

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 21 June 2001

Session 1

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 21 June 2001

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

Scotland's Place in the World

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We have two debates this morning before a ministerial statement. The Presiding Officers have looked at the list of people who have already requested to speak—even before we have asked for request-to-speak buttons to be pressed—and both debates are oversubscribed. I warn members that it is unlikely that we will be able to call everyone. Timekeeping will therefore be strict. I ask everyone, including those on the front benches, to keep to their allotted time.

We begin with the Scottish National Party debate on motion S1M-2030, in the name of John Swinney, on Scotland's place in the world, and two amendments to that motion.

09:31

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): This is the first opportunity that I have had to address Parliament since the death of Cardinal Winning. I wish to place on record in Parliament the sorrow of the Scottish National Party at the death of Cardinal Winning and to extend to everyone in the Catholic community and the wider community in Scotland our sympathies at the loss to Scotland of a great church statesman.

In the past fortnight, Parliament has experienced two major international events within its precincts: the address by President Mbeki of South Africa and the address yesterday by the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern. We have also had the political declaration by a number of so-called constitutional regions in Europe, which was signed by the First Minister on 28 May. This is therefore an appropriate moment to consider Scotland's place in the international community.

When he addressed Parliament, President Mbeki said this:

"While the Scottish Parliament is the custodian and promoter of democracy, human rights and human development, it has also to play a role in promoting the agenda for development for us as well and the rest of the world. The Scottish Parliament has a responsibility to say what is happening to the peoples of the world as a result of globalisation."

What I think President Mbeki was telling us in that passage was the importance of this Parliament having broad and open horizons and a

willingness to confront issues that may lie beyond the tightly defined powers of our Scottish Parliament: a willingness to have ambitions for Scotland and a willingness to have broad horizons for Scotland. In my view, that highlighted the role of the Scottish Parliament in addressing wider issues that are of concern to the people of Scotland but that may not necessarily be directly within the allotted powers of this Parliament—for example, the battle to support international development; the quest to oppose nuclear weapons and to create a safe Scotland; and the desire to work with others in securing international peace. All those are noble intentions and ideas. We as a Parliament should support them and be involved in them.

We in the Scottish National Party want Scotland to be a normal country with a normal Parliament, able to play a positive part in the international community, co-operating with other countries, participating in European and international institutions, and representing our own interests directly and in accordance with the wishes of our people.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Given the results that were achieved by the SNP two weeks ago, when the party's share of the vote fell to barely 20 per cent of the electorate, could Mr Swinney tell me and the chamber how ringing an endorsement that was of the SNP's policy for independence?

Mr Swinney: When I consider the way in which the SNP is mercilessly attacked by Labour politicians, and when I consider the way in which ministers regularly follow the fortunes of the SNP, I know that the SNP remains a formidable and consistent threat in its unity of purpose to ensure that Scottish independence is won. I will have a good deal more to say about that in the course of my speech. Of course, Mr Butler will be aware that the Labour party's vote also fell in Scotland. That should be a source of concern to him. We intend to erode it even further in the months and years to come.

The issue at the heart of this debate is the role that we envisage for Scotland. We should consider other small countries. Representatives of the Norwegian Government were actively involved in peace-brokering in the middle east in the 1990s and are now involved in the peace process in Sri Lanka. The Finnish Government has worked to support the ending of the Kosovo crisis. I therefore say that we as a country have a role to play in the international arena and we must play it positively to encourage and support the process of international co-operation and peace.

The SNP wants Scotland to be a normal independent country. However, we will welcome any moves that strengthen Scotland's position and

give us a stronger say in European and international matters. I would like to comment on, and give our support to, two Executive initiatives that are part of that process.

The first is what I call the McLeish embassy plan. In the aftermath of the tartan day celebrations in the United States of America, it became clear that the Scottish Executive intended to locate a civil servant in the British embassy in Washington to be answerable to the Scottish Executive and to be tasked with promoting Scotland's trade and tourism within the USA. That, of course, was a fabulous example of an SNP policy of 1999, which was derided by the Labour party but then introduced as part of its policy platform in 2001. At the time, *The Scotsman* reported that the proposal had come somewhat out of the blue and had not even involved discussion with the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, who is leading for the Government in this debate. However, the First Minister was committed to the idea and we warmly support that.

On 8 April, it was reported in the press that the Executive planned to consider extending the idea to other British embassies. The Executive's spokesman said that that was an idea that the Executive would consider to ensure wider representation. He said that it demonstrated a desire for the Executive to have a more focused approach in America. The question then is surely this: if the Executive has a desire for a more focused approach in America, does it not have a desire for a more focused approach in many other countries of the world, where it can get the benefit of direct representation and consequent benefit to Scotland? We would be right behind that process.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): Would Mr Swinney care to list for us the countries in which he would establish full embassies and what the cost of that would be? Is he asking the Scottish electorate to endorse a blank cheque for independence?

Mr Swinney: Mr Henry will be aware that Scotland already makes a contribution to the costs of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom. I want to ensure that that money works for the people of Scotland and that we have a strong ability to represent ourselves overseas.

Although I am right behind the First Minister on his initiative in establishing strong links for Scotland overseas, the initiative is not without its critics. Tam Dalyell said:

"Having a distinctive Scottish representative in a foreign capital is one of the hallmarks of an independent country, and it raises deep questions for the British state."

That may partly explain why the Scottish National Party thinks that it would be good idea.

The second major foreign policy initiative that has taken place is the political declaration of 28 May. On 22 February, the Flemish authorities organised a colloquium in Brussels entitled "Strengthening the role of the constitutional regions in the European Union". It produced a declaration on 28 May, which was signed by the First Minister and which goes some way to strengthening the role of Scotland overseas. The Scottish Executive issued a press release on 26 April saying that the colloquium and the discussions that were going on with the constitutional regions were of vital importance in bringing these issues to the attention of the Belgian presidency

"as part of the build up to the Intergovernmental Conference in 2004."

The First Minister signed that political declaration in Brussels on 28 May. From the contents of the press release that I have just read from, he must surely have been aware of its implications and the fact that it would represent a strong stance for the Scottish Executive.

Among other provisions in the declaration, the First Minister signed up to a statement that said that

"the political role of these regions has to be strengthened within the European Union."

He signed up to a statement that said that a

"review of the division of political responsibilities between the European Union, on the one hand, and the Member States and their regions, on the other"

must be looked at afresh. He signed up to the fact that the constitutional regions are not satisfied with the current institutional framework in the European Union.

The declaration ends with a call for the Committee of the Regions to be given the status of a fully fledged EU institution, for national and regional Parliaments to have greater involvement in EU policy making and for the constitutional regions to have the same status as member states in terms of direct access to the European Court of Justice.

It is clear from the Scottish Executive news release that I commented on a moment ago that the Executive expected firm conclusions to come from the process, and that it was identifying Scotland with those conclusions. That should not be a surprise—it chimes with the approach of the Scottish Executive in seeking a stronger role for Scotland in Europe, which was a key part of Jack McConnell's speech in the Executive debate on 9 May to celebrate Europe day. However, it reveals an important development in the Executive's thinking. The Executive acknowledges that the current constitutional arrangements are not enough. What the Executive is doing is not

sufficient. It is not doing all that it has to do to represent Scotland overseas. The Executive's proposals are not enough for us—they do not meet our ambitions—but they are steps in the right direction, and we encourage them to develop.

