with envy by colleagues elsewhere.

The task force has identified a number of issues that are critical to the future of the creative industries. Some issues, such as finance and the implication of intellectual property rights, have been raised today. Although those issues are complex, we are making progress on them in Scotland. New financial packages are being developed specifically for the sector. We have heard about the Alba Centre in Livingston, which

has taken a new approach to sharing innovative thinking among a number of partners along the way. Not only do we have the skills and talents, we have a positive set of conditions to allow us to exploit them.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: Not just now—I have about eight points to respond to.

Just over a year ago, we made a commitment to develop a cultural strategy for Scotland in recognition of the fact that individual ideas, creativity and self-expression lie at the heart of a civilised society. The cultural and creative industry strategies fully complement each other; both are about long-term vision and investing for the future well-being of people in Scotland. In addition, both are about finding new ways to express ourselves and to communicate with the rest of the world.

The creative industries are particularly rooted in developments in technology, but such developments bring exciting new opportunities to more conventional creative activities. I welcome Pauline McNeill's speech on the music industry. I am particularly excited by the joint working that is going on between the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise to support innovative approaches to music and publishing that will develop and exploit the potential of the new technology.

Alex Neil: Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: No, not just now.

Publishing and music have been areas of considerable strength in our cultural sector. They have brought many new and interesting works and individuals to home and international audiences, and both stand on the threshold of rapid and stimulating new opportunities. Technology and creative energy will blend to take us into new fields of excellence. I shall follow the developments proposed by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise with great interest and I am confident that those developments will make a difference.

Scottish Enterprise will look for similarly innovative approaches to new forms and modes of expression. Its plans to develop a media cluster at Pacific Quay were alluded to and are well advanced. The strategy of bringing people together so that they can work with and learn from one another and explore the potential for joint business is critical.

Previously, such situations happened by chance; for example, Leith has become home to many advertising businesses in Scotland. Scottish Enterprise, building on its experience of cluster development in other sectors, such as semiconductors in silicon glen and biotechnology

in Dundee or Midlothian, has the opportunity to develop a well-planned media campus.

As we heard, plans to establish a hub in Dundee for computer games and the electronic entertainment industry are at an advanced stage. That hub has the potential to become an international centre of excellence for the industry in Scotland.

A number of members referred to the proposed film studio, and I know that many believe that that proposal is essential in underpinning the film industry in Scotland and taking it to the next stage. In many ways, we already punch above our weight in Scotland and we should recognise the achievements of people such as Lynne Ramsay, Peter Mullan and others. A business plan has been prepared by Scottish Screen and I advise Brian Monteith that we are considering that plan closely. The studio will give the campus a state-of-the-art digital production facility as well as allowing for more conventional studio activities.

We can realise our potential in television and film only if we capture the imaginations of our young people. We must encourage them to think, to explore, to express ideas, to write, to draw, to paint, to design, to sculpt, to play or just to indulge their creative fantasies, purely for the fun of it. In the cultural strategy, we set out the view that schools can and should be centres of creativity. We can use culture to help children to acquire the skills that they will need for their future lives. Self-confidence and team working will be important, but creative thinking is equally vital.

I will deal with some of the specific points raised by members. Annabel Goldie's speech gave us some food for thought—[MEMBERS: "Oh."] That was a poor joke. While I am happy to recognise the importance of food to Scottish culture, Miss Goldie's comments on regulatory constraints and new burdens on business were irrelevant, as we are rigorous in limiting those to the minimum. We must focus on the potential.

While I welcome Mr MacAskill's support for the motion, it was expressed in a rather typically ungenerous way. Yet again, the SNP talks down Scottish success. He talked about skill shortages in the information and communications sector; I will tell him what we are doing to address those shortages. We are taking action to improve the level of ICT skills in Scottish universities and colleges by investing £15 million over three years from the spending review settlement. We are providing an extra £5.5 million for individual learning accounts, to improve access to learning opportunities. We have earmarked £12 million for initiatives on institutional and international university computing and ICT links.

Kate MacLean spoke articulately about the ICT

developments that are taking place in our schools. If, as Kenny MacAskill said, we have such a lack of technological skills, how do we manage to produce people such as Chris van der Kuy? Many of our leading-edge digital entrepreneurs are in their 20s. What is happening in Scotland is exciting and innovative and we should not continue to talk it down.

