

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 1 February 2001

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 1 February 2001

[The PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

“Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government”

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Good morning. The first item of business is the debate on motion S1M-1609, in the name of Henry McLeish, on “Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government”.

There are now two amendments to the motion. The Conservative amendment came in rather late, but copies are available from the Scottish Parliament information centre at the back of the chamber. It is not in the business bulletin. It is an amendment to amendment S1M-1609.1 in the name of Mr Swinney and proposes to

“leave out from ‘and calls for’ to end and insert ‘represented by and contained within the *Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government* document.’”

The debate will end at midday to allow for a statement from the Lord Advocate on the Lockerbie trial.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had hoped that your announcement on the Conservative amendment would be a change of mind on your part. Given the fact that the motion in the name of Henry McLeish is all-encompassing, I thought that the amendment that I submitted was in order. I would like some guidance on amendments.

The Presiding Officer: I have given you guidance before. If you check the *Official Report*, you will see what I have said before on amendments. You are getting into a bad habit of raising a point of order whenever you do not get your own way and you should avoid that.

09:31

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): Presiding Officer, colleagues and members of the Scottish Parliament, earlier this week, Jim Wallace and I launched the Scottish Executive’s second programme for government. I am delighted to review with members what “Working together for Scotland” is about. The Executive is happy to be accountable to Parliament and the Scottish people.

“Working together for Scotland” documents a solid record of achievement. It sets out what we

have achieved and what we will achieve for the people of this country. It aims to deliver improved services for every person in Scotland. We want nothing less than prosperity and security for all—an inclusive Scotland that leaves no one behind.

Our commitments have been delivered and our promises kept. Seventy of the original commitments have already been achieved, 87 are still being progressed and we are on course to meet those commitments too.

By setting out its objectives and delivering on its promises, the Executive has made a real and practical difference for the people of Scotland. Let me illustrate how that has affected everyday lives.

We have delivered on justice through a new drugs strategy and by enacting new laws to replace outdated ones. We have delivered on health through a new health plan. We have delivered on education through the new teachers’ pay arrangements. We have delivered on transport by funding the M74. We have delivered on social justice by ensuring that all pensioners will have central heating. We have delivered on the economy with record employment levels. We have delivered on environmental issues to ensure a sustainable future for the country. We have delivered on rural development by providing extra support for farmers and facilitating more local involvement in inshore fisheries management.

The document covers 14 subjects of public policy on which the first Scottish Government, working together with Westminster and the people of Scotland, will build a stronger and fairer nation. However, the document is more than a programme; it is a statement of our beliefs.

As we debate our programme, we reaffirm our commitment to a basic Scottish principle—social justice—as well as to my core aspirations that our Scotland will be a land of confidence, compassion and competitiveness. The coalition partnership is passionately committed to social justice. We will judge the decisions that we take and everything on which we spend money by that high principle. Social justice is our cause, our mission and our shared ambition. I hope that members also share that ambition.

That is why we are committed to expanding employment opportunity for all, to achieve the modern definition of full employment. That is why we want the highest standards in education, so that there is educational opportunity not for a few but for all. That is why we are committed to opening up the doors of enterprise, so that there is the opportunity to make the most of our businesses—and their creative and innovative talents—not for a few but for all.

That is why we are committed to abolishing child poverty, so that there is the best possible start in

life for all children. What a scar it is on any nation for children to be living in poverty. Abolishing child poverty is one of the highest ideals that we have set for ourselves to deliver. That is why we are committed to the best public services, so that health care is open to all and depends not on the wealth that people have, but on the health care that they need. That is why we are committed to abolishing pensioner poverty, so that the elderly can enjoy a retirement with dignity.

The implementation of every policy will be judged according to the needs and demands of social justice. Today, I will focus on the new opportunities that we are opening up. They will not only form the basis of our programme for government, but be beacons of our aspirations for every part of Scotland.

Our clear commitment to social justice drives us to regenerate our communities and tackle the scar of poverty that for too long has blighted parts of our country.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): Will the First Minister share with the Parliament the baseline against which he will judge his Government to have succeeded in lifting children out of poverty? Is that 1997-98 or 1996-97?

The First Minister: With the greatest respect to John Swinney, I must make it clear that we are outlining an aspiration this morning. We published a social justice strategy and the first social justice annual report. It is indicative of a party that has no policies that its leader wants to get into definition after definition. I want John Swinney to sign up to the commitments that we are making in the programme for government. That is a better way forward.

Mr Swinney: I asked the First Minister a simple question. The answer is material to whether the Government has succeeded or failed in tackling child poverty. Is 1996-97 or 1997-98 the baseline for the Government's performance on lifting children out of poverty?

The First Minister: We are interested in the facts. As part of our 10-year commitment, 70,000 children have already been lifted out of poverty. That is turning aspiration into action. The SNP can talk and talk about that, but, mercifully, it will never have the chance to implement anything in which it is involved.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The abolition of child poverty is a noble sentiment. I welcome the First Minister's aspiration to that. However, does he mean relative poverty or absolute poverty? There is a difference, of which I am sure that the First Minister is aware. I am interested in knowing which of the two he seeks to abolish.

The First Minister: That takes me back to my university days, when I did extensive research on that concept and studied the topology of poverty through the various ranges from absolute to relative. I do not want anyone to say that abolishing child poverty is a noble sentiment. The people who live in Easterhouse or Craigmillar do not want members to express noble sentiments. They want action. The Administration will act. I want Brian Monteith to agree to sign up to abolishing child poverty. Forget the noble sentiments. They do not feed anyone, house anyone or give anyone a job. Join us in our practical programme—

Tommy Sheridan: On a point of order.

The First Minister: I cannot choose to take a point of order, but I am happy to let Sir David deal with it.

The Presiding Officer: Is there a point of order?

Tommy Sheridan: It is not a point of order, First Minister, but an intervention.

Does the First Minister agree that one of the Administration's honest failures between 1999 and 2001 has been its lack of delivery on the central heating package for Scotland's pensioners, which the First Minister mentioned? Does he accept that, to date, he has not delivered and that that is the problem? If, in the old days when he was a councillor, he had agreed to remove the capital receipt clawbacks, perhaps pensioners would have central heating now.

The First Minister: That is not the case. Tommy Sheridan will appreciate that we have made a commitment that starts in April 2001. An action programme involves costs and requires a time scale. I reassure Tommy Sheridan that the programme will get under way on the date that I mentioned.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I am always interested in giving way. I cannot resist Margo MacDonald's invitation.

Ms MacDonald: I cannot resist the First Minister either. However, I would like to give him the opportunity to withdraw his remark that noble sentiments never put bread on the table. Without the noble sentiments of our forebears, there would be bread, but many fewer tables than there are today.

The First Minister: Margo MacDonald might be off the list now. I am sure that she knows what point I am making. I have been in politics for a long time. Noble sentiments are wider global aspirations. Let us all unite around translating

aspiration into action. That will be the guiding principle for us—that is important.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): The First Minister made an important statement when he said that central heating would be available immediately. Does that mean that pensioners in Glasgow will get central heating immediately in April 2001, or is it dependent on the stock transfer balance?

The First Minister: The SNP is being ludicrous. We have made one of the boldest commitments on central heating for older people. The SNP has no policies on the matter. It is saying to me that if the measure is introduced on 1 April it should be completed by 2 April. The world outside takes a saner view of what we are doing than the SNP.

I want to move on to outline what the coalition is doing for Scotland. I made the point about communities and tackling poverty. Our principles demand that we do more and go further—we shall and we will. We will provide all council and housing association tenants, and pensioners in public and private housing, with warm, dry homes, through the installation, by 2006, of central heating and insulation. There will be free, local, off-peak travel for elderly and disabled people. We will work to ensure that, by 2003, no one has to sleep rough. Those are the significant parts of the strategy that we are developing. We are promoting social justice throughout Scotland. We are investing in our local communities and are determined to tackle poverty, exclusion and inequality.

We will build a new coalition—the Executive, the UK Government, local government, the Parliament, voluntary and community organisations—to meet the challenges that we face. We recognise that politicians cannot and should not claim to know every answer. Instead, as part of our partnership approach, we seek a coalition of views, perspectives and solutions based on our shared ambition to build stronger communities and our shared belief in a compassionate country.

These are the areas where we will build on the legacy left to us by Donald Dewar, the man who delivered the Parliament but for whom the Parliament belonged to the people of Scotland. He would expect nothing less of us than a commitment to move forward and to raise our sights to the challenges ahead, and to do so with a consistency of purpose and a certainty in our core value of social justice.

Looking to the future, “Working together for Scotland” does more than just report on the differences that we have already made. As we look forward together, we are forging a better future for this country. As part of our commitment

to deliver real results for the people of Scotland, we have committed our goals to print.

“Working together for Scotland” sets tough new targets that we will have to meet and on which the public can, once again, judge our performance. The document crystallises our policy priorities; provides focus to our funding decisions; sets our strategy for government in Scotland; and directs the work of our officials so that everyone—ministers, Parliament, the media and the people of Scotland—is clear what we will deliver in the period ahead: an honest compact with the people whom all of us represent.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I have a lot of territory to make up. The member knows that I like to bring people in, if there is time.

Here are some examples of our new commitments: we will protect rape victims from cross-examination by the accused; we will take forward a major review of all quangos; we will consult on the model of drug courts that meets Scotland’s needs; we will increase computer equipment in Scottish schools and provide them with better broadband connections to the internet; and we will develop an alcohol misuse strategy. I have mentioned that we will provide central heating for pensioners and council and housing association tenants. We will protect the fares and the levels of service when we tender the services operated by Caledonian MacBrayne. In the rural areas of Scotland, we will give a commitment to work to secure a sustainable recovery strategy for depleted stocks of fish. Rhona Brankin and Ross Finnie are currently working on that.

We can go further forward than that to create a Scotland where, working together, we can achieve our shared ambitions of a stronger, fairer nation for the elderly, for hard-working families and for children—for future generations. It is that vision that drives us forward—a vision based on partnership.

“Working together for Scotland” encapsulates the effectiveness of the coalition Government of Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Our two parties, in partnership, are working together for this country. Our common commitment to work together for Scotland has delivered a successful partnership approach and stable government. We share a commitment to govern responsibly and well for the people of Scotland. I believe that that is a commitment that many on the SNP and Tory benches can support. Far too often in the chamber—and in politics as a whole—there are areas that we flag up as division, but there are also many areas around which we can unite for the people of this country.

I mentioned earlier our shared ambition to end child poverty. We must ensure that all children are given the best start in life. Our programme includes services targeted towards the very youngest in society, and we have already introduced sure start Scotland and ensured a free nursery place for all four-year-olds. Today, we go further, and we make a commitment to children and social justice so that, by 2002, we will ensure that all three-year-olds have free nursery places.

We will establish a new fund, which will bring together local authorities and health and voluntary services to build an integrated approach to services for children. We will reduce class sizes in primary 3 to 30 or less and increase the number of computers in schools. We will build on pilots of the educational maintenance allowances. That will be one of the biggest single ways of ensuring that young people from low-income backgrounds can get into higher and further education. We need their talent and we are doing something about it.

We are giving children's health the priority it deserves, for example, through direct action to improve young children's dental health and diet by providing fresh fruit in nursery schools and free toothbrushes and toothpaste to 100,000 children.

In an economy where knowledge is fast becoming the chief currency, there has never been a greater need for education. We have set ourselves exacting targets to improve Scotland's schools and we are beginning to achieve those.

We are committed to a quality of education that fulfils the potential of all our children. By April 2001, we will be supporting 62 new community school projects involving more than 400 schools. Above all, this is about ensuring that young people can achieve. We are proud of the fact that Scotland is rich in talent. The challenge for the Parliament and the Executive is to ensure that that talent comes to the fore and that every young person feels that they have a role in our society and a contribution to make—and that that is acknowledged by society.

We are investing to improve our school buildings through a comprehensive buildings strategy. We have secured a fundamental package of reform in teachers' pay and conditions—teachers deserve that. It is the first step to our tackling some outstanding education issues in this country.

On lifelong learning, 40,000 additional places are planned in further education and 2,800 in higher education. The abolition of tuition fees is linked to bursaries of up to £2,000 for students from low-income families: social justice, social justice, social justice. We are moving on individual learning accounts, from which 100,000 people will benefit. One of the key issues—it is worth while for SNP members to listen to this, because I am sure

that they are interested in the issue—is literacy and numeracy. There is no point in seeking to provide opportunities at the highest level of the academic scale when so many people in Scotland do not function on basic numeracy and literacy issues. A confident Scotland means that everybody takes part in education. I am proud to say that we are spending nearly £23 million over the next three years to ensure that that happens. That will be firmly built on the back of our review of a careers service that will produce, for the first time, an all-age guidance service.

Scotland's economy is vital, which is why we have launched the small business gateway. It is why we are supporting 180 high-growth start-ups and why we have fundamentally reviewed Scottish tourism and it is making progress. It is why we have introduced a manufacturing strategy and why we will introduce a financial services strategy. We are working with Scotland and working with the careers service to ensure that we fulfil the potential that undoubtedly exists.

We want to ensure that we commercially exploit the innovation that exists in our country. That involves driving forward the e-revolution and ensuring that there is universal access to the internet by 2005. Ours is a modern economy, which recognises e-business and the e-revolution but looks forward to every business and every member of the Parliament being committed to a much more ambitious plan than we already have.

Scotland's health is crucial, which is why we have prepared a health plan. There are now more than 200 one-stop clinics, which are operated by the national health service in Scotland to provide speedy consultation, tests, results, diagnosis and, if appropriate, treatment, all in a single visit. The health service in Scotland is redesigning services around the patient. The care of our older people lies at the heart of our programme for government. An expert group is soon to be set up to produce proposals for free personal care and its costs and implications, for the Executive and the Parliament to consider. We are systematically tackling smoking, poor diet, homelessness, poverty, poor mental health, and drug and alcohol misuse. Those are all issues that underpin the difficulties that we face and the challenges that we are embracing.

The war against drugs must be stepped up. In every community, the war on drugs is about doing more to protect our young people. We will tackle the consequences of drug abuse and the reasons behind such behaviour. In our first two years, we have set up the Scottish Drugs Enforcement Agency; already, 89 per cent of schools provide a programme of drug education for every pupil. However, that is not good enough. By next year, we will raise to 100 per cent the percentage of

schools covered by drug education. We want to take further steps, from dealers right through to effective treatment and rehab for those who are involved.

I have already mentioned the central heating initiative and free off-peak travel for Scotland's elderly. We recognise the needs and rights of older people. Let me make a further, more ambitious point. People in Scotland, in this Parliament and in the Government are now waking up to the fact that, in the future, as our demography changes, the needs of our older community will have a place at the highest point of the political agenda, and rightly so. That is one of the benefits of the past few months' discussions.

We want to make Scotland safer. That is why we are ensuring that there are more constables on the beat, more security in our town centres and greater enforcement against drug dealers. All in all, we want a safer Scotland. There are myriad other priorities, including sustainable Scotland, raising standards in health and education, promoting health and ensuring that transport, which is integral to the needs of the business community, is developed further.

Underpinning all that is the Scottish economy. Let us celebrate the state of our economy, as one of Scotland's national newspapers did a week ago, although the SNP reacted by writing to the newspaper asking how it dared to celebrate the fact that Scotland's economy is doing so well. We value and trust Scots and want Scotland to succeed. What would be the situation under an SNP Government? The SNP does not believe in Scotland and is willing to write letters saying, "You can't have it so good, you know." That is the point about the economy. Unemployment is at its lowest rate since 1976, employment is at its highest for 40 years, youth unemployment is down by 70 per cent and long-term unemployment is down by 40 per cent. Facts speak solidly about economic achievement.

We want further growth in the Scottish economy. We can achieve that and we can work in partnership with the business community, but let us not forget for a minute the real achievements. Sound public finances and low inflation have led to the changes that have happened. The partnership with Westminster does a lot of very positive good for this country.

We want to create a competitive, compassionate, confident country. I repeat that our programme caters for all our communities and for everyone. It is delivering improved services for children, for the elderly and for everyone in between. In fulfilling many important functions of government in Scotland, the Executive is working together. Through our actions in government, the coalition is demonstrating that the Parliament is

coming of age. There is no dispute. The Executive is delivering a Scottish Government for Scottish needs and we look forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

I move,

That the Parliament endorses the contents of *Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government*.

The Presiding Officer: Members who would like to take part in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons. I particularly want to see whether the latecomers intend to catch my eye. I call Mr John Swinney.

09:53

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I have thought many things of the First Minister over the years in which we have debated, but until he uttered the words, "Scotland's never had it so good," I had never compared him to Harold Macmillan at any stage in his political life.

I am glad that we have the opportunity to debate some vital issues. The document that was published on Monday is a very worthy document. It is a great improvement in design and shape on last year's document. I am sure that the new document will fit into the Deputy First Minister's briefcase when he is going back to Kirkwall every week. Last year's document was described as a helpful replacement for an umbrella if one forgot to bring one when coming to the chamber from the Parliament headquarters. The new document is rather different and a little bit more bijoux, as one might say.

On Monday, when I saw the design of the document and noticed that it was spiral bound, I thought that it must be structured in such a way that last-minute changes can be inserted into the document. I am sure that it is quite common in the commercial sector to use spiral bindings so that last-minute issues can be incorporated. I expected that the spiral binding was required so that the document could give due prominence to the Executive's last-minute commitment to the funding of the personal care costs of all elderly people in Scotland. I searched and searched through the document, but I could not see the commitment that was given in such clear terms by the First Minister at his news conference on Monday.

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) *rose*—

Mr Swinney: Maybe Mr Rumbles has the alternative pages in his briefcase in Kincardineshire.

Mr Rumbles: Am I right in thinking that Mr Swinney is now welcoming the announcement that was made on Thursday rather than rubbishing it as he did at the time, which was a huge

disappointment to the elderly?

Mr Swinney: On Thursday, I took a view very similar to the one taken by Mr Keith Raffan, who, unless I am mistaken, is still a member of the Liberal Democrats and whose services were terminated by the Deputy First Minister on Friday evening. If Mr Rumbles has not watched Monday evening's television bulletins, let me tell him, for the avoidance of any doubt, that I said that I welcome the commitment given by the First Minister on Monday. It was an absolutely cast-iron, irrevocable commitment to fund fully all the personal care costs of elderly people in Scotland, as set out in the Sutherland report. I did not give such a welcome last Thursday because, like Mr Raffan, I was a bit concerned about the way in which the weasel words were being used. I have not exactly seen the Minister for Health and Community Care rushing into print to reinforce the definition that came out of the First Minister's statement. I have no idea why the First Minister is pointing at his copy of the programme for government. He must like the design very much.

The document contains a number of worthy initiatives that the SNP will support if they are of benefit to the people of Scotland. However, just as happened in the debate on personal care costs for the elderly, there have been great expectations about the new document. It is the second programme for government since the Scottish Parliament elections and our expectations have been undeniably raised by the First Minister, by the Executive and by the people who speak on behalf of the First Minister to the media.

Presiding Officer, I intend to quote from some newspaper reports. I hope that I do not offend any parliamentary rules by the language that I am about to use, but I am sure that you will correct me if I am out of order. [MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes, it is going to be that bad.

On 29 October 2000, it was reported in the *Sunday Herald* that the purpose of the policy review that the First Minister had launched was to "dump the crap". It went on to say that the review would

"weed out politically correct but electorally unpopular items".

I was struck by some remarks made by David Whitton in his column in the *Daily Record* the other day. He wrote:

"When it was announced the review was to be carried out one unnamed source unwisely said they were going to 'dump the crap'. They seem to have discovered there was not a lot of 'crap' to flush away."

I wonder where the First Minister was when he was formulating the programme for government, which is markedly similar if not almost identical to the programme that was launched almost 18

months ago. If he felt that the new programme was going to be so similar to the previous one, why did not he act to rebut the remarks made in the press at the time of his appointment and the launch of his policy review? Questions remain as to where the policy programme has come from.

If the First Minister would like some advice about any inappropriate, useless, pathetic policies that need to be dumped, I am sure that my colleague Mr Crawford will be able to give him advice on dumping his trunk road contract policy. If he dumped that policy, he might manage to endear himself to many more of the back benchers who summoned the strength to support him in the Labour leadership election. Everybody knows that the trunk road policy pursued by his Minister for Transport is not only deeply unpopular on the Labour back benches, but deeply unpopular among Scottish local authorities and the workers who are involved in those areas of business.

This debate is an exercise in testing how this programme for government measures up against the expectations of the people of Scotland, and in gauging the ability of the people of Scotland to understand what the Executive is actually talking about. One of the interesting new commitments in the document—

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): There are not many of them.

Mr Swinney: I agree with Mr Russell that there are not very many. Nevertheless, there is a commitment to restore confidence in the exam system in Scotland. That is something that the SNP very much supports, but it is a curious policy commitment. It is curious—an invention in the policy programme—that the Government feels that it must restore confidence in an exam system that it was party to creating in the first place. Here we have a Government that is saying that all its new commitments—all the things that it says it is going to do—are about making up for the damage that has been inflicted on Scotland's examination system. It is a Government strategy designed to paper over the failure that the Government is responsible for delivering.

I note that the commitment to restore confidence in the programme for government does not use the type of language that the First Minister previously used to give a definitive, personal commitment on the subject. On 13 December, the First Minister told Parliament:

"Just to ease John Swinney's dilemma, let me repeat for the chamber and for the country that the chaos that occurred in the summer must never happen again."

Members: Oh.

Mr Swinney: We have not finished yet. He continued:

"I will put it on record: it will not happen again."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 2000; Vol 9, c 859.]

I believe that people in Scotland would have a bit more confidence in the programme for government if the First Minister used language like that and gave clear, definitive commitments in it, rather than the weasel words that we are so accustomed to getting from this Government.

There is also a curious new definition of the word "failure". For most of the world, failure is something that happens when someone has not achieved something that they said they would do. For Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the Scottish Executive, failure has been redefined: it means "on track". In the first programme for government, published in September 1999, the Government said:

"by June 2000 . . . We will increase by up to 200 the number of police officers working against drugs".

In the second programme for government, in the section "Reporting on Our Achievements", the Government says that that commitment, on the attack on drugs, is

"On track Funding for 100 additional officers . . . in 2000-01."

There we have it: a commitment to 200 drugs officers by June 2000 has become a commitment to 100 police officers. Labour and the Liberal Democrats are letting down the people of Scotland by providing 100 fewer drug enforcement officers in the police service than they promised in the first place. Indeed, the commitment is now so on track that its achievements has been delayed until 2003-04.

The First Minister *rose*—

Mr Swinney: If the First Minister wants to intervene, he is very welcome to do so.

The First Minister: I am happy to intervene to make the point that we have had from the SNP, as usual, a kind of ragbag of issues. I submit to John Swinney that his is a party that has no policies and is now dredging around for issues to discuss. I pose the same question that Mike Rumbles posed. Last week, the faces of the whole SNP visibly drained of blood when we approved the amendment. Nicola Sturgeon said that it was disgraceful. Will John Swinney tell the Parliament and the people of Scotland this: is he now fully signed up to the policies that we are pursuing on older people?

Mr Swinney: Well—

Mr Rumbles: Answer.

Mr Swinney: Mr Rumbles has had a lot of excitement in the past few weeks trying to get the Executive to do what he wants. He should calm down. I will deal with his point later.

I will answer the First Minister's question directly, but first, let me say that I noticed that when I made the point about the Government delivering 100 fewer drug enforcement officers than it had promised, the First Minister did not intervene to correct me. I assume therefore that I am correct on that point and that the First Minister is wrong.

The First Minister *rose*—

Mr Swinney: I have dealt with the first policy commitment, but I still have another one—
[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Mr Swinney: The other policy commitment is on long-term care of the elderly. I was clear in what I said in my earlier response to Mr Rumbles. We very much welcome what the First Minister said on Monday on his commitment to pay for the personal care costs of all elderly people in Scotland, as defined and envisaged in the Sutherland report. I am delighted to give my commitment to that today.

The First Minister *rose*—

Mr Swinney: If the First Minister wants to intervene again, of course he may.

The First Minister: The fact that I did not refer to the drugs issue is because there is a problem with either John Swinney's or his party's ability to read a document. Section 3.3 of the programme for government says on drugs:

"We will increase by up to 200 the number of police officers working against drugs in our communities . . . On track Funding for"—

the first—

"100 additional officers in forces provided in 2000-01."

What does John Swinney contest? The commitment to 200 is there; 100 are already being delivered. The next 100 will come over the next two years. What point is the SNP trying to make?

Mr Swinney: The point that I am trying to make is this. I held on to last year's programme for government. It has been a convenient umbrella, but it is also a convenient piece of political ammunition today. Page 4 states:

"by June 2000 . . . We will increase by up to 200 the number of police officers working against drugs in our communities."

The Executive has delivered only 100, so it has failed to deliver 100 of the officers it promised last year. The Administration had better have a decent explanation on the war against drugs by the summing-up of this debate.

I am beginning to run out of time, so I will speed up. Earlier, I asked the First Minister about the baseline figure for relieving child poverty in

Scotland. It was quite clear from the hurried discussions that no one on the front bench knew the answer—I thought that the civil servants at the back might have been able to hand down a wee note to clarify the position. The Government has said that it is committed to lifting children out of poverty. The section “Reporting on Our Achievements” in this year’s programme for government says:

“We will work in partnership with the UK Government to tackle child poverty and raise over 60,000 children out of poverty in Scotland by 2002 . . . **On track**”.

The 1999 document “Social Justice . . . Scotland where everyone matters: Milestone sources and definitions”, the Government says that the baseline year for measuring the reduction in child poverty is 1997-98. The most recently published figures, in the “Social Justice Annual Report 2000”, show that 30 per cent of children were in poverty in 1997-98, and that 30 per cent are still in poverty now. The number of children in the poorest category has increased from 21 per cent to 23 per cent over the same time. That is 20,000 more children.

We are interested in exposing the rhetoric of the Government, which is telling people in Scotland one thing on the one hand, when the reality on the other hand is markedly different. It is the duty of an Opposition to point out to the Government the areas where it is failing to deliver on the expectations of the people of Scotland.

The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Swinney: I would have been happy to take an intervention, but I have 40 seconds left and the Presiding Officer will prevent me from accepting any more interventions.

I see Mr MacKay sitting there, talking about policies from a sedentary position. Let us talk about policies. Let us talk about the SNP’s policies on—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Members in the chamber must quieten down. The member is on his last minute, which is why he did not take the intervention, and he was quite right.

Mr Swinney: Perhaps some more respect for the Presiding Officer from the Labour benches would be beneficial.

Mr MacKay has been sitting, shouting about policies from a sedentary position. Let me tell him a few things about policies. Drugs courts: they were rubbished by Labour in 1999; they are now Labour policy. They were SNP policy in 1999. A department of external affairs: the idea was rubbished by Labour in 1999, proposed by the SNP and is now Labour policy. Reform of the local enterprise company network: rubbished by Labour

in 1999; proposed by the SNP; introduced by Labour. Abolition of Scottish Homes: rubbished by Labour in 1999; proposed by the SNP; introduced by Labour. Reform of the inspectorate of schools: proposed by the SNP; rubbished by Labour; now it is Labour policy.

Over the past 10 days, on a multiplicity of issues—health, the future generations fund, Scotland’s trust for public investment, tackling yob culture and wiring Scotland up for the 21st century—the SNP has set out its new, imaginative ideas to take Scotland forward. It is high time that the Executive listened more to us and implemented our policies. Scotland would be the better for it.

I move amendment S1M-1609.1, to leave out from “endorses” to end and insert:

“condemns the use of valuable Parliamentary time and public resources for an exercise in spin and calls for the Parliament to take on the powers of a normal Parliament which would enable it to use all of the resources of Scotland to address the social and economic priorities determined by the people of Scotland.”

10:09

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): In Hollywood, a sequel is usually an attempt to cash in on the success of the original film. Notwithstanding the fact that the first “Programme for Government” was a resounding box-office flop, the Scottish Executive, in a triumph of hope over experience, keeps on producing one disaster movie after another.

That begs the question as to why we are debating an even glossier brochure today than we did last year. This account of the year that is awa is highly partisan and unbalanced, and a wish list of the things that the Executive hopes to achieve at some point in the future—all produced at taxpayers’ expense. Before offering us more pledges, it would have been better if the Executive had fulfilled some of its original election pledges and addressed some of its failures.

A more honest assessment of the past year from an Executive that likes to boast of its commitment to openness would have been appreciated. Instead, the failures have been snowpaked out as the Executive affects some kind of collective amnesia, tries to kid us all and produces yet another five-year—or longer—plan stretching into the distance. Frankly, this is not so much a Government as a politburo.

Where in the new document is the Executive’s commitment to cut national health service waiting lists? In 1997, that was one of Labour’s five election pledges, but it has been expunged from the history books faster than a deposed dictator in the Soviet Union. The reason for that is simple.

Labour has failed on health, and by its own criteria. Today, there are 2,000 more patients waiting for NHS treatment than there were when Labour came to power in May 1997.

Having failed to meet that pledge, in true new Labour style the Executive shifted the goalposts and tried to make out that waiting times were more important than waiting lists. That pledge has not been met either, because the number of patients waiting for more than 12 months has increased dramatically over the past four years. A new survey recently highlighted the appalling state of our accident and emergency departments, where some patients wait up to five hours for treatment.

Labour introduced tuition fees after the previous general election, but rather curiously the Scottish Executive proudly boasts—

Mr Rumbles: We have abolished tuition fees.

David McLetchie: Wait for it, Mr Rumbles. The Scottish Executive proudly boasts in its programme for government that it has now abandoned the policy that was introduced by the dominant party in the coalition; it has done nothing of the kind. As I said yesterday, the graduate endowment is a tax by any other name. All students will still have to pay, on graduation, £2,000 for their education.

Mr Rumbles *rose*—

David McLetchie: I will finish the point. Strangely, there is no mention of the graduate endowment anywhere in the programme for government, presumably because the Liberal Democrat party does not want its betrayal of our young people to be put on public record.

Mr Rumbles: The point is simple: could the member tell the chamber how many students are paying the £3,075 tuition fee? Will he confirm that the Scottish Executive is paying the fee to the universities?

David McLetchie: A significant number of Scottish students at universities elsewhere in the United Kingdom are still paying tuition fees—in clear breach of the undertaking in the Liberal Democrat manifesto, Mr Rumbles. Many more generations of students will pay £2,000 a year for their education—in clear breach of the commitment in the Liberal Democrat manifesto. Let us have less of the sophistry on tuition fees and get down to the reality of who is paying because the Liberal Democrat party cannot keep its word.

To cap it all, the Executive presided over the breakdown of the examination system, doing untold damage to its reputation and causing severe anxiety and stress to many young people and their families.

As Mr Swinney rightly highlighted, law and order has been another Executive failure. Crime is rising in Scotland—especially violent crime—yet there are fewer police officers today than when Labour came to power and the Executive has closed, or is in the process of closing, four prisons.

The flagship Transport (Scotland) Bill is also sinking fast. The plan to enable local authorities to introduce a toll tax on those travelling into our cities has already come under fire from Labour and SNP councillors in West Lothian, who have denounced the idea on behalf of commuters from that region who come into Edinburgh for work or other purposes. I predict that it will not be long before Midlothian, East Lothian—and the kingdom of Fife, First Minister—are equally up in arms over this. It is ironic that the protesting councillors are from the parties that forced the vindictive stealth tax through Parliament at the end of last year.

Instead of sticking to the failed policies and empty rhetoric that have marked the Executive from the start, the First Minister should have used the new programme for government as an opportunity for a fresh start. The first step towards winning back public confidence must be to tackle the waste of taxpayers' money that has been the hallmark of the Executive and has led to so much disillusionment with the Parliament.

The most glaring example of profligacy has been the building of the new Parliament at Holyrood. The financial mismanagement that has characterised the project beggars belief and has done more than anything else to undermine public confidence in the Parliament. The fact that the price tag has gone from £40 million to more than £200 million is nothing short of a national scandal.

Ms MacDonald *rose*—

David McLetchie: I will be with you in a second, Margo.