Given that our motion refers specifically to the political declaration, when I lodged it yesterday I was more than a little surprised to see that the Government's stance was going to be outlined today by the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs. The political statement that was agreed to was signed by the First Minister. It is always a pleasure to be in the company of Jack McConnell. It is always a pleasure to debate with him. I spent a very pleasant evening with him at Carfin last night, on a truly memorable occasion for Scotland. However, this is an occasion on which the First Minister should be here to explain to Parliament the basis of the agreement that he has entered into.

The First Minister appears to have had the time to write the amendment to my motion, but he does not have the time to come before Parliament and explain the intricacies of the political declaration that he has signed up to, and which is part and parcel of the debate that we are having today. Neither does he have time to check the protocols of the Scottish Parliament. In this amazing Parliament, he has managed to offend Hugh Henry and the European Committee because he did not properly consult the committee about the contents of the agreement. The First Minister has time to fly to Flanders, but not to walk across from George IV Bridge to address Parliament.

I have three key points to make about the political statement that was agreed by the Scottish Executive in the First Minister's name. The first is about giving Scotland direct access to the European Court of Justice. That was proposed by the Belgian Government at the Nice summit, and blocked by UK ministers. It would have given Scotland the right to challenge bad EU laws. The political declaration that Henry McLeish signed calls for

"the right for the constitutional regions, as exists for the Member States, to refer directly to the European Court of Justice when their prerogatives are harmed."

On Tuesday of this week, the contents of that declaration were undermined by Mr McLeish's spokesman, who said that the Executive sees no need for that to be introduced, while respecting the right of other regions to put forward their policies.

So the First Minister goes to Flanders and he does not properly consult Parliament before he signs an agreement, parts of which he does not agree with. What a ridiculous situation. Surely this Parliament should have the First Minister before it to explain exactly what he has signed up to on behalf of the people of Scotland.

The second point is about the secrecy that surrounds the declaration. There was no official announcement that Mr McLeish was going to sign the declaration. News of it was issued only after inquiries from journalists. At the time, the First Minister's spokesman said that the Executive had nothing to hide, and blamed journalists for failing to ask the right questions. Until yesterday, the declaration that the First Minister signed was not even on the Scottish Executive website. Ironically, it appears beautifully translated into English on the Flanders website. What on earth is the Government up to? It complains about our arguments for transparency and for the need for this Parliament to be open, while it will not publish that information and the First Minister will not bother to come to Parliament to explain the intricacies of what he has signed up to.

The final point is about the consistency of what the Labour party is doing on these issues. A report from the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee set out the European Parliament's views on the development of the EU after the Nice treaty. Various amendments to that report were lodged to strengthen the role of the constitutional regions in that process, and the report was debated by the European Parliament. In true, consistent form, two of the three Labour members of the European Parliament for Scotland who were present on that date did not vote to support the declaration and direction of thinking; instead, they voted to oppose it. Bill Miller and David Martin both voted against amendments to the report that would have strengthened the role of the regions in the approach to the Nice treaty.

For the sake of consistency, I tell the two members of the Liberal Democrats who are present today—

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Four Liberal Democrats are present.

Mr Swinney: My apologies. They are so invisible that I cannot see them. I hope that Mr Raffan is not attempting to—

Mr Raffan rose—

The Presiding Officer: No interventions. Mr Swinney is in his last minute.

Mr Swinney: Elspeth Attwooll, the Liberal Democrat MEP for Scotland, voted in favour of extending the rights of the constitutional regions. Let us see whether the Labour Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs and the Liberal Democrat Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs can achieve consistency, because the Labour party argued against the stance that was taken by the First Minister when he was in Flanders at the end of May.

We welcome the Executive's stance on representation overseas, but it is not enough for us. We welcome the political declaration, but it is not enough for us. However, they are steps in the right direction.

I read the newspapers this morning, because it is always helpful to have Jack McConnell's arguments flagged up in the newspapers before coming to Parliament. He said that the context of the declaration explained why the regions do not demand independence. In another article on Europe day on 9 May, Mr McConnell wrote that Scotland was well placed to play its part as a dynamic country. Mr McConnell cannot decide whether Scotland is a region or a country. We in the SNP recognise that Scotland is a country. The issues of our representation overseas and our role in the world are centre stage in Scottish politics. The question of independence is centre stage in Scottish politics, and we intend to keep it so.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the political declaration by the governments of Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders on the future of the European Union, signed by the First Minister on 28 May 2001; calls upon the Scottish Executive to ensure that any future European or other international agreements signed by the First Minister are carried out with greater transparency and involvement of the Parliament, and recognises that such initiatives are important steps towards Scotland becoming an independent country in the European Union, engaging fully in the community of nations.

09:47

The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Mr Jack McConnell): I am delighted to debate today how we take Scotland forward as the modern and confident nation in the United Kingdom that we want it to be. I am also happy to associate myself with John Swinney's remarks about the late Cardinal Tom Winning. He too believed in a modern and confident Scotland, and his contribution, particularly to Catholic education in Scotland, was considerable during his time as a priest, a bishop, an archbishop and a cardinal. Those who attend Scotland's Catholic schools in particular will mourn his passing with considerable grief this week.

I welcome today's debate, but I am disappointed by the content of the debate so far. We are not here to debate who is speaking in this debate; we are here to debate the content of the motion and the two amendments. We are here two weeks after the general election on 7 June to give the SNP an opportunity to debate the subject of a separate Scotland. Of course, the SNP had the opportunity to debate that during the election campaign, but it chose to use its Opposition day for other topics. It did not want to discuss

separatism and independence during the election campaign. The truth is that today's debate is not about the topic of the motion; it is more about shoring up John Swinney against the problems he has in leading his party following that election result.

John Swinney may want to debate the role of Scotland, but so do we, because our vision of the role of Scotland is the better vision for Scotland. The truth is that the SNP does not stand for Scotland; it stands for separatism. The SNP does not want to build bridges across Europe; it wants to put up barriers. The SNP does not have taking poverty out of Scotland as a top priority; it wants the top priority to be taking Scotland out of the United Kingdom. Separatism for Scotland would damage Scotland's interests and damage Scotland in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Tell that to Finland.

Mr McConnell: Tell that to Bavaria or Catalonia or Flanders or the other signatories to the declaration that John Swinney has welcomed this morning. Scotland would have less influence in Europe. We would have less influence and profile in the world if we divorced ourselves from the one country that has membership of the G8, the EU, the Commonwealth and NATO, and permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council—the United Kingdom.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP) rose—

Mr McConnell Just listen for a second, Ms MacDonald. I will give way later.

Separating from the United Kingdom would damage Scotland's exports and commerce, particularly with those with whom we deal most in the rest of the United Kingdom. Our family, personal and cultural ties to the rest of the United Kingdom would also be damaged. It would break up our social security, tax and pensions systems and put them under threat.