Irene McGugan mentioned the importance of creativity in schools. That is exactly why we plan to put cultural champions into Scottish schools. She also mentioned tourism, and I agree that culture is vital for Scottish tourism. That is exactly why we are developing the important niche market of cultural tourism—today, I chaired the first meeting of the new group on cultural tourism.

I recognise and value Pauline McNeill's work on the music industry in Scotland. There is indeed a lot of work to do. I have alluded to current developments, including the study of the recording industry that is being undertaken by the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise; other interesting developments include those at the proposed school of music and recording technology in Ayrshire. As Pauline McNeill said, music inspires many young people. When we talked to young people and asked them what culture meant to them, many of them replied that music was important. That is why we need to consider how school cultural champions can widen the opportunities available for youngsters to play musical instruments, to develop work on the setting up of bands and to take part in popular music in schools.

Kate MacLean recognises clearly the importance of culture and the creative industries to Dundee. In our cultural strategy, we specifically recognise the importance of using culture as a tool for cultural development.

Mike Russell told us that he has worked in a creative industry. The only creative industry that Mr Russell has been involved in, as has been suggested, was the SNP's manifesto. In typical form, he described the debate as boring and lacking in excitement. That describes his speech exactly.

As the Parliament has heard, the Scottish Enterprise cluster strategy aims to expand the creative sector by 30 per cent over the next three to five years, to develop the talent and skills base and to raise creative exports to 15 per cent of the Scottish total.

To achieve its potential, the business will need to be complemented by a dynamic, healthy cultural sector, the achievement of which is embodied in the cultural strategy's vision. Those are ambitious projects, and the vision that they embody must have the support of the Parliament.

We need to develop our creative potential to maintain Scotland's viability in increasingly competitive world markets.

For all those reasons, I urge members to vote for the motion in support of the creative economy and to support the Scottish Enterprise strategy and the cultural strategy.

Annual Reports

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): There are no Parliamentary Bureau motions before us today, but I ask the convener of the Health and Community Care Committee, Mrs Margaret Smith, to move motions S1M-1212 and S1M-1211, on the publication of the ombudsmen's reports.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament notes that the Health Service Commissioner for Scotland intends to lay his Annual Report for 1999-2000 before the Parliament and orders the Clerk to publish the Report.

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration intends to lay his Annual Report for 1999-2000 before the Parliament and orders the Clerk to publish the Report.—[*Mrs Margaret Smith.*]

Decision Time

17:08

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The first question is, that amendment S1M-1213.2, in the name of Miss Annabel Goldie, on the creative economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 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)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (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)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (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)
 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)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (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)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 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)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 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 19, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S1M-1213, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on the creative economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 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)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (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)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (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, Etrick 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)
 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)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (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)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 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)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 88, Against 1, Abstentions 19.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises the increasing contribution of the creative industries to the Scottish economy and the potential for further growth in this sector; notes the Executive's wish to ensure that the creative and business skills on which these industries depend are fully and properly nurtured in Scotland's people; welcomes Scottish Enterprise's £25 million development strategy to support this sector of the economy and promote its continuing expansion; and therefore endorses the determination of the Executive to ensure the conditions in which Scotland's creative industries will continue to flourish in rapidly growing world markets.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S1M-1211, in the name of Mrs Margaret Smith, on the Scottish parliamentary ombudsman's annual report, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration intends to lay his Annual Report for 1999-2000 before the Parliament and orders the

Clerk to publish the Report.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S1M-1212, in the name of Mrs Margaret Smith, on the annual report of the health service ombudsman for Scotland, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes that the Health Service Commissioner for Scotland intends to lay his Annual Report for 1999-2000 before the Parliament and orders the Clerk to publish the Report.

Highland Clearances

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S1M-1004, in the name of Jamie Stone, on the Highland clearances. I make my now familiar appeal to members who are leaving to do so quickly and quietly, so that we can proceed with the debate.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament expresses its deepest regret for the occurrence of the Highland Clearances and extends its hand in friendship and welcome to the descendants of the cleared people who reside outwith our shores.

17:11

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I begin by saying two things. First, from the bottom of my heart I thank the members from all four big parties who have been good enough to support this motion. Secondly, I extend on behalf of the Parliament a very warm welcome to our visitors from the Highlands, who are sitting in the galleries.