Sir Stewart Sutherland indicated in a letter to *The Scotsman* the other day that the additional cost of implementing his report in full was £25 million. The growth in the cost of the Parliament building would have funded that for more than six years. People in this country think that that waste of money is appalling and should be condemned.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD) *rose*—

David McLetchie: Sorry George, I invited Margo to intervene first.

Ms MacDonald: Does the leader of the Conservatives agree that it would have shown good sense, good management and a good programme for government if the First Minister had said that he was going to advise the people who are going to spend a fortune on duplicating the efforts of the director of the National Galleries of Scotland, whom we are already paying to tell us

what art we have that might enhance the new Parliament building?

David McLetchie: I could not agree more with Ms MacDonald. As usual, she talks a remarkable amount of common sense from her position on the back benches. Would that the rest of the SNP did the same on more occasions.

The size of the Government in Scotland has also exploded, but although we have more government in Scotland it certainly is not better government: 22 ministers now do the job that was done by seven under the Conservatives. That only increases the public perception that politicians are more concerned with their own self-interest than with the interests of ordinary people. It is odd that even when Mr McLeish tries to do the right thing, he ends up getting it wrong. For example, no sooner had he announced a bonfire of Scotland's 187 quangos than Wendy Alexander announced the creation of another 20.

The First Minister: They are local economic forums.

David McLetchie: Yes, local economic forums.

I hope that the review will prove a serious exercise, although it would be better if the Executive set an example by cutting its Administration down to size.

The financial profligacy that has led to public disillusion with the Parliament has been compounded by the increasing perception that the Executive and the First Minister lack direction on many crucial issues. That has been reinforced over the past week by the way the First Minister dealt with the implementation of the Sutherland commission recommendation on personal care. On an issue of clear principle, the response of the minister and the Executive has been one of spin and counter-spin, a nod here and a wink there—that is no way to run what the First Minister would like to call a Government. That sums up the approach of the Executive under the First Minister.

Let me make it clear that the Conservative party supports in principle the Sutherland recommendation on free personal care. It was one of the first parties to do that in parliamentary debate.

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)
rose—

David McLetchie: Sorry, Margaret.

We support the recommendation not only on the grounds of fairness and equity, but for another very good reason, which Sir Stewart Sutherland points out in his admirable report. It states:

"From the point of view of efficiency we consider that the extension of universality, through the collective approach entailed by the proposal, is the most efficient way of

covering the risks of having to meet long-term care costs."

It goes on to say:

"The new certainty conveyed by this proposal as to the nature of future state provision could also enable the insurance industry to develop new financial products to cover the areas of individual responsibility."

Here is a great opportunity for the Scottish financial services sector to develop new and innovative products to meet a new demand. I suggest to the Executive that if it is serious about Sutherland it should pursue discussions with the industry on the matter as part of the development programme and review that is being undertaken.

The First Minister: I seek some clarity. The SNP now grudgingly supports what happened last Thursday. Does David McLetchie mean that the Tories now accept in principle what happened last week, subject only to the further privatisation of private personal health care?

David McLetchie: Sorry?

The First Minister: Let us be quite clear: if we are talking about free personal care, are the Tories now qualifying their position by saying that the private sector should get involved in the costs?

David McLetchie: I am afraid that the First Minister does not understand the Sutherland report, although that is not surprising, given his confusion about it.

The Sutherland commission recommendation related to nursing and personal care. There was no recommendation that the state should pick up the tab for all accommodation, hotel and residential costs. The Sutherland report also suggested that if the state took collective responsibility for nursing and personal care costs—which are highly unpredictable and difficult to underwrite—the financial services industry could develop a wider range of products to enable people to protect their assets and generate streams of income which would pay for the residential element of the costs that still have to be borne. I hope that that explanation clarifies the matter and that the Executive will implement the recommendation, which is important as accommodation forms a substantial part of overall care costs.

The Presiding Officer: You are on your last minute, Mr McLetchie.

David McLetchie: I am glad that we clarified that point on Sutherland.

We need a First Minister and an Executive with a genuine vision for a modern Scotland that delivers a dynamic economy and first-class public services. We do not have that yet. Nothing that the First Minister has said or done and nothing in the programme for government gives us any ground

for optimism on that score. In the past 100 or so days, the First Minister has shown that he is not up to the job and that he leads a divided Executive and a ramshackle coalition that is not fit to run the Parliament any more. No doubt it will hirkle on to the next election; however, the writing is on the wall for the Administration and I have no doubt that a damning interim verdict on it will shortly be delivered.

I move amendment S1M-1609.1.1 to amendment S1M-1609.1, to leave out from "and calls for" to end and insert:

"represented by and contained within the *Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government* document."

10:22

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I am happy to speak for the Liberal Democrats in support of the First Minister's motion S1M-1609, which asks Parliament to endorse the document "Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government".

There can be no doubt that, in the coalition with our Labour colleagues, the Liberal Democrats have had a big impact on the government of Scotland. Indeed, our participation in the coalition Government means that for the first time in many years Liberal Democrat policies are being adopted in Scotland. As both Henry McLeish and Jim Wallace point out in the foreword to the document, this is a progressive programme

"forging a confident, competitive and compassionate Scotland".

Mr Swinney: On the subject of making progress, does Mr Rumbles believe that the programme for government sets out enough progress on the issue of introducing proportional representation for local government, although that is not actually mentioned in the document?

Mr Rumbles: Mr Swinney must try much harder than that. He has obviously not read the document. The issue that he mentions is in there in black and white. I am surprised at the leader of the Opposition.

There is an obvious determination to deliver effective public services. The Government of Scotland is investing more in our health service. Our children will benefit from a better education service with rising standards of attainment and enhanced school facilities—for example, we have only to remember McCrone. Furthermore, there will be more police on our streets, which will make our country safer and our people feel safer.

I will examine in some detail sections of the programme that are particularly important to both the Liberal Democrats and the people of Scotland.

First, the Scottish Executive's new health plan has formally switched health service priorities from the policy of tackling the length of waiting lists—it is particularly important that David McLetchie listens to this point—to a new focus on reducing waiting times for patients. It is blindingly obvious that what matters to patients is how long they have to wait, not the number of other people on the waiting list. Furthermore, the Executive has adopted the Liberal Democrat manifesto commitment of maximum waiting times.

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

Is Mr Rumbles saying that his Labour colleagues—whose virtues he has been extolling for the past couple of minutes—were wrong to focus on the issue of health service waiting lists?

Mr Rumbles: The Labour Government in Westminster set those targets. The new Government of Scotland is a partnership between the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. The Opposition parties seem to misunderstand the whole idea behind coalition politics; they need to get used to it.

The Executive's health plan includes more nurses; maximum waiting times; and reduced—

Michael Russell: Will the member illustrate his point about the operation of coalition government with reference to last Thursday's events? Is the idea behind coalition government to take the Executive to the brink of defeat, or is it operating well in some other way? I think that we should be told.

Mr Rumbles: Mr Russell's intervention sounds like the response of someone jilted at the altar. It is scurrilous of the SNP and the Tories—particularly the SNP—to pretend that they are interested in free personal care for the elderly. Anyone who was in the chamber last Thursday when the Minister for Parliament made his announcement could see how the SNP members could not bring themselves to welcome it.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: Not at the moment—the member should try later on.

In a further move, the Executive has announced proposals to allow general practitioners to prescribe all nicotine replacement therapies. That meets a Liberal Democrat commitment for more resources to be devoted to health promotion, including addressing tobacco abuse, and follows the launch of a £26 million fund in the summer to promote good health and reduce illness.

At this point I was going to comment on last Thursday's events, but I think that enough has been said about that.

The Minister for Justice, Jim Wallace, is providing £8.9 million of direct funding to increase police numbers by up to 300 officers with the aim of reaching a figure that is an all-time high by next year. Furthermore, the Executive has delivered the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc (Scotland) Act 2000, and we now await the nominated day for total abolition.

The programme for government sets out a number of initiatives, such as the introduction of a bill to reform family law, support for organisations that provide advice to families and individuals and the provision of free criminal record checks for volunteers working with children. That move is particularly welcomed by many voluntary organisations. The Liberal Democrats also look forward to the publication of the draft land reform bill to secure a right of community purchase, a crofting community right to buy and a right of responsible access to our countryside.

One other promise that must be highlighted—and on which Jim Wallace must be congratulated—is the commitment to introduce a much-needed independent element into the police complaints procedure and to issue a consultation paper on the subject in the spring.

Shona Robison: Does Mr Rumbles disagree with the Executive on anything?

Mr Rumbles: Do not tempt me. *[Laughter.]* I fully support the programme for government. Of course, I would have liked a few more things in it.

One of the social justice programme's main commitments is the decision to provide all council and housing association tenants, and all pensioners in both public and private housing, with warm and dry homes through the installation of central heating and insulation by 2006.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the pensioners who live in the seven local authority areas where stock transfer is proposed be able to receive central heating as of April 2001, or will they have to wait until after the stock transfer? Is the £350 million announced tied up with stock transfer, or is it available separately?

Mr Rumbles: The document makes it clear that all pensioners will get central heating in a rolling programme to 2006. That major initiative should be welcomed by all parties. I am surprised that the SNP keeps carping about these good initiatives.

The programme for government is not about only what is to come; it highlights the achievements of the coalition Government in Scotland. I take pleasure in mentioning one of those achievements. Tuition fees have been abolished for full-time Scottish students who are studying at Scottish universities. That was a major Liberal Democrat pledge before the election, and it

has been delivered by the coalition. Despite all the muddying of the water by the SNP and the Tories, and despite their attempts to worry and mislead people—we saw similarly scurrilous behaviour last Thursday, over the issue of personal care for the elderly—the simple fact is that no full-time students at our universities pay tuition fees. Although the Tories and the SNP may not understand that, our young people do. Last week, it was announced that applications to Scottish universities had risen by almost 10 per cent. Clearly, our students know that they do not have to pay tuition fees because the £3,075 is paid in full by the Scottish Executive.

As the Liberal Democrat spokesman on rural development, I shall highlight the achievements of the Minister for Rural Development in delivering for rural Scotland. The Liberal Democrats have a real interest in the sustainable development of rural Scotland, large swathes of which we represent: 10 of the 12 Liberal Democrat first-past-the-post constituencies are rural.

Fiona Hyslop: Will Mike Rumbles give way?

Mr Rumbles: I have already given way to Fiona Hyslop.

It is worth noting that the Minister for Rural Development is a Liberal Democrat with a strong voice in the Cabinet—actually, a strong voice anywhere.

We have delivered extra support for farmers that is worth more than £150 million. We have passed the Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Bill, which was a much-needed measure to conserve wild salmon in the freshwater phase of their lives, although that bill was unfortunately—and inexplicably—opposed by the Conservatives. Most important, we have introduced an independent appeal mechanism for farmers when they are dealing with European Union payments. With a rural affairs department in the Scottish Executive, rural issues are high on the political agenda in Scotland—and rightly so.

Before I conclude, I shall mention the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000—an enabling act that was designed to clear the way for the establishment of national parks in Scotland. We will soon have the Loch Lomond national park and, in my constituency, the Cairngorm national park. That is a major achievement of the coalition Government, although it is not highlighted in the environment section of the programme for government—I hope that the Executive is not hiding its light under a bushel. Twenty per cent of the management board of a national park will be comprised of directly elected local people. That is a genuine involvement of local people and must be a good move. I heartily welcome it.

Alex Fergusson (South of Scotland) (Con): Will Mike Rumbles give way?

Mr Rumbles: Okay.

The Presiding Officer: No. Mr Rumbles is on his last minute.

Mr Rumbles: Sorry.

We have much to be cheerful about. The second programme for government—"Working together for Scotland"—contains many Liberal Democrat measures, as well as those proposed by our Labour colleagues in the coalition. Working together, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party are delivering for Scotland. I urge the Parliament to endorse the programme for government, by voting for motion S1M-1609 in Henry McLeish's name and ignoring the rather disappointing amendments.

The Presiding Officer: We now come to the open debate. If members stick to the four-minute limit, all those who have requested to speak should be able to do so.

10:34

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): The speeches that we have heard—especially the First Minister's—show clearly what is on offer from the coalition and what the consequences would be without it. What was inherited by the Labour Government in 1997, and subsequently by the Scottish Parliament, were crumbling public services, Victorian hospitals, rundown schools and a fragmented transport system. However, over the past three and a half years we have made slow but sure progress in tackling years of neglect.

Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con): Does Hugh Henry also recognise that the Government inherited shorter NHS waiting lists than exist now?

Hugh Henry: I recognise that we have invested a record amount in the health service to tackle both the problems that the Tories left behind and some of the accounting manoeuvres that the health service had to cope with, which we are being told about locally.

We know that the public are, quite rightly, impatient for change, and we want progress as a result of our record investment in the health service. Much remains to be done. The Minister for Health and Community Care has heard from me—and from many of my colleagues—that we want results. However, we also heard David McLetchie allude to the Tory alternative: private health care, privatisation and the removal of the health service from public control. The Tories are offering cuts in services; we are offering investment in services.

We also welcome the massive investment that has been made in education. In my constituency, not only has every four-year-old been given a pre-five place, but there has been steady progress to ensure that every three-year old will have a place. New pre-five centres have opened in Johnstone, Glenburn and Foxbar and across the south end of Paisley—something that would never have happened if the Conservatives had been returned to office. Classroom assistants have also been introduced. In every primary school that I have visited in my constituency, the teachers speak with pride about the introduction of classroom assistants and the difference that they are making to education in those schools. Notwithstanding the fact that some teachers have concerns about what has been achieved under the McCrone settlement, I look forward to progress on the back of that.

The M74 would not have been offered for completion if the Conservatives had been returned, and there have been record levels of investment in local government. When I was a council leader in 1996-97, I would have given my right arm for the kind of settlement that local government has received this year.

Fergus Ewing: Will Hugh Henry give way?

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will Hugh Henry give way?

Hugh Henry: I have only a minute left.

There has been progress, but what happens when Labour makes progress? The SNP cries, "It is not enough. It is not happening soon enough." What does the SNP have to offer? It has aims but few commitments. It will abolish quangos, but will establish conventions and trusts. When it makes commitments, it simply echoes what has already been done and tries to claim the credit. When it promises legislation, it is to ensure that all Scottish universities have an elected rector. Most important, the SNP proposes to introduce a Scottishness vetting for all college and university teachers. I invite SNP members to look at their website information from 1998. It talks of

"an appointments policy that gives due weight to an informed enthusiasm for Scotland's history and culture"—

in other words, Mike Russell's appointed zealots applying the purity test. The SNP would also resurrect the Scottish Examination Board with a new remit.

The UK Labour party—and, in the Scottish Parliament, the coalition parties—is delivering progress. In contrast, the alternatives are a return to the destruction of the Tories or a journey into the fantasy land of the SNP.

10:39

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I shall try not to show any zealotry in my speech.

Mr Swinney has drawn attention to the handy nature of the programme for government booklet. Last year's document was much larger and it was a different shape; this year's is ring-bound. I look forward to a continuation of that policy—the Executive is obviously going into the publishing business, so I will make a couple of suggestions. Next year, the book could contain a pop-up First Minister. The following year, we could be offered a cut-out-and-keep Jack McConnell, made from sticky-backed plastic. The book could also be shrink-wrapped, with a CD of Ross Finnie's greatest hits on the cover or—considering the commemorative gifts that now accompany many publications—one of Tom McCabe's rubber truncheons.

The reality is that the document is full of style and photos that signify nothing. We heard the soundtrack to it from the First Minister this morning, in a speech that was—I am trying to be generous, Presiding Officer—gibberish. The First Minister said:

"The SNP does not believe in Scotland",

but that is meaningless. Scotland is not a faith or a talisman; it is a country—we are standing in it. The First Minister went on to promise universal access to the internet—good news for the inhabitants of the planet Pluto.

The Administration has no substance whatever. It is built around a cult of personality—which is bizarre, considering the First Minister's personality. He was described memorably by Alan Taylor in the *Sunday Herald* as a man who speaks in crossword clues. Both of the statements that I mentioned are good examples of that.

The programme for government is a hollow document. It is not what the First Minister described as being an "honest compact" with the people of Scotland. The truth of that can be proved by a simple comparison of this year's text with last year's. On education, 54 per cent of all the pledges are not new, but are repetitions of aims that have not been achieved. On sport and culture, the figure is 67 per cent. The document consists of repetition dressed up with photos—some of the repetition is older than last year's document.

I am worried that Helen Liddell has returned to haunt us. On 11 March 1999, Mrs Liddell said that by 2000 there would be one modern computer—I do not know what an old computer is—for every five secondary pupils and one for every 7.5 primary pupils. The target date is now 2002. That aim is simply a repetition.

The Executive has no ideas. It is a body that has no policies and simply makes things up as it goes along. It is deceiving the people of Scotland. This document, whether it is sitting on a bookshelf, being handed out in the chamber or being delivered through a letterbox—if one has a letterbox big enough—is a cynical sham. It says that everything is happening and that there is lots of good news. Mike Rumbles has given us his reasons to be cheerful—if one looks at Mike Rumbles, that is surprising—but the reality is that there is a lack of achievement. The document represents spin over substance and rhetoric over reality. That was embodied in the First Minister's speech this morning.

In Scotland we need a Government that is ambitious and wants to achieve things. We need the type of Government that is described in the SNP amendment—a Government that uses the powers and resources of Scotland to achieve for the people of Scotland. We certainly need that in regard to education. On class sizes, the ambition in this document is not enough. No educational research shows that the reduction of class sizes to 30 or 25 makes the difference that we need. I know that the SNP will introduce ambitious ideas and I know that the SNP's ideas attract the people of Scotland. Our job is made easier when one compares our ideas and vigour with the Executive's nonsense.

10:43

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Time forbids a thorough appraisal and critique of the Executive programme, save to say that the poverty of aspiration that is inherent in the document is due entirely to the Executive's adherence to the failed free-market policies of new Labour in Westminster and Scotland. Those free-market policies promote rather than tackle poverty and inequality. One example of the Executive's poverty of aspiration is its failure to introduce a simple measure that would be popular with at least 90 per cent of the population: the abolition of the council tax and the introduction of a local wealth tax that would redistribute income throughout the country.

I will concentrate on what Mike Rumbles called a major issue, which also betrays poverty of aspiration. There is a commitment in the document to the provision of whole-house central heating and insulation for every Scottish pensioner by 2006. The First Minister has had to admit today that, in its first two years, the Executive has failed Scottish pensioners by its unwillingness to install one central heating unit in any Scottish pensioner's house. During its four years, the Westminster Government has similarly failed our pensioners. If the Executive or the Westminster

Government had been willing to ditch discredited Tory policy, we could have installed in every pensioner's house in Scotland whole-house central heating and insulation by 1 April this year. Instead, we have poverty of aspiration and rhetoric about a five-year programme.

Some members may ask how we could have done that. In politics, the reasonable question is often where the money to pay for programmes will come from. Many members—particularly Labour members who have a background in local government—will understand that the introduction by the Tories in 1996 of the capital receipt set-aside rules resulted in a major loss of revenue for local authorities to spend on council housing. The Westminster Government has been in power for four years and has refused to change those rules; the Scottish Executive has been in power for two years and has refused to change them.

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

Tommy Sheridan: I am in my last minute, unfortunately.

The problem is that, if the Executive had ditched that discredited Tory policy, £315 million would have been available immediately to local authorities throughout Scotland to deliver for 126,000 households in Scotland whole-house central heating, insulation and/or double glazing. In other words—I direct this to Mike Rumbles in particular—instead of talking about a programme that will begin on 1 April, we could have been talking about a programme that had delivered for every pensioner household in Scotland. That demonstrates the Executive's poverty of aspiration and I challenge the First Minister or his deputy—whoever sums up—to announce today at long last whether the Executive will ditch the discredited Tory policy of capital receipt set-aside. That would give local authorities the ability to look after their tenants as they deserve to be looked after and—in particular—to concentrate on pensioner households in Scotland.

10:48

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Hugh Henry presented the tissue of factual inexactitudes that got Labour elected in the first place. He ignored totally the new hospitals that were built in Scotland under the Tories and the virtual creation of the M74. Not only would we have completed the M74, but we would have fulfilled our promises to complete the M77. At the moment, all we have from Labour are words.

Hugh Henry: Will Mr Gallie give way?

Phil Gallie: No chance—we have heard enough from Hugh Henry.

Another day, another glossy. Henry McLeish delivered a lot of promises but what he is good at is delivering a lot of glossies. The value of the document, given its cost, is doubtful—"of doubtful value" is also an excellent description of its contents.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Phil Gallie: I do not have time.

The public's expectations of this Parliament were raised by promises by Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the nationalists—

Mr Rumbles: Not by the Tories.

Phil Gallie: Absolutely not by the Tories. The public's expectations have not been met and, to the Executive's discredit, its promises have not been delivered. If the Executive has achieved a measure of success, it is in the number of glossies that it has produced. If we piled up all the publicly funded glossies that it has brought out, we would probably reach the height of the Scott monument.

Mr McAveety : To be consistent, will Mr Gallie condemn the citizens charter documents that were produced at great expense by the previous Tory Government and which achieved absolutely nothing?

Phil Gallie: The citizens charters achieved much. The hospitals that achieved charter marks are today performing well.

Today's two-and-a-half-hour debate on the document's wide-ranging stream of issues is absolutely meaningless. The Executive should be ashamed to waste parliamentary time by producing a document that takes such a broad-brush approach and which is full of promises that will end up as nothing more than that.

When we look at the content of the document, we see the Executive's promises about the police, but what we must look at is its performance on the police. The Labour Government and this Executive, having reduced the numbers of police compared to 1997, now simply aspire to the numbers that we had in 1997. The cash that is provided for the police does not take account of training, early retirement, replacement and pension costs, which go in with the revenue costs that are applied to the police. Although the First Minister mentioned the number of police who have been recruited to deal with the drugs problem, the Executive has again simply moved police from one sector of our police force to another.

The document boasts of the Executive's intentions on prisons and talks about improving the prisons estate, but what has the Executive done? It took away £13 million from the prisons budget and has created a situation in which prison

officers in the Scottish Prison Service suffer from a massive loss of morale.

If those are the kind of promises that Executive ministers claim to have met, it speaks for itself that all that they have done is failed, failed, failed. They have failed on health and waiting lists and they have failed on education.

The Government promised to improve school buildings. Four years on, we find school buildings in a deplorable state. Henry McLeish promised today that the Executive would reduce teacher to pupil ratios in primary schools. That promise was made four years ago; it has been repeated today.

The Executive has failed in every respect. Bringing out glossy magazines will not do the image of the Parliament or the Executive any good.

10:52

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I wish to blend loyalty with constructive suggestions in my speech. Mike Russell said that the launch of "Working together for Scotland" was all spin and very wicked. My views on such things are well known, but, although some Government documents—both here and from London—are full of verbiage that does not mean much, this document is an honest attempt at a factual statement of what has been achieved and what is aimed for. It might not win a first-class honours degree, but it is a serious attempt at a new approach and that is to be welcomed—it can be improved on as we go along.

I will concentrate on some aspects of the document that have not been thoroughly dealt with so far, starting with local government. We welcome the promise on the community initiative and community planning, which is helpful. We welcome the pledge under paragraph 2.9 of the document—which I think John Swinney missed in his reading of it—that the Government is

"committed to continuing to make progress on electoral reform"

in local government.

Bruce Crawford: I hear what Donald Gorrie says about community planning, but how will local government respect and understand that? We are in the middle of a trunk road network crisis. All the trunk roads in Scotland are, through a flawed process, about to have their maintenance privatised. How can that be treated as being in any way sensible—particularly given Donald Gorrie's comments on community planning? Can the proposals really be believed by local authorities?

Donald Gorrie: I was going to come on to roads later. We need to do things better in future—we must rebuild the partnership that was beginning to

develop between the Parliament, the Executive and local government. Roads were badly handled in the past; we should learn from that and do things better.

There is an opportunity to create genuine, grass-roots democracy in Britain, which I welcome. The matter of the voluntary sector is related to that. I welcome Jim Wallace's agreement to the Government's paying for Scottish Criminal Record Office checks on volunteers. That is a step forward. Several MSPs and many bodies outwith the Parliament pressed hard for that, and it is to the Executive's credit that it has started to recognise—albeit slowly—the argument and to address the point. That has not been done in London.

We are promised a strategic review of how we fund the voluntary sector. I repeat my plea that the Executive does not merely go on with endless projects. We need core funding for existing bodies, whether national bodies—such as Citizens Advice Scotland—or local youth clubs and sports clubs, which have suffered dreadfully over the past 15 years or so. We must give them more funding and continuity. There is a promise on the voluntary sector, but our actions need to be taken right across the board. In official circles, there is a tendency to consider only social inclusion partnership areas and other areas for specific grants. Help is needed right across the board in the voluntary sector.

I welcome the document's pledge to

"develop a strategy to tackle alcohol misuse".

I also welcome Jim Wallace's announcement of a commission or committee to examine licensing and alcohol problems. I gather that that undertaking came too late for the printing deadline for "Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government", but it is a welcome step. I hope that the Executive will support other measures that can be carried out more quickly and without always waiting for lots of strategy reviews and commissions in future. A lot of progress could be made, but I welcome the commitment that has been made by the Executive.

10:56

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I will concentrate on one section of "Working together for Scotland". There are 16 health pledges in the document, but only half can reasonably be described as new commitments. Most of them were announced in "Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change"—another glossy document—only a few weeks ago. I do not agree with Phil Gallie often, but that begs the question why we needed a further glossy document to reannounce some of those pledges in the space of

only a few weeks. Two of the other pledges in the health section are leftovers from last year's programme for government. They are things that the Executive promised, but failed to do last year, and so has been forced to re-include in this year's programme for government.

That all begs the question that John Swinney posed: where is the radical new thinking that was promised by Henry McLeish when he was elected First Minister a few months ago? There is no evidence of it in the programme for government that has been published this week.

We have heard various taunts about policies from members of the other parties so, helpfully, I will make a few suggestions to the Executive on how it could turn the document into a programme for government that would deliver for the people of Scotland. How about fruit for every single primary school pupil? That would be a real attempt to change young people's habits and improve their diet, so that we might have a chance to rid ourselves of the sick-man-of-Europe tag in the next generation.

How about the removal of charges for dental check-ups? That would be targeted action to address the fact that more than 50 per cent of adults are not registered with a dentist, although the rate of oral cancer is increasing.

How about setting the ambitious target of halving the maximum waiting times for in-patient treatments, instead of just promising to reduce them to nine months—a waiting time that was derided by the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care when he was in opposition? That Tory scandal is now paraded by him and his colleagues as a new Labour target.

How about real action to end postcode prescribing? Instead of announcing a new body which—according to the existing body's chief executive—does not have the power to end postcode prescribing, why not give the existing body the power to do the job that it exists to do?

Those are real suggestions and SNP policies that we would be happy for the Executive to implement, to turn a programme for government that is lacking in detail into one that could deliver real progress for the people of Scotland.

The most striking thing about the programme for government is what it does not say. It is astonishing that, after last week's to-ing and fro-ing, there is still no commitment to implement the Sutherland recommendations in full. That raises the question of the status of the welcome pledge that was made by the First Minister on Monday. We know that his Cabinet does not agree with it and we do not need reminding that the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, does not agree with it. Susan Deacon, who has responsibility for turning the First

Minister's rhetoric into reality, steadfastly refuses to give a commitment to free personal care. Yesterday, she issued a statement that was scarcely in the same language as that which was used by the First Minister on Monday.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: I would give way if I were not in the last minute of my speech.

Susan Deacon's statement seemed only to erect barriers to free personal care. The people of Scotland are reading these words, so why is there no commitment in "Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government" to implementing the Sutherland recommendations in full? Is it because the First Minister is the only member of the Scottish Cabinet who believes in that commitment? Instead of glossy documents that contain few details—certainly no new details—why cannot we have real commitments and straight answers to the questions that the people of Scotland are asking?

11:01

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): I welcome the opportunity to debate the Executive's record and its future plans. The Executive is at least honest enough to admit that there has been delay in delivering some of its commitments. I am especially concerned by the delay in the reorganisation of national health service acute services, particularly in the Forth Valley Health Board area. Forth Valley Health Board has been dithering around on the issue for more than a decade and its indecision has raised doubts about the location of gynaecology, maternity and paediatric services at Falkirk royal infirmary. Such indecision is unacceptable. I hope that the Executive will take steps to ensure that there is a full range of women's and children's services at Falkirk royal infirmary. The Executive should also introduce measures to reduce waiting times at Falkirk royal infirmary and, indeed, everywhere else in Scotland.

I hope that there will be no further prevarication on the Sutherland recommendations on care of the elderly. We are talking about the generation of people who built the welfare state. It would be a gross betrayal of those people if they were denied care in their time of need. The Executive has received much criticism for not making its intentions on Sutherland absolutely clear. I hope that the First Minister's statement on Monday—although it was rather belated—will ensure that free personal care for all elderly people will become a reality by April next year at the latest. If that upsets some politicians at Westminster, it is up to them to take action to raise standards of

care for elderly people elsewhere in the UK. The Scottish Parliament should be a standard bearer for others to follow on this and other issues.

Although the Scottish Parliament has received criticism on student finance, it has taken a more enlightened approach than Westminster. Westminster abolished student grants and imposed tuition fees. The Scottish Parliament is restoring student grants, particularly for students from low-income families, and has abolished advance payment of tuition fees. Nevertheless, there is widespread dissatisfaction among students that, after graduation, they will be forced to make payments into a graduation endowment fund, even if their annual incomes are as low as £10,000. Cubie recommended a threshold of two and a half times that figure. I hope that the committee that is dealing with the Education (Graduate Endowment and Student Support) (No 2) (Scotland) Bill will make appropriate amendments to it before it comes back to the chamber at stage 3.

It is part of the Parliament's job to make the Executive accountable. That means telling the Executive when it has got things wrong, whether on student finance, care of the elderly, the national health service or anything else. The Executive has a duty to listen and respond to the Parliament. If it does that, there will be a more democratic style of government and the people of Scotland will be better served by an Executive and Parliament that respond to their needs and aspirations.

11:05

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): It is right that the Parliament should focus each year on the programme for government. Doing so reminds the nation of what we set out to achieve and what we have achieved, and allows us to review any new measures that require to be taken.

"Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government" is a summary of the work that is being carried out by the Administration. I contend that it is more accessible than any other document in the history of the Scottish Parliament.

The contrast between the type of Scotland that we had in the mid-1990s and what we have now is stark. In the mid-1990s, there was no strategy or commitment to tackling child poverty; no commitment to having a public strategy on concessionary fares for Scottish pensioners; no strategy for tackling domestic abuse; no commitment to free places in nurseries for three and four-year-olds; no strategy for the funding of part-time students and poorer students in higher education; and no commitment to, or finance for, the new stretch of the M74—the Tories may have been committed to it, but not enough to provide

finance for it. There was no social justice strategy and no commitment to giving every child an e-mail address and to having computers in our schools. The Administration is delivering and will continue to do so.

Mr Monteith: Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: Today, I will do so.

Mr Monteith: Can the member remember when the M74 was called the A74? Does she not recall that the designation of that road changed under the Conservative Administration because we turned it into a motorway?

Pauline McNeill: I do not remember—Mr Monteith is a wee bit older than I am. He misses the point. Mr Gallie may point out that the Conservatives were committed to completing the M74, but they do not understand that that commitment was no use given that they were not prepared to put their money where their mouth was.

The biggest challenge that we face is building our national health service. Any country with a national health service recognises the complexities of running it. It is not simply about cash injections and the biggest ever increases in funding, which we have introduced; it is about establishing basic principles about management. Managing a national health service demands recognition of the need to advance the discoveries of modern science; it demands recognition of the ever-increasing drugs bill, the need for proper management of NHS staff and the continuation of partnership working between managers, trade unions and professional organisations.

Labour members recognise that it is key to have staff at the centre of the strategy. That is why Susan Deacon rightly continues to meet our trade unions and professional organisations, in partnership, to give them a say in how our national health service should be working.