I was interested to hear what John Swinney said about—[*Interruption.*] Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Swinney was listened to in reasonable silence. I ask for a little bit of quiet for Mr McConnell.

Mr McConnell: It is unfortunate, Presiding Officer, that the SNP does not like to hear the arguments. SNP members like to interrupt and shout instead.

SNP members would like a separate Scottish navy, a separate Scottish army, separate immigration services and embassies throughout the world. They would try to achieve that with less than the Barnett share of UK expenditure. Just three weeks ago, the SNP said in its manifesto

that the new foreign affairs department of the so-called independent Scotland would operate on a budget that was no greater than the Scottish Executive's current spending and our population share of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's spending. Imagine what would have been said during the general election campaign if either of the two coalition parties here had said that about education, health or other matters.

Separatism would be bad for Scotland. The Scottish National Party wants Scotland to sign international agreements, but when we do, it distorts the purpose and content of those agreements. SNP members say that they want links across Europe, but when we have open debate on those emerging links, they are abused as an anti-London, anti-English battering ram.

The Flanders declaration is not a charter for separatism. The declaration recognises the role of the member states. I went through the declaration again last night in some detail. In the course of five pages, I almost lost count of the number of times that the member states and the regions were mentioned separately. The declaration says that any consideration of reform of the European Union should take the following principle as a starting point:

"the obligation to respect the national identity of the Member States".

John Swinney, Roseanna Cunningham and Kenny MacAskill, who has left—I presume in his dismay at what was being said about the declaration—may have sold out and started to recognise that devolution will work for Scotland, but I find it hard to believe that Alex Neil or Margo MacDonald is comfortable with that. It is even harder to believe that Lloyd Quinan is comfortable with that. I presume that that is why he is not even present.

Ms MacDonald: Instead of reciting the normal litany of the poverty and pestilence that would befall an independent Scotland, torn from the clutches of Mother England, will the minister give us three examples of people in Scotland benefiting from being part of the larger union? [MEMBERS: "Jobs."] I hear "Jobs, jobs, jobs," but we will not go there, because that is too embarrassing. I would like to hear three examples of how people in Scotland benefit from that clout—perhaps in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Mr McConnell: We benefit from greater power and influence in the world and from better and more co-ordinated immigration and other services throughout the island in which we live. We also benefit from not breaking up the pensions, taxation, social security and other economic systems that exist in the UK. I do not believe that Margo MacDonald will vote for a motion to say she

"welcomes the political declaration by...Bavaria, Catalonia"—

proud nations within member states—

"North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders".

I do not believe that she believes in preserving the identity of the UK, as the declaration says.

John Swinney has made a mistake in endorsing that political declaration, but I welcome his support. The Parliament should welcome the Scottish nationalists' conversion to a charter for devolved government in Europe and a strong voice for Scotland at the centre of Europe.

When we become involved in international declarations, it is unacceptable to distort them, as has been done with the comment on the European Court of Justice. The declaration says that

"the constitutional regions would wish that, amongst others, the following topics"—

not even proposals—

"would be considered".

It mentions the Committee of the Regions, our proposal for national and regional parliaments to be more involved in the European policy process and to improve their interaction with the European Parliament, and the Belgians' proposal for regions to have access to the European Court of Justice when their prerogatives are harmed. Those are topics for discussion. They are not firm proposals. There has been no drawing back from that.

Mr Swinney rose—

Mr McConnell: Mr Swinney should listen, because he might learn something.

There was a good reason for the UK Government, with our support, opposing that. The Government did not block the plan. All the member states blocked Belgium's plan, because the Nice summit back in December concerned streamlining and making more efficient European institutions for enlargement. It was not intended to clog up the European Court of Justice with more proposals and submissions. We believe in a political solution to the problems of transparency and subsidiarity throughout Europe, not a legalistic solution, and we think that our view is right.

Mr Swinney: If the First Minister did not agree with a part of the declaration to which he signed up, would not it have been reasonable for him to issue a statement saying, "We agree with the whole declaration, except for that bit," or is this just another example of the chaos that surrounds everything that the First Minister touches?

Mr McConnell: The Parliament and the Executive are not opposed to considering issues or having debates, so we endorse the declaration.

The Belgians have an absolute right to make that proposal, for debate in the next four years. I have no problem with participating in that debate.

Our young Parliament has met for two years. The nationalists always opposed it. They opposed it before it was created. They tried to jump on board during the referendum campaign, and they have tried ever since it was created to ensure that it could not work.

Last week and this week, President Mbeki and the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern addressed our Parliament. Those addresses are good examples of the international contacts and respect that we have. We do not need to break up Britain or the United Kingdom to have those international contacts. Scotland can have its profile and respect throughout the world as a devolved part of the UK. We can build on our strengths as part of the UK, economically, socially and culturally.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP) *rose—*

Mr McConnell: I am sorry. I am in my last few seconds.

At the same time, we can express clearly our cultural and national identity and our thoughts on the future.

As I have said before in the chamber, we get the best of both worlds from devolution. That is why, on 7 June, the Scottish National Party had its worst election result for some time. It is in serious trouble. A divide runs through the middle of its parliamentary group. I do not believe that all the members who will vote for the motion support it. John Swinney and others may. If they are coming on the devolution train with us, they are very welcome.

I move amendment S1M-2030.2, to leave out from "calls upon" to end and insert:

"recognises that such initiatives play a part in Scotland enjoying profile and influence in Europe and the rest of the world as a dynamic country within the United Kingdom, and firmly rejects the view that Scotland can only achieve international prominence by separating itself from the United Kingdom."

09:58

Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con): As unionists, it is with some regret that we debate an SNP motion that has some reason in its origin, although not in its latter part. The clear aim of the debate must be to examine why the First Minister went to Brussels last month to sign up to a document that contradicts United Kingdom foreign policy. Why did our First Minister not consult Parliament or the European Committee before pledging support on our behalf? More important, we should question the First Minister's ability to defend Scotland from pitfalls that will only allow it

to fall into the hands of the separatist SNP.

The Scottish Conservatives will first discuss what in the declaration is at odds with the United Kingdom's position. I thought—as I am sure many Labour members did—that there was little appetite for more powers for the Scottish Parliament, but the declaration expresses a view that goes beyond the Executive's competence. It expresses a view that more direct power be given to devolved regions and seeks the ability for Scotland to go to the European Court of Justice to overrule the UK if it so wishes. The First Minister has not understood the implications of such statements.

The clues were there all along. In Nice last Christmas, the Belgian Government proposed such ideas. The United Kingdom blocked them. In February, the Minister-President of Flanders gave a speech, on behalf of Scotland and other countries, to demand more powers. Mr McLeish has no way of wriggling out of that constitutional mess. He is best advised to stop meddling and to leave external affairs to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or his Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, who is present to answer for his boss's incompetence. If press reports are to be believed, the new Foreign Secretary is none too pleased.