The Highland clearances were a catastrophic time for the Highlands. Whatever one may think about the reasons for the clearances—at lunch time today Mr Michael Fry and I had an energetic and interesting discussion of those on the BBC—there is no doubt that they happened and that they led to the destruction of the Highlands that Boswell and Johnson saw in their celebrated tour of the Hebrides. At the time of their visit to the north, that process was already in hand, but the clearances were responsible for its completion.

I want first to look back and then to look forward. In looking back, I will make two points. The first is that in the Highlands the clearances are still with us. The memory of them is handed down from generation to generation. I will illustrate that with a short story. Five years ago, some of us, including people in the public gallery, had reason to attend the memorial service at Croick church in Sutherland, which was held to commemorate the clearance of Glencalvie in 1845. Many members will be familiar with the story of how the Munros and Rosses were cleared out of the strath and took shelter under a tarpaulin in the churchyard. They were not allowed into the church; there lies another story. It was due to our great press and to *The Times*—"The Thunderer", no less—that the lid was taken off this story. The newspaper sent a reporter to the area—alas, we do not know who he was, although we have some suspicions—who covered the story and, thanks to the then editor, put it on the front page. That shamed the whole terrible process to a halt.

I wrote a column in the local newspaper about the memorial service and about what had happened. I speculated about what might have happened to the people who ultimately left the churchyard. In the books of the time and in modern history books, it is reported that a family by the name of Ross took shelter on a black moor some 25 miles away, up behind Tain. Two or three days after I wrote the column, I was walking in Tain when a gentleman came up to me—I wish I had asked his name, but I was too astonished to do so—and said, “That was my family; that was my great-great-great-grandfather.” Memory of that incident is still with one family today. That is one reason why the topic of the clearances is still with us and is still so important in the Highlands.

My second point is that the picture of the clearances is not as clear as some historians would like to paint it. It was not just the great families—or, to be accurate, some of the great families—who were responsible for the clearances. Indeed, my family was involved.

I had occasion some years ago to look back into the title deeds of a small farm of which my family has the remains today. My ancestor was a Fraser from Cromarty, who very likely cleared in the Black Isle. He came to Tain in the 1820s and made good—it will not surprise some members—with a drink shop.

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): Not a cheese shop?

Mr Stone: No, a drink shop.

He took it upon himself to buy some small parcels of land around the burgh. If we go back in the deeds, we can see that those were small crofts in their day. If we study the history of Easter Ross, round about Kilmuir Easter and Logie Easter, we will see that almost everyone was at it. That is why the situation is not as simple as we might think.

On a lighter note, I point out that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton’s ancestor, the fifth Earl of Selkirk—although vilified in some of the books of the time—was a very good man indeed, who almost bankrupted himself trying to take the cleared from Sutherland to Canada. In 1820, having lost his fortune in that enterprise, he died of consumption owing to his labours. He even bothered to learn Gaelic on the boat over. It is worth remembering that the enterprise failed because the fur trade made it its business to see that it did not work and that the settlers would not prosper. What is interesting about that episode is that the ringleaders of the fur traders were two Highlanders by the name of McGilvery. Again and again, we have Highlander against Highlander in this whole episode.

It is for that reason that, in my former existence as a councillor, I always strenuously resisted any

talk of demolishing the Duke of Sutherland’s statue.

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): I am not sure about that.

Mr Stone: The member may boo, but it is an unwise society that destroys its history. Let us remember that it was Nazi Germany that burned books. It is correct that the duke should be there, to remind us of what happened.

I will speak briefly about the future. Mr Dennis MacLeod, who is with us today, was born and bred in Helmsdale but went abroad and made his fortune in gold. He has an extremely imaginative project in hand to establish a clearances memorial and centre at Helmsdale in Sutherland, not just to commemorate what happened, but to act as a genealogical archive and an information centre. It strikes me that, out of the wickedness of the Highlands of those years—the wickedness that affected and was caused by all classes of Highland society—some great good could come.

The motion says that we extend the hand of friendship to the descendants of Highlanders across the world. It strikes me that, if we established the centre and those descendants could come back to the Highlands to research their roots—we know that our American friends are very keen on that—that would be of enormous good to the Highlands.