The move from the Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation formula for distribution to the Arbuthnott formula under Labour and the Liberal Democrats is a key change. The change in formula will make a difference to every health board, and there are no losers. All parties should welcome that.

The SNP has at last published its plan for governing the NHS. That is welcome and long overdue. There is much on which we can agree, such as the need to achieve equality of access and the highest quality of care and to introduce a dental health plan. We are taking action in those areas. As ever, the weakness in the SNP's argument is that its promises are not costed. The proposal to employ 1,500 more nurses in the NHS is not costed. The SNP does not cost its proposal

to end postcode treatment or say how it will end it. Although we listen with bated breath for an explanation of how the SNP proposes to cut waiting lists, it has not got a clue about how that can be done and it has given no costings.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: I am in the final 30 seconds of my speech.

We have an action plan for the national health service that is comprehensive and welcomed by everyone. It is not simply down to the Administration to make that plan work; it is down to everyone in the Parliament and the agencies that we fund—the health boards and the trusts—to deliver on the plan to create a better health service, cleaner hospitals, better treatment and a more patient-focused health service.

11:10

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Had the First Minister or Mr Henry given way to me earlier, I would have asked them whether the omission from the programme for government of any reference to the proposed privatisation of trunk road maintenance contracts was deliberate. I looked in vain for any reference in the programme to the fact that a Labour Government is planning to press ahead with that privatisation. I am sure that members from all parties will welcome the delegation from Highland Council, led by David Green and the council's transport convener, Sandy MacKenzie. Like council representatives and leaders of all parties throughout Scotland, that delegation would have welcomed the abandonment of the Executive's policy on trunk road maintenance, which enjoys the support of hardly any members of the Parliament, bar the Minister for Transport.

I begin with a quotation that I believe sums up the Rural Development Committee's first report, which was published earlier this week. Under the convenership of Alex Johnstone, the committee concluded that

"the combination of poverty and the decline of traditional industries is a threat to the sustainability of rural life as we know it."

I am sure that we are all of good intentions—no one ever quarrels with that and we must take it as read. However, the enormity of the committee's conclusion has not yet been grasped. People in rural Scotland face a deeper crisis than ever before. Two elements constitute that crisis: hidden poverty and decline and crisis in many of the traditional industries.

No one would pretend that there are magic solutions to those problems, but it is disappointing, to say the least, that the issue that was raised at

every meeting of the Rural Affairs Committee, as it went around Scotland, is not mentioned—it does not even find utterance—in the programme for government. I am referring, of course, to that unmentionable, four-letter word that begins with F: fuel. At every meeting, fuel tax was mentioned as the single greatest problem for the rural economy. That is why, at the forthcoming general election, the SNP will pledge to make an immediate cut in fuel tax and to aim to cut levels to European averages.

The tragedy of this Parliament and of this Executive is that the Government will not speak out against Westminster policy where such policy is plainly opposed by the majority of people in Scotland and where it causes, in my submission, grievous damage.

We read of the effect of that policy on the traditional sector of farming in today's edition of *The Press and Journal*, in which the north-east board chairman of the National Farmers Union says:

"My fuel costs at harvest are normally between £6,000 - £8,000, but this year were about £14,000".

Alternatively, we could turn to the comments of a married fisherman, who said that, last year alone, his extra fuel costs amounted to £76,000.

At the same time as that massive increase in fuel costs, there is a massive fall in farm incomes. Given that a sheep farmer's income is £5.76—not an hour, but a week—we must recognise that the rural economy is facing more problems than ever before. Nothing in the programme for government will go any way towards tackling that crisis.

11:15

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): My heart always sinks when Fergus Ewing's name comes out of the hat before mine. My worry is that he will give my speech and that I will have to invent another one. That is not the case today, but I will reinforce the theme that he chose to follow.

The report that the Rural Development Committee published this week contained a genuine reflection of what we found when we travelled around rural Scotland. Our inquiry was carried out over 10 months and the report reflects the feelings of many of the people whom we met and spoke to.

Like Fergus Ewing, I will take the theme of what does not appear in the programme for government document. When I looked through the section that is devoted to rural development, I found that, although many of the projects that the Minister for Rural Development pursued over the year were mentioned, there was no reference to beef exports, for example. Nowhere does the document

mention the "great success" of the date-based export scheme. Hailed as a triumph at the outset, the scheme has been a total failure and seems to have fallen off the list of successes. Although the BSE crisis in Europe makes this a difficult time, farmers want and expect the Executive to pursue the issue of beef exports, yet it is not mentioned in the list of promises.

The Executive also fails to mention the implementation of the new less-favoured areas scheme, which threatens the very future of our crofters and marginal hill farmers. Jim Walker, the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, said:

"By year 3 of the Scheme, as it currently stands, the majority of LFA farms across Scotland face having their incomes drastically and unfairly cut".

Similarly, the president of the Scottish Crofters Union, Donnie MacLennan, said that the Scottish Executive had, with its deal on the new scheme, "abandoned" crofters. The renegotiation of that disastrous scheme must be among the Executive's top priorities. Scotland's hill farmers and crofters expect nothing less.

In the document, the Executive says quite clearly that it intends

"To support a high quality science base in agricultural, biological and related sciences which delivers research of strategic relevance".

However, the reality is, as has been made clear over the past 10 days, that the Scottish Executive is cutting funding to the Scottish Agricultural College by £1.5 million in real terms over the next three years. The SAC says that those cuts will jeopardise key research programmes, at a time when public concern about food safety and animal health has never been greater.

The chairman of the SAC, Maitland Mackie, who is a prominent member of the Minister for Rural Development's party, stated publicly that the Scottish Executive does not share the view of the Scottish farming industry that the SAC is essential to the survival of the rural and agricultural sector. Fears are growing that the highly educated Scottish farming industry will no longer have the support of that valuable institution, which is well known throughout the world.

Another aspect of the underfunding of the SAC hits home in many rural areas in Scotland—I take as my example the proposed closure of the veterinary laboratory in Thurso, which covers a huge geographical area in the Highlands and Islands and is responsible for 300,000 cattle, 1.1 million sheep and 5,200 agricultural holdings. It carries out key surveillance and research and its scientific achievements, which include research into enzootic ewe abortion, scrapie and bovine viral diarrhoea, are known worldwide. The threat to

the laboratory will undermine Scotland's agriculture. I urge the minister to examine ways of keeping that laboratory open and to consider the proposal to reopen the Oban laboratory.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): Before I call the next speaker, I ask members to observe a little more courtesy when other members are speaking. The noise in the chamber is quite loud.

11:19

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome the publication of the programme for government. It is a staging post for measuring our successes to date and for setting out our aspirations and intentions for the future. That means pointing out where work continues to need to be done, but I take issue with Phil Gallie's point that the document was of doubtful value. Setting targets is an important discipline and we should let the people of Scotland judge whether those targets have been achieved. The document will also let us judge ourselves and whether we are on course. Indeed, Nicola Sturgeon used the document to highlight areas where progress that might have been hoped for when the first document was published had not been made. The document is important and it is accessible to anyone who chooses to read it.

Honesty is required in all parts of the chamber. We have to accept that we do not always move as quickly as we would like and we have to accept that we occasionally get things wrong—as we had to in the chamber last week. However—Dennis Canavan's speech highlighted this point—honesty is also required throughout the chamber when the Executive achieves things that are welcome. That often happens with the progress of bills. Many of the Executive's achievements, as set out in the document, are indeed the achievements of the Parliament and a reflection of the work that people of all parties have undertaken in committees. The document is about working in partnership.

David McLetchie was misleading when he tried to tie the Executive and Parliament to timetables, commitments and pledges made by a Labour Government in another place. This Executive is a coalition of two parties, and this Parliament is new. If we are to tie UK national parties to pledges made in other Parliaments in the UK, perhaps we should ask Mr McLetchie why the Conservatives in this Parliament were, only a fortnight ago, in favour of restrictions on tobacco advertising to protect our children from smoking. When the bill went to Westminster—which we allowed—the self-same Conservatives voted against those restrictions.

Alex Johnstone: It was not the same Conservatives.

Mrs Smith: Mr McLetchie took a dangerous line.

The Executive is a coalition of parties working together. For the most part, we work together well. We are delivering on our common goals—social justice, improved public services, enhanced democracy and equal opportunities for people throughout Scotland. We are beginning to deliver on the issues that matter to ordinary Scots—for example, long-term care for the elderly. Earlier, a red herring appeared—as usual—on why that issue was not mentioned in the document. Events of last week overtook the printers, as they overtook so many people.

We have made progress on higher education funding, on record spending in our health service, on our child care strategies and on our decent, sustainable and viable three-year funding deal for our colleagues in local government. Many of those points have been highlighted by my colleagues Pauline McNeill and Mike Rumbles.

We can always look back over the past year and see the rows, the banana skins and where things have gone wrong. However, we can also see where we have done good work. There has been increased investment in our education system after McCrone, increased investment in our schools infrastructure, a 40 per cent increase in support for rough sleepers initiatives, extra sports co-ordinators in our schools and 43,000 extra places in further and higher education. More is to come. Progress has been made on the reform of local government, on new planning regulations for mobile phone masts, on reduced class sizes for primary 3, on expanded drug rehabilitation services and on police numbers, which will have risen to an all-time high by 2002. Donald Gorrie spoke about free criminal record checks to protect our children and to assist the voluntary sector; he was instrumental in bringing that about.

We do not always get things right, but those of us who go out and speak at conferences will, I am sure, have had the same reaction as I have had. When I was speaking at an Alzheimer's conference a couple of months ago, somebody came up to me and said, "You passed the Adults with Incapacity Act." How many people out there know that we passed that act in 2000? How many people know how many years and decades of wishes went into the passing of that important act by this Executive and this Parliament? The people whose lives depend on the act know, and the carers and users of services know. It is important that we get balanced views in the contributions that we hear today.

11:24

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I would like to widen the debate a little. Up to now, it

has been about the Scottish Executive's programme for government. I would like to consider the responsibilities of government in general.

Before I do, I will pay tribute to the First Minister. I applaud—as will everyone in the chamber, I think—his personal commitment to social justice. I sense that he really means it. That is excellent, and quite different from what we hear in some of the speeches from another Parliament. However, although not exactly boasting, he spoke about the richness of the talent to be found among young people in Scotland and said that he wanted them to make a contribution. So do I—but not only in Scotland. It is not enough to say that each of them will have access to the internet. The idea of contributing internationally is much bigger and wider than that, as I will explain later.

I freely concede that the Executive's plans in some areas might well improve some of the services and facilities for which the Executive has ultimate responsibility. However, it is not enough for this Parliament to be judged to have fulfilled the normal expectations of a Parliament. People look for much more than that. Although Hugh Henry said that, as a former local government leader, he would have given his right arm for some of the settlements that local government has now received from the Executive, it is not carping of the SNP and other Opposition parties to say that that is not good enough.

Last night, I was in the company of people who are described as handicapped or physically disabled. They were marvellous young people, and much of that is down to the fact that they go to a particular club. That club is due to run out of funds on 31 March. If that happens, it will be a stain not just on local government in Edinburgh but on the Executive for not being able to provide the support to develop the talents that the First Minister talked about. I do not mean to carp, but where there are shortfalls we are, as Donald Gorrie said, entitled to comment on them.

I said that I wanted to widen the debate. I believe that Parliaments are supposed to exercise rights and responsibilities. In negotiating with teachers, Jack McConnell has rights and responsibilities. Devolution has given him responsibility for the Scottish education system. In another defining area of our society, Jim Wallace and the Scottish law officers have rights and responsibilities—looking after the system within our boundaries. However, because the system stops at the border, it is constrained. In the past few months, we have seen that Scottish justice will stand up to international scrutiny. Just like Scotland's children, it has much to contribute to the world. We have much to contribute to the development of international justice and to the

improvement of civil rights for all people. We should not do that through the prism of Westminster. If we have the right to have our own legal system, we have the responsibility for ensuring that it contributes to the development of legal systems in the world. We have that responsibility and the aim is achievable and reasonable, as has been demonstrated at Camp Zeist.

I believe that the Executive and Parliament should seek to exercise that responsibility on behalf of the people whom we represent. The exercise of such a responsibility will make us all grow. It will make our aspirations higher. We will benefit more people—and not just here in Scotland. If we think small, we will do small things. We must think a lot bigger. If we have our own criminal justice system, and if it is seen throughout the world to be a sound system, let it interact directly with the other systems of the world.

I urge the Scottish Executive to embrace as part of its programme for government all the aspirations, responsibilities and rights of government. Do not cut us off from global developments in any area of human activity, as will happen if we think small. Although I agree with many things in the programme for government document, I believe that it is too limited in its aspirations.

11:29

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to speak this morning—not least because I have been uncharacteristically quiet for the past couple of weeks, suffering from laryngitis. I am back—and I have a lot to say.

One of the useful things about making a closing speech in a debate is that one can sit and listen to what people say and pay attention to the form and content of their speeches. What we have heard this morning shows, once again, the real differences between those of us who are trying to deliver for the people of Scotland and Opposition members, who simply want to use any debate to labour the same old political points.

This morning, we have heard from the First Minister and from a range of coalition members about our very real commitment to social justice. That marks out the partners in the coalition from the Opposition. Social justice is our No 1 priority—not using every debate to focus on constitutional questions irrespective of whatever else is going on or, for the Tories, using every debate as an opportunity for selective amnesia about what was done during 18 long, hard, desperate years of Tory government.

Alex Johnstone made a wee aside earlier:

“It was not the same Conservatives.”

Really!

Alex Johnstone: I said that it was not the same Conservatives who voted in this Parliament and in Westminster, which is what Margaret Smith seemed to suggest.

Cathy Jamieson: I can rest my case safely on that. Who are the real Conservatives? What is the real Tory agenda? What are the Tories doing here and at Westminster? We should be told what their real policies are.

Nicola Sturgeon: I am glad to hear that Cathy Jamieson listened carefully to the debate, as she will have heard me make four specific proposals about how we can improve the health of our children and the quality of health care generally. Will she tell me which of those proposals she agrees with and which she disagrees with?

Cathy Jamieson: If Nicola Sturgeon looks at the comprehensive health plan that the coalition partners have published, she will find out that many of those proposals are already commitments. I think that the SNP is going through the plan and picking things out. The SNP has a duty to consider fully costed proposals.

Nicola Sturgeon rose—

Cathy Jamieson: Sit down, Nicola—you have had your opportunity to speak.

There has been a lot of talk about the Sutherland report over the past few weeks. I speak as somebody who used to go into people's houses to assess whether they should go into residential care, or nursing care, or get a home help or benefits. It is a very complex issue. The written answer that Susan Deacon gave yesterday to my parliamentary question about the remit of the care development group is very helpful. It lays out in detail what needs to be done, including identifying the gaps in existing provision and making

“proposals for the implementation of free personal care for all, along with an analysis of the costs and implications of so doing”.

That is something the SNP and the Tories have never done.

The real Tory agenda was beginning to show when David McLetchie spoke. The Tories say they want free personal care and then say that there is an opportunity there for the financial services market. What that reveals is an expectation that somewhere along the line people will have to pay for services and that those services will be privatised.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): That is an utter distortion of what was said. The member may be unaware that a significant

number of financial products currently on the market aim to help people who are budgeting for old age. That is in addition to, and without prejudice to, the desire of this Parliament, including my party in the Parliament, to support the provision of universal free personal care to our elderly.

Cathy Jamieson: I am grateful for the clarification, but I do not think that it takes away from the fact that the real Tory agenda is privatisation of the health and care services. Many of the people who will benefit from what we are currently doing to improve the quality of life for elderly people cannot afford to take out the private schemes that Annabel Goldie, David McLetchie, Phil Gallie and others spoke about. The Westminster Government is attempting to do more than the Tories propose to solve that problem.

Phil Gallie said that "Working together for Scotland" is of no value. The people of Scotland deserve a decent-quality publication. I worked for years with people who complained bitterly about the legal jargon that the old Scottish Office produced, under Governments of all political persuasions. People will be able to look at this document and see issues in it that affect their day-to-day lives. I say to Phil Gallie—is reforming family law of no value? Is taking action on domestic abuse and on land reform of no value? Is taking action to improve the education of our children of no value? Social justice is the most important thing on our agenda—and only this coalition is delivering it.

11:35

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): The interesting part of "Working together for Scotland" is the aptly named flyleaf. It bears the photographs of the ministerial team. Anyone can write words: in the document there are a great many words, but whether anyone pays attention to them depends on who is uttering them and what their track record is. In this case, a picture speaks a thousand words.

The photographs on the flyleaf show a reflective and somewhat uneasy Jim Wallace. Perhaps he is pondering rising crime or the cut in police numbers since 1997. Perhaps he is pondering the proposed closure of four prisons. I see a pugilistic Ross Finnie—no doubt explaining that the Rural Development Committee has it wrong when it has the temerity to suggest that there is an economic crisis in our rural communities. Fergus Ewing was right to tell the chamber of a sheep farmer's weekly earnings of £5.76. Alex Johnstone was right to raise inquiries about the apparent omission of beef exports from the document. An open-mouthed Wendy Alexander is clearly asking the questions, "Is a graduate tax not the same as a

tuition fee?" and, "Why have we not abolished tuition fees?"

It seems to me that Susan Deacon's quizzical expression is because she is stung by the fact that we have 2,000 more people waiting for hospital treatment than in 1997 and by the crisis in many accident and emergency departments—or perhaps because the Executive's handling of the Sutherland report was one of the most dismal advertisements for the Parliament since its inception.

Mr Rumbles: It was a success of the Parliament.

Miss Goldie: I am happy to take an intervention from Mr Rumbles rather than some sedentary insolence.

Members: Apologise.

Mr Rumbles: Despite that personal remark, does Annabel Goldie accept that what occurred over Sutherland was a positive move where the will of Parliament prevailed? The Parliament should not be criticised in that way.

Miss Goldie: At times, I wonder what world the Liberal Democrats live in—certainly I wonder among what people they move. I have spent the week since last Thursday meeting people who have said to me—it is a deeply disquieting consequence of the absolute muddle that took place then—"Parliament is a shambles, don't any of you know what you are doing?" I have endeavoured to explain that two parties knew what they were doing, one party had no idea what it was doing and another party was engaging in a shameless con.

I am glad that Mr Rumbles has raised the point, because it bears further expansion. If anyone in this chamber desires to play a collective part in the promotion of the Parliament as an instrument for the good administration of devolved government in Scotland, it is high time the coalition Executive tried to represent a position that does not bamboozle, confuse, dismay and at times infuriate the Scottish public but rather—

Mr Rumbles rose—

Miss Goldie: I have taken an intervention from Mr Rumbles, which I am dealing with.

But rather tried to strike a position and indicate to the Scottish public that it knows what it is doing and does not have to clarify its position through hastily convened press conferences with the First Minister.

The First Minister's photograph on the flyleaf is most engaging. He seems to have acquired a lump of cotton wool in the general direction of his brain sector. I can only assume that that led to the confusion last week when what the Executive had

agreed on personal care of the elderly was entirely obscure.

If I look further, I see an uneasy, reflective and, I think, slightly disturbed representation of Mr Galbraith. As he presided over the Scottish Qualifications Authority shambles, as he ultimately had to explain to the Parliament how that shambles had arisen and as he was partially relieved of his ministerial responsibilities because of his supervision of that shambles, that Mr Galbraith looks reflective is no wonder. That one of the messages that the Parliament has given to the public in the course of the past year has been a deeply disturbing position on the SQA is also no wonder.

If I look further, I see Angus MacKay clearly looking taken aback. That is probably because he had been told that his ministerial statement was not to be heard because the Executive had decided to leak it to the media in advance.

If the programme for government is really expected to have any credibility with the Scottish people, they are entitled to look at the photographs, reflect on what they represent and consider the Executive's track record so far. I hesitate to say that I do not think that their vote will be one of confidence. So far, we have had a sorry display instead of good, firm and sensible government. There is nothing—or very little—in the document to suggest that the Executive's resolve to do better will be implemented.

11:41

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): In the content of the programme for government, not much has changed from mark 1. There is an improvement in the presentation: we do not have the outsize coffee table version that we got last time. That version had a delightful picture—to allude to Annabel Goldie's speech—of the then Minister for Communities taking a cup of tea. I am sure that the Minister for Social Justice was quite relieved that she did not have to pose in a similar fashion for the new programme for government.

Does it not occur to the people who write such documents that some of us might read them and contrast the second programme for government with the first? It is clear that not much has changed. We were promised that bad and unpopular policies would be dumped. What has been dumped? I have not heard one speech on what has been dumped, because, despite that promise, nothing has been dumped.

The Parliament and the Opposition parties, in good faith and with good grace, recognised that the First Minister might want to put his own stamp on the Government. However, it seems that the stamping of authority has brought on a bout of

foot-and-mouth disease. He mouths the word "Government". When is a Government not a Government? When London tells him to use the term "government" in general terms, but on no account to describe the Executive as the Government of Scotland.

The First Minister puts his foot in it by tripping all over the issue of free personal care for the elderly—he got there on the Monday, but only by trampling over Cabinet colleagues and Labour back benchers. I listened carefully to Cathy Jamieson's comments on the Sutherland report. She talked about "proposals" rather than an unequivocal commitment. I will read her speech in the *Official Report* with interest.

The First Minister was seeking to put his stamp on the Government when he wanted to brand the Edinburgh International Conference Centre with a projection of his own image. I must warn the First Minister that there are young children living around Morrison Street in Edinburgh. Those children need to sleep at night and their parents were very relieved when his project did not happen.

The Parliament recognised the delay in the document with good grace and would have accepted it had the Executive proposed something different from what we had first expected, such as getting rid of the extension of the right to buy and the privatisation of trunk road maintenance. The vanity of projecting one's image on to a building pales into insignificance beside the Executive's decision to delay its programme for government—barely altering it—just so that it could be launched on its 100th day in office. That is vanity rather than statesmanship.

John Swinney and Phil Gallie made some important points on police numbers. It was also interesting to hear David McLetchie's comments on the Tory policy on care of the elderly and the threats of privatisation. That is another matter that we will pursue, to find out exactly what the Tories propose for our old folk. It was interesting to hear Mike Rumbles talk about reasons to be cheerful—as far as I remember that was a number by the late Ian Dury and the Blockheads.

Phil Gallie: Will Fiona Hyslop acknowledge the fact that the private sector is already highly involved in the care sector? Labour local authorities use private services all the time to supply care provision under their social work responsibilities.

Fiona Hyslop: I respect Phil Gallie's comments, but the way David McLetchie referred to the private sector seemed to indicate that the Conservatives want to develop it far further.

There is a commitment to social justice among members of the Labour party and the SNP. I listened with interest to Hugh Henry's comments

on the wonderful world of Paisley. Does he know how many of his constituents are among the 16,000 more children who are living in households on income levels below 70 per cent of average income? Under Labour, the number of children living in such households has increased. When Cathy Jamieson talks about the Executive's commitment to social justice, she should remember that it is delivering that commitment that is important. The Executive's own figures show that it has not delivered on child poverty.

Jackie Baillie: I do not know how to make it clearer to the SNP than do the figures in our annual social justice report, published last year, which show that we have lifted 70,000 children out of poverty. There is a huge task ahead of us and I am delighted at Fiona Hyslop's commitment to assist the coalition to deliver on that.

Fiona Hyslop: I want to end child poverty, but that demands action and delivering on commitments. The Executive's figure of 70,000 children relates to 1996-97 rather than to 1997-98. The change took place in the year before Labour came to power. The Labour Government has failed to deliver on child poverty.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member give way?

Fiona Hyslop: The minister has made her point and I want to move on.

Donald Gorrie made an important speech on the importance of the voluntary sector in delivering social justice, and the significance of core funding to the voluntary sector. Dennis Canavan talked about the Scottish Parliament being able to take a more enlightened approach. That was an important point. I would like to reassure Pauline McNeill that the revenue costs of the SNP's health policies, which she seems to welcome, are less than last year's NHS underspend.

Fergus Ewing and Alex Johnstone made important speeches on the rural dimension and the absence of substance in "Working together for Scotland". We must begin to talk about the problems of rural poverty. There have been references to social justice figures. We want to use statistics on improvements in social justice, but I should point out that the Executive has used the Department of Social Security report "Households Below Average Income" as its baseline. Are members aware that the report says:

"It should be noted that results for Scotland do not include people living north of the Caledonian Canal?"

That means that half the landmass of Scotland and about 175,000 people are excluded from the figures. We have heard about the poverty incomes of £5.76 a week and that is the reality that we should be discussing in today's debate.

The document does not represent a programme

for government—most of it is a programme for administration. Furthermore, it is a programme for the administration of decisions that have been taken elsewhere—by Europe or previous Governments, and that goes for Helen Liddell and her targets for computers in schools, too.

Having studied the programme for government, I realise that two things have been dumped. I wonder whether they are deliberate omissions. One is a pledge to tackle the problem of persistent reoffending. That pledge has disappeared, although I thought it was rather good. The pledge to train 5,000 new child care workers by 2002 has been removed. Was that considered a bad policy? I rather liked that pledge, too, but I suspect that it does not appear in the new document because there are only 11 months to go and the Executive has reached only a third of its target. Out of 157 pledges made by the Government, almost 60 per cent are either reannouncements, commitments from the previous programme for government or EU directives. There are 12 pledges on the environment, 11 of which are EU directives or reannouncements.

What has happened? On the empty homes initiative, the Executive is sorry, but it is not delivering its pledge of 900 such homes by 2000 because it turns out that that was a typographical error. Homelessness is at an all-time high. The number of homeless people currently living in temporary accommodation is higher than when the coalition first took office. That is what is happening under new Labour.

We want a Scotland that can embrace wider powers. There have been brief moments in which we have glimpsed what the Scottish Parliament can do when it acts in the collective public good. That is what Dennis Canavan meant about the Parliament's enlightened approach. As Margo MacDonald said, we can do so much more. We have the ideas, vision and passion. Independence and the use of the Scottish Parliament's full powers would mean a Government of substance, not just semantics. "Working together for Scotland" is a programme for administration, not government, and Scotland deserves better.

11:50

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice (Mr Jim Wallace): As the First Minister said at the outset of the debate, this Executive has delivered an impressive record and with this document we commit ourselves to a strong programme for the future. It provides more than just a snapshot of what the Executive has done for the people of Scotland: it covers the spectrum of the work that we believe is necessary to improve the lives of all the people of Scotland.

We have been fulfilling our promises and we are delivering. Margaret Smith was right when she said that one of the great benefits of a document such as this, or its forerunner, the first programme for government, is that it sets targets. If there are delays in meeting targets, I can assure the Parliament that ministers are conscious that the targets exist in the programme for government, and that is a goad for us to deliver. For example, in my area of responsibility, there have been delays in producing the draft bill for land reform. The explanation is the introduction of the crofting communities' right to buy. Nevertheless, there is an incentive for us to get on with the job.

It is unique for an Administration to allow itself to be examined and held to account, and it improves the quality of governance in this country.

Phil Gallie: Will the minister give way?

Mr Wallace: No, let me get into my speech.

I agree with John Swinney that this is a better sized document and that it is more convenient to carry. That said, I regret to say that that is about all that I agree with John Swinney on today. The Parliament will have noted with considerable disappointment the lack of any substance in the speeches of either of the Opposition leaders. John Swinney was so bereft of any criticism of this document that he was left to discuss its style at considerable length. He then launched into some lurid quotations, for which he even apologised in advance, about policy reviews. I take issue with that. My colleague Angus MacKay, who is not here, said that perhaps Mr Swinney was referring to his own party's policy review. If Angus were here, I would explain to him that a review requires a party actually to have policies.

Nicola Sturgeon *rose—*

Mr Wallace: With the noble exception of Nicola Sturgeon, the debate has been bereft of anything from the SNP that approximates to a policy. In her winding-up speech, Fiona Hyslop gave some grand slogans about what the SNP would like. Slogans, not policy, is the SNP that we have come to know.

Mr Swinney: The Deputy First Minister obviously does not read the newspapers and he obviously did not listen to my speech, because I listed a number of initiatives that the SNP has taken on policy questions, and I listed a number of initiatives that his ministerial department, which is bereft of any good ideas, has adopted from the SNP. Would he care to respond to the points that I raised about his failure to deliver the number of drug enforcement police officers that he promised in his 1999 programme for government? Let us have specific answers to specific questions, rather than this rant.

Mr Wallace: I will happily deal with the question about police numbers. There is a very good news story to tell on that.

Nicola Sturgeon referred to long-term care for the elderly. I confirm what the First Minister said on Monday. The problem with the SNP is that it would rather we did not make the commitments that we have made. It would rather go on trying to score party political points than accept and welcome the policy commitments that we have made.

For the Conservatives, Annabel Goldie gave an amusing winding-up speech, but it did not amount to much substance; it was an analysis of the photographs of each member of the Cabinet. The trouble with the Conservative party is that it does not get the big picture. Because it has so little to say about specifics, it concentrates on trivia. David McLetchie indulged in a few whinges, including his normal one about the Holyrood building. Anyone who reads the speeches of David McLetchie in this Parliament will be hard pushed to find one substantive policy commitment.

I know what this coalition is about, I think I know what the SNP's ambition for independence is, and sometimes I even get a glimpse of what William Hague is about, but the question for the Parliament is, what is the point of David McLetchie? He never makes a substantive contribution about what the Conservative party wants to do. I understand why the Conservative party is quiet about its policy intentions: we know that their cost is a cut of £16 billion in public expenditure across the UK. The Conservatives have said that that is a mistake, and that it should be £8 billion, but even £8 billion across the United Kingdom is a substantial cut. The Conservatives should come to this Parliament and be honest and say which cuts will take place in each of our constituencies if their spending cuts go through.

I am grateful for a number of positive contributions to this debate, for example that of Mike Rumbles, who referred to the health plan and free SCRO checks for volunteers who work with children, and Hugh Henry's comments on the Government's commitment to invest in education. Donald Gorrie alarmed me somewhat when he started by saying that he would make a loyal speech with some constructive suggestions. He was true to his word. He highlighted issues such as the need for a strategic review of funding of the voluntary sector, some of which we will have to address. The same is true for the important issue of alcohol misuse, and I confirm again the Executive's commitment to have a comprehensive review of liquor licensing law.

Pauline McNeill listed a number of our achievements, and in a powerful speech winding up for the Labour party, Cathy Jamieson

underlined the emphasis that this Parliament and Government place on our commitment to social justice. I welcome Margo MacDonald's acknowledgement of the personal commitment of the First Minister to the cause of social justice.

I take issue with Mike Russell, who said that there is no substance in this programme. In the social justice chapter of the programme, we talk about tackling the tough housing choices and what we must do to end rough sleeping in our community, to reduce homelessness and to tackle fuel poverty. If ever there were issues that mattered to people in need, they are those issues. This is a programme of substance, and a programme that we are intent on delivering.

Fiona Hyslop: Of course those are important issues, but homelessness under this coalition is at record levels. Temporary accommodation, the impact of which on children in particular is an important issue, is at record levels. What is the Executive delivering? Yes there is a commitment, but is the Executive doing?

Mr Wallace: The rate of rise in homelessness has slowed down, and in the third quarter homelessness was down. That shows that a trend that has been upward for some time, and which no one in this Parliament liked, is being turned round. We are making serious inroads in tackling rough sleeping.

Tommy Sheridan, who is not here, talked about fuel poverty. He begrudgingly accepted that we are going to provide central heating for Scotland's pensioners. He should not ignore the fact that in our first programme for government we committed ourselves to improve the insulation in 100,000 homes, particularly those of pensioners. The target date was 2003, but already that task has been completed in 40,000 homes.

The funding that is being made available by this Executive will increase police numbers to record levels. Phil Gallie is wrong to say that no account has been taken of training. The money that we put in place last year included money for the training college at Tulliallan, and it took account of the 200 officers who will go there for the Scottish Drugs Enforcement Agency. The SDEA was established only in the first half of last year. I am sure that John Swinney agrees that it would have been wrong to denude all local constabularies of their officers who are skilled in drug enforcement and put them into the SDEA all at once, but already in this financial year there are 100 police officers, and the resources are there for the 200 additional—

Mr Swinney: Will the minister give way?