The Scottish Parliament has a European Committee. We have in place concordats with Westminster to ensure that Scotland is involved in the process of EU policy making. We are more involved with the EU than are many other regions of Europe. I am sure that John Home Robertson and Ross Finnie can testify to that. As is so often the case, things could be done better, but that is not an excuse for signing up to the Flanders agenda.

While Mr McLeish's show of inadequacy in the foreign area is an embarrassment to Scotland, his disregard of Parliament is an insult. Perhaps the First Minister will tell us why he thought it unnecessary to consult even the European Committee before he signed away the union on our behalf? Has the First Minister learned nothing from the Frank Roy debacle?

The Scottish Conservatives are keen to promote EU links. We want teamwork in the union, based on fairness for all. We do not want friction between Westminster, Brussels and Holyrood: a friction that the nationalists will always encourage. It is extraordinary that the Labour party's amendment fails to recognise the content of the declaration.

Ms MacDonald: Does Ben Wallace share the hope that when Henry McLeish signed up, he did so believing that everyone in the chamber would endorse the move towards the democratisation of European decision making and the attempt that was made by the Flemish people to oppose the

centralising, anti-democratic tendencies in Europe today?

Ben Wallace: I am sorry to have to say to the member that the reason that Mr McLeish signed up to the declaration is that he was out of his depth.

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Ben Wallace: No, I am sorry, but I have to get on.

I want to enlighten the unionist members who sit on the Labour party side of the chamber. As John Swinney rightly pointed out, the document was not released to us, although the Government in Flanders was happy to do that. At the bottom of page 4 of the document, the declaration calls for

“a review of the division of political responsibilities”

between member states and their regions. I thought that we were all happy with the current arrangements, but that is obviously not the case.

The document also states that the review is to include the common agricultural policy and the functioning of the internal market. On page 6 of the document, there is a call for the Committee of the Regions to become a “fully-fledged EU institution” with political powers that go beyond the purely consultative roles.

More worryingly, the document calls for regions of countries to be able to refer directly to the European Court of Justice when their prerogatives are harmed. As a unionist, I say that that is not in line with the present constitutional arrangements, as agreed by the Scottish people in the referendum, nor is it what was envisaged by the Prime Minister.

The title of today’s debate is “Scotland’s Place in the World”. Scotland’s place is not in an EU with seven votes on the Council of Ministers as compared to England’s 27. It is not in an EU where Spain, Portugal and Greece could outvote us on fishing. Scotland’s place is not on the outside of the United Kingdom, or outside of English trade markets and the transport links that we share. It is not being out of NATO, being without a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and nor is it queuing up behind Bulgaria to rejoin the EU.

Mr Swinney said at the beginning of the debate how proud he is of countries such as Norway and Finland that take part in peacekeeping tours across the world. What Mr Swinney forgets is that those UN peacekeeping tours are achieved by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council getting their way for the good of the UN. Mr Swinney would have us off the council—if so, we would be going nowhere very

fast.

Today’s debate was always going to be predictable and the disappointment is that the First Minister was foolish enough to give the SNP reason for it. The recent election results have shown that Scotland is tiring of nationalism. The Scottish people are tired of narrow arguments and the confused position of a party that is against Westminster and yet keen on Brussels. Now is not the time for a First Minister lacking in judgment to allow unnecessary frictions between our Parliaments to reignite the SNP’s embers.

If the First Minister is not able to stand up for the United Kingdom, perhaps he should give way to a party that is: a party that sees the pitfalls before he does and will not be outwitted by an SNP that is set to break up Britain.

I move amendment S1M-2030.1, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“expresses its concern at the signing by the First Minister of the political declaration by the constitutional regions of Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders without prior consultation with or intimation to the Parliament; notes that the content of the declaration contradicts Her Majesty’s Government’s policy and undermines the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, and further affirms that Scotland’s position is best represented within the union that is the United Kingdom, which brings economic, social and cultural benefits to the people.”

10:04

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): At the beginning of the debate, John Swinney mentioned that there were four Liberal Democrats in the chamber. The word “fourth” has a certain ring to it at the moment, as that is where the SNP came in Argyll and Bute. Later in my speech, I will reflect a little on the events of 7 June.

As a Liberal Democrat, I endorse the principles that were signed up to on 28 May. Indeed, the agreement that the First Minister signed in Flanders—a statement by a number of well-established and developing devolved Governments—is intended to strengthen the role of the regions in the European Union. When the minister spoke about the declaration earlier, he pointed out that it endorses devolved government within strong member states as part of the European Union and that it is not a charter for independence.

As a Liberal Democrat, I support proposals that move us closer to the decentralisation of power in the European Union. That is why the Scottish Parliament is not a final solution, but part of the process that will see decisions being taken at the most applicable level that is consistent with their efficiency and with the delivery of good local services.

Strengthening the regions of Europe is consistent with the European principle of subsidiarity. None of the European regions that signed the treaty, with the possible exception of Catalonia, seeks SNP-style independence. That said, Mr Pujol's party in Catalonia is agnostic on the principle of outright independence. Such a course of action is not a matter for the Scottish Parliament, but one that all the nations of Europe will have to resolve through an amendment to the Treaty of Rome. Those of us who have been through the fishing debates that took place around 7 May and who have sat through Eurosceptic meetings on that subject do not underestimate the difficulties involved in that process.

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): So that we can avoid any doubt on the matter, will Mr Scott tell the chamber whether his part of the Executive believes in the proposal contained in the document that Scotland should have direct access to the European Court of Justice? Is that what the Scottish Executive is committed to?

Tavish Scott: The minister can take care of that question when he winds up. I want to deal with subsidiarity and the devolution of power. Independence is not the subject for debate in the chamber today. If it were on the agenda, it would be taken care of at Westminster.

Where are the famous five? Have they been standing up for Scotland on this issue? It would seem not, as in the past couple of weeks the famous five have been substituted and Captain Salmond is back in the dressing room after only two weeks on the pitch. Even by SNP standards of failure, that is quite a record. Before 7 May, we had it rammed down our throats how well the SNP was going to do in the election. It is only fair that the chamber reflects now on how badly the SNP did on 7 May. [MEMBERS: "June."] I thank members; it was 7 June. Although, what does it matter if it is June or May? The SNP is a failure every month.

I understand that, on 8 June at the SNP's celebratory press conference, champagne was served to the press. That is a significant development, even for that party. Having lost a seat, lost votes, scraped in as the third party in terms of the number of MPs, the SNP served champagne to the press. There we have it. At least the SNP gained one thing: a second leader. The SNP has a leader at Westminster and a leader in Scotland. Mr Salmond, having suggested that Westminster was an irrelevance, is now happy to prop up the green benches down by the Thames. I always suspected that there was more to Mr Salmond's resignation than 10 years in the job. We have now seen that Mr Salmond resigned because he knew that his party had already failed.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I apologise for my voice, but not for the fact that in Banff and Buchan, even with one of the most distinguished candidates in Canon Kenyon Wright, the Liberal vote in the by-election dropped from 15 per cent to 6 per cent. Canon Kenyon Wright came in fourth place. In Banff and Buchan, we know what we think of the Liberals.

The Presiding Officer: Let us return to the debate on the motion.