Why not take those people up to Helmsdale? If they discover that their ancestors came from Ayrshire, let them go back down the road. In the meantime, let us get them north to see John O’Groats and to boost the economy of Caithness and Sutherland. I make no apologies—the scheme is an imaginative one. Out of wickedness in the past, great good can come.

It has been put to me repeatedly by the press today that I am in charge of some sort of apology. The motion reads that

“the Parliament expresses its deepest regret for the occurrence of the Highland Clearances and extends its hand in friendship and welcome to the descendants of the cleared people who reside outwith our shores.”

To try to bring back everybody is a very noble idea. Surely every child in this country learns about the clearances. We do not apologise—we were not responsible. However, in our heart of hearts surely every one of us deeply and sincerely regrets that black era in British history.

I close with words—written with a diamond ring in the window of Glencalvie kirk—that many will know and recognise and which can be seen today:

“Glencalvie people was in the church here May 24, 1845”—

and this is the saddest thing of all—

"Glencalvie people the wicked generation . . . John Ross shepherd . . . Glencalvie people was here . . . Amy Ross . . . Glencalvie is a wilderness blow ship them to the colony . . . The Glencalvie Rosses".

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): Understandably, a large number of members have indicated that they wish to speak in the debate. It will not be possible to call them all. I ask those who are called to keep their contributions brief, so that we can accommodate as many members as possible.

17:20

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I start by congratulating Jamie Stone on lodging this motion. This has been a joint party effort. The text of the motion invites Parliament to express our

"deepest regret for the occurrence of the Highland Clearances".

I know that there will be no vote, but I hope that at the end of this short debate the minister will say that he personally joins in the spirit of the motion.

Why should this be done? In other countries, the genocide and ethnic cleansing that has taken place, against the Indians in America and the Aborigines in Australia, was acknowledged long ago. Today, the time to acknowledge what happened to those who were cleared from the Highlands has come. We can now acknowledge and regret what happened and perhaps then move on.

The motion also asks us to extend our

"hand in friendship and welcome to the descendants of the cleared people who reside outwith our shores."

Although the descendants of cleared people in Scotland today may number only tens of hundreds, the Highland diaspora extends to tens of millions. With Margaret Ewing, I visited Ellis island, off New York, which commemorates the melting pot of America and where the citizens came from—the countries that they left.

What a terrific idea Mr MacLeod has, with others, to show the country that people left and how they got to Canada, Australia and America. The centre will show the experiences that they had on the way—the hardships, suffering and atrocity that they endured, such as show trials and hangings. I join Jamie Stone in hoping that the Executive will support—in all ways—the fruition of that project.

As Jamie Stone mentioned the future, I will mention the present. We had one of the most interesting times for reflection today, when George Thompson reminded us of the dangers of exaggerating what we may see as the wrongs and ills of today in comparison with acts of genocide,

war and suffering on a much larger scale. Although I would therefore not use the phrase "new clearances", I am concerned that voluntary bodies and Government agencies in the Highlands have too much power over the lives of those who live there. I hope that we can deal with the abuse of that power as well as commemorate the wrongs of the past.

17:23

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I start by commenting on Jamie Stone's reference to the Earl of Selkirk and the Selkirk settlers. The Red River settlement founded Winnipeg, which is today larger than Edinburgh.

I am delighted to support Jamie Stone in this debate. The Highland clearances were a matter of great regret to the people of Scotland. We must never forget the suffering caused to so many innocents. We must learn from history. In the latter half of the 18th century, there was an enormous population explosion, which reached its peak in the 1830s. It was caused mainly by the virtual eradication of smallpox through injection and the introduction of potatoes, which grew easily in poor soil and provided a basic diet.

A social revolution was created in the Highlands and Islands by Government legislation that ended heritable jurisdiction. Formerly, the Scottish kings, without a standing army, had found it necessary to delegate authority to subjects who in return were granted large areas of land. Consequently, the power of a chief lay in the number of men whom he could call to arms. The Heritable Jurisdictions (Scotland) Act 1746 ended that prerogative and landlords, as real money replaced barter, began to make their land commercial through improvement and charging higher rent. The old system of township farming, in which rent was paid mostly in kind, became increasingly uneconomic. Ever-expanding families tried to scrape a living from the land, but they failed. The little island of Inch Kenneth, off Mull, was ploughed from shore to shore, but still there was not enough food to keep the inhabitants alive.