Mr Wallace: No. I have answered the point and I have only one minute to go.

I reassure Alex Johnstone that we take the problems of farmers in less-favoured areas seriously. The fact that a safety net exists ensures that there is a period of time for some of the serious issues, which he is right to highlight, to be addressed. Ross Finnie has already set up a working group involving the National Farmers Union of Scotland and the Scottish Crofters Union to address some of these important issues.

In conclusion, I affirm the approach of this partnership Liberal Democrat-Labour coalition to what is best for the people of Scotland. Our Government is getting down to work to fulfil the hopes that so many have held for so long for this Parliament. It is not possible to achieve everything overnight, but with a stable Government we can make steady progress.

"Working together for Scotland" demonstrates the breadth of our achievement and ambition. As the First Minister said, the programme is not about aspirations; it is about putting aspirations into action. Our programme for government will make a real difference. We are working together for Scotland and I commend the motion to the Parliament.

Business Motion

12:00

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The next item of business is consideration of motion S1M-1605 in the name of Tom McCabe, setting out the business programme. Any member who wishes to oppose the motion should press their request-to-speak button.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees:

(a) the following revisions to the Business Motion agreed on 25 January 2001-

Thursday 1 February 2001

after Business Motion insert:

followed by Ministerial Statement on the Lockerbie Trial

and (b) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 7 February 2001

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Executive Debate on the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2001

followed by Executive Debate on the Criminal Justice and Police Bill – UK Legislation

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1478 Cathy Peattie: 2001: UN Year of Volunteering

Thursday 8 February 2001

9.30 am Green Party debate on Renewable Energy

followed by Scottish Socialist Party debate on the National Health Service

followed by Scottish Socialist Party debate on Local Authority Housing Capital Debt

followed by Scottish Socialist Party debate on the Abolition of Council Tax

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time

3.30 pm Stage 3 Debate on the Budget (Scotland) (No. 2) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1489 John Scott: Non-payment of Redundancy

Packages to Ailsa Troon Workers

Wednesday 14 February 2001

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Ministerial Statement

followed by Health and Community Care Committee Debate on its Report on the Delivery of Community Care in Scotland

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1569 Fiona Hyslop: Debt Advice and Debt Awareness Day

Thursday 15 February 2001

9.30 am Scottish National Party Business

followed by Ministerial Statement

followed by Business Motion

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time

3.30 pm Executive Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business—[Tavish Scott].

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I want to restrict my remarks to the three half-hour debates in the name of Mr Tommy Sheridan during non-Executive business on Thursday 8 February. This will be the first time three half-hour debates in non-Executive business time will have taken place and there is a danger that a precedent with further implications will be set. We have serious reservations because speeches from the back benches will be restricted; more than that, back benchers will be squeezed out.

I understand that there is nothing in the standing orders to prevent such arrangements. I therefore request that the subject be referred to the Procedures Committee, as such ordering of business seems to disadvantage back benchers substantially. However, despite our strong reservations, the Conservatives will not oppose the motion.

The Presiding Officer: I call Mr Scott to reply.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP) rose—

The Presiding Officer: Only one speech is permitted, I am afraid.

Tricia Marwick: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I understand that only one member may speak against the motion. However, I add my voice to what Lord James has said.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry—

Tricia Marwick: The SNP also has serious concerns that back benchers are being disadvantaged.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but speeches cannot take place on points of order.

The Deputy Minister for Parliament (Tavish Scott): I share the concern that Lord James has raised. I understand that the Parliamentary Bureau discussed the issue on Tuesday afternoon. The bureau would consider taking the issue to the Procedures Committee for a determination.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S1M-1605, in the name of Tom McCabe, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Lockerbie

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We come now to the Lord Advocate's statement on the Lockerbie trial. The Lord Advocate will take questions after the statement, so there should be no interventions during it.

12:02

The Lord Advocate (Colin Boyd): Presiding Officer, with your permission, I would like to make a statement on the end of the Lockerbie trial.

I am grateful to the Parliament for an opportunity to speak today, following the conviction of Mr Al Megrahi yesterday. I regret that I was unable to speak to the Parliament yesterday.

The Lockerbie disaster was something of a defining moment in Scottish history. It is one of those tragedies that anyone who is old enough to remember will never forget. Two hundred and fifty-nine passengers and crew aboard Pan-Am 103 were killed, along with 11 residents of the town of Lockerbie. We cannot begin to imagine the distress that that dreadful criminal act caused many family members. Our thoughts have been with them throughout the trial and its long preparations. I have been honoured to meet many family members in this country and in the United States, but especially at Camp Zeist.

It is appropriate that I should pay tribute to those who investigated the crime. They include successive chief constables of Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, senior investigating officers, and the many police officers—some now retired—from all the Scottish police forces, as well as from Northumbria constabulary and the Metropolitan police, who worked hard to investigate this most difficult of cases. It is only because of the painstaking search procedures that were put in place and carried out from the first days of the investigation that it was possible to make the breakthroughs that led the investigation to Malta, to the timer that detonated the bomb, and, ultimately, to the accused.

The inquiry was truly international. Many countries gave us unprecedented support. If I single out a small number, it is only because of the level of assistance that they gave. To the authorities of Malta, Germany, Switzerland and Sweden, and those of the many other countries that were involved, I wish to record my gratitude. I pay a special tribute to the United States. The plane was American and was on its way to America. The majority of those who were killed were American. The courts in the United States had jurisdiction to try the case. Accordingly, the investigation became a joint one. We co-operated

with the United States authorities in the preparations for the trial. I was especially pleased to have the assistance of Department of Justice attorneys before and during the trial.

Ours is a system in which prosecutors play an important role in major criminal investigations—never was there a case in which that was so clearly demonstrated. In any case of suspected homicide, the procurator fiscal must immediately be notified, and he or one of his deputies will attend the scene of crime and give directions to the police. In this case, the then procurator fiscal at Dumfries, Mr James MacDougall, established a temporary office alongside the police and remained there until January 1992, working full time on the investigations. He was assisted at different times by two experienced members of the procurator fiscal service, both of whom later played a very important part in the trial preparations.

When we first took office in 1997, Lord Hardie—the Lord Advocate—instructed that the evidence in the case be reviewed by an advocate depute to consider whether it stood the test of time and whether the case could be presented in a third country. It was clear, as previous Lord Advocates had concluded, that there was still a sufficiency of evidence. It was also becoming clear that there was no prospect of the accused being surrendered for trial in Scotland or in the United States. Accordingly, in consultation with—and with the consent of—the Lord Advocate, the United Kingdom and the United States Governments brought forward the initiative for trial in the Netherlands before a bench of Scottish judges.

When the initiative was launched, we started to prepare for a trial, senior Crown counsel were appointed and the team of three members of the procurator fiscal service engaged on the case at the time was increased to four. That formed the core team that met on a weekly basis, chaired by me, then the Solicitor-General. Later, when the accused were surrendered, junior counsel were brought into the team and seven other members of the procurator fiscal service, drawn from all over Scotland, were brought in to assist with the precognition of particular chapters of evidence. It was by far the largest team that the service had ever deployed in any one case. In this case, the Crown Office team discharged the traditional precognition role of the procurator fiscal and, in doing so, it employed the same values and professionalism that it uses week in, week out, in other cases across Scotland.

I wish to pay tribute to the dedication, professionalism and skill of the Scottish prosecution team, including both Crown counsel and procurator fiscal staff. I am proud of what they achieved in laying this complex case before the

court. The Crown Office worked closely with Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, which provided essential support to the team, especially during overseas inquiries. As had happened in the earlier investigation, officers from Strathclyde police and Lothian and Borders police were seconded into the police team.

I want also to pay tribute to the work of the Scottish Court Service and officials from the justice department. A tremendous amount of work was done in converting and adapting the facilities at Camp Zeist to provide secure prison and court accommodation, facilities for members of the families of the victims and accused and state-of-the-art facilities for the media. It is a remarkable tribute to the registrar of the Scottish Court Service, Gordon Beaton, and his team—supported greatly by the Dutch Department of Justice—that those facilities were ready for the start of the trial. The site required—and continues to require—police and prison officers, and we should recognise the important part that they are playing in the justice system at Zeist.

It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the verdict itself. However, the terms of Megrahi's conviction make it clear that he did not act alone. He has been convicted of committing murder while acting along with others and in furtherance of the purposes of the Libyan intelligence services. The question then arises whether it might be possible to bring further proceedings against those who are alleged to have been acting along with Megrahi. As in any case, proceedings can be brought against an individual only where there is a sufficiency of evidence linking him with the crime. In this case, we had a sufficiency of evidence against only two individuals. Before the trial, I said that we would consider the position against others once the trial was over. We will of course look carefully at the evidence and the judgment of the court, but my judgment at present is that there is insufficient evidence to justify further proceedings at this time. Clearly, if new evidence becomes available, we will reassess the position and, in doing so, I would want to continue to act in close co-operation with our American colleagues.

What are the lessons from the trial? I believe that there are many, but three immediately come to mind. The first is the general one that, where the international community stands together, those who commit the most atrocious acts can be brought to justice. In this case, that was facilitated because we were prepared to be flexible in our domestic procedures and set up a court in a third country, but we must also look to international forums such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the new international criminal court.

Secondly, we had to deal with a large number of

family members who sought information on the progress of the case and support during the trial. We were fortunate to have the services of the office of victims of crime, part of the US Department of Justice. A member of the procurator fiscal service was seconded to that office and worked closely with our American colleagues in providing advice, support and assistance to the victims. We will use that experience and the lessons from the case in the establishment of a victim liaison office as part of the Crown Office and procurator fiscal service.

Thirdly, we have learned much about the use of technology. Simultaneous transcripts were provided through the use of LiveNote, allowing counsel and judges to highlight text and make notes on a laptop as the case progressed. We also had to deal with a mountain of documentary productions. At an early stage, we decided that it would be impracticable to proceed on the traditional basis of using exclusively paper copies of documents. The court would quickly have become completely swamped, and the lawyers and judges would have had to carry round unmanageable quantities of paper. Accordingly, the Crown Office developed a system for scanning, retaining and viewing all the documents in the case. That enabled counsel to instruct that any document or image be brought up on the screens in court in seconds. It also meant that the lawyers could have easily portable access to every document in the case via laptop computers, and the judges were able to have similar access to every document that had been introduced in evidence.

The facilities, together with the simultaneous interpretation for the accused and for witnesses, shortened the length of what would otherwise have been an even longer trial. I believe that we have seen the future, at least for lengthy, complex trials.

The prosecution involved dealing with the most complex case in Scottish, and indeed British, legal history. The prosecution had 220 witnesses from 13 countries, including air traffic controllers, forensic scientists, police officers, hotel staff, airport workers, intelligence agents, a Northumberland housewife and a Maltese shopkeeper. Everything was done in a foreign country in the glare of international publicity.

Some said that the prosecution was flawed from the outset, but the prosecution demonstrated that there was a case to answer. As Lord Advocate, I am proud of what has been achieved by the Scottish prosecution service. As a whole, the Scottish criminal justice system has had to meet a formidable challenge in the glare of international scrutiny. I believe that we rose to the challenge and I record my thanks to all who were involved.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I hope, Presiding Officer, that you will give me, as the constituency member representing Lockerbie, a little bit of leeway.

I add my congratulations to those in Dumfries and Galloway constabulary on all the tremendous work that they did in bringing the case. I also pay tribute to the community of Lockerbie, which coped tremendously well, not only with the terrible and horrific event 12 years ago, but with all the repercussions and publicity that have gone on since then. I want to put that on record, because it has been a tremendous community.

My constituents want to move on to a future where Lockerbie is known for its potential and its location rather than for the tragedy that bears its name. Nevertheless, there are a number of unanswered questions. I would therefore like to ask the Lord Advocate how he and the Executive will be able to contribute to the UK Parliament's discussions on the feasibility of a public inquiry. I am aware that there is considerable interest in a public inquiry and I know that the issues surrounding that may be very complex.

The Lord Advocate: I join Dr Murray in her tribute to the town of Lockerbie. I led some of the witnesses from Lockerbie in the first couple of days of the trial and I know what an effort it was for them. I know something of what they went through at the time.

With regard to a public inquiry, some of the families met the Foreign Secretary in the middle of last month. I understand that he has listened to their concerns and is considering them with colleagues. I will meet some of the families later.

With regard to my remit, I have responsibility for bringing criminal prosecutions and for considering whether there should be a fatal accident inquiry. As the member knows, there has already been a fatal accident inquiry, so that option is not open. If I may say so, I believe that it is for the UK Government to consider whether there should be any further inquiries of the nature that has been suggested.

It is important to recognise that while some people express strong views on the nature of an inquiry, it would appear that not all families have the same agenda. In particular, the American families are focused on further criminal proceedings and on civil proceedings, which have been raised in the United States district court. It would appear that there is not unanimity of view about the best way forward, even among the relatives.

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I make a special tribute to the courage and persistence of all the bereaved families who, throughout the past 12 years, have worked tirelessly. In no small part,

they have been part of the process of getting us to where we are today. I join in the tributes being made to all those involved in the trial, from the local police officers, who would, of course, have been among the first on the scene, right through to the members of the legal teams, a number of whom are known personally to me and all of whom have worked extremely hard over a very long period.

I know that the Parliament will agree with all the tributes that have been made and with me when I say that this trial has shown the Scottish justice system to be robust and effective in the eyes of the world. A small jurisdiction it may be, but it can certainly stand proud in the international community. Despite the overwhelming international publicity and pressure, the three judges have steadfastly maintained their independence and have abided by the fundamental principle of our law, that it is the task of the prosecution to prove guilt, not the task of the accused to prove innocence. Sometimes, that can make things difficult in the eyes of the public, but it is extremely important.

I have two questions. First, I add my voice to the concern expressed by the local member that we do not close our minds to the idea of an inquiry in the future. I would like at least to hear from the Lord Advocate that, should there be an inquiry, he will pledge his full support and will indicate his intention to co-operate fully. That should be put on the record. Other questions need to be answered that cannot be answered in the context of a criminal trial.

Secondly, I was interested in the Lord Advocate's comments about the international criminal court. Does he agree that any such court would have to reassure the international community, as it was reassured in the Lockerbie trial, of its independence from political pressure, particularly the independence of its judges? Such a court would also have to establish rigorous rules of evidence that would be acceptable right across the board, which is something that might be more difficult in the doing than it is in the saying. I would appreciate the Lord Advocate's comments on how, from the Scottish perspective, some of that could be built into any future international criminal court.

The Lord Advocate: I will deal with Roseanna Cunningham's last point on the international criminal court first, if I may. I agree entirely with her that any court has to be seen to be independent. I believe that it is not just the judiciary, but the prosecution, that has to be seen to be independent. The United Kingdom Government was instrumental in ensuring, during the negotiations that produced the Treaty of Rome, which is the foundation of the international criminal court, that there was independence.

Independence is not just something that is written down; it requires people of integrity, honesty and independence of mind to make it a reality. I am sure that Roseanna Cunningham will agree that often the building of the independence is as important as what may be stated in a statute or in rules.

I would have to consider the terms of any inquiry and whether there was the prospect of further criminal proceedings. Having said that, if a decision were taken that there should be an inquiry, I would want to co-operate with it to the best of my ability while ensuring that it did not compromise the independence that I would have to protect, which Ms Cunningham talked about. With those caveats, if there were an inquiry, I would wish to be as positive as I could be towards it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Does the Lord Advocate accept that his leadership, along with the work of his team of prosecutors, in bringing the Lockerbie case to a successful conviction has brought great credit to Scotland's legal system and to our resolve that justice should not only be done but be seen to be done?

Can the Lord Advocate confirm that the meticulousness of the police in collecting all the evidence in Scotland was invaluable during the inquiries? Can he describe the procedures and time scale for the anticipated appeal? Finally, can he give the Parliament his own assessment as to the prospects of obtaining a generous compensation package from Libya for the families of the victims of this appalling tragedy?

The Lord Advocate: I thank Lord James Douglas-Hamilton for those comments. I can confirm that the case was finally solved as the result of a painstaking and methodical police investigation; I sometimes get the impression that many people have not appreciated the scope of the investigation. Vital pieces of evidence were taken from the countryside some considerable distance away from Lockerbie, including a charred piece of shirt, which contained within it a piece of what turned out to be the timer and part of an instruction manual for the radio into which the bomb had been packed.

A lady from Northumberland found a piece of the same instruction manual in her garden and alerted the police. That shows the scope of the police investigation and the public-spirited nature of the response to this awful crime.

Compensation is a matter for the United Kingdom Government and the negotiations that may follow in relation to the outcome of the trial. Formally, sanctions are still in place and it requires a resolution of the United Nations Security Council

for sanctions to be finally lifted. From what I have read in the press, it would appear that the UK and US Governments are keen to ensure that adequate compensation is paid. As I have mentioned, a civil action is proceeding against Libya in the United States.

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): I extend congratulations from the Liberal Democrat benches to the Lord Advocate and the many people, including the families, who brought about yesterday's conclusion at Camp Zeist. The nation can take quiet pride in the achievement of bringing to justice one of those involved in the foul conspiracy that killed everyone on board Pan-Am 103.

Should the facilities in the Netherlands be retained in case new evidence that could lead to further prosecutions becomes available? Furthermore, will prosecution evidence be made available for the civil proceedings that have been initiated in the US courts?

The Lord Advocate: On the first matter, the treaty with the Dutch provides that the court facilities revert to the Dutch once their immediate use is at an end—that is, once the trial and any appeal process have finished. It is therefore not open to us to keep the facilities for any future proceedings. In any event, as no such proceedings are currently contemplated, we would presumably have to mothball the facilities and pay for that mothballing. However, what might happen—although this is for others, not for me, to decide—is that some other judicial use might be found for the facilities by the international criminal court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. As I have mentioned appeals, I should have said in answer to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton that we will know within 14 days whether there will be an appeal.

As for the question of making prosecution evidence available, that evidence is currently lodged with the court; it would therefore be a matter for the court as to whether any evidence in its possession should be released for other purposes. We should also bear in mind the fact that, as a result of agreements with other countries, we are obliged to use evidence from those countries for the purpose of criminal proceedings, unless they give consent. There is nothing unusual about that; it is the normal basis upon which international co-operation for the recovery of evidence proceeds. We would have to wait until after the conclusion of any appeal proceedings before we turned our minds to the release of productions.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Does the Lord Advocate agree that the victims' relatives are entitled to know the whole truth, and that the trial raised many unanswered questions that might be

best addressed through a full judicial public inquiry? However, in view of reports that Downing Street has all but ruled out such an inquiry, can the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament order the setting-up of an inquiry with or without the permission of Downing Street?

The Lord Advocate: We would have to wait until we know the UK Government's conclusions about an inquiry. As I understand it, the families who have been pressing for an inquiry have focused on matters to do with security agencies and aviation security, both of which are reserved to the UK Government. As a result, it is for the UK Government to decide in the first place whether there will be an inquiry.

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank the Lord Advocate for his statement. Several members have referred to the possibility of a public inquiry. Should that inquiry take place and sufficient evidence become available, would the Crown Office consider it appropriate to undertake further prosecutions?

The Lord Advocate: A public inquiry is not an evidence-gathering exercise: it considers the evidence that is already available. I have stated that there is not sufficient evidence to justify further proceedings. If further evidence comes to light, we will investigate it, but the investigation is not a matter for a public inquiry; it must be pursued by the police and other investigative agencies.

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): I grew up in Lockerbie and have lived there for most of my life. I have therefore not found it easy to be objective in this matter. Most people do not have to contemplate the way in which their community would react to such a terrible tragedy but, as Dr Murray said, the response has been remarkable. People's first thoughts have always been for the relatives of the victims and of ways in which to assist those who have pursued this inquiry over the years.

As Dr Murray made clear, the community now wants to move on, although there is talk of other inquiries in other forums. I ask the Lord Advocate and the Executive to do what they can to ensure that as little attention as possible is focused on that community, as events move into the different forums, so that it can return to the normality and anonymity that it seeks.

The Lord Advocate: I understand the point that David Mundell makes. Yesterday, a great deal of media attention was focused on Lockerbie; unfortunately, that was something over which the Executive had no control. I am sure that the Parliament endorses the view that Lockerbie should now be allowed to get on with its life and, if possible, return to the type of community that it

was before this dreadful incident occurred.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): As a sometime procurator fiscal depute, I add my congratulations to the prosecuting team as well as my sympathy to the victims. I have two domestic issues to raise.

First, in recognition of what the Lord Advocate said about the experiences of the victims, will those experiences and a record of the incident be compiled in a report to the Parliament on the way forward in the Scottish context? Many lessons have been learned, and it is important that people's experiences are made use of.

Secondly, will procurator fiscal resources be freed up so that they can be deployed back to Scotland, where there has been some pressure on the service because of the demands of the Lockerbie trial?

The Lord Advocate: We must learn lessons from the way in which we have been able to deal with the victims. One of our full-time members was seconded for that purpose, and much of that experience is being put into the victim liaison office. I shall consider providing more information to the Parliament on the victim liaison office.

At one stage, almost a dozen procurators fiscal were working on the case. That number has been reduced to a core team of four, which will be scaled down further. Rather than the sheer numbers, the greatest problem has been the fact that it is the more experienced people who have been taken away from their ordinary duties. I am keen that the experienced people who gained further experience through the exercise get back into the service.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I would like to associate myself with the acknowledgement of the competence and compassion that were shown by our criminal justice system during the trial.

Dennis Canavan and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked about compensation and further investigation. The responses from the Lord Advocate show that, in a trial of this sort, the law and politics interface, and the judgment that Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi committed murder in conjunction with others in pursuance of the Libyan intelligence services' interests also suggests that it is difficult to disentangle the law from the politics of the case. Given the experience of Camp Zeist and the status that is now enjoyed by Scots law in terms of the credibility and independence of its judges, what opportunity exists for the Scottish legal system to shape directly the construction of the international criminal court?

The Lord Advocate: The impact will come over time: there is no defining moment. When people

from other jurisdictions whom I meet find out that I am involved in the Lockerbie trial, there is an immediate interest as the case resonates throughout the world. We can be sure that many people will have seen what happened yesterday and appreciated the worth of the Scottish criminal justice system and—I hope—the Crown Prosecution Service.

I do not know whether there will be a particular outcome in relation to the international criminal court. We have to think about raising the profile of Scots law and influencing the international criminal court in a number of ways, especially through the international forum. I went to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia two weeks ago and happened to be there when Mrs Biljana Plavsic was arraigned. I spoke to the president of the tribunal and the chief prosecutor, both of whom expressed great interest in my experience of the Lockerbie trial. We must work at that kind of contact and ensure that we use our experience for the greater international good.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I congratulate the Lord Advocate and those to whom he referred. He referred to the appeal process. Will he say something about the effect that an appeal might have on the Scottish judiciary and the system in Scotland?

The Lord Advocate: An appeal has to be lodged within 14 days of yesterday, so we will know quite quickly whether there is to be one. Grounds of appeal will be lodged and that will allow us to tell what the focus will be. Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi has the right to be present at any appeal. If he exercises that right, as I imagine he will want to, the appeal must be heard at Camp Zeist, where he will remain until any appeal has finished.

The appeal would be conducted before five judges and would have to wait until five judges could be got together and the cases were finally prepared. It is impossible for me to say at this stage when that might be—although it might be in the latter part of the year—and I cannot say how long the appeal might last because I do not know what the grounds of appeal are. However, the appeal will not be on the same scale as the trial. It is limited to legal issues, so it might take two or three weeks rather than months.

12:40

Meeting suspended until 14:30.

14:30

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Children's Diet (Fruit)

1. Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill)

(Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures are being taken to encourage local authorities to provide free fruit to pre-school and primary school pupils, in line with the initiative recently introduced to a number of schools by Glasgow City Council. (S10-2865)

The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Mr Jack McConnell): The Executive's recent provision of resources from its £100 million health improvement fund to all health boards prioritises work with their local partners, including local authorities, to support the provision of fruit for infants in pre-school settings and fruit and salad bars and breakfast clubs in schools.

Patricia Ferguson: Will the minister join me in congratulating Glasgow City Council on the initiative, which follows a previous initiative to provide children with breakfast at 9 am, before the primary school day starts. If successful, the pilot scheme will be rolled out to approximately 60,500 primary and pre-school children in Glasgow. Will the minister say what proposals the Executive has to develop that kind of initiative in the rest of Scotland?

Mr McConnell: It is for health boards and local authorities in each area to determine how to use the resources in their area. One of the best aspects of the Glasgow initiative is that both health board and local authority resources are behind it. In St Cuthbert's Primary School in the member's constituency and in many schools throughout Scotland, a considerable difference is being made not just to children's health but to their educational attainment by breakfast clubs and other healthy eating initiatives, which are to be welcomed and encouraged throughout Scotland.

Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister join me in endorsing the SNP policy commitment to provide free fruit for every primary school child in Scotland?

Mr McConnell: I would be delighted if Ms Robison would occasionally praise the local authorities and health boards throughout Scotland that are already undertaking such initiatives. If the SNP could find a way to fund some of its promises, I would be happy to welcome it on

board.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I congratulate the minister, local authorities and, particularly, the private sector on such pilot schemes with fruit. Will the minister agree that the humble Scotch pie should remain part of the nutritional balanced diet in Scottish schools, along with chips—which the SNP wants to ban.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Who ate all the pies, Brian?

Mr McConnell: Maybe Mr Monteith enjoys a pie on a Saturday afternoon at Easter Road. Although we can have some banter on the subject of pies, I stress that, in a country that has one of the worst health records in Europe and in which people's lifestyles must change, it is very important to encourage healthy eating among young people. They can enjoy traditional foods, but fruit and vegetables should be central to everyone's diet. I hope that the message that goes out today is that all schools should become involved in such initiatives.

Schools (Violence)

2. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to reduce violence in schools. (S10-2893)

The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Mr Jack McConnell): Any violence or abuse in Scotland's schools is unacceptable. Earlier this month, I set up a discipline task group to address indiscipline in schools. It will look at existing policies and consider how best to build on the good work that is already being carried out in this area. The task group is due to report by mid-June. It will consider violence and abuse against teachers as a specific issue.

Mr Stone: Parents have an important role in tackling the problem. Will the minister outline what steps the Executive is taking to involve parents?

Mr McConnell: There are a number of initiatives through the support for parents scheme, among others, to extend the involvement of parents in schools. We cannot stress enough the importance of the involvement not just of teachers, pupils, Government and local authorities, but of parents in initiatives to counter indiscipline, bullying and violence in schools. In particular, it is absolutely critical that parents set standards for their children at an early age to prevent such behaviour from developing. That issue will be part of the work of our task group.

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): Does the minister accept that demanding a reduction of a third in the number of exclusions

from school could expose teachers to more violence?

Mr McConnell: I certainly hope that that would not be the case. One of the clearly stated reasons for setting up the task group is to try to ensure that there is no contradiction between different policy initiatives. Yes, we want to reduce the number of exclusions from schools—children should be in school, learning, rather than on the streets. At the same time, that policy should not create further problems in the classroom.

Only yesterday, I was in St Paul's secondary school in Pollok in Glasgow, where an excellent initiative has, using money from the anti-exclusion fund, ensured that young people who in the past would have been on the streets of Pollok because of their behaviour are in the school, learning new forms of behaviour and becoming better adults as a result. That is good news for Scotland.

East of Scotland Water

3. Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it plans to take following the personal letter issued by East of Scotland Water authority to every employee regarding reductions in the number of staff over the next five years and what staff reductions there will be over the next three years and five years. (S10-2869)

The Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture (Mr Sam Galbraith): None. It is the responsibility of the water authorities to take the action necessary to improve their efficiency and to provide value for money for customers.

Tommy Sheridan: I am disappointed by the minister's reply. My question asked for action from the Executive. The workers who deliver our water and sewerage services believe that the industry is in severe danger. Those workers deserve action from the Executive, rather than just words. They deserve action to protect jobs, to ensure public safety and to prevent the privatisation of our water. Unison believes that 2,000 jobs are under threat. Does the minister agree that competition in our water and sewerage industry threatens jobs, public safety and the public ownership of the industry? Will he use his powers to approach the Secretary of State for Scotland to argue for the exclusion of Scotland's public water and sewerage services from competition regulations?

Mr Galbraith: Once again, Mr Sheridan has no idea what he is talking about. It is true that the water industry is experiencing some problems, but those will be even greater if it does not achieve the necessary efficiencies. It would be helpful if, rather than always taking the view of vested interests and prattling on using outdated ideological dogma, Mr Sheridan considered the service and the

people who have to use that service.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Is the minister aware of any comparable plans to cut jobs in the West of Scotland Water authority?

Mr Galbraith: As I said, those are matters for the water authorities. If the member would like to speak to WSW, I am sure that the authority would be more than happy to deal with his inquiry.

The water industry must become more efficient. We should consider the service and stop obsessing about the producer agenda. We should focus on the service that is provided for the people who pay the bills. Those are the people whom it is important to consider. Those are the people for whom the Labour party stands.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): Perhaps I should declare an interest as a member of Unison, the largest trade union involved in the water industry. Does the minister agree that the most important issue is the retention of our water industry in public ownership and that the current huge investment in Scotland's water and sewerage infrastructure is vital if we are to ensure that the public sector can compete effectively with the private sector?

Mr Galbraith: Yes. I have said repeatedly that there is no possibility whatever of the Government privatising Scottish water. However, the industry must become more efficient. I pay tribute to all those workers in the industry who have played their part in improving its efficiency. Let us remember that we must deliver services to individuals within society. We should concern ourselves with the service and its quality, rather than get hung up on vested interests and outdated political ideology.

Drug Misuse

4. Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making in encouraging local authorities to provide three-year funding packages for drug misuse organisations and projects and in promoting the availability of social inclusion partnership money for such purposes where it is available. (S10-2874)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Iain Gray): Decisions on the funding of drugs work at local level rest with local authorities and other key bodies such as health boards and social inclusion partnerships. In general, the Scottish Executive is committed to three-year funding for voluntary organisations, and we are keen to work with other funders to provide a stable funding environment for the sector. Those principles were set out in the Scottish compact good practice guides, which were published last June.

Mr Raffan: Does the minister agree that it is unacceptable that organisations such as the Drug and Alcohol Project Levenmouth—which the chairman of the Fife drugs action team said was superb and doing a valuable job—have to do their job not knowing whether they will receive core funding from one year to another? Can the minister explain why, when the Executive is increasing resources to tackle drugs misuse, so many drugs organisations and projects like the one that I have mentioned are facing either cuts or a standstill budget? Why is the money not feeding through?

Iain Gray: Three-year funding for voluntary organisations, such as the Levenmouth project that Keith Raffan referred to, is desirable; I repeat that it is our wish to provide such funding. That is precisely why over next year and the following two years we not only have provided unprecedented resources for that kind of work in drugs treatment, prevention and rehabilitation, but have done so over the three years so that drugs action teams can take the kinds of decisions that will allow organisations such as DAPL to know what their future is. I hope that that will happen in the three years to come.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Would the minister care to comment on the fact that in Aberdeenshire, which is run by the Liberal Democrats, the greatly respected anti-drugs group Grampian Addiction Problem Services has had its local authority funding cut completely, never mind having its funding rolled forward in a three-year programme? How does the minister feel about that? Will he condemn Aberdeenshire Council for doing that, when we need support for our voluntary organisations in this field?

Iain Gray: It is the responsibility of the drugs action team in Aberdeenshire to take decisions on how it invests in the voluntary sector to deliver our drugs strategy and we expect the DAT to explain to us how it plans to do that. However, the decisions that are taken on where funding goes are properly taken locally and on the ground, where people know and understand the organisations and the problems that they face.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Can the minister give some detail on the programme for drugs education for school pupils and assure the Parliament that all schools will provide drugs education to every pupil by the target date of 2002, as indicated in the programme for government?