Tavish Scott: Indeed, Sir David, I am addressing the motion, as the debate that the SNP wanted was about independence.

Mr McConnell: Mr Scott might want to reflect on why Banff and Buchan, as I understand it, was the only constituency in Scotland where the SNP vote went up at the general election. The SNP vote went down in all other 71 constituencies.

The Presiding Officer: I appeal for a return to a debate on the motion. We are not discussing the SNP's election prospects.

Tavish Scott: I take the direction that Sir David is giving. However, as it was the SNP that called the debate, it is meant to be about independence.

The SNP's flagship policy was rejected, as Mr McConnell precisely described, by 71 of the country's 72 constituencies. I was told time and again that the independence movement would flower in Argyll and Bute and in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross. The SNP came fourth in Argyll and Bute and a dismal third in the far north.

I leave the SNP to its own devices on those matters. As a Liberal Democrat, I especially welcome the political, economic and social development of the European Union. With its Parliament, Scotland plays a stronger role at the forefront of European thinking. As Mr Swinney, Mr McConnell and others have mentioned, we have had visits in the past couple of weeks from the President of South Africa and the Taoiseach. Mr Henry's European Committee regularly engages with its European counterparts. Members make representations to and work with Scottish MPs on a wide variety of issues. Such developments are not enough for the nationalists. I respect their view, but it is not the majority view in the chamber or in Scotland as a whole.

In the aftermath of Gothenburg and the Irish vote on the Nice treaty, surely it would be right to reflect on the peoples of Europe and how they react to Europe. Following last year's anniversary, as we enter the EU's next 50 years, the deepening and enlargement of the European Union is a prize to which committed Europeans should aspire. Liberal Democrats strive to build a more peaceful and prosperous union, which serves and is

committed to its people. My party wants the principles of subsidiarity and devolved decision making to be enshrined in a constitution for Europe. That constitution would be a guarantee of citizens' and states' rights, not a blueprint for centralisation. It would clarify and define the relationship between the regions, member states and the European Union, simplify European law, enhance transparency and guard against the unnecessary accumulation of powers by the centre.

The political declaration that was signed by the First Minister on 28 May is consistent with that approach and a step along the road to the kind of Europe that I envisage.

10:12

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Mr Scott's contribution was one of the worst that he has made in the chamber—believe me, that is saying something. Apparently, the Scottish National Party is in terminal decline. The last time I looked, however, it had an unblemished record in outdoing football clubs in elections. Mr Scott might consider the fact that the Liberal party has fallen to a new depth. When the Liberals in the Scottish Parliament were asked about one of the declaration's key provisions—the direct point of access for Scotland to the European Court of Justice—it turned out that they could not be even as brave as the Liberals in the European Parliament, who voted on 31 May for such a proposal. The lackeys in this Parliament are not even allowed to answer for their own party—that tells us a lot.

The fact that the First Minister has not deemed it necessary to turn up today to tell us exactly why he signed up to a declaration in which he does not believe is an extreme disappointment. It is not common for me to experience extreme disappointment when Mr McLeish does not speak—the English language probably benefits substantially—but it is discourteous and cowardly. Apparently, the First Minister engaged in discussions over many months about an important international declaration, but according to his Executive spokesman, once he had signed it, he decided that there was no need for the measures to be introduced. If that were not so serious, it would be utterly laughable.

There are only really two possibilities. The first is that Mr McLeish thought that what he was signing up to was correct. If he thought that last month, one wonders what has changed. The second possibility, even more worrying, is that he did not believe in what he was signing up to, but did so anyway. That may be the most retrograde step in international diplomacy in recent times. What does it say about an international leader of Mr

McLeish's repute when he wanders around the globe, signing agreements that he either does not understand or does not believe in? This man should not be let out on his own. Who knows what will happen when he next goes abroad? Is it not true that the First Minister is now a national and international embarrassment? What does it say to the people who signed up to that declaration along with the First Minister that, only three weeks later, he decides to say, "Oops. It was a mistake. I did not mean to sign it"? International negotiations cannot proceed on that basis. I am sure that when Mr McConnell takes over he will improve the situation.

Mr Swinney referred to the fact that the First Minister's clout in Europe was so massive that he could not bring any coherence even to his group of Labour MEPs. On 28 May, the First Minister signed up to a declaration that Mr McConnell seeks to downgrade. The opening paragraph says that the regions that signed the declaration

"want to contribute to the debate about the future of the European Union and its key tasks. They also want this initiative to highlight a number of issues that are of vital importance to them."

Those issues are not mere frippery, but "of vital importance".

Mr McConnell: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Hamilton: No.

The issues that are referred to as being of—

Mr McConnell: Will the member give way?

Mr Hamilton: For sheer humour, let us have it.

Mr McConnell: Would Mr Hamilton like to comment on the fact that, when he read out that sentence, he missed out a key phrase, which is:

"the constitutional regions of Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders".

Obviously, he does not like that part of it. Will he tell us his view of the fundamental principle in the document, which is that the obligation should be to respect the national identity of the United Kingdom and the other member states?

Mr Hamilton: It is hardly a worthwhile intervention to point out who signed the document, as that is a matter of public record. I am fully aware who signed the document, but if Mr McConnell wants to go through the detail of it, we should let him do so. The document talks about three specific measures that are of vital importance. One of those is access to the European Court of Justice. Perhaps Mr McConnell would like to clarify what Mr Scott refused to. Does the Executive believe in direct access to the ECJ, or is its current position that it does not believe in

that?

It appears that the minister does not wish to answer my question. I dare say that he will answer once he has checked with his boss.

The members of the European Parliament refused to sign up to the document that Mr McLeish signed on 28 May. That is a matter of some regret, but perhaps the greatest matter of regret is that, for once in his ailing political career, the First Minister had stumbled upon what looked like a good idea. A further great regret is Mr McLeish's intervention in the debate and then his retraction. Mr McLeish, having stumbled on that great idea, did not have the guts or the gumption to hold steady on a matter that was important to Scotland. Is it not true that Mr McLeish, just as he has been a national embarrassment in Scotland, is now an international laughing stock?

In future, if treaties are to be signed on behalf of the Parliament, they should be discussed in the Parliament and the First Minister should answer to the Parliament. In future, when Mr McLeish goes to Europe, he should think about what is in the document. If he is feeling especially generous he could even read it. If he signs up to it, he should mean it.

10:17

Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I speak, for the first time in the Parliament, in support of the Executive amendment. That is perhaps appropriate, because my constituency contains the birthplace of Thomas Muir, supporter of the French revolution and the declaration of the rights of man and a member of the Society of United Irishmen, which was referred to by Bertie Ahern only yesterday.

Also in my constituency, Kirkintilloch is home to the great internationalist, Tom Johnston. His radicalism, which led him into the Independent Labour Party, his conviction that fascism and Nazism were threats to the security of all the people of Europe, which grounded his fierce opposition to appeasement and his insistence on a Scottish council of state in the wartime coalition, surely take an honourable place in the history of the establishment of this legislative body.