The problem was exacerbated when the Highland regiments raised to fight in Europe were disbanded and all the men came home. The Government tried to help by giving grants towards employment. Many dry-stone dykes remain as evidence of that work. The failure in 1820 of the kelp industry, in which seaweed was burned to make fertiliser, was another blow to the Highland economy. Worst of all, in the 1840s the potato crop failed.

John Ramsay at Kildalton in Islay, where people were on the verge of starvation, paid for a steamer to take some of them to Canada. Later, when he

went to visit them, he found them in a prosperous condition. At the time, there was no form of national assistance other than parish relief.

There was a huge difference, which still exists, between the native Gael culture and its English equivalent. I quote John Robertson, a southern journalist, who wrote in Glasgow's *The National*:

"A Highlander's soul lives in the clan and family traditions of the past. The legends of the Ingle, the songs of the Bards. The master idea of the English mind, the idea of business, has not dawned on his soul, has not developed its peculiar virtues in his character. He is loyal, but not punctual, honest but not systematic. The iron genius of economical improvements he knows not and he heeds not."

Those are wonderful virtues, which still exist in the Highlands and Islands and which Scotland would lose at its peril. I urge the Scottish Executive to promote and protect the Highland culture and to prevent another Highland clearance by aiding the inhabitants, who now face tremendous difficulties in a UK, which, we are told, is prosperous.

Many people emigrated of their own accord. Flora MacDonald, saviour of Bonnie Prince Charlie, is a case in point. Some landlords forced whole communities to go. The poor Rosses of Strathcarron at Easter Ross were bloodily evicted, and Strathnaver and the lands of the Countess of Sutherland were cleared by her husband, the notorious Marquess of Stafford. He, incidentally, has one thing in common with Jamie Stone, in that he too was a Liberal MP for Caithness and Sutherland. His two agents—James Loch, another Liberal MP, and Patrick Sellar—cruelly and savagely carried out evictions. When confronted by an old lady of 90 who refused to leave her dwelling, Patrick Sellar is reputed to have said, "Burn it down, the old witch has lived too long."

It is worth noting that the so-called progressive policy of the liberal Whig party in those days actively encouraged the clearances, while Conservatives at the time were fighting to keep people in the glens to preserve the rural population and to maintain a source of remarkable foot soldiers who had always served the British Army with extraordinary valour.

While we are rightly horrified by the clearances, and while honouring the courage of the men and women who opposed them—such as the Skye people in the battle of the braes—we must pay tribute to the enterprise and initiative of those who emigrated of their own free will and improved the lot of their families. They have since strengthened Scotland's links overseas to the benefit of us all.

It is in that positive spirit that we should encourage a visitor centre in the Highlands, which will welcome people to renew contacts with their ancestors' homeland. I support Mr MacLeod and wish his venture every success.

17:28

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): When I was a child, my grandmother told me a story—a tale of Highland battle, of sticks and stones and broken bones—which ended with the complete removal of the crofting population from the township of Sollas on North Uist. My grandmother told that story with such passion and in such detail that it was as if she had been there herself. In fact, it was a story that had been passed on to her by her grandmother, a witness and a participant who was also a seannachie—a folk historian—whose job it was to witness and to keep in memory the experiences of her extended family and her community.

The day of the clearance of Sollas in 1849 was the end of that community, but it is remembered in our family as a day of pride as well as a day of anguish. Yes, it was the day on which we lost the land, but it was also the day that the fightback began. The fightback continued. In my teens, I heard another story, from the early days of the Labour and trade union movement in the city of Aberdeen. I heard how Aberdeen Trades Council organised a trainful of townspeople to support the landless cottars and squatters facing eviction from the slopes of Bennachie in Aberdeenshire, which they had brought into agricultural production after being cleared from land elsewhere and over which the owners of the neighbouring estate saw fit to exercise their legal rights to possess and to divide the land among themselves.

On Bennachie in the 1890s, as in Sollas in the 1840s, the people resisted and the landlords won. However, those acts of resistance and the solidarity of working people in town and country helped to change the course of history. It is a tradition of resistance and solidarity of which I, for one, am proud.