Iain Gray: It is only a week since my colleague Nicol Stephen launched the schools drug safety team report, which will play a significant role in improving the quality of educational and preventive drug strategies in schools. I am confident, as is the First Minister—a point that he

made in the debate this morning—that we will soon achieve, certainly by 2002, proper and appropriate drugs education for every one of our children, who are the future of this country. Indeed, in the next few days, when we announce the allocations from the £100 million over the next three years for this kind of work, members can be assured that there will be resources to make sure that that happens.

Sustainable Development (Ministerial Meetings)

5. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive when the ministerial group on sustainable Scotland was last convened and what was discussed. (S10-2895)

The Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture (Mr Sam Galbraith): The ministerial group on sustainable Scotland last met on 7 November 2000. At that meeting, we discussed the promotion of renewable energy and the proposed changes to the Scottish building standards on the conservation of fuel and power.

Robin Harper: Does the minister intend the group to carry out or initiate an audit of the programme for government in relation to environmentally sustainable development?

Mr Galbraith: No, we do not have that in our current programme. However, given the member's representation, I will consider it.

Waste Water Treatment

6. Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will ensure that there are adequate systems in place so that there is an effective response to any emergencies that arise at new waste water treatment plants once they are operational. (S10-2886)

The Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture (Mr Sam Galbraith): Under the Security and Emergency Measures (Water and Sewerage Authorities) (Scotland) Direction 1998, water authorities have the responsibility to plan for emergencies at existing and new works.

Richard Lochhead: Is the minister aware that the new waste water plants in the north-east of Scotland are being built and will be operated by Yorkshire Water under the guise of Aberdeen Environmental Services? Safety at those plants will therefore be in the hands of private water companies based in the south of England. Will he now confirm that, contrary to his comments this afternoon, Scotland's water industry is being privatised by the new Labour Government?

Mr Galbraith: I do not know what the Opposition's problem is and how many times I

have to say that the Scottish water industry will not be privatised. The nationalists should be privatised—they seem to think that the water industry should remain in aspic and not change or move forward. They are luddites. It is no wonder that they were opposed to computers in schools. This is just another example of their luddite attitudes.

Railways

7. Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures are in place to prevent trespassing and vandalism on rail embankments and lines. (S10-2900)

The Minister for Transport (Sarah Boyack): The prevention of vandalism and trespassing on the railway is the responsibility of the railway industry and the British Transport Police. However, the Executive is committed to working in partnership with the rail industry and the British Transport Police to support the initiatives and campaigns that are being promoted.

Lewis Macdonald: I welcome the minister's partnership approach. Is she aware that it is all too easy in several places in the city of Aberdeen for children and adults to obtain access to the railway line, particularly where it runs between the communities of Tillydrone and Fersands in my constituency? Will she give a commitment to visit that rail embankment when she next comes to Aberdeen, to see for herself the work that needs to be done to make that area safe for the people who live there and for those who travel and work on the trains?

Sarah Boyack: I am happy to tell the member that I intend to visit Aberdeen shortly, when I will meet representatives of the north-east of Scotland economic development partnership. I will be happy to take the member up on his offer, to ensure that we examine the partnership work on railway safety that is being carried out throughout Scotland, and particularly in his constituency.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): I point out to the minister that vandalism is not restricted to the railway lines. Many stations that are unmanned of an evening, such as Stonehaven station, are regularly targeted. What initiative is the minister prepared to take on that, especially as Stonehaven station received central funding for its recent upgrade?

Sarah Boyack: I am well aware that personal safety, as much as safety on the rails, is a critical issue for passengers and train drivers. The Executive is committed to working with the industry so that closed-circuit television is spread throughout the country. Many stations that do not have staff at night now have CCTV. People who

use the railways can be assured that staff are monitoring those stations with CCTV at all times. Help buttons are also available. We want to extend such provision throughout Scotland. That is work in progress.

Scottish Prison Service (Meetings)

8. Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when ministers last met the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service. (S10-2868)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice (Mr Jim Wallace): I meet the chief executive or his senior staff frequently. The most recent meeting was on Friday 26 January.

Michael Matheson: Is the Minister for Justice aware of the way in which the Scottish Prison Service has tried to mislead the public and politicians about the true cost per prisoner of the private prison at Kilmarnock? The service tells us that the cost is £11,000 per prisoner. A parliamentary answer from the Minister for Justice says that the cost is £21,000. Now we have a leaked document from the Scottish Prison Service that says that the cost is £26,000. As the minister who is responsible for justice and for freedom of information, will Mr Wallace ensure that the proper information on the costs of Kilmarnock prison is placed in the public domain, so that the public can decide whether private prisons are appropriate?

Mr Wallace: The figure of £11,000 per annum per prisoner place at Kilmarnock prison is explained by the fact that that is the net present value of the contract for design, construction, finance and operation of the prison over 25 years. I accept Mr Matheson's point that it is important that the basis of that calculation is made clear. That is why it is part of the estates review, which, when published, will include the options for proper public debate.

We have asked independent accountants to evaluate the figures that will be contained in the review. That will allow us to have a proper discussion and compare apples with apples. I am aware that the concerns that Mr Matheson raises have been a feature of the debate. We will be able to put them to one side when we compare like with like. We hope that the independent valuation will achieve that.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): The minister may be aware that I wrote to him this week about changes in prison officers' conditions of service. I wonder whether the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service has made the Executive aware of changes in absence management that have been introduced retrospectively over 12 months. They penalise workers disproportionately for short periods of

absence. Does the minister share my concern that that may constitute sexual discrimination, as, statistically, women are absent from work more frequently than men?

Mr Wallace: I have not yet seen Dr Murray's letter. The matters that she raises are operational matters for the Scottish Prison Service. However, when I met the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service on Friday, other senior officials and the trade union side of the service were also at the meeting. A number of issues were thoroughly debated in my presence.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Is the minister aware that morale among prison officers is very low because of the autocratic attitude of the chief executive, who is trying to impose unilateral changes such as staff cuts, a reduction in the number of promoted posts and new attendance patterns? Will the minister tell the chief executive that such deplorable industrial relations will not be tolerated and that he must enter into genuine negotiations with the Prison Officers Association?

Mr Wallace: Attendance patterns were discussed at the meeting that I referred to. I encouraged discussion to take place between management and the trade union side in a spirit of partnership—that principle was accepted by both sides. I accept that there is some uncertainty because of the estates review. Uncertainty does not help morale, which is why we wish to make progress on the issue. Members will agree that there are important decisions to be made and that it is important that the Parliament, especially the justice committees, have an opportunity to discuss all the issues—that is why we want to present the options as soon as possible.

Abercorn Primary School

9. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will make public immediately the contents of the recent Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools report on Abercorn Primary School in West Lothian. (S1O-2880)

The Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Nicol Stephen): As Lord James will be aware from his experience in these matters, it is normal practice for ministers to seek the views of Her Majesty's inspectors when we are required to consider a local authority request for a school closure. That is the case in relation to Abercorn Primary School. The views of HMI do not constitute a formal report in these situations. The information provided to ministers by HMI has not historically been made public.

Lord Douglas-Hamilton: Is the minister aware that not only is Abercorn school an extremely popular school, with high standards, but it is

strongly supported by the parents and the local community? Will he bear it in mind that those people would very much welcome the assessment being made publicly available, because they believe that that would be in the public interest?

Nicol Stephen: I am aware of the views of parents and others; indeed, Lord James had a worthwhile members' debate in the chamber on 13 December, when many issues relating to the proposed closure were properly discussed. It would be wholly wrong and inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of the proposal at this stage. Suffice it to say that, in due course and as early as possible, a decision will be announced by the Scottish Executive. With that decision, we will summarise the main points that were considered in arriving at the decision—whatever that decision is.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I welcome some other West Lothian children to the gallery, from Inveralmond High School. Will the minister congratulate West Lothian Council on building a brand-new school at Bridgend—a school that will cater for the children of Abercorn and will give them increased educational opportunities? Will he comment on how many new schools he thinks we are likely to build if the Parliament and local authorities have to take their share of the Tories' £16 billion cuts?

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The last bit of the question is not in order, but the first bit is.

Nicol Stephen: I am pleased to congratulate any local authority that is investing in the expansion and modernisation of education facilities, but I do not want to get drawn into the detail of the issues surrounding Abercorn Primary School, as that would be inappropriate while the matter is formally before ministers for consideration.

Chhokar Inquiries

10. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I welcome to the Parliament the new Minister of State in the Scotland Office, George Foulkes, and his parliamentary private secretary, who are in the gallery.

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to reconsider its decision that the inquiries into the Chhokar case be held in private. (S1O-2902)

The Solicitor General for Scotland (Neil Davidson): The answer is no. The Scottish Executive remains of the view that those independent inquiries are the best way to proceed.

Phil Gallie: Is it the case that there are now no outstanding matters sub judice in the Chhokar

case? Given the words of ministers this morning with respect to openness, is not it time to recognise that a full and open public inquiry should be established in this case?

The Solicitor General for Scotland: As both inquiries commenced before Christmas, surely Mr Gallie will agree that they should be allowed to proceed to ascertain the facts underlying the difficult situation for the Chhokar family.

Trunk Roads (Maintenance)

11. Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has in place for the maintenance of trunk roads from April 2001. (S10-2876)

The Minister for Transport (Sarah Boyack): I announced the successful bidders to the tendering process last week and I made it clear in the debate in the chamber last Thursday that, before awarding the contracts for the work, Scottish ministers would consider the audit report that I commissioned last week in response to the widespread concerns that had been raised. I expect to receive the audit report shortly.

Mr Home Robertson: I am sure that we all want to achieve the best possible value for taxpayers' money, but does Sarah Boyack accept that there are extremely serious doubts as to whether her officials have made fair comparisons in their assessment of those tenders? [*Applause.*] Does she accept that the review that she has rightly initiated must take account of all relevant factors, including the experience of rural areas such as East Lothian and the issue of responsibility for local roads? Will the Executive accept the unanimous view of the Parliament, which was made abundantly clear last Thursday? I remind the minister that she is not under any legal obligation to accept any of the tenders that have been tabled. [*Applause.*]

Sarah Boyack: I reiterate once again how disappointed I am, particularly as a Labour minister, that there was such a huge gap between the winning and losing bids. I am fully aware of the implications of that for local authorities and I note that there are many local authority representatives in the public gallery this afternoon, who have been meeting members. As Minister for Transport, I have the responsibility to ensure that all the tenderers are treated fairly and properly. We have audited the majority of the process that we have been through thus far and, before we move forward to contracts, we will look at the last part of the audit, which I spoke about in the chamber last week.

The process has been thoroughly scrutinised, and I expect further scrutiny in the weeks ahead. We are where we are and the existing contracts

expire on 31 March. Extension is not an option and we now have to take the process forward within the law. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. Before I call any more members to ask questions, I remind people in the public gallery that, although they are welcome to be here, they may not express approval or disapproval. I call Bruce Crawford.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I thank councillors and council leaders from all over Scotland for being here today to lobby the Parliament. Last week, during the SNP-initiated debate, Sarah Boyack said that it would be a breach of European Union rules for the tendering process to be suspended. Will she tell us why her view is superior to that of local authority solicitors, who are absolutely clear in their opinion that there is no such requirement? Does not the minister agree that her legal reasons are just an excuse for the lack of political will to ensure that justice and fairness are brought to the flawed tendering process? Even at this late hour, will not she see sense and stop the signing of the contracts pending the outcome of the Transport and the Environment Committee inquiry? This is this lady's chance to show that she is for turning.

Sarah Boyack: As a minister, I have to receive and consider the legal advice that I get and I then have to act within it, as do all Scottish ministers.

Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con): After audit, if the contracts are placed with the contractors who have, provisionally, been successful, does the Executive intend to share the savings that it believes can be made with local authorities through a resource transfer? That would allow those authorities to be compensated for any consequent redundancy payments, for the costs of redundant or superfluous vehicles, equipment and plant, and for the additional operating costs of providing maintenance, particularly winter maintenance, on those stretches of road that hitherto have been maintained on an integrated basis. It would also ensure that local authorities can continue to provide services economically in the future.

Sarah Boyack: I point out to Murray Tosh that this year's local government settlement included an additional £70 million for local authority roads and maintenance, in particular for roads and bridges. Local authority direct labour organisations will also be able to tender for work worth £150,000 or more. On his substantive point, any money that we are able to release through the process will be invested in vital services across Scotland.

Mr John Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): I am sure that the minister is well aware of the anxiety that has been expressed throughout Scotland by people who fear losing

their jobs because of the recent decision. My area of the Highlands is geographically equivalent to Wales. If she were to suggest that a private contractor could look after every piece of road in Wales, people would tell her that her suggestion was absurd. The suggestion that has been made about the roads in Scotland is equally absurd.

I would like to pose a question—

The Presiding Officer: I would like you to pose one, too.

Mr Munro: I understand that the cost of the Caledonian Roads north-west bid for the five-year period has been reduced by some £7 million to approximately £90 million. Is the minister prepared to reveal the true cost of the preferred bidder and will it provide best value for the Highland public?

Sarah Boyack: I am keen that we should be able to give as much information to members as possible. When the process comes to a conclusion, that is exactly what I intend to do. We are looking to see how much information can be revealed about each bidder, within the commercial confidence procedures that we operate, so that the maximum amount of information is available to members.

Class Sizes (Primary Schools)

12. Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what average class size in primary schools will be achieved by 2003. (S10-2871)

The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Mr Jack McConnell): We cannot accurately project average class sizes for primary schools in 2003, but we would expect the average class size to remain at just under 25.

Michael Russell: I am surprised that the minister cannot project class sizes, as his figures until now have been projected. Does he accept that achievement of the target of under 30 has gone slower than the Executive expected, as indicated in the programme for government? Does he also accept that a great deal of current research shows that there is very little difference between class sizes of 25 and 30? Will he be more ambitious for Scotland's schools, starting by getting more accurate figures, so that we know where he is going?

Mr McConnell: Mr Russell has misunderstood not only the programme for government, but his own question. His question asks about average class sizes for primary schools. The programme for government refers to maximum class sizes for primary 1, 2 and 3. We will reach the target, which is for primary school class sizes in those years to be under 30 by August 2001. We will also have a pupil-teacher ratio of 15:1 by the middle of 2002.

Those are considerable achievements, which have involved a lot of investment and a lot of hard work by primary school teachers across Scotland. Teachers should be given credit for that, rather than being criticised in error.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I would never attempt to teach an education minister how many beans make five—not one who is an ex-maths teacher anyway. I appreciate that there may be a difference of educational opinion on what constitutes a reasonable or the optimum size for a primary school class, but it is agreed across the teaching profession that, although the minister has introduced some hope of an improvement in teaching and employment conditions—conduct and so on—he still has not got it right. Far too much of primary teachers' time will be taken up preparing lessons, rather than being in the classroom. How does the minister mean to reduce that?

Mr McConnell: I am delighted to reiterate to the chamber that the agreement we reached with the teaching unions and the local authorities last month includes a provision for the class contact time for primary teachers to be reduced to the same level as secondary school teachers. For the first time in the history of the Scottish education system, primary school teachers and secondary school teachers will be treated as equal citizens and human beings.

That is a good thing for both systems. It will ensure that primary school teachers have the right amount of time to prepare for the high-quality work that they are currently doing with their classes right across Scotland. I am sure that Margo MacDonald will be among the first to welcome that.

People's Juries

13. Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what criteria are considered when establishing people's juries. (S10-2890)

The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie): The Executive's publication "Using People's Juries in Social Inclusion Partnerships" sets out the main considerations and principles that SIPs should address when deciding to hold a people's jury.

Mr Gibson: I thank the minister for her answer. Does she accept the findings of her central research unit, which has condemned people's juries as "expensive and time-consuming" and unreliable. Does she further agree with the unit that the findings of people's juries are often worthless and cannot guarantee a representative sample of views? Will she take the opportunity to acknowledge that this initiative of her predecessor

has been a costly failure?

Jackie Baillie: Dear, dear. As ever, we have a series of misquotes from the SNP. People's juries are not a failure. The report that was carried out was an assessment of a whole range of tools to test community opinion. Our perspective is about empowering communities and engaging them in shaping and developing policy. We want to bring about real change, which is shaped by local people and creates empowered communities. I regret that the SNP does not know a great deal about that.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Rather than going along with the gloom and doom that has yet again come from the SNP, does the minister agree that the people's juries that have taken place in the pilot projects—including one in my constituency of Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley—have given people an opportunity to meet the policy makers and give feedback to their local authorities, MSPs and MP at Westminster? That is a positive development, which should be continued.

Jackie Baillie: I am happy to welcome the experiences in the pilots in East Ayrshire and Aberdeen. In addition, Glasgow carried out a city-wide drugs jury. The information that we gleaned from people that are able to have an in-depth consideration of the issues has been informative in shaping policy for the better for those people in their communities in the future.

Rough Sleepers Initiative

14. Fiona Hyslop (SNP) (Lothians): To ask the Scottish Executive what percentage of the rough sleepers initiative budget for 2000 has been spent rather than allocated. (S1O-2879)

The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie): At 26 January, 48 per cent of the rough sleepers initiative funding allocated for the financial year 2000-01 had been drawn down by local authorities and others.

Fiona Hyslop: If the minister is saying that less than half of the rough sleepers initiative budget is being drawn down, I think that is a disgrace. If she recognises the problems, especially in Edinburgh, will she take action to ensure that local authorities—especially the Labour ones in Edinburgh—spend the money?

She will be aware that Castle Cliff, barely 100 yards from the chamber, would make ideal facilities for hostel provision. Will she make representation to her Labour colleagues in the City of Edinburgh Council—and specifically the council's spokesperson on equal opportunities—to ensure that homeless people in Edinburgh get the facilities that they deserve?

Jackie Baillie: I will deal with the more general part of Fiona Hyslop's question first. The majority of funding through the rough sleepers initiative is revenue based, so it is drawn down after the revenue has been expended. It is not drawn down in advance of need, so Fiona Hyslop will find that a substantial amount is still to be drawn down for the last quarter.

Secondly, I will deal specifically with the difficulties in Edinburgh. There was Victorian accommodation in the city, where people were living in appalling conditions. It is right that improvements should be made. The Executive and the rough sleepers advisory group have had discussions with the City of Edinburgh Council, which is now on track to increase the level of accommodation available: temporary provision is being put in place in February with two permanent facilities following on track before the end of the year.

First Minister's Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): To ask the First Minister when he last met the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues were discussed. (S1F-814)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): I understand that Phil Gallie might not have wanted to extend a welcome to Sandra Osborne because of their political history. However, I think that the chamber should extend that welcome, as well as congratulate George Foulkes on his appointment as minister of state. *[Applause.]*

In answer to John Swinney, I speak regularly to the Secretary of State for Scotland and we have plans to meet in the next few days.

Mr Swinney: I thank the First Minister for his answer. On Monday, I was very pleased to hear the First Minister's crystal-clear commitment and cast-iron determination to pay for the personal care costs of all elderly people in Scotland. Will he now, in front of Parliament, provide a clear definition of what he means by personal care?

The First Minister: At least the issue raised by Mr Swinney this week comes as no surprise to me.

Let me be very concise: the Executive could not be clearer about its way forward. Everyone recognises the need for clarity. The development group's remit is explicit, and the group is the best place to consider all the complicated issues surrounding free personal care. It is sad that, despite endless coverage last week and the debate this morning, the SNP cannot accept that the Parliament has made a decision and will deliver the commitments made in last Thursday's discussions and decision.

Mr Swinney: One of the First Minister's difficulties is that he cannot provide clarity when asked to do so. On Monday, the First Minister said:

"We are embracing the principles of Sutherland in full."

The Sutherland commission contains a definition of personal care, which includes help with bathing and washing; help with eating and drinking; and managing incontinence, immobility and medication. I presume that, from his answer, the First Minister has welshed on that commitment by supporting a remit for the development group which includes the need to bring forward a clear definition of what is meant by personal care. Why

does the First Minister not stick to his guns of Monday and stop being dragged around by the Minister for Health and Community Care?

The First Minister: The chamber should forgive my wry smile. This is an extraordinarily serious issue for the 940,000 older people in Scotland that this Parliament purports to serve.

John Swinney is fast becoming the Victor Meldrew of Scottish politics. The SNP supposedly campaigns on behalf of Scotland's older people, but when we deliver lock, stock and barrel, he says, "I can't believe it." Let us have a rehearsal for the 15th time. I am sure that some of our colleagues sitting in the press gallery will be saying, "Well, we've published a fair bit about this and if McLeish's position is unclear, it must only be so to the members on the SNP benches." I will simply say that the faces of the nationalists visibly drained last week when our announcement was made. We believe that what we—not the SNP—are doing is in the interests of the Scottish people.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. When will the First Minister realise that when he answers questions, he should do so to the chamber, not to his back benchers? We cannot hear what he is saying.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Well, the First Minister has two microphones, so he has a slight advantage over the rest of us. He is all right.

The First Minister: I am quite happy to waste some time repeating my answer and looking straight into the eyes of the member.

Last week, the SNP was very worried about a very historic and important announcement that we were going to make. This morning, the Conservatives muddled the waters. David McLetchie, who had clearly been speaking to William Hague, was at least honest enough to say that he quite liked the idea of free personal care for all, as long as he could go along to the financial services sector in Edinburgh to find out whether it would want to invest. The Tories' position is confused and the SNP is being as cynical as ever. However, the coalition's position is quite clear. We have set up the development group. Let it report, and let this Parliament take decisions about the welfare of older people in this country.

Mr Swinney: Well, the First Minister has triumphed today. He had two shots at the same question, and failed both times. Why does he not stick to what he told the country on Monday, which was that he would fully implement the Sutherland report, which contains a definition of personal care? When will he stop vacillating, extending the time scale and misleading the elderly people of Scotland and tell his development group to get on

with the implementation of Sutherland's recommendations instead of talking about them even more? When will we get the commitment from the First Minister to live up to his expectations?

The First Minister: When I rise to the lectern and see that my colleagues are nodding, that suggests that the SNP—[MEMBERS: "Answer."] SNP members are saying, "Answer." John Swinney said, "You made it clear on Monday; make it clear again." The simple point is this: if John Swinney cannot acknowledge what we have said and what we have committed ourselves to, the SNP are playing naked politics with the welfare of older people.

I suggest to John Swinney that he speak to Alzheimer Scotland, Age Concern Scotland, Help the Aged and every group in the community that thinks that the Parliament has taken a courageous decision to progress sensibly and responsibly, considering all the costs and implications. It is clear that the Parliament is united. The only people who cannot stomach the decision are SNP members, who are simply being cynical.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, when a question has been asked, it is courteous to listen to the answer.

Cabinet (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): To ask the First Minister when the Scottish Executive's Cabinet will next meet and what issues will be discussed. (S1F-813)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): The Cabinet will next meet on Tuesday 6 February and will discuss issues of importance to the Executive and to the people of Scotland.

David McLetchie: I thank the First Minister for that answer. No doubt, the Cabinet will consider the financial implications of some of the recent spending commitments that have been made by the First Minister. Before I address those, I suggest that, instead of trying to distort my remarks, it might help if, now and again, he clarified his own.

Over the new year, I noticed that the First Minister has become the patron of a pro-Europe campaign—a fact of which he is proud. Instead of squandering millions of pounds of taxpayers' money in attempting to abolish the pound, why does he not use that money to fund his apparent commitment to providing free personal care for our old people?

The First Minister: Forgive me for looking a bit agonised, Sir David, but when David McLetchie stands to speak I am often unsure which question to answer. Is this a question on Europe? Is it a

question on prudent finances? Is it a question on Sutherland? Let me make a point that may cover all those. We are considering prudent finance—I am sure that David McLetchie would agree with that. We want to ensure that there were no empty promises to the teachers, to those requiring long-term care or to students over tuition fees.

If we say that we will move on an area, we will look sensibly for the resources to do so. That is why the Minister for Finance and Local Government has been charged with leading a budget review group that will ensure that, if we decide on new priorities in the context of a Scottish Government, we will deliver. That is sensible, serious politics. I am sure that Tory philosophy would agree with that.

David McLetchie: Indeed, I do. That is why I have come up with a helpful suggestion to assist the First Minister in his search for savings. Instead of spending millions of pounds of public money at the levels of central and local government, trying to scrap our currency in favour of the euro, why does he not use that money to improve public services? Given that 70 per cent of the people in this country have today indicated their opposition to Britain's joining the euro, does he not think it a ridiculous waste of taxpayers' money to campaign and spend public money on scrapping the pound—money that could otherwise be spent on our schools, hospitals and older people?

The First Minister: At last we have flushed out the real issue—the Tories' extreme obsession with Europe. Whether one is for or against Europe, is it not in the interests of the Scottish community—especially the business community—to have a sensible debate, and for the Government in Scotland and Westminster to ensure that, if the people decide that the country should join the euro, there is preparation and planning to make that decision sensible?

When nearly 360,000 jobs in Scotland are dependent on the European dimension, even extremists such as the Conservatives must face up to the reality that Europe exists and that the currency debate will continue. All I ask of David McLetchie is that he conduct a balanced debate in Scotland. Every side should have a chance to put forward their views and we should not close down the debate. I utterly and totally reject the suggestion that the Government is wasting money.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): On spending commitments, as the First Minister will be aware, I have been pursuing the issue of the allocation of the £10 million UK-wide textile rescue package. In yesterday's debate on textiles, I asked the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning:

"To clarify, will the minister tell me—in one word,

please—the exact figure for the amount of that £10 million UK rescue package that has come to Scotland?”

The minister replied:

“The answer is £1.2 million.”—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2001; Vol 10, c 798.]

First Minister, I have confirmed with the Department of Trade and Industry that the £1.2 million is being allocated over three years at £400,000 on a UK basis. The allocation will not be determinable until the three years are up. I believe that—

The Presiding Officer: Order. We must have a question.

Christine Grahame: I believe that the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning misled the chamber yesterday, albeit unintentionally. Will the First Minister take this opportunity to put on record the correct position? That is my question.

The First Minister: My response will be briefer than the question. Suffice it to say that both the DTI and the enterprise and lifelong learning department have taken positive decisions to assist our textiles industry.

Christine Grahame: That is not the same as allocating £1.2 million.

The First Minister: Three million pounds is being invested in Scotland. Considering the budgets of the DTI and the enterprise and lifelong learning department, that is a formidable package. I wish that Christine Grahame would stop carping about a project around which we are all united and which helps the textiles industry. Talking Scotland down, as the SNP does, is not helpful.

Domestic Violence

3. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what initiatives the Scottish Executive is promoting with the aim of eradicating domestic violence. (S1F-817)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): The first ever national strategy to address domestic abuse in Scotland was published in November. On 29 November 2000, we announced our biggest ever funding package of £18.3 million to provide protection, prevention and provision for abused women. We will continue to fund the on-going publicity campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse. We are also funding the Zero Tolerance Trust's "Respect" pilot in several schools and youth groups to educate young people about the issue.

Johann Lamont: I welcome the Executive's commitment on this issue, which is due in part to Labour's determination to have equal representation of men and women in the Scottish Parliament and thus deliver a Parliament that

gives priority to issues such as violence against women rather than delivering the posturing about issues such as Europe that we witness from the Conservatives.

Does the First Minister recognise the crucial importance of tackling domestic abuse across all fronts? Will he assure me that the highest importance will be given to delivering joined-up government to ensure that some of our most vulnerable women and children are given the best possible service not only by the justice system but by the health, education, housing and social work services and that the attitudes that cause domestic abuse are tackled?

The First Minister: I thank Johann Lamont and the many members from all parties who are involved in this important issue. I assure her that I agree that part of the approach to the issue must be joined-up government. Domestic abuse is an issue for health, housing, justice and for many other aspects of Government policy. I also think that the fact that the electorate are delivering more women into the Scottish Parliament is helpful in ensuring that issues such as domestic abuse are always to the fore.

This is a male issue; it is about male violence against women. We should be sending a powerful message to every part of Scotland that we think that domestic abuse is abhorrent, that it will not be tolerated and that the Government in Scotland, working with our colleagues in Westminster, will make sure that everything possible is done to stamp it out.

Mr Gil Paterson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I associate myself with the First Minister's comments about men's responsibility for domestic violence. Research shows that, on average, a woman is abused 35 times before making a complaint. Will the Executive consider the Canadian initiative of having domestic violence courts, with a view to setting them up in Scotland?

The First Minister: I am not sure that I know enough about the background of that initiative to make a positive response, but the Minister for Justice and his colleagues are, of course, listening. I welcome the member's positive comments. One of the difficulties that women face is having to decide whether to report—it often takes an enormous number of occasions before they do so.

Jackie Baillie and her colleagues, along with the Minister for Justice, are working to ensure that women have the confidence, the necessary access and the confidentiality to come forward. I urge all colleagues in the chamber, especially if they know of any particular circumstances, to alert women to the fact that there are ways to get in touch to get protection from what are horrendous

situations not just for the mother or woman, but often for the children.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): One of the main causes of domestic violence is misuse of alcohol. I have had indications from people high up in the police, the health service and social work that they would benefit from the Scottish Government giving them a steer: that alcohol problems should be high on their agendas. That would help reduce domestic violence among families. Will the First Minister assure us that the message that alcohol misuse is a very important issue will be transmitted to those public services?

The First Minister: I agree that alcohol misuse and abuse is a key issue for our society. That is why the coalition Executive is pursuing a strategy to deal with it. It is a contributory factor to domestic abuse, but people with more knowledge than me suggest that it may not be the most important. Whether drug abuse or alcohol abuse, it is about abuse, and the central message is that we in the Parliament find it abhorrent. We will certainly pursue joined-up government to ensure that alcohol is to the fore in our tackling the factors that contribute to domestic violence.

The Presiding Officer: Question 4 is withdrawn.

Less Favoured Areas

5. Fergus Ewing (Inverness East Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what pledge or undertaking the Scottish Executive will make with regard to crofters and hill farmers in less favoured areas. (S1F-827)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): I welcome this opportunity to confirm the Scottish Executive's total commitment to maintaining crofting and hill and upland farming throughout our less favoured areas.

Fergus Ewing: Does the First Minister agree that, unless the rotten deal on the less favoured areas is materially altered, in three years' time, when crofters and small hill farmers lose 50 per cent of their income, they will face no future in crofting or farming? Does he agree that, as a consequence, the Executive will have succeeded where Patrick Sellar failed? Is the Executive proud of such a record? Does the Executive regard the dreadful deal that has been done as a betrayal of its principles and of the once honourable tradition of the Highland Liberals?

The First Minister: I think that Fergus Ewing has no sense of either history or proportion on this matter. It is important that people dramatise and articulate their concerns, but, putting that another way, Fergus Ewing's question was simply over the top and unhelpful to the people whom he thinks he represents and to a serious debate on the issue.

There have been changes in European funding in this area. Over the next six years, we will be able to review the issue and to fine-tune our policy on it. It should be made clear, however, that a 90 per cent safety net applies, and that further discussions are constantly taking place on the matter. The sum of money that is involved is still substantial—it is much enhanced compared to what it was in the 1990s.

It is also rich that, although everyone is desperate to move to allocate the resources, Fergus Ewing's motion to annul the instrument, which he has made to the Rural Development Committee, means that that is not going to happen. By dint of that motion—

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): Nonsense.

The First Minister: It is not nonsense. By dint of that motion disbursement is not going to happen. I urge Fergus Ewing to withdraw the motion to allow us to help people who are being hard pressed. That is the view of the industry and the view in the chamber. Let us work together to ensure that the scheme works for the maximum number of people.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I share the First Minister's disappointment about what Fergus Ewing's motion will do to the agricultural business development scheme. Does the First Minister agree that crofting is a successful way of enabling people to remain in rural communities? Will he ensure that this type of land tenure can be extended to other areas? Will he make a commitment to agree to review schemes such as the less favoured areas scheme to ensure that young people have an economically viable future in crofting?