I am the successor to Sam Galbraith, who won Strathkelvin and Bearsden for Labour as recently as 1987. In doing so, he helped to rid Scotland of the Tories, as we prepared to rid government of them throughout the rest of Britain. Sam Galbraith always worked closely with our late First Minister Donald Dewar, at no small cost to his health and family. I am sure that many, in the chamber and beyond, will join me in thanking him for his singular contribution to the cause of social justice. Ad multos annos, Sam. That is the benefit of a

Catholic education, Jack McConnell.

Sam Galbraith's contribution was singular in many senses. He would probably have had robust views on the nationalist motion today and may have uttered that word beginning in b and ending in s—no, not that one—that nearly got him into bother when slapping down an Opposition spokesperson.

It is extraordinarily and entirely predictable that, at every turn, on every issue and in every debate—be it drugs policy, housing reform, sectarianism, the international criminal court or even the future of the European Union, all of which are important—the nationalists return to their favourite obsession.

For the nationalists, those issues can be seen only through the distorting prism of their obsession with the constitution of the United Kingdom. Always disregarding today, that party claims, illogically, that it wants to make the European Union work, while in the meantime always working against the even more successful union that is modern Britain. Even in handling its own motion, the SNP shows by its behaviour today that it is much more interested in a row than in an argument.

In the run-up to the intergovernmental conference in 2004, the SNP handles an important document by suggesting that it is somehow something else: a declaration on the future of Europe, rather than a contribution to that debate. In doing so, that party wilfully and deliberately distorts the essential debate on how subsidiarity across the European Union is to work most effectively for the people of the European Union.

Members of the SNP do that because it does not suit their determination to have a row rather than an argument that Labour at Westminster welcomed and supported Scotland's signing the declaration. Ben Wallace probably did not notice that. I have a piece of advice for him: he should not read everything that is put in the papers by the SNP. Nor does it suit the SNP that our Prime Minister also argued the case for the four main themes of Nice, which were welcomed in the text of that very declaration.

It does not suit SNP members that the decisions taken at Nice wholly undermine the credibility of their claims for independence in Europe. Perhaps even they know that those claims have had their day. Maybe they should ask Bertie Ahern—*[Interruption.]* I am asked why. As is the case generally, the inevitable logic of enlargement is that Scotland is best served by being at the heart of Britain in a Britain that is at the heart of Europe. Although the SNP might wish otherwise, the declaration is not the precursor to a separate Scotland, but a serious and welcome contribution

to the debate on what shape an enlarged Europe must take to work together.

In an enlarged Europe, some of Winnie Ewing's favourite countries, such as Denmark, will have seven votes instead of only three, while Britain will have 30 instead of 10. In an enlarged Europe, Britain will certainly have a commissioner, but the smaller states will serve by rotation only. It is small wonder that Bertie Ahern yesterday reinforced the critical importance to Ireland of the London-Dublin axis.

In supporting the Executive's amendment, I endorse the work of both the Executive and the Government in ensuring that my constituents' jobs and their economic and social stability are best protected and promoted by the Scottish Executive and the Government working together rather than against each other. We are stronger together and weaker apart. I commend the Executive amendment.

10:23

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): I am grateful to the Scottish National Party for lodging today's motion, which enables us to highlight the deficiencies in its core policy. As we know, the SNP has long advocated independence in Europe—not so much a political slogan, more a contradiction in terms—but it has never been noted for the coherence of its policies.

We have been assured by a succession of nationalists, beginning with the lost leader himself, Jim Sillars, that independence in Scotland would be the answer to all of Scotland's problems. They said that, instead of being part of the United Kingdom, we would have a seat at the top table and be treated with the same respect as other small, independent countries such as the Republic of Ireland. In fairness to Mr Sillars, he has in part seen the error of his ways; would that more of his colleagues had done so.

We have all seen the contempt with which the Republic of Ireland has been treated since its people had the temerity to reject the Nice treaty in the referendum held on 7 June. The European Union has decided to ignore that vote and to press on regardless, ignoring the inconvenient fact that the Irish people apparently do not think that the Nice treaty is in their national interest. They have woken up to the fact that membership of the failing euro is incompatible with the management of their economy, not just in relation to interest rates, but in the crucial areas of taxes and spending, which go to the very heart of national sovereignty.

The truth of the matter is that that is the reality that Scotland would face in the European Union as constituted at present. Scotland would be told, just as the Irish have been, to vote and vote again until

the big guns of the European Union get the result that they want. The truth is that so-called independence in Europe would force us to conform to whatever the larger countries of the European Union decided to impose on us. Like the Republic of Ireland and Denmark, we would have three votes out of 87 in the Council of Ministers, whereas, as part of the United Kingdom, we have 10. Following enlargement in 2005, an independent Scotland would be in an even weaker position, with seven votes out of a total of 345, whereas the United Kingdom will have 29. We might well be sitting at the top table in an independent Scotland, but we would be feeding off the scraps.

Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Has it occurred to Mr McLetchie that, as two independent members of Europe, England and Scotland would have 13 votes, rather than 10, as they have at present, and that, where our interests converge, we would have a stronger voice as two independent states than we have as one lumpen union?

David McLetchie: I fail to see how that could happen if the two countries were pursuing wholly discordant policies, even assuming that Andrew Wilson's arithmetic is correct.

Even if the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, is cooling towards the euro and is now proposing a two-year period of assessment, which he has not yet even started to undertake, the Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats would have no such inhibitions and would sign us up to a single currency just as soon as they could engineer the devaluation of our own.

Leaving that aside, the worrying thing about today's motion and about what has happened in the past month or so is where exactly the Labour party stands on these issues. The signals are extremely confused. Our First Minister does not seem to be able to make up his mind whether he is a unionist or a nationalist. Coming on the back of his attempt to turn the Scottish Executive into a Scottish Government without consulting his Westminster colleagues, it appears that the First Minister has decided to pursue a unilateral foreign policy. It seems that Scotland may have lost a Foreign Secretary in Robin Cook, only to acquire one in Jack McConnell.

By signing up to the political declaration of the constitutional regions, which calls for a greater say for those regions in the running of the European Union, the First Minister is playing with fire. He is pandering to a nationalist agenda that seeks to break up the United Kingdom and a Commission agenda that seeks to diminish the influence of the nation state by expanding the role of the constitutional regions. Instead of that ill-considered populism, which seems to be motivated largely by

personal vanity, the First Minister should have the good sense to acknowledge that Scotland's interests are best served, and we are more influential in the world, as part of the United Kingdom than we would be as a separate nation. He should not seek to undermine the union by his own actions.

The only party that is unequivocal in its approach to the matter is the Scottish Conservative party. We see Scotland's place as a partner within the United Kingdom. That allows us to play our part in the development of the European Union, so that it becomes a genuine Europe of nations, working in a flexible partnership in pursuit of common interests. That is the way ahead for Scotland, for the United Kingdom and for an enlarged European Union. I support Ben Wallace's amendment.

10:28

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I begin by observing a parliamentary convention and congratulating Mr Fitzpatrick on his maiden speech. Although he broke the convention that maiden speeches should attempt to endear the new member to all parts of the chamber, I shall not break the convention of congratulating him.