The laird who cleared Sollas was not a Sassenach or a stranger or a foreigner; he was a man with the title of Lord Macdonald. As a descendant of his victims, I do not want an apology from this Parliament. I do not even want an apology from the current Lord Macdonald. Instead, I want this Parliament to build on the resistance and achievements of the past 150 years to deliver the far-reaching land reform that will secure the future of our crofting communities, to deliver a secure future also for the Gaelic language and culture as part of the heritage of the whole of Scotland, and to deliver social justice and economic opportunity, which are the shared ideals of Uist land leaguers and Aberdeen trade unionists alike.

Mrs Margaret Ewing: I have a brief point—I am listening carefully to what Lewis Macdonald and others have said. Does he accept that in the teaching of the Highland clearances we must

separate romanticism from reality? Is not a responsibility placed on this Parliament to ensure that all the children of Scotland are aware of exactly what happened?

Lewis Macdonald: I support that point. As technically I have given way, I technically have the opportunity to make a further point. It is important that we educate people about their history, but it is also important to recognise that, although many of the descendants of those who were cleared from the Highlands went overseas, many more remained here. Therefore, the responsibility to the descendants of the cleared is not confined to those who are overseas, important though that is. This is also a matter of integrating the cultural tradition of rural and urban Scotland.

17:31

Mr John Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): When I hear Jamie McGrigor talking about Strath Halladale and the duke and Patrick Sellar it puts a cold shiver up my spine because of the atrocities that were perpetrated there.

I welcome this debate. It gives us an opportunity to look back on our history, but I am not sure that this Parliament should express regret for the clearances. After all, these events were terrible atrocities that were perpetrated on a vulnerable, fragile and defenceless community, and were controlled from another distant place. I suggest that our clergy and state Church of the time were as guilty as anybody of encouraging the scourge that was the clearances. Through their pious pronouncements from their pulpits they declared regularly that this was God's will for His devoted people, and as good and decent Christians they should accept His command and leave their shielings and holdings. But for the benefit of what? The great white sheep that were being introduced to the Highlands. They were considered to be more profitable than the indigenous population, and probably easier to manage and control.

As we have heard, these events took place 150 years ago, but attitudes have not changed. Since then, we have had a much more sophisticated type of clearance. We have seen the steady decline of employment opportunities in our major industries. I think in particular of the decline in our coal mining, our steel industries and our shipbuilding. We have seen the decline of our car manufacturing at Linwood, the decline of British Motor Corporation at Bathgate, the aluminium smelter at Invergordon in the Highlands and the Fort William pulp mill. I will not mention Barmac, where 4,000 people were employed some months ago. These companies were all major employers in their day. Where and when will we reverse this decline, and ensure that people are able to exist in their own country in secure, affordable homes, and

with gainful employment?

In the Highlands at present we are suffering from a more modern malaise. While the clearances removed the people from the land, the new concept removes the land from the people. I refer to the green, creeping sward crawling over every glen and strath in the Highlands, which masquerades under the fancy title of afforestation. That means planting vast areas with foreign tree species of doubtful quality and little commercial value. All of that takes the land away from the people.

In supporting Mr Stone's motion and the sentiments expressed in it, I want to ensure that, when we extend the hand of friendship to our exiled ancestors, they can return to a nation and a people of whom they can be justly proud.

17:35

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): Among the people whom we should welcome to the chamber today I see the figure of Michael Fry—it is hard to miss the figure of Michael Fry—the founder of the clearance-denial school of journalism. I hope that he is listening to the unanimity that is being expressed in this debate as members of all parties describe what happened in Scotland and try to find a way forward.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the member give way? I would like to defend Mr Fry.

Michael Russell: I know that Mr Monteith is a dining companion of Mr Fry and I hope that they enjoy their pan-fried duck, but I will not accept an intervention today.

In every nation, there are moments of catharsis. Fergus Ewing has referred to the plains Indians in the USA and the Aborigines in Australia. In almost every nation, there is a moment of huge significance that changes that country for ever—the Irish famines of the 1840s are an example of such an event. Those events do more than change the course of history; they change the landscape and the ways in which people relate to each other. They are a full stop in the history of a nation, after which something different follows on.