The First Minister: My colleague understands the importance of those issues. We want everyone in every part of the Highlands and Islands to have a future. I have no doubt that Ross Finnie and his team will take on board the points that have been made. We are fully committed to maintaining crofting and hill and upland farming throughout less favoured areas. I hope that we can work with members from those areas to ensure that we provide the best deals.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I return to the matter of the ABDS. Many of my constituents were awaiting decisions on applications to that scheme. Because of the motion that was lodged by the SNP to stop the scheme going through the Rural Development Committee, they will now have to wait weeks if not months for vital decisions to be taken. Will the First Minister join me in condemning the SNP for blocking the scheme?

The First Minister: The easy part of my answer is to join in the condemnation. On the other hand,

let us let common sense prevail. Let Fergus Ewing appreciate that it is the will of the chamber that people who need help should receive it. He should withdraw his motion and let the Rural Development Committee and the Minister for Rural Development ensure that help goes to where it is needed.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I do not usually jump to Fergus Ewing's defence, but his motion to annul at the Rural Development Committee concerned a miswording in the statutory instrument that made it impossible under the rules for anyone who had applied to the scheme to reapply. I believe that his motion is intended to clear up that matter rather than to stop farmers receiving grants.

The First Minister: I rest my case by quoting the words of the National Farmers Union of Scotland:

"The money available through ABDS for capital investments and diversification projects is a key lifeline to assist those farmers and crofters who wish to restructure their business. Any delay in approving and distributing grant aid further adds to their uncertainty and undermines their viability."

That is the view of the NFU. For goodness' sake, let us have the motion withdrawn.

Christine Grahame: On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: I hope that it is a real point of order.

Christine Grahame: It is. I gave the First Minister the opportunity to correct something that was on record in the Parliament, but he refused. I seek your guidance on how I should proceed to have that corrected.

The Presiding Officer: Order. That is not a point of order. The content of questions cannot be a question of order. The member must find other ways of pursuing her concern.

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The leader of the Conservative group asked the First Minister a question on the transfer of money that is allegedly being used to convert to the euro. Should David McLetchie be allowed to misrepresent the fact that, according to a written answer from the former Minister for Finance, the money to which he referred is additional to the Scottish block? Indeed—

The Presiding Officer: Order. I can only repeat what I said to Christine Grahame: the content of answers cannot be the subject of a point of order.

Strategy for Enterprise

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-1610, in the name of Wendy Alexander, on the strategy for enterprise, and on two amendments to that motion. Members who wish to contribute to the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons now.

15:34

The Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Ms Wendy Alexander): I am delighted to outline the key points of "A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks", which I launched on Tuesday. That document is the first comprehensive statement that the Executive, or the Scottish Office before it, has issued on what it wants the enterprise networks to deliver.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the way things used to be. In previous years, Administrations sent letters of strategic guidance to the enterprise networks. That guidance was usually no more than a ragbag of individual initiatives and ideas of what the Government would like them to do.

This document is different. We have listened carefully to Scotland's business leaders and they have told me what they need from the enterprise networks. They spoke and we listened. That is devolution delivering for Scotland.

In future, the action that we ask the enterprise networks to take will be different from what we asked of them in the past, because the world that we live in is different. Twenty years ago, Scotland suffered from boom and bust, mass unemployment, industrial restructuring and regional decline. For more than a generation, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which Labour set up in 1965, and the Scottish Development Agency, which Labour set up in 1975, struggled to cope with the pains of transition. Even following the merger with the Training Agency in 1990, training schemes too often existed simply to massage the unemployment figures.

That was then. Under this Government, we have a strong, stable economy. Unemployment is at its lowest level for a quarter of a century and more Scots are in work than have been for 40 years. The challenges for the future are different from the struggles of the past.

The key challenge is no longer that of countering mass unemployment, but to deliver full employment. No longer do we cling to the old ways; we are ensuring that all industries make use

of new technology. No longer are we subsidising physical capital when supporting people can deliver more. Our macroeconomic stability gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver prosperity for all.

What are the three big priorities that we have given the enterprise networks? First, we must have more growing businesses in order to raise the sustainable growth rate of the Scottish economy. We need more start-ups, more e-business and more commercialisation of research and development. Those are important areas, but so are the key sectors where Scotland can lead globally. Already, we are showing what we can do to grasp leadership in biotechnology, optoelectronics and the creative industries.

The second priority is global connectedness. We have all worried about Scotland's peripheral position on the edge of Europe, but we can grasp the opportunities and benefit from the reductions in communication costs that follow changing technology.

I hope that all parties will welcome the addition of the digital agenda to the enterprise agencies' brief. We are asking Scottish Enterprise to work up a business plan with the private sector to increase the availability of broadband in Scotland. I will return to that issue later in my speech, but we already have broadband capability to Wick—the problem is with the prices charged by the telecommunications companies that operate there.

We need more competition as well as more wires and I am delighted that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, under Alex Neil, is examining how to deliver most efficiently not just broadband capability but cheap telecommunication services throughout Scotland.

Part of being globally connected is about building bridges to the world—not about building barriers within our own island or creating embassies for Scotland. Where it makes sense, we should work on our own, but, where appropriate, we should use the leverage of the entire network of UK embassies to target and promote Scotland abroad in tourism, trade and inward investment.

After worrying about building businesses and being globally connected, we come to the third priority. What do the people of Scotland want from their enterprise agencies? Above all, most people in Scotland want security, both for themselves and for their families. They want a job and would prefer a secure job. The Government is delivering for them, as unemployment is down from more than 300,000 to 100,000. We are making that work pay and, through the skills and learning agenda, we are making jobs secure.

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

Ms Alexander: I will take an intervention in a moment.

For too long, skills and learning have been the poor relations in the enterprise networks. The spirit of the Scottish Development Agency has been stronger than that of the Training Agency. That will change—from now on, skills and learning will be at the heart of the work of the enterprise networks.

We have already announced the alignment of the careers service with the enterprise networks and the creation of a new future skills unit, which will be able to develop a better matching of supply and demand in Scotland's labour market. We got youth unemployment down by 73 per cent, but we must learn from those lessons and make those benefits available to all.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): The minister talks about bringing youth unemployment down. Does she still stick to the answer that she gave me in a recent debate, when she said that a 13-week job is a sustainable job for a young person? Does she stand by the statement that a 13-week job is sustainable?

Ms Alexander: Nobody ever asked me whether a 13-week job is sustainable. I was asked whether the new deal is effective and I indicated the number of people who are getting sustainable jobs through the new deal. I do not want to use the debate to revisit the fact that the SNP did not support the new deal, which has brought about a 73 per cent reduction in youth unemployment in Scotland.

For a long time, many people have asked why the enterprise agencies are not more committed to the social justice agenda. I want to reassure those people that we have set the enterprise networks one of the most fundamental challenges of our social justice strategy—to narrow the gap between high and low unemployment areas. In Scotland, there are 112,000 claimants—a figure that nearly matches the number of vacancies, which is 100,000. We need to ensure that people are ready for tomorrow's jobs.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): The report that was published by the Rural Development Committee earlier this week—"Report on the Impact of Changing Employment Patterns in Rural Scotland"—recommends that Scottish Enterprise be given a social remit, as was Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Given the minister's comments, does she support that recommendation?

Ms Alexander: We said in the document that we published this week that we will adopt a whole new approach to the social economy. We will

shortly announce our plans and I will be happy to talk to the member about them when we do.

I hope that the enterprise networks will learn to be good partners—with careers Scotland, with further and higher education institutions, with Scottish Homes, with local authorities, with businesses and with trade unions.

I will use my final couple of minutes to talk seriously about the amendments to the motion. The SNP amendment calls for three things. First, it calls for the Executive to bring forward “detailed proposals” for implementing our plans. We have set out our priorities. My question to the SNP—which Kenny MacAskill may answer—is this: does the SNP still call for the abolition of the boards of Scottish Enterprise and HIE, as was its policy before the last election? Does it want us to dispense with the services of Jim Hunter, Ian Robinson, Ian Vallence, Campbell Christie and others, who are involved in ensuring that the Scottish economy flourishes and that the enterprise networks play their part?

The second thing that the SNP asks us to do is consider the possibility of a dedicated telehouse for Scotland. I am happy to confirm that, for some months now, that possibility has been studied by Scottish Enterprise. We expect a business case to be presented by Easter.

The third thing the SNP asks is for me to promise broadband for all of Scotland. I ask Kenny MacAskill what that means. Does it mean broadband for every town, every business or every home? What would be the cost of such a commitment? As I have said, the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee is considering how we can have ubiquitous broadband capability, with the right technology, across Scotland. That is the way forward, but if Mr MacAskill would clarify whether he is talking about every town, business or home, and if he would tell us the cost, I would be grateful.

The Tory amendment calls on us to stimulate enterprise

“by reducing the bureaucracy which is currently stifling entrepreneurship”.

Can the Tories please confirm whether that means that they support the proposals that Mr Portillo, the shadow chancellor, announced last week? When asked to find £8 billion of tax cuts, his answer included £1 billion from regional schemes, £300 million from trade and industry and £400 million from the new deal. I do not think that the way to cut out bureaucracy is to cut our enterprise networks.

I invite members to consider the document—“A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks”—that they have before

them. I commend it to Parliament and I urge members, during the debate, to concentrate on what the enterprise networks should do, rather than simply use the debate as a platform for a constitutional argument that has been lost time and time again. In that co-operative spirit, I invite comments on the document and the ways in which we can support the activities of the enterprise networks.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the publication of *A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks*, the first ever comprehensive policy statement of what government expects from the networks, which sets out the foundation for long-term and sustained improvement in economic performance for all of Scotland; welcomes the determination of the Scottish Executive to work with the networks on the challenges of raising productivity, encouraging entrepreneurship, raising skill levels and connecting Scotland globally, and notes the Executive's commitment in setting the vision and direction for the networks to improve their focus and effectiveness.

15:45

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): It is rather surprising to be responding to a Labour speech on an Executive glossy brochure that posed more questions for the SNP than on the matters that we are debating. I will do my best with some of the points the minister raised, even though she was not prepared to take my intervention.

Despite the obsequious language of the motion, the Executive is to be commended for identifying the challenges facing Scotland as a nation in the 21st century. I would be surprised if anyone here disputes that the challenge to Scotland and to individual Scots is

“raising productivity, encouraging entrepreneurship, raising skill levels and connecting Scotland globally”.

It is one thing to identify the tasks, however, and another to provide the framework and funding to implement them. That is why the SNP amendment was submitted. We are happy to unite behind the ideas that have been flagged up, but we do not want unity for unity's sake; we want unity of purpose. If the tasks that are rightly identified are to be implemented, there must be not just tactics but targets, not just rhetoric but resources. There is and must be consensus and co-operation on the economic viability of Scotland. Accordingly, our points are made to add to the vision, not to detract from it.

Raising productivity is essential for Scotland. We live in a global economy and no one owes Scotland a living. We may be geographically peripheral but that should not be an impediment. I quote from an article by Geoff Beattie in *business a.m.*

"There is a small northern European country with a population of about 5 million looking forward to a very prosperous year ahead.

Over the years it has been invaded, dominated and bullied by its bigger, brasher neighbour. It suffered a terrible recession, most locals called it a depression, ten years ago when GDP dropped by 13 per cent over three years. Since then it has transformed its largely state-run economy into the high tech envy of Europe. In the third quarter of last year it posted an annual growth rate of 5.6 per cent. It is, if anything, expected to be even higher this year."

That is not Scotland, or even Santa Claus land, but Finland. That is what Scotland must aspire to, but we cannot simply wish ourselves there. Practical steps must be taken. Entrepreneurship must be encouraged. For too long it was practised only by Scots absent from their native land. For too long the "I kent your faither" syndrome was prevalent. It is difficult to legislate for cultural change and that is, to some extent, what is required. The Parliament sets a tone that will hopefully resonate outwith, but it is not just the song—it is the singer. Too many people in the country are impeded in entrepreneurship by barriers to capital. If we want to support rather than just applaud such people we must ensure that the fuel that drives them is available. As a nation we must speculate to accumulate and the risk must be shared.

I have no doubt that there is consensus on raising skill levels. We are lagging in sector-specific skills. A once-proud engineering country, we now have too few employers and, notwithstanding the colleges and universities on their doorstep, too few available skilled employees. The electronics sector in Scotland has a shortage of skilled labour. In Finland, Nokia alone hires a third of the electronics and software engineering graduates from Tampere University of Technology—many in Scottish academia and commerce are envious. Identifying skill shortages is not enough—industries flagging up problems include oil and gas and financial services as well as electronics—they must be resourced.

The huge Scottish diaspora includes people driven from their native land through lack of opportunity as well as through desire for adventure. There are many Scots working in the financial sector in London and the oil and gas industries in the middle east. Why do we not do as our Irish cousins do and encourage our kith and kin to come home? When I asked a written question on the possibility of the Executive facilitating a trades fair to address skill shortages, as the Irish Government did, I was told that that was a reserved matter. If it is a reserved matter, why are we having the debate?

The minister raised the question of putting digital Scotland on the agenda. Just putting digital Scotland on the agenda is not enough—action is

needed. BT says that one third of Scotland has no access to broadband. For the debate to be productive, the emphasis must be on telecommunications.

The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee is carrying out an inquiry into the new economy. So far, the evidence indicates that there is a window of opportunity. That window is closing fast and we must move with alacrity. A European—indeed, global—superleague is in the offing not just in football, but in telecommunications. Frank Binnie from ScotlandIS told the committee that the south of England, Sweden and Ireland are off to that superleague. Scotland remains dormant in the telecoms SPL.

The SNP welcomes the fact that the minister has identified telecommunications as an area that must be addressed. However, identification must be followed by implementation. That is why the SNP is calling for a nationwide roll-out of increased bandwidth.

If Sweden can deliver full broadband services to every household and business, why can not we? The Executive says that cost is the reason. The problem is that we do not know the cost. That is why there must be an investigation. Indeed, as Graham Moore said to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, there must be a partnership between the private sector and government. The minister's job is to facilitate that partnership.

As Graham Moore pointed out, BT paid far more for its third generation telecommunications licences than it would cost to provide broadband to every household in Scotland. Two generations ago, a Labour Government, accepting that power and light were not only a citizen's right, but were essential to the sustainability and viability of the Highlands and Islands, created the Hydro-board—a dynamo for many communities. That social provision was seen as a right. Sadly, telecommunications and broadband are not seen as a right, but as a luxury, available only to the few. The technology that should liberate rural Scotland is being denied to it because of the area's peripheral nature. The fact is that air links are poor and expensive and ADSL is unavailable or unaffordable. Tom Johnston is rightly revered in households in the north of Scotland—Labour or otherwise—for what he did in the post-war years. Sadly, the minister is no Tom Johnston.

In summary, the intention is admirable, but the mechanism is absent. We agree on what is to be done, but we differ in that the SNP believes that there must be a framework to ensure that action is not simply discussed, but delivered. The minister can rest assured that we will co-operate in achieving those goals. However, we reserve the right to criticise constructively where we believe there are deficiencies. That is why I have lodged

the amendment, to ensure that Scotland not only envies, but emulates Finland.

I move amendment S1M-1610.1, to leave out from "the first" to end and insert:

"calls upon the Scottish Executive to bring forward detailed proposals both for funding and implementing its plans regarding raising productivity, encouraging entrepreneurship and raising skill levels, and calls for a commitment, with regard to connecting Scotland globally, to roll out broadband communication services to all of Scotland within a defined timescale and to promote, in conjunction with the private sector, a dedicated Scottish Internet connector."

15:52

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): A debate entitled "Strategy for Enterprise" sounds hopeful, but the beguiling title is somewhat misleading when we read the motion, which

"notes the publication of *A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks*".

Although ambitions for the enterprise networks are laudable and are certainly supported by the Conservatives, they are not the whole story. The Conservative party not only established Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies, but, in 1999, was the first political party in Scotland to call for a radical review of the whole enterprise network. The First Minister, who was then the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, derided that call. However, within days of rejecting that call, Mr McLeish had executed a U-turn, supporting a radical reappraisal of the enterprise network—perhaps that was when he began flexing his U-turn muscles in preparation for the future.

The further grand language of the motion suggests that the document is the

"first ever comprehensive policy statement of what government expects from the networks".

That is a rather extravagant claim. As I indicated, it was a Conservative Government that set up the enterprise network and gave clear direction as to why the Scottish Development Agency was obsolete, how the new enterprise network was to operate and what it was intended to achieve. To put matters into perspective, the minister is not quite the innovatrix and the motion is not quite the innovation that the Executive would have us believe.

A strategy for enterprise—worthy though a radical reassessment of the enterprise network may be—is not and never can be the sole consideration for what contributes to a strong enterprise economy. That is why my colleague David Davidson lodged the Conservative amendment.

Before an enterprise network can address

anything, either collectively or through its component parts, certain ground rules must be in place. First, there must be a stable economy with a low taxation regime. I remind the minister that, since 1997, the tax burden has risen from 35.2 per cent of national income to 37.4 per cent in 2000. Since 1997, the business rate poundage has been 45.6 in Scotland and 41.2 in England.

Secondly, there must be a climate in which entrepreneurs can focus on business and not be distracted by, oppressed by, and in many cases overwhelmed by, the infuriating and irksome bureaucracy that currently clogs up our factories and offices. I remind the minister of the comment of Mr Jeremy Peat of the Royal Bank of Scotland, who called for "a bonfire of regulations".

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): We are having difficulty hearing what Miss Goldie is saying.

I am sure that Miss Goldie will come to it—at least I hope she will: what bureaucracy is meant by David Davidson's amendment when it refers to

"reducing the bureaucracy which is currently stifling entrepreneurship"?

What, specifically, does that mean?

Miss Goldie: There are many irksome regulations affecting business, some of which are unnecessary administrative burdens that could be removed. If Mr Rumbles is asking specifically about the sort of obligations that are currently making life difficult for business, examples would be compliance with the working time directive and many aspects of current employment legislation, which could be made a great deal simpler without in any way prejudicing the security of employees. If Mr Rumbles cares to go out of his constituency and speak to businesses, he will find no shortage of contributions on the bureaucracy that should be reduced.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Miss Goldie: I am sorry, but I am conscious of time, and I have tried to deal with the intervention.

The other essential ingredient for a good enterprise climate and economy is a working roads infrastructure. As the minister said, there is also a need for a leading-edge communications infrastructure. Finally—and this is extremely important—there is a need for an educational system that produces youngsters with a standard of education that makes them employable. It is a matter of regret to me that many business people lament the standard of product from many of our schools and regret that they must spend time in their businesses effectively re-educating those youngsters.

Unless those essential ingredients are in the

mixing bowl, the enterprise network throughout Scotland can sit slouched in a chair with its legs on the desk. I will be pleased to hear the minister's comments on my points in winding up. I would not wish to appear negatively dissident about the document that states the ambitions for the networks. There are challenges, which it is right to identify, and they must be focused upon.

Minister, in relation to communications infrastructure, the business community is feeling inhibited. It is clear that there is a huge customer procurement power in the public sector. Co-ordinating and harnessing that asset as a purchasing influence could have a dramatic effect on provision. I would welcome the minister's comments on that.

In conclusion, there are fundamental issues that must be addressed before the enterprise network, or any aspect of it, has a chance to operate. If those issues are not addressed, the aspirations that are expressed in the document will remain just that.

I move amendment S1M-1610.2, to leave out from "the first" to end and insert:

"calls upon the Scottish Executive to play its part in stimulating enterprise in Scotland by reducing the bureaucracy which is currently stifling entrepreneurship and discouraging employment, and further calls upon the Executive to take a lead in facilitating the provision of a communications and roads infrastructure which will assist Scotland's business to develop."

15:58

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I welcome the publication of the strategy document, which is one of many on the subject over the past 18 to 20 months. It highlights clearly the challenges that face the Scottish economy. The central challenge for us is to ensure that Scotland becomes a more competitive place in which to do business. The challenges are clearly about raising our productivity towards the level of our European partners and emulating the United States, which leads the world. That is one of the key issues if we are to increase wealth in Scotland.

To ensure that that comes about, we must create a culture of enterprise, a fact that is clearly laid out in the document. We must raise our skills base. That is fundamental if we want to close the productivity gap. No longer can we rely on a low-skill work force. We must re-skill our people if we want to raise productivity and become a more competitive place in which to do business. Lastly, we must also ensure that Scotland is connected globally and wired internally. That is vital to ensure that Scotland's economic growth continues.

Kenny MacAskill dealt with connectivity at length. It is part of the Enterprise and Lifelong

Learning Committee's inquiry into e-commerce. A number of hard questions must be answered before we start making commitments such as that which Kenny MacAskill called for. It would be interesting to cost that out. I suspect that it comes to a lot of money.

The key question from some of the evidence to the committee is whether Scotland needs a direct broadband pipeline to America. The committee has heard mixed messages on that. We heard from Frank Binnie last week. He made it clear that we need such a pipeline. BT, however, said that there is no need for it and that there is a huge amount of bandwidth available with the current connections and that the key issue is tariff barriers. We need to understand whether we must spend that kind of money to connect Scotland—

Fiona McLeod: Will the member give way?

George Lyon: Certainly.

Fiona McLeod: Does the member agree that when the south-east of England has decided that it is vital for its economy to get connected to the interconnector, and has gone ahead, it is of the same vital concern that Scotland gets connected, as Ireland too has done?

George Lyon: No. We received clear evidence that there is already a huge bandwidth capability across the Atlantic. The key issue is whether we should access that through London or construct an independent line. I do not think that the experts who gave evidence to the committee provided a clear message on that.

The evidence also raised questions about the infrastructure in which we should invest. Which technology should we adopt to capture some of the benefits of the new economy? The committee heard from BT, which said that ADSL is the best technology, as it would sweat the assets and use the existing infrastructure. Others told us of the need to place fibre optics around most of Scotland. I do not think that it will be possible to do that in rural areas, because of the high cost. The committee also heard that satellites might be able to link rural areas. A project on Islay is investigating how that might benefit such remote islands. I think that the answer will be that a mix of technologies is needed. I look forward to some definitive answers from the Scottish Enterprise study that is examining the issues.

As we are talking about how the enterprise networks can assist in the process, we should ask whether the public purse should be involved in delivering the infrastructure. Will the market deliver on its own? If demand is present in the central belt and the main urban areas, the market will deliver there. However, the market will not deliver in rural Scotland. Market failure there must be recognised. The public bodies will have to step in and make up

the difference.

We are reasonably fortunate in the Highlands and Islands, because the partnership approach that Highlands and Islands Enterprise has piloted with BT has delivered significant benefits. If that is contrasted with the position in the south of Scotland, it is clear that we are well ahead of the game. The big issue is ensuring that we build on that success. Where do we go next? What partnerships are needed? Which technology will ensure that rural Scotland does not fall behind the game?

In the past few months, review after review and strategy after strategy have appeared. Robert Crawford has radically restructured Scottish Enterprise. It is now time for politicians to step back and let the professionals get on with delivering a better skilled, more enterprising and more competitive Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Alex Neil, convener of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee.

16:03

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I will try to put into perspective what we are debating, which is—in the jargon—microeconomic policy in Scotland. However, the overall level of activity in the Scottish economy is determined to a large extent by macroeconomic policy. In the past 20 to 30 years—even when the rate of growth of the Scottish economy has been historically high—we have still not achieved the levels of growth in gross domestic product that have been reached elsewhere in the country.

This year, it is estimated that the UK economy will grow by about 3 per cent, whereas the Scottish economy will grow by about 2.5 per cent. That output gap has been consistent. If it did not exist, the Scottish economy would be worth £78 billion more than it is. One of the micro and macro policy challenges that we must meet is closing the growth gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

In recent speeches, I have concentrated on what is wrong with the Scottish economy—much has already been said about that today. As Kenny MacAskill rightly said, there is a broad consensus on the key challenges that face us. I want to address various issues that relate to the relationship between the enterprise network and our institutions of further and higher education, which are essential to achieving the objectives that are laid out in the Executive's document. I ask the minister to consider some specific points. She does not necessarily need to consider them today—tomorrow will do.

First, the new universities in Scotland are not getting a fair deal from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, especially in relation to funds for research and development. Indeed, I am told that since SHEFC was formed, it has funded the old institutions to the tune of about £1,000 million for research, while the new universities have received something in the order of £50 million. I was at Abertay University last Friday; the potential in many of our new universities is as great, if not greater, than that in our older universities. They are a huge intellectual resource of which we must try to make greater use. There is a specific issue about the research development grant that has been used to create research capabilities, especially in our new universities. The grant is due to come to an end next year. I ask the minister to consider, in consultation with SHEFC, the possibility of extending that programme. It has been extremely helpful in creating additional research capacity, which will allow us to compete in the future.

The next issue relates to research and development. To be fair, there have been a number of initiatives by Scottish Enterprise—some of them in budgets in the past couple of years—to encourage more research and development. However, we are still about 50 per cent short of where we need to be on research and development spending in order to compete effectively in the future. Indeed, Nokia in Finland—to which Kenny MacAskill referred—spends more on research and development than the whole Scottish economy. That is an indication of the scale of change that we require.

Just before Christmas, Ireland announced a major package of funding for biotechnology and information technology over three years, involving investment of the order of £500 million, compared to Scotland's £40 million investment in biotechnology over four years. The scale of investment must be increased substantially.

My final point is that one of the areas where we have major skill shortages—ironically, side by side with high unemployment—is graduate unemployment. Two matters need to be addressed. The first is the curricula in our universities—are we producing the right people to fill jobs in Scotland? The second issue relates to the careers service review. Will the minister consider the part that Duffner did not consider—the university careers services—which need to make a more substantial contribution?

16:09

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): In this, my first speech in the chamber, I support the Labour-led Executive's motion and the strategy outlined in the document "A Smart, Successful

Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks”.

My welcome for what the minister has outlined is echoed by a number of organisations representing all strands of Scottish life. I note in particular the welcome that it has been afforded by the Scottish Trades Union Congress and its commendation of the priority that is given in the strategy to a high-skills, high-wage economy and the promotion of skills and learning.

One of the main objectives of the approach that is outlined in the statement is the raising of the employment rate throughout Scotland. As the member for Glasgow Anniesland, I wish to focus on that area of the strategy. Success in that area is an essential prerequisite in redressing what my illustrious predecessor, Donald Dewar, rather quaintly but correctly called the imbalance in the “social arithmetic” of Scotland.

It is true that youth unemployment is at its lowest since 1986 and that long-term unemployment generally is at its lowest since the mid-1980s. That is due, I believe, to Labour-led government, both here and at Westminster. In Drumchapel in my constituency, there has been an 11 per cent drop in the number of people who leave school without employment. However, I am aware, as Donald Dewar was aware and as we are all aware, that much remains to be done—a clichéd phrase but one that is still pertinent. There are pockets of my constituency where the fall in unemployment has been neither as steep nor as rapid as I and we all wished.

Full employment must be the aim of any progressive left-leaning Government. I welcome the document’s commitment to providing access to high-quality learning and skills development and its acknowledgement that we need to offer vocational and high-level technical and IT skills to hasten the creation of more jobs and to compete in an increasingly global economy. Allowing people to add to their existing skills and gain additional qualifications is essential to the creation of a more prosperous and more socially and economically just Scotland. That is especially true in respect of women workers and manual workers.

Training and retraining must be flexible and imaginative and requires a multi-agency approach with networks working in partnership. I shall give an example of such an approach in my constituency. In Drumchapel, a programme that seeks to develop an enterprise culture—developed by Drumchapel Opportunities and supported by the local social inclusion partnership, Glasgow City Council, the European regional development fund and Scottish Enterprise Glasgow—had, by the end of 2000, assisted in the development of 25 new businesses, developed a women into self-employment course and progressed a pilot programme that focuses on

self-employment with placements for local high school children. I am glad to say that Drumchapel Opportunities has a digital learning centre, which has been adopted by the Executive as the flagship learning centre for learndirect Scotland. I am equally pleased to say that it is used by more than 150 Drumchapel residents per month and rising.

Those are only steps towards full employment and towards the better society that we all believe in. As the new member for Anniesland, I recognise that they are only the first steps, but they are achievements. They are achievements that I am proud of; my predecessor would have been, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That was a perfect three minutes and 59 seconds. Thank you, Mr Butler.

16:13

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): I do not commit myself to achieving a similarly perfect time for my speech, Presiding Officer.

I knew that “A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks” had come from Wendy Alexander as soon as I opened it and saw the requisite Venn diagram, this time on page 16.

I have a general comment to make about Scottish Enterprise. I very much welcome Robert Crawford’s joining that organisation at the helm and I have great confidence in his dynamism and desire to change the organisation. One of the things that needs to change is the way that Scottish Enterprise has reached out to business. I know that many members will have attended Scottish Enterprise events or local enterprise company events. One of the things that has always struck me about those events is that there is never anybody there but people who already have a relationship with a LEC. That is why I must dispute slightly what the minister said about members of the public. I do not think that many members of the public know what Scottish Enterprise is and what their LEC is doing. In the past, Scottish Enterprise has been a rather inward-looking organisation.

I want to concentrate on digital connectivity. I heard what Kenny MacAskill said during the debate and what he said the last time that we had roughly the same debate. However, the SNP must present a detailed proposal if it wants broadband to be provided out of the public purse. It is an option. As Kenny MacAskill said, it has been done in Sweden with public money, but that was a conscious decision. The SNP will have to identify where the money would come from.

For a long time, I have been ploughing the furrow of what is generally known as demand

creation. I believe, as we have heard in the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee inquiry, that that is the way forward. For once, or for always, I do not agree with George Lyon—now is not the time for politicians to step back. I believe that this is the time for politicians to step forward, with what I think will be a very productive report by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee. One of its conclusions will be to show the scope of the public sector's role. That role is not to dish out money for somebody to do something in the traditional way, but to channel procurement to create the demand that will justify private sector investment. Indeed, the evidence that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee has received so far has established clearly that various public sector organisations are operating in a stovepipe way and do not know who else in their community is procuring bandwidth. The health service, for example, might not know that a school is being connected at the same time as the health service is putting in a link between hospitals.

We must have a strategic overview, so that public sector usage, in its widest sense—including universities, which in my opinion have excess capacity that should be freed for wider public use—can be used with revised procurement processes to create demand. I cite the example—which I have used before—of the state of Virginia, which has successfully done what I described.

I agree with George Lyon on one point—there is no single answer. The issue of connectivity with the United States and other parts of the world is complicated. There is no single answer on tariffs either. Both are broad issues.

The Parliament has moved forward, particularly due to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's investigation and due to the minister's willingness to address the issues.

16:17

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): First, I welcome some of Alex Neil's comments about the importance of the new universities in carrying this agenda forward. As someone who worked in a new university for a long period of my life, I am particularly aware of the importance of the new universities' research activities and of their role in contributing to skills development. In that context, I want to highlight in particular the new universities' concern about the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council's proposals on how research money is likely to be allocated, which could lead to a deterioration in the situation. That is an issue of some concern in the context of the thrust of the strategy.

The strategy is, however, to be welcomed, perhaps even more so because of the strong

commitment that the minister has given to advancing Scotland's economic performance. It is justifiable to claim that the Labour party has been instrumental in the past in modernising Scotland's economy. Annabel Goldie made reference to the Conservatives' record in that respect, which was in interesting contrast to the Conservatives' occasional forgetfulness about the past. Labour can claim to have made a big step forward with the establishment of the SDA. More particularly, we can now claim that a Labour Government at Westminster has, by strengthening the Scottish economy, created the foundation that allows us to take forward the intervention agenda that the minister has laid out.

However, I hope that the minister will forgive me for highlighting the fact that the level of prosperity that now exists in Scotland has not been delivered evenly throughout the country—there are communities in very different circumstances. My constituency is a case in point. Clydebank has suffered considerably from the decline in traditional industries. Although efforts have been made by local agencies to bring in new employment to replace jobs that were lost, there are barriers to overcome. I hope that those will be addressed as part of the implementation of the new strategy.

Four challenges for Scotland are laid out in the document: improving productivity; raising the rate of new business foundation; development and better matching of new skills and opportunities; and embracing of the digital age. Those are not challenges for only Scotland in general; they are challenges for Clydebank in particular. If they can be taken forward in Clydebank, they will make some of the greatest differences that can be made across Scotland. The approach that we have to take is not to talk about Scotland incorporated, but to address local needs and circumstances.