Elections are funny things. They put you up, they put you down; you win some, you lose some. There are swings and roundabouts. After elections, one can feel elated or slightly deflated, but this debate is a good antidote. Suppose somebody who was feeling slightly deflated came along to listen to Jack McConnell. I have known Jack McConnell for a long time and I am very fond of him, but one always knows when he does not really believe what he is saying, because he goes slightly red in the face and starts to gabble. That is what we saw this morning.

Jack McConnell was surrounded by his chorus of performing seals. Then we heard Tavish Scott with his troupe of performing political midgets and Mr McLetchie had a troupe of performing political fleas. I come to the chamber and say to myself, "There is a strong argument for independence." That argument comes from the SNP benches.

When I listen to the debate, I know that we are in the right because we have ambition for Scotland. The other parties are in the wrong because they have no ambition for Scotland. All the other unionist parties wish is craven, supine and fearful acceptance of crumbs from somebody else's table. That is not good enough for Scotland.

Nevertheless, much more unites the chamber than divides it. There are three principles in the Parliament's operation of external affairs. First, we need an external affairs policy. I welcome the conversion of the Scottish Executive to that

principle. In the 1999 election, the SNP was derided for its view that there should be an external affairs department in Parliament, but there is one now. I am glad that Mr McConnell has converted to the idea.

Secondly, we should build external relations constructively. The document may not be ambitious, but it is a constructive attempt to work with other small nations of Europe to influence the debate in Europe. We all welcome that step forward, although Mr McConnell's assertion that the document signed by Mr McLeish in some way affirms the right of Belgium to have a view in the European Union is very strange. The Belgian Government must be in grave trouble if it needs Mr McLeish to tell it that.

Thirdly, we should talk about Scotland's external affairs openly and honestly. The SNP lodged the motion and has said to the Executive that the declaration is only a small step, but that the SNP supports it. Instead of having a debate, Mr McConnell has gone back to the garbled repetition of old press releases from 1997 and 1999. Those also formed the burden of Mr Fitzpatrick's speech. He even used the same words—he must have written some of them. If we are to have a debate on Scotland's position in the world, the First Minister should come to the chamber and lead the debate. Honesty is needed from the Executive parties and the Conservative party about what we could achieve. If there is disagreement, we need it to be honest disagreement.

The SNP has put forward strong ideas, but if another party does something and we agree with it, we will support it. The inability of the Executive—and the more thinking members of the Executive—to engage in a debate depresses me. The fascinating thing about election results is that they change from election to election. The fear in the eyes of the Conservatives, who know that is true, comforts me, as does the laughter of the Liberal Democrats, which reminds me of the biblical phrase, "Like the crackling of thorns under a pot". Those parties are afraid of Scotland's progress in the international world, but that progress is inevitable.

10:33

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): I, too, congratulate Brian Fitzpatrick on being elected and on his maiden speech. I look forward to his future contributions to debates in Parliament.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss Scotland's role in the world and the general thrust of the political declaration that is referred to in the motion. It is important that the Scottish Executive and other devolved Governments participate directly in the preparatory work for the next

intergovernmental conference, which will play a crucial role in deciding the future of the European Union. However, I am concerned about the declaration's reference to Scotland as a constitutional region. Scotland is not a region—it is a country. The people of Scotland are a nation. I hope that the Scottish Executive will ensure that that is recognised in future.

I am also concerned about the lack of consultation between the Executive and the Parliament before the signing of the declaration. Many of us learned about the agreement from the papers, despite a protocol that states that the Executive should keep the committees of the Parliament informed of any announcements or news releases that are relevant to their remit. The European Committee was not informed of the signing and when I raised the matter as a point of order, the Presiding Officer upheld my complaint. It is important that the Executive behaves in a transparent and accountable way and that the Parliament does likewise, particularly in matters involving international relations.

In reply to a recent parliamentary question, I was informed of 17 overseas delegations from this Parliament. In principle, I am not opposed to such visits—they can add a lot to international understanding—but I do not recall the Parliament approving the visits or the membership of the delegations. Such decisions are taken by members of the Parliamentary Bureau behind closed doors and no subsequent motions are debated or voted on by the Parliament as a whole.

Yesterday, Bertie Ahern referred to the Scottish Parliament's participation in the British-Irish international parliamentary body. That is an excellent project, but the Scottish Parliament's delegation was not approved by the Scottish Parliament as a whole and I am not aware of any report to the Parliament by the delegation. Not so long ago, a former Lord Provost of Glasgow, Pat Lally, was drummed out of the Labour party for allegedly fixing overseas trips for his cronies. The Scottish Parliamentary Bureau may be laying itself open to similar accusations unless it behaves in a more transparent and accountable manner.

The role of the Parliament and the Scottish Executive in international relations is limited, but I predict that it will increase. We now have a minister who is responsible for external relations and it is logical that a parliamentary committee should have responsibility for monitoring the minister's work.

Scotland is a relatively small country, but historically Scots have been outward-looking and international. The Parliament's work should reflect that in its relations with Europe, the Commonwealth and the rest of the world.

10:37

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):

I regret the way in which the debate has been conducted. The tone was set by Mr Swinney, the leader of the Opposition. He seemed to be far more concerned about the way in which the declaration was reached than about the declaration itself. A grown-up Opposition in a grown-up Parliament would debate the substance of relations with Europe and the wider world rather than the mechanics. It would not get distracted by petty matters. The Opposition once criticised the Prime Minister for his unfortunate reference to parish councils, so it must conduct the debate not in the manner of a parish council, but in the manner of a grown-up Parliament that is maturing day by day. I regret the Opposition's approach.

I thought that the Conservative party was undergoing a policy review, but perhaps that is only the English part of the party—the party that is changing its leader from a Europhobe to a Eurosceptic, or to somebody even more Europhobic, and not to somebody who has a positive approach to Europe. If the Conservative party is undertaking a review of policy, Mr McLetchie might have addressed the chamber in somewhat less dogmatic terms and been more humble, given the party's severe election defeat and its falling behind the Liberal Democrats in Scotland.

We are the most consistently pro-European party in British politics—that is one of the principal reasons why I joined the party. That does not mean that we do not recognise the flaws in the European Union and do not want to address them. The principal problem is the democratic deficit. We want to strengthen the role of regions within the European Union and the declaration is a step towards that.

We are following in the footsteps of Wales, my previous political home, which some years ago established close economic links with the motor regions of Europe—Catalonia, Baden-Württemberg, Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy. That was an important development for Wales and we too must build on our relations with other European regions.

One way of addressing the democratic deficit is through further decentralisation. We should strengthen the Committee of the Regions. At the conference of the British islands and Mediterranean region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association that was held in another part of the Parliament this week, we discussed the relationship between our region—including some of the smaller nations that are applicant countries, such as Malta and Cyprus—and the European Union and how that relationship should develop.

The Committee of the Regions is key. One of the ways of addressing the democratic deficit is to develop the Committee of the Regions, to strengthen its role so that, once the smaller applicant countries have been successful—which I hope they will be—it becomes a committee of the regions and smaller nations and evolves into a second chamber of the European Union. I even hope that the Conservatives might move towards that position when they undertake their policy review. I hope that the SNP will make a similar move. It used to be an anti-European party before it changed its policy—I recognise the crucial role that Winnie Ewing played in the European Parliament—and all credit to it for changing.