Nobody can travel through Scotland today without seeing some evidence of the clearances. In the Highlands, there is physical evidence in the form of deserted towns and villages. In the south of Scotland, there are signs too. In Bute, which Mr Lyon represents, there is Canada hill, a place so named because people would climb to the top of the hill to get a last glimpse of their emigrating relatives leaving Scotland—their last glimpse for ever.

In this city and elsewhere in the south, we can

see evidence of the clearances in the Gaelic churches that were founded and in the major industries that were established with the help of labour that came from the north of Scotland. The country was changed—and changed utterly—by the experiences of the clearances in the 18th and 19th centuries.

How does Scotland reconcile itself to an event that massive? We have two choices. Jamie Stone has referred to one, which is to blow up the statue of the Duke of Sutherland and to say that the clearances were so terrible that we should blame the victimisers for ever. Indeed, my good friend Dennis MacLeod, who is sitting in the distinguished visitors gallery, told me that he wanted to do that when he was a young man growing up in Caithness.

The other reaction—into which Dennis MacLeod and many others have grown—is to reconcile ourselves to our past and learn to understand it. We should consider the benefits of that period, because there were benefits. There are people all over the world who are descended from emigrants who did well and prospered. Nobody thinks that the clearances were a good thing—I am not practising clearance denial, and I believe that the clearances were an awful event—but if we can reconcile ourselves to the past, we will learn from it.

That is why the innovation of Dennis MacLeod is significant. As Jamie Stone said, the centre will be a place where we can go and reconcile ourselves to the clearances and where those from the diaspora can go and learn about what happened to their ancestors. I hope that people will not only learn about the clearances in the centre, but come away with a feeling that that period is over and done with and will pledge, as we should all pledge, not to forget the clearances but to look after, cherish and develop the country that John Munro was talking about, Highland and lowland, and make sure that it is worth living in.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before calling the minister to wind up the debate, I apologise to those members whom we have been unable to call this evening.

17:39

The Deputy Minister for Highlands and Islands and Gaelic (Mr Alasdair Morrison): I congratulate Jamie Stone on securing this debate, and all members who have participated in it.

Among the enduring legacies of the Highland clearances, as the motion rightly reminds us, is the enormous Highland diaspora that extends around the world. From the perspective of today's Scotland, that diaspora is a valuable resource. It is important that we reach out as constructively as

we can to people of Highland descent, wherever they are. It is important that we respond enthusiastically to the warm feelings that those people often have for the Highlands and for Scotland more generally.

When thinking about the thousands—millions even—of emigrants who left Scotland in the past two or three hundred years, there is an understandable temptation to concentrate on the success stories. There are certainly many successes to celebrate. They can be read about in Jim Hunter's book, "A Dance Called America", which tells the story—and does so very well—of the huge impact that has been made by Highland emigrants, including many victims of clearance, on the United States and Canada. Jim Hunter's book recounts and celebrates the quite remarkable achievements of the numerous Highlanders who, as fur traders, politicians and railway builders, did so much to open up, shape and develop north America.

However, Jim Hunter's book makes another point, which needs to be stressed in the context of today's debate. It is not at all the case that every Highland emigrant family benefited from their emigration. Clearance and emigration shattered an awful lot of lives. Jim Hunter writes that two such shattered lives can be made emblematic of all the others. The lives in question are those of Ellen and Ann MacRae, little girls whose names Jim came across when visiting what remains of the Grosse Île quarantine station in Canada's St Lawrence river.

Ellen and Anne belonged to Lochalsh. They arrived at Grosse Île in 1847. Their father's name is given in the Grosse Île records as Farre, which I guess is as near as a French-speaking orderly could get to the Gaelic Fearchar. What happened exactly to Fearchar—in English, Farquhar—MacRae, his wife Margaret and any other children whom they may have had is not known. Perhaps they died at sea or perhaps, as many others did, they died on Grosse Île. If so, they are doubtless buried in one of the mass graves that are still to be seen beside the Grosse Île inlet, which, ever since the 1840s, has been known as Cholera bay.

Anne and Ellen were left parentless. In October 1847, they were admitted to a Quebec city orphanage. Ellen, who was aged 12, was eventually adopted by a Quebec family. Anne, who was aged 10, was found a home in the United States. They probably did not meet again. Even if they did, other than by means of what they might have recalled of their childhood Gaelic, they could scarcely have communicated, as Ellen would have grown up speaking Québécois French, and the adult Anne would have spoken American English.