West Dunbartonshire has the lowest percentage of people gaining further and higher education qualifications. It has one of the highest rates of unemployment and the lowest business birth rate in the UK. Consistent action is required to change that. Action to deal with the problems in that area must not be left to the local enterprise company; it must be embraced by Scottish Enterprise, Robert Crawford and Wendy Alexander.

I recognise the importance of thinking globally, but we should not underestimate the importance of acting locally. We can see the greatest achievements at local level. As with Bill Butler's area, there are several interesting projects in my area that are making a big difference to people in local communities. Those projects are adding value by giving people opportunities to learn computer skills and other relevant skills. We must ensure that local initiatives are linked to the

national initiative and the national strategy to ensure that we deliver at all levels, so that we create a Scotland where every person has the opportunities that we would like them to have. That should be a key task of the joint performance teams that the minister is creating.

16:22

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I should begin by congratulating the Scottish Executive and Wendy Alexander—who, it would appear, has just joined the Tories—on her contribution to encouraging enterprise in Scotland. The printing sector must be experiencing boom times, given the number of glossy documents that the Government produces.

We must remember that the Scottish economy is diverse and that different companies in different areas have different needs. My understanding is that the priorities in the document are supposed to be the priorities of the enterprise networks, but those will not always be in tune with what other people believe should be the priorities of the networks. It is important that we do not take our eye off the ball; we must not become obsessed with the priorities in this document. After all, the LECs' purpose is to create jobs. Too often, especially in rural Scotland—which I will talk about for a few moments—enterprise companies spend their time retraining people who have been made redundant by other companies. That highlights a significant problem.

The Minister for Rural Development has no cash to play about with in this Government. He is responsible for 0.65 per cent of the total Scottish budget and he has discretion over only 20 per cent of that 0.65 per cent, so our rural communities are dependent on the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning making the right decisions to help generate jobs in rural communities.

We must not take our eye off the ball as far as our traditional industries are concerned: agriculture; fisheries; our food industries; and the many smaller businesses in rural Scotland have other priorities. The digital agenda is important and will help those industries to export goods and become globalised. Another priority is to address European regulations that are being introduced, such as the urban waste water directive, the climate change levy—coming from Westminster—and the integrated pollution, prevention and control regulations. They pose a risk to many jobs in fragile communities. Those matters all place our rural industries at a competitive disadvantage. What is the document going to do to address those priorities, which are shared by many of our rural companies?

The paper industry is going through enormous

difficulties; what will the strategy do to help it? Even as we speak, thousands of jobs are on the line, many of which are in rural areas. For example, the Donside Paper Co in Aberdeen recently shed more than 100 jobs. Inveresk expects to make a £10 million loss this year, which puts more jobs on the line. Since Labour was elected in 1997, only £4 million has been invested in that industry. How will the strategy help such industries?

I will turn briefly to infrastructure. In the north-east of Scotland, Grampian Enterprise spends all its time talking about the lack of a decent transport infrastructure in the area. Of course, such issues are outlined in the strategy document; however, Grampian Enterprise's No 1 priority is to sort out that infrastructure so that existing companies in the area can survive and prosper. For example, the big issue at the moment is the gridlock in the city of Aberdeen, which is causing enormous problems; that is the current priority for those companies. Although the Government has come up with cash to improve the M74, not one penny has been spent on the western peripheral route or other transport improvements in the north-east.

The Scottish Government should take a lead in Scotland's massive offshore industry, which is also important to the north-east. The Government is responsible for improving the skills base and education in the north-east—those are not reserved matters. The Government in Scotland should lead on initiatives such as LOGIC and PILOT, which help the offshore industry, because it has its hands on the levers of the issues that matter.

The document is entitled "A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks". If the minister wants us to be smart, successful and ambitious, she should be fighting for Scottish independence to give us the power to create a real enterprise culture in this country.

16:27

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Bill Butler mentioned the Labour-led Executive. As Bill is relatively new to the chamber, I should point out to him—if he is listening—that the Executive is a partnership between the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats, who are working together in a progressive government.

David Mundell: Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: Give me a minute to start—I have been speaking for only 25 seconds.

David Mundell: On the basis of recent evidence, is not the Executive led by Mr Rumbles?

Mr Rumbles: That was a nice try, but it really

did not work.

The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats are working together in a progressive Government for Scotland. I do not recognise the left-right distinctions that Bill Butler used. I prefer to think progressively.

The Liberal Democrats view skills and learning as the key drivers of economic development. That policy can be seen clearly in the partnership agreement and the programme for government that we debated this morning. Such a strategy would be welcomed widely by business. As Iain McMillan, the director of the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, said in his 2001 new year message:

"We need to build on the success of 2000 in delivering an economic and legislative environment, which will enable business in Scotland to prosper and thrive for the benefit of all our communities."

In that respect, the Liberal Democrats, working together with the Labour party, are implementing the recommendations of the McCrone report, which will work towards the CBI's key objective. Iain McMillan also said:

"Developing further our education system will be the biggest single factor in driving forward Scotland's competitiveness in the global digital economy."

How very true.

In our manifesto, we made a commitment to

"review the operation of local enterprise companies to promote greater openness, accountability and effectiveness. We will ask Audit Scotland to devise appropriate output indicators."

In many respects, the strategy for enterprise delivers on those commitments; and although Audit Scotland is not involved, the joint performance team will give the Government a stronger role in laying down and monitoring targets. That is even better.

I challenged Annabel Goldie about the Conservative amendment in the name of Mr David Davidson, who will perhaps address my points in his winding-up speech. The amendment refers to

"reducing the bureaucracy which is currently stifling entrepreneurship".

I asked which specific bureaucracy was meant.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): It is kind of Mr Rumbles to give way. Since 1997, the Labour Government has introduced slightly more than 3,600 items of business regulation, but has de-listed only a few. I do not have time to list the 3,600, but broad rafts of them—mostly concerned with employment—could be simplified.

Mr Rumbles: Come on.

Mr Davidson: On 27 November, Ms Alexander made a pledge, about which I shall ask her later.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are in your final minute, Mr Rumbles.

Mr Rumbles: Yes. Thank you. I will not give way like that again. David Davidson could use his own speech to outline some of those points—I hope that he will do so instead of avoiding the issue.

The Conservatives are almost fearful of having anything at all to do with Europe. Annabel Goldie—I am glad to see that she has returned to the chamber—could identify only the working time directive. That just goes to show the worth of the Conservative party's anti-European rhetoric.

To conclude, I bring to the attention of the minister an issue that Richard Lochhead mentioned in an intervention. The Rural Development Committee was unanimous in calling for legislation to broaden the remit of Scottish Enterprise, to bring it into line with that of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and to give it a social as well as an economic element. That action alone could do a huge amount to help to develop entrepreneurship in rural Scotland outwith the Highlands and Islands. I hope that the minister will address that.

16:31

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): The word "sustainability" occurs in the diagram on page 16, but that is all that is mentioned of sustainability and the environment in the Executive document. I register my disappointment at that fact.

The minister spoke of partnerships. I draw her attention to the Midlothian business and environment partnership, which draws in young students from all over Scotland during the six-week holidays from their courses and gives them placements in local firms. Their remit is to conduct environmental audits of the way in which those firms conduct their business, then to suggest to the firms improvements that they could make. Over the past couple of years, several hundred firms and many hundreds of students have benefited from the scheme. Indeed, significant progress was made by one firm—the student who was attached to it managed to increase its turnover by £60,000 during the six weeks when she was there.

That is the kind of environmental partnership that I would like to be drawn to our attention in the Executive document—which the minister is vainly perusing for any further mention of the words "environmental sustainability".

Ms Alexander: They are mentioned three times.

Robin Harper: Three times. Gosh. I am so pleased.

I have a couple of points that I hope the minister will address in her summing-up. First, over the next year, will she flesh out what she intends by attaching to this document the word sustainability, with no further reference to what she understands by it or what she proposes to do to encourage businesses in Scotland to take advantage of the enormous progress that they could make by addressing their environmental impact, thereby becoming more efficient and profitable? I would like the minister to give a commitment on that.

Secondly, I draw the minister's attention to the fact that, in the document, she does not highlight the important opportunities that are afforded to Scotland by the development of renewable energy resources. I shall bring that matter to her attention next Thursday—I give her advance notice of that—and hope that there will be somebody from the enterprise and lifelong learning department in the chamber to listen to what I have to say.

16:34

Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): I welcome the document, which shows that we are taking another step towards transforming the economic future of Scotland and moving towards having a high-skill, high-wage economy that is globally competitive and promises a prosperous future for all.

As a member of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, I am particularly pleased that that committee's inquiry informed and drove forward the network review that has led in part to "A Smart, Successful Scotland" which has a welcome focus on the challenges of raising productivity, encouraging entrepreneurship, developing skills and improving digital communications. The document is also evidence of democracy in action as a result of the Scottish Parliament. The move towards ensuring that the priorities of the enterprise agencies are discussed and debated will mean that they become more accountable in their use of their £0.6 billion of funding.

I am pleased that, in the section that deals with encouraging people to be more entrepreneurial, not only is the need to drive up the business start-up rate acknowledged, but the need to encourage more female entrepreneurs is recognised. Tomorrow, I am opening a new business in Mastrick in Aberdeen that was set up by a local woman who spent years working for other people before deciding that she could do it better herself.

The document has a clear focus on skills and skill shortages. In a way, we are in an enviable position, as not so long ago we had major

problems with unemployment. As Bill Butler said, there are still major pockets of high unemployment that we need to tackle. A good start has been made. We need to enable people without jobs to develop the skills that we are short of.

It has been suggested that far too few people who are in work are undertaking continuing learning and skills development. We have in place a raft of activities that will assist, such as individual learning accounts, the much-improved student support package, learndirect Scotland and the modern apprenticeships. All will help. The review of the careers service will give us all-age career development, which is absolutely necessary as we move jobs so often. I look forward to the setting up of the future skills unit, which will identify the gaps now and in the future. All sorts of jobs are appearing now that did not exist before.

Communications have been mentioned today. Richard Lochhead talked about transport infrastructure, but to get rid of the congestion in all our cities—not just Aberdeen—we need an integrated transport strategy and not just a focus on roads.

We need to ensure maximum connectivity to enable us to join the digital world. As others have said, however, we should not come up with simplistic answers. We need to examine the issue correctly as it is complex and many elements of the issue are to do with pricing rather than capacity.

16:38

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): I thank the minister and the printers of this document for increasing my linguistic understanding of the master of business administration qualification.

The document says:

"Entrepreneurship is not simply for the established and the educated, but for everyone. If an idea will make a living, let alone a fortune, it should be encouraged."

I want to speak about a Scottish industry that has failed to be encouraged and that is and always has been at the cutting edge of information technology by nature of what it sells and of the hardware: the music industry.

If we believe the minister's statement that

"Too few of our existing firms reach global status and too few people back good ideas with action",

there is an absolute requirement for a manufacturing base for our music industry. That would also provide a manufacturing base for the development of what is often referred to as our film industry—although the reality is that we have no film industry, just an ad hoc collection of

movies made in this country with foreign money.

Our music industry is an integral part of the economy but we do not exploit it as much as we could. I urge the minister to meet at the earliest possible opportunity the people from DigMedia, an international company in Edinburgh whose headquarters are in El Paso, who are at the cutting edge of MP3 technology. DigMedia agrees with the SNP amendment's call for a "dedicated Scottish Internet connector."

There are good reasons for a dedicated interconnector. The principal interconnector for Europe is currently based in Reading and could be subject to any number of natural disasters. Indeed, due to the recent floods, the Intel centre recently came close to going out of operation. The centre also suffers potential threats from the over-demands on energy from the greater London area.

DigMedia, along with other companies that deal particularly with MP3 technology and the new broadband technology, would urge the minister to seek out a partnership to create a server centre here in Scotland. More important, the clean-technology buildings that are lying mothballed in the Borders would be an absolutely perfect CD and DVD manufacturing base that would save our nascent film makers and musicians money and time. At present, they are wasting their time having their products made into a saleable form in other countries.

In its merger talks with America Online, Time Warner made it clear that its two CD and DVD plants here in Europe will be up for sale at a knock-down price. On behalf of the Scottish music industry, I urge the minister to make the quickest possible attempt to draw together Scottish Enterprise and Scottish entrepreneurs to provide a manufacturing base for our CD and DVD industry. That could provide much-needed jobs in the Borders.

16:41

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I will try to bring a north Highland perspective to what has been said today. I will start with three points that I know to be important for the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network. The first is the importance of strengthening remote Highland communities—which is why HIE receives funding that Scottish Enterprise does not. Linked to that is the social role that HIE plays—I need go no further.

Secondly, global connection is an important objective, but we have to remember the cost for the HIE and local enterprise company networks, relating to distance and to the difficulty of getting through the hill, as it were. The Scottish Executive must not forget that.

The third point is the importance of very small businesses in the Highlands and Islands—as is the nature of the economic base there. We must not take our eye off that ball.

Having made those three points from the HIE network perspective, I turn to the minister's opening remarks. She rightly mentioned her three key points: the importance of growing businesses, global connections and security for people in work. Skills and education underpin everything the minister is trying to achieve. It is a question of maximising that. At the same time, however, we must not forget that we in the north Highlands are out in the sticks and that it cannot only be a matter of skills and education in Glasgow, Edinburgh or Dundee.

We have to be careful about how we manage our efforts. This is not the Executive's fault, but I have made considerable play recently of the Scottish Agricultural College's proposal to close its small veterinary laboratory in Thurso. That lab is a key skills resource. Such action appears to fly in the face of everything the minister and all right-thinking people in Scotland are trying to do. A holistic approach has to be taken. I acknowledge that that will not be easy for the minister—she almost needs eyes in the back of her head. It will require banging heads together to ensure that her laudable aims are reflected in what other bodies do. It would be a bad thing for the minister's intentions not to be met because of failures on other fronts.

The document's ministerial foreword mentions

"the confidence to embrace . . . change".

It also mentions "self-belief". That is what it is about. For too long, we in this country have sold ourselves short and have not believed in ourselves. We do believe in ourselves: we have a Parliament here today. Here we are. The confidence from this Parliament can go out and help send out this same message to the Scottish people. People who are starting a small business in the Highlands—or in the Borders, Glasgow, Aberdeen or wherever—should have the courage to do it. The Executive is with them—they should just have the courage.

I will close now, as I want to hear what the other closing speakers have to say, Mr Duncan Hamilton in particular.

We had a characteristically elegant speech from Mrs Goldie—Miss Goldie, I am sorry—of the Conservatives. We heard William Hague's policy on the euro. That was not unexpected, but it was expressed eloquently. Mr Mundell chose his strong ground on all things electronic.

To give credit where it is due, from the SNP we heard a superb speech from Alex Neil, and Lloyd

Quinan made an impassioned argument on the music front. I am looking for Duncan Hamilton to correct the imbalance on the Highlands and Islands, as we have not heard much good news and constructive argument on the Highlands and Islands.

Earlier today, inadvertently and in a moment of madness, farmer Fergus Ewing dropped a colossal brick. By his action, he has managed to stall a million pounds-worth of grants. I have here a press release on the matter from the National Farmers Union of Scotland. Duncan Hamilton must talk about the Highlands and he must get Mr Ewing to change his mind and remove the blockage to the scheme. If he cannot do that, he must dissociate himself, on behalf of his party, from Mr Ewing.

16:46

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): We welcome the fact that the minister recognises the priorities for action and the needs that have to be addressed. We also welcome the recognition in the document of the value of wealth creation—something for which we have often been abused in the chamber for pursuing. However, there are major problems. There is no evidence in the document of any proposed action that has a time scale and a budget line. I will return to that issue later.

The new deal has been mentioned. I think that everybody recognises that about 80 per cent of the jobs that have been created through the new deal would have happened anyway. I would like the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning to come clean and admit that the macroeconomic stability that the Executive talks about was inherited. The Executive received a golden inheritance, which has not quite gone off, but we should not think that that stability started in 1997.

Kenny MacAskill and others have discussed the skills base. I think Alex Neil talked about upping the skills base. We cannot fast-track from a low skills base and meet the demands of the industries that want to invest in the short term. We need a programme to fast-track people who already have reasonable skills so that we can attract investment. That does not mean neglecting people who need help.

The document refers to workforce training. Employers, rather than learndirect Scotland, provide that training. Sometimes, employers are a bit upset that that fact is neglected.

Alex Neil: I am puzzled about something. I refer to William Hague's recent announcement about a cut in the Department of Trade and Industry's budget. What is the proportionate cut in the

Scottish Enterprise budget that would result from that cut in the DTI budget?

Mr Davidson: Given that the Scottish Enterprise budget comes out of the block grant, that was not a clever question.

I return to the issue of Government leadership. The Government should act as a brokerage agent to make the private sector want to participate—that is hinted at in the document, but there is not enough detail. Jamie Stone talked about confidence. The private sector does not have enough confidence in the structures or in what the Executive is saying. Employers want something far more significant than what we have had so far.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Mr Davidson: In a moment.

Mr Rumbles: Would the—

Mr Davidson: I said that I would give way in a moment.

Unfortunately, the document makes no mention of the removal of Government interference. However, it says that

"It is business and people, not governments, which lead productivity growth."

Therefore, I presume that the minister agrees that we do not want the heavy hand of Government, but instead want Government to expedite things.

There is no mention of the removal of red tape, which the minister said on 27 November she would address and which was a Labour party policy.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way? He said I could do so in a moment.

Mr Davidson: It has not come yet.

On page 19, there is talk of partnership working, but neither the document nor the minister have said what the Government will bring to the party. Many people have talked about entrepreneurship—I recommend the helpful new centre on that at the Robert Gordon University. All the Government burdens that Mr Rumbles wants to debate deflect the focus of the small entrepreneurial businesses in Scotland, which spend far too much time on administration and not enough on the creativity that we are trying to promote.

We welcome the decentralised approach to Scottish Enterprise, but does that mean that the minister is removing responsibility from the Executive?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): Please wind up, Mr Davidson.

Mr Davidson: Alex Neil's point—

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is closing, Mr Rumbles.

Mr Davidson: I discussed with the minister last night the point that Alex Neil made about the SHEFC's approach to funding. I hope that, when the review comes up in a couple of years' time, she will take on board the necessity of dealing with that issue and of examining how to use the applied sciences as a resource to drive our economy forward.

Scotland needs small government, as only small government will allow our businesses the freedom to prosper, to do their own thing and to take risks.

Mr Rumbles: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please come to a close, Mr Davidson.

Mr Davidson: I am sorry, Presiding Officer—there is a bit of a disturbance in the chamber.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Yes, I can hear it.

Mr Davidson: We do not know how the minister copes with the Liberals.

The minister's document does not go far enough. If we are to get the economy that we need and deserve, she must enter into a better debate about how she is going to assist business to help itself.

16:51

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I immediately risk spontaneous combustion by saying that much of the document is good and deserving of praise. The debate has been interesting and a number of questions that require answers from the Executive have been asked.

Lloyd Quinan has finally laid to rest the suggestion that the Scottish National Party never comes up with positive and specific proposals, as he made three such proposals.

In response to the question that Jamie Stone put to me, I say to my good friends on the Liberal benches that, first, it is not within my power to change the mind of anyone whose surname is Ewing and, secondly, I would not be minded to do so in any event. Fergus Ewing attempted to stand up for those people who will lose out under the less favoured areas scheme. As he is a Highland member, that is exactly what he should be doing.

It would be difficult to disagree with the view that productivity, entrepreneurship, skills match and digital connections, which are covered in the document, are key areas. On business start-up, the minister might find it useful to understand the

complexity and the depth of the problem in Scotland.

In its economic briefing note for January 2001, the Royal Bank of Scotland said:

"Scotland's low business birth rate and relatively low level of business research and development have been persistent and long running problems. Scotland's business birth rate has deteriorated relative to that of England in recent years. In 1994, the difference between new businesses as a percentage of adult population in Scotland and England stood at 8.52 per cent."

That figure has now risen to 11.2 per cent. Not only is the position not encouraging, the disparity north and south of the border causes real concern. I commend to the minister more measures to try to target business start-up as an absolute priority.

Access to capital came up during the debate, although, on that point, the debate was not developed as it should have been. An absence of will from politicians and political parties to urge people in Scotland to become more entrepreneurial or to take more risks is not one of our problems. However, we have a problem when it comes to accessing capital to make that a reality. Our attitude is conservative—with a small c—in comparison with that of the United States or other countries. That attitude prevails not only in government, but in our banking sector—but perhaps the responsibility for that is not the Government's alone and I hope that the message will go out from this debate that we need more radical thinking and more risk taking.

A number of good points have been made about skills shortages. I suggest to the minister that we should embrace some of the measures that are proposed in the document for the careers service and the future skills unit, which bode well. However, we could do a lot more than that. For example, when some countries receive foreign direct investment—one of the few areas that continued to expand throughout the global downturn—they manage to embed learning in a way that we may not have managed to achieve. When a company leaves such a country, another company is more than likely to be attracted to the same country for the simple reason that skills are embedded in the population. That issue must be considered further.

The Executive may find it worth considering yesterday's debate on access to education, during which I pointed out the economic spillover from education.

The Finnish example has already been mentioned. The Finnish Minister for Education gave an excellent speech, which ended with the following:

"For a small nation to maintain a high-quality higher education system, its Government needs to make a heavy investment in it, since external funding from business and

industry is not nearly as easy to obtain as in bigger national economies."

The paper concludes that

"this is still the only survival strategy for a small nation".

To address our skills shortages, we should give more thought to investment.

A key issue in this debate has been the need to expand broadband telecommunications. That is vital. People have spoken about the Highlands and Islands and the absence of ADSL from many areas. Richard Lochhead made the fair point that we cannot just consider the new developments in the economy: we have also to consider the infrastructure so that business can deliver. It is crucial that the kind of action that we have seen in countries such as Sweden is replicated across the board.

David Mundell made an excellent point about the need not just to respond to demand but to create demand. That is absolutely correct. However, I must contrast our position with that of Ireland. In January, the Irish minister announced 11 pilot projects on the west coast and in the more rural parts of Ireland, specifically to create demand. That is a proactive measure that we could learn from. I suggest that the minister may want to do similarly.

I want to make a final point about Scotland in the global community. Throughout the document, the Executive makes great play of the fact that Scotland has to compete in a global community. The whole point of the SNP's amendment is to get that dedicated Scottish internet connector. Whether that is done directly, through Ireland, through the European Union, or however, it will be a vital driver of future Scottish economic growth. Without it, the effect of most of the good intentions and plans in the document will be truncated.

16:56

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic (Mr Alasdair Morrison): I am delighted to close this debate and to emphasise the importance of "A Smart, Successful Scotland" across the whole country. As well as responding to members' points, I will reiterate the key themes of the document, which have been comprehensively discussed this afternoon in a Highlands and Islands context.

My friend Kenny MacAskill referred to a target set in Finland for participation in further and higher education. The target is in the region of 60 or 65 per cent. Mr MacAskill mentioned that figure on television earlier this week and again during yesterday's debate on the graduate endowment. Yesterday, we heard another eulogy of all things Finnish.

I am sure that we all agree with the aspiration to lifelong learning. Its importance underpins the participation target that Finland is committed to. Although it is important that we learn from what is happening in other countries, we should not underplay the considerable success that we are achieving here in Scotland. I will cite a few examples. A total of 51 per cent of school leavers from state schools in Scotland go on to further or higher education, a trend that is steadily increasing. The participation rate for young people in higher education is 47 per cent, double that of 10 years ago. It is worth repeating that in Scotland 75 per cent of the population will, at some time in their lives, take up a higher education opportunity. The figure in Finland is 70 per cent.

We recognise that more needs to be done. That is why we have committed funding for additional places at colleges and higher education institutions. As my colleague Nicol Stephen said yesterday, a new package of support will be available for those entering higher education from the autumn. We are reintroducing bursaries, reducing debt and targeting help at those who are most in need. I hope that that will reassure Mr MacAskill—and I hope that he will start focusing on Scotland and dispense with his obsession with the kingdom of Finland.

George Lyon and a few other members rightly mentioned the importance of raising our skills base. Mr Lyon spoke about the broadband connection and rightly said that it is not a lack of access that is disadvantaging Scotland, but the cost. The answer, of course, is to encourage more telecoms companies into the market. That is exactly what Wendy Alexander will be doing on Monday when she meets major companies.

George Lyon also suggested that all we have had is review after review. I assure him that there will be no further reviews until after 2003. I am sure that that statement will encourage him. Perhaps more important, it will encourage the professionals working in our networks.

The convener of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee raised the question of research funding in the old and new universities.

Alex Neil rose—

Mr Morrison: I am about to respond to points that Mr Neil raised in the debate, if he will give me a moment. Research funding is allocated to the universities with proven research skills, which tends to be the older universities, but we also want to help the new universities build up their research capability, so we need to balance quality and new opportunity. Wendy Alexander intends to review that sensitive matter to ensure that our approach is right.

Alex Neil rose—

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Order. There are too many conversations going on; it is unfair to the minister.

Mr Morrison: Mr Neil asked whether the Executive will review university career services. That is largely a matter for the universities, but we expect a high standard of those services and expect careers Scotland to set that standard.

Bill Butler gave examples from Glasgow Anniesland to emphasise the importance of continuing to pursue the aim of full employment. We are almost within touching distance of full employment—it is firmly back on the agenda.

Alex Neil *rose*—

Mr Morrison: I am not giving way. I must try to respond fully to other members.

We recognise the concerns Des McNulty raised about unemployment in Clydebank. I assure him that there will be consistent action to address unemployment in that area. Robin Harper, correctly, raised the issue of sustainability. At last night's meeting of the cross-party oil and gas group, which was addressed by Wendy Alexander, the group agreed that the industry should take up opportunities to look at environmentally sensitive technologies.

Alex Neil *rose*—

Mr Morrison: I am endeavouring to make progress. I recognise Mr Neil's enthusiasm, but I have responded to his point.

Members: Give way.

The Presiding Officer: Order. The minister is not giving way.

Mr Morrison: The enterprise networks are the agents of change to ensure that the Highlands and Islands can continue to prosper in the future. To achieve that, "A Smart, Successful Scotland" sets out the overall mission for the enterprise networks. It includes growing businesses, global connections and skills and learning. Each is equally important and vitally relevant to the Highlands and Islands.

I believe strongly that the economic future of every part of the Highlands and Islands needs a blend of new, growing and established companies, which together can stimulate a vibrant economy, creating opportunities for jobs, new product development, inventiveness and prosperity. Highlands and Islands Enterprise is already pursuing that agenda. This strategy document, with the targets to be set by the joint performance team, will further advance our agenda for the Highlands and Islands.

The worldwide revolution in new technology continues to gather pace and is a fundamental strand of economic activity throughout the

Highlands and Islands. The Scottish Executive is firmly committed to the development of information and communications technology and the enterprise agencies have made it a key priority to direct efforts and resources towards upgrading communications infrastructure. I do not have to go outside my own constituency to give the example of Iomart, a dynamic company working on Lewis that shows what can be done in the Highlands and Islands. It is a young integrated telecommunications and internet services company. The group has a headquarters in Glasgow but Iomart's entire product range is supported from a purpose-built, dedicated support centre in Stornoway.

Wendy Alexander mentioned Jim Hunter who, as members know, chairs the board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise. When he presented Highlands and Islands Enterprise's most recent annual report, he was speaking as its chairman and as an historian. He said that it is several hundred years since the Highlands and Islands entered a new century in such good shape, relative to the rest of Britain, and with such exciting prospects. That is not to say that there is not still a big job to be done—there are plenty of places where the depopulation that started with the clearances still has to be reversed.

As an aside, Fergus Ewing's reference to Patrick Sellar during First Minister's question time today was loathsome and odious. Fergus Ewing has no sense of proportion or of history.

During the past 30 years, the population of Scotland as a whole—

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP) *rose*—

Members: Give way.

The Presiding Officer: Order. The minister is winding up.

Mr Morrison: I suspect that Mr Ewing has just been wound up.

The population of the Highlands and Islands has grown by some 20 per cent over the past 30 years, but parts of that area have experienced much faster rates of increase. Take Skye for instance. Prior to the clearances, it had 24,000 people. By the 1960s, the population was down to 6,000, but today Skye has about 10,000 people. That increase was made possible by a greatly diversified economy.

"A Smart, Successful Scotland" indicates the priority that we give to social development, particularly, but not exclusively, in the Highlands and Islands. Highlands and Islands Enterprise is already strengthening communities by promoting investment in community assets, developing community strength and leadership and enhancing

the value of culture and heritage. I am sure that there is broad agreement that the enterprise networks should continue to undertake those vital priorities.

I urge members to support the Executive's motion.

Decision Time

17:06

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-1609.1.1, in the name of David McLetchie, which seeks to amend amendment S1M-1609.1, in the name of John Swinney, on "Working Together for Scotland", 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)
 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)
 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)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 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, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (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)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

Amendment to the amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is,

that amendment S1M-1609.1, in the name of John Swinney, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1609, in the name of Henry McLeish, on "Working Together for Scotland", be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)

Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 33, Against 77, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S1M-1609, in the name of Henry McLeish, on "Working Together for Scotland", be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

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

Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (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)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)

Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 49, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament endorses the contents of *Working together for Scotland: A Programme for Government*.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that amendment S1M-1610.1, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1610, in the name of Wendy Alexander, on the strategy for enterprise, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)

Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)

Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 32, Against 77, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that amendment S1M-1610.2, in the name of David Davidson, which seeks to amend motion S1M-1610, in the name of Wendy Alexander, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (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)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 47, Against 63, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that motion S1M-1610, in the name of Wendy Alexander, on the strategy for enterprise, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (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)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, Mr John (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

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)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (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)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 18, Abstentions 31.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the publication of *A Smart Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks*, the first ever comprehensive policy statement of what government expects from the networks, which sets out the foundation for long-term and sustained improvement in economic performance for all of Scotland; welcomes the determination of the Scottish Executive to work with the networks on the challenges of raising productivity, encouraging entrepreneurship, raising skill levels and connecting Scotland globally, and notes the Executive's commitment in setting the vision and direction for the networks to improve their focus and effectiveness.

Acute Services Review (Tayside)

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S1M-1575, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Tayside acute services review consultation.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament expresses its lack of faith in the consultation process associated with the Tayside Acute Services Review and the way in which public opinion is being ignored; is concerned that Tayside Health Board are intent on imposing a centralising agenda which will remove services from Angus and Perthshire and overload the service in Dundee, and believes that the Health and Community Care Committee should undertake an inquiry into the evidence base for the proposals and the effectiveness of the consultation process undertaken.

17:13

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I am pleased to have this debate this evening, but I am not quite so pleased to see that the Minister for Health and Community Care is not in the chamber. Unfortunately, it has been par for the course over the past 18 months to two years that the Minister for Health and Community Care has not wanted to address any of the concerns and problems of the people of Tayside about what is happening in the national health service there.

Uncertainty has been the watchword for the health service in Tayside over the past few years. The acute services review has caused a great deal of anxiety and insecurity among patients, practitioners and the general public alike. The final report from the co-chairs of the review, Professor David Rowley and Dr Andrew Russell, has now been published—it is a weighty tome, as members will see. Although there is still to be a three-month period of formal public consultation before the final decision is officially reached, the people of Tayside believe that the final decision was reached some time ago. They believe that the consultation to come will be a cosmetic exercise and that the entire process has been a sham and a farce.

The proposals that are of particular concern to me and the people of Perth are the plans to remove consultant-led maternity provision and 24-hour children's services from Perth royal infirmary and to centralise them in Ninewells hospital in Dundee. I have colleagues who have particular concerns about the implications of the review for health services in Angus and Dundee, where the concern is that Ninewells will become overburdened. My colleague Andrew Welsh very much hoped to be in Parliament this evening; unfortunately, Heathrow is fog-bound and he has

been unable to get back to Scotland in time. He has been working hard in his part of Tayside to further the interests of his constituents.

My main concern is, of course, Perth. Taking maternity and children's services away from Perth royal infirmary is akin to ripping the heart out of the hospital. There have been warnings over the past few months that a loss of paediatric cover would pose a threat to the accident and emergency department. That possibility has not even been addressed by the report.

Over the past year or two, there has been a vigorous public debate in Perthshire; both the public and the professionals have participated fully in that debate. The clear perception all along has been that no one involved in the review has listened to anything that has been said.

There is now some cynicism in the public's response to any announcement on the health service in Tayside. The public think that the aims of the review and the charade of the consultation process that has been associated with it have been cost driven, that its management has been publicity driven and that its direction has been politically driven.

Three years ago, Tayside Health Board assured me that there were no plans to close the children's ward at PRI. Since then, a petition to oppose any reduction in children's services at PRI has received 10,000 signatures, and two public meetings have been held, each of which was attended by more than 1,000 people. Five thousand people demonstrated in the streets of Perth and hundreds marched up the Mound to demonstrate at the Parliament on St Andrew's day, delivering more than 20,000 postcards to the Minister for Health and Community Care—who, unfortunately, did not see fit to meet the people who had come here.

Despite all that, Professor Rowley still proposes centralisation. He dismisses the thousands of genuine expressions of concern as the work of a "vociferous minority" and the public concern as "emotionally held". Of the hundreds of communications to me about the threat to PRI, not one has supported any of the frequently leaked proposals that have characterised the process. Vociferous the representatives of the Hands Off PRI campaign may be—and I welcome them to the Parliament, particularly the organisers Kate Gillanders and Julie Fielding—but a minority they are not. They speak for Perthshire. It is Professor Rowley who is not listening.

In an injured response to the criticism, Professor Rowley insisted that he was

"presenting a range of options".

However, the truth lies in phrases in the report,

such as

"it is difficult to come to a conclusion other than that a single service is the only viable strategic option",

which he said of paediatric services, or

"it is difficult to come to any logical conclusion other than that a single site model for maternity services is appropriate."

In the face of such comments, Professor Rowley continues to insist that, somehow, a range of options will be proffered to the public.

The final report paid no attention to the important issues of distance and transport links. People who face an extra 20-odd miles of travel along the notorious A90 Perth to Dundee road to give birth, attend clinics or visit loved ones have raised those issues time and again. The conclusion of most is that the process has been a sham.

Those who are responsible for the review seem thirled to a centralist agenda. They have come up with a solution that threatens to set area against area and will be no good for any part of Tayside. I want the Health and Community Care Committee to set up an inquiry into the review process. Apart from ignoring public opinion, the process has now been responsible for destroying public confidence in the national health service in Tayside. That matter should be of concern to every member.

Susan Deacon has been conspicuous by her absence here today and in Tayside throughout the past two years, apart from one interview with Radio Tay, in which she committed a major gaffe. She had to admit her ignorance of the fact that waiting lists in Tayside soared by 47.3 per cent from September 1999 to September 2000.

Acute services reviews are causing problems in places other than Tayside and similar stories are emerging around the country. Public confidence in the consultation process of each review is at rock bottom, but the minister refuses to take any responsibility. She refused my invitations to come to Perth to hear what the public have to say. She refused to meet the campaigners when they came to Parliament. She has shrugged her shoulders and said that the decision is not up to her. She even chooses not to attend today's debate.

I hope that members of the Health and Community Care Committee who have attended the debate—I see some of them here—will agree that somebody needs to get a grip and restore public confidence in the delivery of health services in Tayside and throughout the country. They can play a part in that by undertaking an inquiry that will actually listen to the views and evidence put forward by public and professionals—views and evidence that, so far, have been summarily ignored by the acute services review in Tayside.

17:20

Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): I congratulate Roseanna Cunningham on securing the debate. However, her remarks about the absence of the Minister for Health and Community Care were unfortunate, as she knows that it is routine for deputy ministers to speak in members' debates.

As the member for Perth, Roseanna Cunningham made a strong case for the implications for Perth of the acute services review in Tayside. I cannot comment on that, as I have not been elected to represent anyone in Perth and I would not seek to interfere in that part of the Tayside area. However, I am a constituency member for Dundee, and the review has implications for Dundee, so I feel that I must make a few comments in the debate, not least on the motion.

Parts of the motion give me considerable problems. For example, we are asked to express a

"lack of faith in the consultation process associated with the Tayside Acute Services Review".

That is not because the process was less than comprehensive, as I can remember SNP members complaining that the cost of holding focus groups of people in Tayside who use the health service, in order to establish their views, was a waste of money—money that could be better used on front-line services. SNP members are not worried about the extent of the consultation.

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I represent the Mearns, which is served by Stracathro. I can guarantee that the people of the Mearns feel that the consultation process has not been comprehensive and that the whole process is flawed.

Mr McAllion: I was merely pointing out that the SNP complained that the consultation process was too comprehensive and that too much money was being spent on it. Nine public meetings were held in the second phase, only one of which was in Dundee. That does not sound like a centralising agenda to me. The main argument in the motion is that public opinion in Tayside has been ignored in favour of a health board agenda that is centralising by putting too many health services in Dundee and not enough in other parts of Tayside, such as Angus and Perth.

Constituency members have every right to argue for their corner of Tayside; I will argue for mine. I have not come across anyone in Dundee who says that too many health services are located there, that we are spoiled for choice at Ninewells and that it is time that some of the services in Dundee were taken away and sent elsewhere in Tayside.

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Mr McAllion: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

I have heard John Swinney argue passionately for the consultant-led maternity service at Ninewells to be closed down and transferred to Perth. Despite the fact that the majority of births in the area take place in Dundee, that most of the poverty is in Dundee and that the greatest need for that service is in Dundee, the leader of the SNP wants to close down the service and move it to Perth. If he expects me to support that, he should find something else to do.

I understand the pain that lies behind the debate—we are all being hurt by the acute services review in Tayside and I will shout for Dundee in the same way that Roseanna Cunningham shouts for Perth—but I recognise that there must be an acute services review, because the current structure of services in Tayside is distorting the way in which services are delivered to people in the area. One in five of the beds at Ninewells is inappropriately occupied—that has to change, and it can change only by moving resources from acute to primary services. If politicians cannot face up to that, they are not telling the truth to their constituents.

17:24

Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con): What we have just heard shows the lack of understanding on both sides of Tayside—Perthshire and Angus. The stony silences from many Labour members at Tayside Health Board meetings speak volumes.

I am incredibly grateful to Roseanna Cunningham for securing the debate. It is important that somebody who has spent a lot of time at Tayside Health Board, trying to understand what has been going on, should consider the matter objectively and should take into account the needs of Angus and Perthshire and, indeed, Dundee. However, the history of the Tayside acute services review is one of mismanagement, lack of consultation, high-handedness and centralisation. All the while, the Executive has buried its head in the sand, leaving mass uncertainty and fear.

It was only after constant pressure and a Health and Community Care Committee investigation that the Minister for Health and Community Care sent in the task force. Professor Clark's report found management to be at fault and took the appropriate action. However, having found the cause of the £90 million deficit—most of which, I concede, resulted not from Government policy, but from bad administration by the board and some of the trusts—the Executive now seems content to go further and punish the patients of Perth, Angus

and Dundee for that mismanagement.

The review is undeniably dictated by cost alone. For every clinical voice in its favour, there is a clinical voice against it. More important, not one patient's voice praises the plan. The review's launch, days before the date that was promised to us, the elected members of Parliament, shows the contempt in which the people of Tayside are held.

The review makes a number of errors. It recommends—before the Executive's own national review of maternity services is published tomorrow—changes to maternity services in Perth and Angus. The review is pre-empting some of the Executive's views, and the knowledge that the maternity services review will provide, which we hope will lead to better maternity services throughout Scotland. If that is not a clue as to how the acute services review has been conducted, I do not know what is.

The changes that are proposed would leave no obstetrics services between Pitlochry and Dundee or even between Loch Rannoch and Dundee. How long, I wonder, would an ambulance take? I notice that there is no provision for extra money to be spent on ambulance or emergency services, should the review's proposed changes to maternity provision go ahead. I recognise that midwifery services in Tayside, Perth and Angus need to be valued and promoted more. I have been informed that retention of maternity services as they are would cost about £1 million a year. Is not that a price worth paying? Would the service be subject to such change if the review were not driven by a deficit of £90 million?

Having met patients in Angus, I know that there is a curious omission of naming Stracathro hospital in the review. Angus is a county that already has a hospital—perhaps we should remember that as Stracathro begins to be dismantled. Stracathro serves 130,000 people, including people living up in the Mearns. That is the same number as live in Perth and Kinross. We were once proud of that hospital and we should be proud of it again. To suck services in from Perth and Angus will, in short, leave Perth royal infirmary and Stracathro as empty shells.

We must not forget that, in the end, the review is in the hands of the Minister for Health and Community Care. We must not forget that it is she who will take the final decision and it is on that that she will be judged.

17:27

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): The Tayside acute services review affects not only the people in Tayside. As Ben Wallace said, most of the people in the southern part of my constituency, notably in the

Mearns, are served by Stracathro hospital. The acute services review says that the aging Stracathro hospital should be replaced with a new-style community hospital that offers hi-tech diagnostic and ambulatory care facilities. Although the report does not preclude the development of the new hospital on the Stracathro site, it does not specify a location. How convenient.

There is strong local support for the retention of Stracathro hospital—a 20,000-signature petition has already been raised. Many members attended a rally outside Stracathro hospital, where almost 1,500 people gathered to voice their concerns about the future of the hospital. I am not talking about the bricks and mortar of the hospital. I am talking about that hospital's facilities for people who live in rural Scotland, north and south of the boundary between Tayside and Grampian.

If Stracathro hospital closes, the people in the Mearns will lose out tremendously. A new hospital in Arbroath, for example, will be no good to the people of the Mearns. In my view, the report is flawed. My constituents in the Mearns have not been properly consulted. When we attended public meetings, I was astounded that there was no mention of the people of the Mearns. Health board representatives attended public meetings in Brechin and did not even mention the people of the Mearns, never mind consult them. They had to be prodded and reminded. The health board's focus seems to be that centralisation is the key. The problem is that Stracathro hospital is located in the far north of Tayside. How much more managerially convenient it would be to remove that hospital and centralise facilities in Dundee and elsewhere, but that would not help the local people.

I almost said that there seems to be a lack of honesty in the report, but I would not lay such a charge. I will lay the charge that there is a lack of forthrightness. Why is there no recommendation on the location of the new Angus hospital? The suspicion remains that Tayside Health Board has it in for Stracathro. If that is so, my constituents will lose a much-needed facility. People in the rural part of my constituency—the Mearns—will be in trouble. They will have to travel north to a hospital in Aberdeen or to the new hospital, which might be in Arbroath; that seems to be the suggestion, although the board has not had the courage of its convictions and said so in the report. We must save the Stracathro facility for the people who need it. That is what this is about.

17:30

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Roseanna Cunningham on her success in obtaining this debate, which gives us a welcome opportunity to air the issues

that are connected with the acute services review. It has been a revealing debate so far. I did not know that the great conscience of the Parliament, John McAllion, had such an affection for focus groups, which he vigorously defended in his speech, while misrepresenting the views and attitudes of others who have spoken in the debate.

It is entirely natural and sensible for individuals to promote the concerns of their constituents. I represent a large landed area of Perthshire and Angus, which depends on the services that are provided by Stracathro hospital, Perth royal infirmary and Ninewells hospital. What concerns me is that we face an acute services review that denies the geography of the area in which we live and makes no attempt to propose any sensible alternatives, for example, on the use of vital ambulance services which, before we even embark on the acute services review, are under enormous strain in large rural areas of Scotland. We have before us a prospectus of change, all of which is done in the name of modernisation and improvement of the efficiency of services, but which denies the fundamental reality of the geography in which we live.

I represent constituents who, to get from their homes in Kinloch Rannoch or Loch Rannochside to Perth royal infirmary, would be engaged in a journey that might take them up to two hours in good weather. They are now expected to undertake a journey of two and a half hours to get to Ninewells hospital. There are no credible alternatives in place in relation to vital transport facilities and making services available in the locality. I express to the minister in the strongest possible terms my concern about the plans to remove the consultant-led maternity unit from Perth royal infirmary. That unit is vital to an area of Scotland where there is, in fact, a growing population—ministers should not ignore that.

My second point is on Stracathro hospital in Angus, at the other end of my constituency. Nobody can deny that the bricks and mortar of Stracathro hospital are under strain and do not deliver the modern-day health care facilities that are required. That is not an excuse for running down the provision of services in the county of Angus. The only reason why those facilities are so run down is that health service planning in that part of Scotland has been the victim of the most appalling neglect for 20 or 30 years. The sooner health service management in Scotland faces up to its neglect of some of our vital country health care services, the better our debate about the future of those services will be.

I have one specific question for the minister, to which I hope he will respond in his summing-up. My constituents, while they are asked to accept the closure of Stracathro, are being promised a

new facility. How might that come about? I have heard far too many promises from Tayside Health Board about an integrated package. I am quite prepared to accept that change might be needed, but I suspect that my constituents will have to face bad news before they have any prospect of reliable good news from Tayside Health Board.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Kate MacLean has withdrawn, so I offer her slot to Richard Simpson.

17:34

Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I congratulate Roseanna Cunningham on getting this debate, which will be, I think, one of a series of debates on acute services reviews up and down the country. The issues are not totally dissimilar in different areas. I question some of what I have heard. Having been responsible for the Stobhill report, which has changed the pattern of consultation by health boards, I listened with some dismay. It seems to me that, in many cases, consultation has undoubtedly improved.

In the case of Tayside, the report that I have received indicates that the board established a patient reference forum of 30 individuals, consisting of patients, carers and Tayside Health Council. Members of the forum were involved in every single group that was consulted in the review. Forty public meetings were conducted, involving over 5,000 people. Two deliberative conferences, facilitated by external organisations, were held, involving 160 members of the public.

Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
rose—

Dr Simpson: No. I do not have much time.

Tayside Health Board was involved in meetings with pressure groups that were held by Professor Rowley. The patient reference forum, staff partnership forum and professional bodies jointly determined the criteria against which the options, benefits and risks would be determined. That does not sound like an appalling consultation process. Rather than rhetoric, we need to hear specifics of the sort that Mike Rumbles put forward when he said that no public meeting had been held in the Mearns area, and that people in that area were not consulted.

I can accept that, but I cannot accept, on the basis of this evidence, that there has not been some measure of consultation, even if that process remains flawed. The problem on Tayside is that it is bedevilled by the funding issue in the background, which has resulted in a lack of trust in the trust boards and the health board. That makes consultation difficult, because it is not based on

trust.

The problems of south Glasgow were recently debated and, as I said, there will be debates about many other areas. The main issue across Scotland must be that, in preparation for the next 10 to 15 years, we develop safe services. Nobody would suggest that we should expand neurology services beyond the areas that they are in at the moment.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
rose—

Dr Simpson: I am sorry. I do not have time as I only have three minutes. I am going to run out of time anyway.

No one is suggesting that those services should be expanded. Are we suggesting that the services that we have, in the places that we have them at the moment, are safe? Unless that is the case, members must sign up to modernisation along with everybody else and produce proposals as to how that is to be achieved.

I will finish by dealing with obstetrics.

Mrs Margaret Ewing *rose—*

Dr Simpson: I am sorry. I do not have time to take an intervention. If I had more time, I would let Margaret Ewing intervene.

The advice that I have received about obstetrics from the colleges is that 3,000 births are necessary to sustain the clinical work of consultants. If that is not the case, we can have a different debate. The same massive debate took place when centralisation occurred in Ayrshire and Arran some 10 years ago. No one in Ayrshire and Arran would now propose to divide those units again. In Forth Valley, although we are having a debate about where the services should be centralised, they are being centralised. The dilemma that is being faced is that services must be safe, but must also be as local as possible.

Susan Deacon should not be in the chamber, because she will have to make the ultimate decision. It is inappropriate for Roseanna Cunningham to attack her on that basis.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Four members still want to speak, so speeches will have to come down to just over two minutes if they are all to get in.

17:38

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I have to say that I feel slightly aggrieved, as a member who represents constituents across Tayside, to see my time being eaten up by someone who spoke more or less on behalf of the Government and does not represent the area in

this debate.

Dr Simpson: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Is it correct for a member to accuse another member of speaking when he does not represent the area, when in fact he represents constituents in the Tayside area? Mr Monteith should do a bit of geography.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I confirm that that is not the case.

I think that the accusation was directed as much against the Deputy Presiding Officer's lack of control of time as anything else, so can you now please use your time expeditiously, Mr Monteith?

Mr Monteith: I welcome the opportunity to debate this issue. I especially welcome the opportunity to raise the issue of Angus and the Mearns and Perth and Kinross.

It is well recorded from the speeches that have been made that it is being suggested that acute services should be moved from Stracathro to Dundee, which could result in only 67 beds being left in Stracathro. That would mean that there would be one bed per 170 people in Dundee and one bed per 3,793 people in Angus and the Mearns. Where is the social justice in that? Where is the value for money under those proposals, when high-tech beds are being occupied by patients being treated for ingrowing toenails and hernias?

Although distance is a crucial issue, a more important issue is the travelling time. Areas such as Inverbervie, Fettercairn, Laurencekirk and Johnshaven are within the reach of Angus and the Mearns and are served by Stracathro hospital. If an area with a population of 130,000 such as Perth can justify a hospital, Angus and the Mearns should expect a hospital at Stracathro.

We should also be aware that the number of cases of obstetric litigation is high and rising across Britain. Anyone taking their wife or partner to the maternity unit might get stuck behind a snow tractor or a tractor carrying bales of hay and will still have that extra distance to travel from Perth to Dundee. Furthermore, if we take into account the other health board reviews in which, for example, the maternity unit at Stirling could be moved to Falkirk, we could have a situation where there is no maternity provision between Dundee and Falkirk.

Obstetric emergencies are unpredictable and can be catastrophic. I know friends who have experienced great difficulties; as I have already said, the distance and the travelling time are crucial issues. As a result, I do not think that the proposals before us are what we need.

We have good reason to believe that Angus and the Mearns and Perth and Kinross did not

contribute to Tayside Health Board's deficit. Those areas should not pay for the incompetence of others by losing their local services. Instead, we should be seeking local provision from these health boards. I welcome the opportunity to state those facts and thank Roseanna Cunningham for securing the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Although I cannot extend this debate for the normal 30 minutes, in these circumstances I am minded to accept, with the minister's agreement, a motion without notice to extend the debate by 10 minutes.

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm) *indicated agreement.*

Motion moved,

That the debate be extended by 10 minutes.—[Mrs Margaret Ewing.]

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Monteith actually got three and a half minutes, so the remaining members are back on course.

17:42

Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP): For the past three years, local people have made it abundantly plain at every opportunity that they want to retain Stracathro hospital as a base for acute services in Angus and the Mearns and local maternity services in the three current sites. Those views could not have been more clearly expressed or more overwhelmingly endorsed at public meeting after public meeting. However, the review recommends a single-site maternity unit with no acute services for Angus and the Mearns. That situation is causing unprecedented concern.

The review team has tried to spin the promised new community hospital as good news, but the fact is that even if it is eventually built, it will mean a severe reduction in health services in Angus. The people in Angus and their elected representatives must not be sidetracked into fighting about either the siting of this illusory new hospital or the location of the single-site maternity unit. Instead, they must unite to save all acute and maternity services in Angus and the Mearns.

The financial context of the review means that the deficit must be resolved before the report's proposals can be implemented. That was confirmed by the new chair of Tayside Health Board, who said yesterday:

"In reality, no major changes will be made until Tayside's £19 million deficit is wiped out, and that will not be until 2003."

It was further implied that there was no prospect of ministers writing off the deficit. Tayside Health

Board and the Scottish Executive must therefore make clear their plans for dealing with the massive deficit. Given the dire financial state of Tayside Health Board, it is very hard to see where funding will be found for a £20 million hospital. Indeed, it is such a burden on the whole situation that it is very difficult to be optimistic about the prospects for Angus.

From the start, there has been very real concern about the lack of concrete evidence to support any of the review's proposals, all of which will decimate services in Angus. Certainly with regard to maternity services, there is nothing to suggest that the proposals would result in significant cost savings nor that the units are in any way unsafe or unsatisfactory.

As for acute services, closer examination of the review report reveals that 67 beds will be provided in Angus, of which only 29 would be quasi-acute. That represents one bed per 3,793 people in Angus and the Mearns, compared with one bed per 427 people in Perth and one bed per 170 people in Dundee. Where is the evidence to justify that degree of inequality?

The people of Angus and the Mearns are being made to bear a disproportionate and unacceptable burden, in an attempt to reduce debt throughout Tayside. What the people of Angus and the Mearns want is not a reduction in health services, but an enhancement of them and increased choice.

17:45

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to speak directly after Irene McGugan. Along with Andrew Welsh and one or two other members, she and I attended a meeting organised by the Keep MUM campaign in Montrose on Saturday. The campaign supports the maternity unit in Montrose. At that meeting, it was decided to divide those present into focus groups, to discuss the prospects for maternity provision in Angus. Cleverly, all the politicians were allocated to the same group. At the end of our 10-minute discussion, we decided that we should seek the retention of maternity services at the present three sites in Angus. It is essential that maternity units are provided where local people want them—in their own locality. That principle can be applied more broadly across all health service provision.

The county of Angus is geographically very different from other regions in the Tayside Health Board area. Instead of having a single centre of population around which everyone can rally, it has a spread-out population and four main centres, including the Mearns. The result is that a few promises have been made—the possibility of a

new hospital here and the development of a single maternity unit there—which have divided opinion. Coupled with that, the review team has been playing Angus off against Perth and has taken every possible opportunity to divide opinion and reduce the pressure for any one solution.

In Angus, the politicians have decided to unite behind Stracathro. That is no accident: we have spoken to each other.

Mr Rumbles: And in the Mearns.

Alex Johnstone: And with politicians in the Mearns. I am sorry. I was born and brought up in the Mearns, so I should know better.

In Angus and the Mearns, the politicians have united behind Stracathro. It is our intention to seek the preservation of acute services on the Stracathro site. Without those services, there will be an acute services wasteland between Aberdeen and Dundee, and unless we continue to unite behind Stracathro there will be no future for the provision of those services. I thank Roseanna Cunningham for securing the debate and lend my support to the motion.

17:48

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Presiding Officer, I thank you for suggesting that the debate be extended so that I could participate. I, too, congratulate Roseanna Cunningham on securing the debate.

It is crystal clear that Tayside Health Board faces a huge task in restoring public confidence, let alone the confidence of politicians. The minister can only endorse that fact. His boss sent a task force into Tayside Health Board, such was the degree of mismanagement and the seriousness of the financial problems that it faced.

I do not want to go over old ground. We are now in a six-week period, following the publication of the acute services review, in which the board intends to hold further discussions with interest groups, clinicians—especially obstetricians—midwives, nursing staff and others. I can only encourage the board to do that. At the end of that period, the board intends to publish a further 25 to 30-page document prior to a three-month formal consultation period.

I hope that, during that consultation period, Tayside Health Board will take a close look at the way in which Fife Health Board is carrying out its consultation and trying to regain public confidence. There will have to be many meetings with community councils, residents' associations and a multitude of interest groups, and perhaps roadshows at local events and a newsletter distributed to every household. The board must undertake such actions now, to maximise public

involvement and participation.

I will comment briefly on three aspects of the review. First, we must not side-step—as the review has done—where the proposed new Angus community hospital should be located. The population may be concentrated on the coast, but locating the hospital at Arbroath, so close to Dundee, would be a mistake. It should be central to the population as a whole, which Stracathro is. I strongly support the case for Stracathro—indeed, I first got to know it as a boy when my father was a consultant anaesthetist there. It might be where it is due to an accident of history, but it commands huge local loyalty and it is in the right place for all the people of Angus and the Mearns, whom it serves.

Secondly, I am deeply concerned about the proposed centralisation of maternity and children's facilities at Ninewells hospital. That could result in there being nothing other than a midwife-only facility between Dundee and Stirling—or, worse, between Dundee and Falkirk, should Forth Valley Health Board go ahead and centralise its maternity facilities there.

I recently visited the maternity facility at PRI and participated in one of the marches, along with Roseanna Cunningham, who could not see me for the crowd. PRI, rightly, commands strong local support. The board must use the six-week period to find a way out of the current impasse through further discussions with obstetricians in particular.

Thirdly, the Tayside acute services review should not be considered simply in terms of the Tayside Health Board area. It is crucial that it is discussed in relation to the proposals for Forth Valley Health Board and Fife Health Board. I say that as a regional member and hope that that demonstrates the value of having regional members, with the overview and perspective that they bring to the Parliament. Those who live on the boundaries must not be forgotten or marginalised.

I had better stop before I am stopped. What is essential and of paramount concern to members is the highest standard of health care for all who live in Tayside Health Board area and for those outwith its boundaries who use its services.

17:53

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): I congratulate Roseanna Cunningham on securing this debate today. It is entirely appropriate for her to represent the views of her constituents on local health proposals. Equally, it is inappropriate for me or Susan Deacon to comment at this stage on specific local plans—it was unworthy of Roseanna Cunningham to attack the minister on that ground.

The Executive's job is to set the framework for the local plans and it is up to local health bodies to translate that national framework into local action. As John McAllion said, I am clear about the fact that we need acute services reviews and that they must not be driven by money.

As the national review of acute services made clear, the objective of acute services reviews is modern, high-quality services with the correct balance between hospital and community services. They also offer an opportunity to assess, systematically and objectively, how the location of services balances local access with the scope and delivery of specialist services.

The balance between hospital and community services is also critical for maternity services. I note what Richard Simpson said about Ayrshire, which, although it has one centralised maternity unit, also has excellent community services. I am not saying that Ayrshire should be the model for the whole of Scotland—decision making must be local—but we have to beware of being alarmist because, clearly, the service in Ayrshire is entirely safe.

I am slightly disadvantaged because the framework on maternity services will be launched tomorrow and, obviously, I cannot talk today about its specific contents. I can say, in general, that it adopts a woman and family-centred approach to care and support and has been planned in partnership with women. I am also pleased to hear that Tayside Health Board will examine that framework as part of its on-going work. I am told that the health board will consult stakeholders and consider—significantly and importantly—cross-border issues in conjunction with Forth Valley Health Board.

Ben Wallace: I am conscious that the minister has said that he cannot comment in detail on the acute services review, but would he say that it was unwise for the health board to produce its review before that framework was published?

Malcolm Chisholm: Many maternity service reviews are being conducted at the moment. The point that Ben Wallace has made could be made of all of them. A lot of work has been done by the health board and I have been assured that it will examine the framework.

Although I have said that decisions that affect local communities are best taken at a local level, it is clear that the Executive has great interest in how those decisions are made. That is why "Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change", which came out in December 2000, pledged that

"we will establish an expert group supporting and advising local NHS Boards in managing changes in the configuration of services and advising the Health Department of the

appropriateness of local reconfiguration".

Roseanna Cunningham expressed concern that the NHS in Tayside has not fully engaged the public in its consultation exercise. Full, genuine and meaningful public consultation is of paramount importance in developing proposals that will have far-reaching consequences for everyone who lives in Tayside. The idea that change can be imposed without the support and involvement of the many stakeholders is unsustainable.

Roseanna Cunningham: Does the minister accept that, whatever the process of consultation, the people of Perthshire, Angus and the Mearns have expressed a consistent, sustained view that appears not to have been taken on board at any time by those who are conducting the review and producing the report?

The issue is the extent to which the consultation is real rather than apparent. It can be real consultation only if the people who are making their views known have some confidence that those views are genuinely being taken on board. The problem is that people in Tayside simply do not believe that their views are being taken on board.

Malcolm Chisholm: Many views have been expressed today about the effectiveness of the consultation. I suppose that I had some involvement in that, in that I was on the Health and Community Care Committee when it produced its report on Stracathro hospital, as referred to by Ben Wallace and others. Looking back, I think that the committee took a balanced view. Among the recommendations in its report was the following:

"The Committee strongly urge the Trust and the Board to maximise efforts to consult timeously **all levels** of staff at Stracathro and the public in Angus now and at all stages of the Acute Services Review."

The committee also acknowledged that the health board had made significant efforts to consult the public. Looking at the matter from outside, it appears to me that there have been good developments—Richard Simpson referred to recent developments and consultation. I am not here today to announce that the consultation has been perfect; I merely note that the Health and Community Care Committee took a balanced view, and that its conclusion may well be reasonable.

There is room for a great deal of improvement in the way in which health boards consult. That is why the Executive, in "Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change", pledged to ensure that statutory guidance on formal consultation will be reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of modern health care systems and takes into account the changes to NHS planning that are

announced elsewhere in the plan.

The Executive also pledges to provide guidance, training and support to local NHS leaders to enable them to involve the public effectively in the management of changes to local services.

Presiding Officer, can you tell me how long I have?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have another three minutes.

Malcolm Chisholm: While I fully understand people's support for their local hospitals, that has to be weighed against the need for appropriate quality of care and the balance of benefit for the community as a whole. What takes over in an area when services move has to be considered. There has been much discussion about what may emerge in Angus. I am told that there are proposals for a new community hospital there, and I am also told that the people of Angus will be consulted on the precise location of their service. To an extent, the answer to Roseanna Cunningham's point is that people in different parts of a large area will take different views about where they want services to be located. That has been evident in this debate, with conflicting speakers representing different areas.

Mr Rumbles *rose—*

Mr Swinney *rose—*

Malcolm Chisholm: Two members wish to intervene. I will give way to John Swinney.

Mr Swinney: I do not want to get bogged down in the issue of the location of services, but I hope that the minister will set out what the Scottish Executive's attitude will be to supporting the development of a new hospital facility in Angus. I fear that my constituents will have to bite the bullet of bad news long before they get any prospect of good news in the form of high-quality services to which they will have reasonable geographic access.

Malcolm Chisholm: That issue will form part of what is eventually presented to the Executive. In principle, if public funds are needed for a capital development in Angus, that money will be found. Many issues of funding have arisen in the debate, and I do not have time to address those in detail.

We all understand that the task force was sent in because of massive trust shortfalls. That was nothing to do with the Health and Community Care Committee, whose report did not refer to money—although I stress that I am a great supporter of the Health and Community Care Committee.

That is the background to some of the financial problems. I remind members that funding to Tayside increased by 7 per cent this year, and will increase next year by 5.5 per cent.

Shona Robison: The minister said earlier that the acute services review is not driven by money. Why then have the health board and the trust said that the affordability of the Tayside acute services review is entirely dependent on eliminating the existing deficit? How can services be developed unless the deficit is dealt with? How can the deficit be dealt with without the assistance of the Executive?

Malcolm Chisholm: I acknowledge the point that Shona Robison makes about the deficit. Clearly, the board and the trust are also saying that the two exercises are quite separate from that point. There are complex arguments about the deficit in Tayside that I would pursue, but I think that the Presiding Officer will not allow me to.

In her motion, Roseanna Cunningham calls on the Health and Community Care Committee to undertake an inquiry into the proposals. It is not for me to tell the Health and Community Care Committee what to do. I merely observe that when I was a member of the committee, we took the view that we would be interested in matters such as the process of consultation but would not interfere in local decision taking, which, appropriately, is for local health bodies.

I feel bad about not giving way to Mr Rumbles.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Oh, give way to Mr Rumbles.

Mr Rumbles: The minister referred consistently to consultation in Angus. Even Tayside Health Board is falling into that trap. Even when the minister was a member of the committee, the committee did not mention the Mearns. People in the Mearns feel somewhat neglected as a result of the lack of consultation. They are served by Stracathro hospital, which is only 500m across the border, and they need to be properly consulted and involved.

Malcolm Chisholm: If my memory serves me correctly, I think that we referred specifically to consultation in Angus. I will not go down that path because my time is almost up.

We will encourage the health board and its partners to work urgently, openly and transparently. When the extra work, which I have been assured will take place, is completed, we expect the board to take decisions—however difficult—that balance competing demands but fundamentally improve the quality of services for everyone in Tayside.

Meeting closed at 18:02.

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