Jim Hunter concludes his account of Anne and Ellen with these words:

“Historians have from time to time advanced the thesis—first propounded, of course, by nineteenth-century landlords—that the wholesale Highland emigrations of the 1840s and 1850s were in the best long-term interest of the emigrants involved. Such historians, perhaps, should be brought to Grosse Île, sat down in the cemetery above Cholera Bay and asked how they would set about justifying their opinions to Ellen and Anne MacRae.”

Not all emigrant stories, then, had happy endings. In recalling the Highland clearances, it is vital that we remember that. It is equally vital that we reject the glib, unfeeling notion that what happened to people such as Anne and Ellen MacRae was in some way unavoidable. There was nothing predestined or inevitable about the Highland clearances. They were the result of human choices and actions. Given different choices and actions, the Highlands and Islands might well have followed a very different path from the one that it was made to take by the lairds who forcibly removed so many families from their homes.

That is why the best possible memorial to the Highland clearances will be the successful Highland economy that I hope everybody in the chamber is committed to creating. Coupled with that aim is the desire that Gaelic, the language of the Gael, must triumph. It is not only a jewel to be nurtured and cherished in the Highlands but an asset for all of Scotland.

Sadly, no discussion about the Highland clearances is considered complete until someone, somewhere, trots out the tired old notion that the Highlands and Islands were, and are, intrinsically incapable of providing their people with a good quality of life. That always was and still is a lie; today we are proving that.

I mentioned Jim Hunter. As most members know, he chairs the board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Last month, when presenting HIE’s annual report, he said—and he was speaking both as HIE’s chairman and as an acclaimed historian—that it is several hundred years since the Highlands and Islands, relative to the rest of Britain, entered a new century in such good shape and with such exciting prospects.

That is not to say, of course, that there is not still much to do in the Highlands and Islands. There are plenty places where the depopulation that started with the clearances has still to be reversed. However, in the course of the past 30 years—a period when the population of Scotland as a whole has been static at best—the population of the Highlands and Islands has grown by some 20 per cent. Parts of the area have seen faster rates of increase. Take Skye, for instance. Prior to the clearances, it had a population of 24,000. By the 1960s, that was down to just 6,000. Today, Skye has around 10,000 people once again.

That has been made possible by a greatly diversified, greatly expanded economy. Our aim is to get that economy extended into those areas where the clearances have still to be decisively reversed—areas such as Kintyre, my constituency of the Western Isles, Orkney’s offshore islands and eastern Sutherland. We are certain that that job can be done, and by way of helping HIE to get on with it, we have, as Henry McLeish made clear last week, given HIE additional funding.

Another aspect of our programme is worth mentioning in relation to the clearances: our land reform agenda. I know that Lewis Macdonald knows the area of Sollas well. Sollas, in my native North Uist, is a vibrant and thriving community. Yesterday, it was announced that HIE, in partnership with Scottish Enterprise, has been asked to handle a new opportunities fund programme, which will result in £10 million of national lottery money going to rural communities that wish to take on the ownership of land and other natural resources in their vicinity. That £10 million programme will be known as the Scottish land fund. In order to manage it, HIE, in effect, will be beefing up and expanding the community land unit, which it was asked to set up just after Labour came to power in 1997.

I am pleased to be able to announce that HIE is still actively considering establishing a substantial part of its expanded land unit in Lochalsh. That is very much in accordance with our firm view that public sector activity of that kind can, and should, be located in rural areas.

It may be worth underlining, in conclusion, that it was from Lochalsh that there sailed in 1847 the emigrant family whose fate I touched on earlier. When, one and a half centuries ago, that family joined the long, long list of folk who fell victim to the Highland clearances, it would have seemed completely inconceivable that there would one day be public funds available to help Highland communities to take on the ownership and management of the land from which so many of our people had been evicted.

Today, thanks to this Administration’s commitment to land reform, such funds are firmly in place. It is no more than a coincidence that they will be administered from Lochalsh, the birthplace of those two orphan emigrants who, back in 1847, found themselves in such terrible circumstances over there in Canada. But as coincidences go, it is a very happy one.

Meeting closed at 17:48.

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