The chancellor, in his speech at the Mansion House yesterday, outlined what he called his “considered and cautious approach” to the single currency. He described his approach as “pro-European realism”, but it is not realistic enough for me. I hope that enthusiasm will become more evident. Surely the UK Labour Government, having won a second landslide victory, attained a sufficient degree of self-confidence that it can be bolder and strike out in a more courageous and pro-European way. Rather than following public opinion, it should lead it.

The paradox in the SNP's position on Scotland's relationship with the wider world is most clearly seen in its position on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. It wants to withdraw from NATO when eastern European nations are queuing up to join it. Separatism, as a description of the SNP's stance, is out of date. The SNP is no longer a separatist party; it is now an isolationist party and is far to the right of the Republican Party in the States. The SNP wants to withdraw from NATO, which is a central part of the defence and foreign policy of every other party in the chamber.

10:42

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): I must say that I am extremely depressed by the unionist parties' tone in the debate. We initiated the debate to be constructive. A warning must be hung over Millbank tower, which says, “Beware all ye who enter here. Here is your catechism of clichés to recite every time you meet a member of the Scottish National Party.”

It is depressing to hear the same views echoed by the Liberal Democrats. I say that especially to Tavish Scott, of whom I had a higher opinion. Who is his leader? Is it a Charlie or a Henry?

I had hoped that Jack McConnell, having adopted the role of Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs in the Scottish Parliament, would have abided by the sentiments he expressed in his profile in *Holyrood* magazine on

21 May. He stated:

“We want the Commission to consult more widely before draft legislation is proposed and we wish to encourage debate on a ‘subsidiarity watchdog’”.

Jack McConnell did not mention that in his opening speech, which was extremely depressing. If we are going to take ourselves seriously as a Parliament, the Executive must have a more constructive attitude to such issues.

I say to all members—I feel this strongly and I have said it before—that debates such as this one show the value that we place on the Parliament and on how we are seen in the world. The Parliament is not a perfect model, but its structures have been held up this week as an example that other Parliaments could adopt. If we cannot discuss external affairs in a constructive manner, as reasonable human beings, we do a great disservice to all the people, from every political party, who worked to establish the Parliament.

Those of us who have a long history of involvement in international affairs welcome the developments in the Parliament. The debate has not dealt with some of the constructive developments that have taken place. Dennis Canavan referred to the British-Irish interparliamentary body. I know that he is a little sore that he is not involved in it, because he had a long tradition of serving effectively and well on that group when he was a Westminster MP.

I agree that we do not have a facility to report back on the activities of people such as myself who are involved. We may have articles in “What's Happening in the Scottish Parliament” and here, there and everywhere, but there is not a proper mechanism for examining and questioning actions taken by parliamentarians on our behalf.

I welcome the development of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, because I have been involved as a Commonwealth observer in countries that, in terms of turning out to vote, take their democracy much more seriously than we do. I welcome the continuation of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, its involvement in the Parliament and the facilities that it has offered.

I have two critical points for the minister, whose response, I hope, will be constructive. First, the facility to have proper reporting-back mechanisms must be addressed. Secondly, the Parliament must take initiatives. We should not wait for them to be handed down to us—that is subservience, not subsidiarity. The Parliament should take the initiative on what it projects into the international community.

10:47

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I support the amendment moved by my colleague Jack McConnell, the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs. I do so not only because of my party affiliation, but because I view the Scottish National Party's motion as a disappointing mixture of the pious and the spurious.

With the exception of the Tories—a small and fractured sect—I take it that the whole Parliament welcomes the First Minister's signing of a joint declaration which, as I understand it, calls on the European Union to allow devolved nations and regions to have a bigger say in policy making. There is nothing very contentious about that. It seems that we are all for devolution now.

The nationalist party's motion goes on to call

"upon the Scottish Executive to ensure that any future European or other international agreements ... are carried out with greater ... involvement of the Parliament"

That is stirring stuff indeed. Who could possibly disagree? That is why I say that the beginning and middle of the motion is pious.

What I find most disappointing is the spurious nature of the concluding part of the motion. The nationalist party makes the claim that the signing of such agreements, which are in favour of devolution, should be viewed as a symbol of the imminence of independence. On the contrary, I would argue that such agreements, signed by devolved Governments, are indicators of the strength of support for a variety of forms of subsidiarity, within a variety of nations and regions. The motion claims that we are marching four-square towards independence, because a joint declaration in favour of devolution has been signed. That shows either a high degree of wishful thinking on the part of the nationalist party or dangerously misplaced bravado. Where is the evidence for the nationalists' assertion? Little, if any, comfort is to be found in recent electoral tests.

Ben Wallace: I do not know whether Bill Butler has read the declaration. I know that many of his colleagues, including the First Minister, obviously have not.

An important paragraph on page 6 of the declaration states that there is a

"right for the constitutional regions, as exists for the Member States, to refer directly to the European Court of Justice when their prerogatives are harmed."

Does Bill Butler favour Scotland being able to go directly to the European Court of Justice if its prerogative is harmed by the UK implementation of EU legislation? The UK Government did not.

Bill Butler: I thank Ben Wallace for that succinct

point. I am in favour of positive engagement with Europe, unlike the Conservative party. Mr Hague spent the election running here, there and everywhere, whipping up apathy, with a pound coin stuck between his forefinger and his thumb. Look where it got him.

Like the price of oil—upon which the SNP's case for independence is predicated—evidence from opinion polls is extraordinarily volatile, especially when it comes to whether the Scottish people are for independence or for devolution. When we consider the results of real people casting real votes at real elections, the trend is more stable and provides a more accurate picture of how people think. For example, in the election 14 days ago, the SNP gained barely 20 per cent of the popular vote. That must be worrying. The party was fourth in Argyll and Bute, where it claimed that it was the main challenger, and there was an 8 per cent swing from the SNP to Labour in Kilmarnock and Loudoun, where the nationalists were supposed to be the main contenders. That is hardly full speed ahead to independence.

I ask the chamber to dispatch the motion summarily and to support the Executive's amendment.

10:51

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Contrary to the expectations of my dear colleague Duncan Macmillan—[*Interruption.*] That is not right. I am so overcome by the debate that I have forgotten his second name—[MEMBERS: "Hamilton."] So it is—Duncan Hamilton. I must put that right. [*Interruption.*] Or perhaps I meant Duncan McNeil.

I imagine that the motion will be backed unanimously by the members who sat in the chamber and basked in the warm glow of the words of President Mbeki, when he congratulated the people of Scotland on their contribution to his nation's struggle for democracy and freedom. That sits ill with the denigration of Scottishness and Scottish nationhood that we have heard from some members this morning. However, in the brief time I have available, I would prefer to ponder what Scotland's contribution to the world should be.

When we talk about Scotland's place in the world—or in the EU—we should focus not simply on what we can get, but on what we can give. We have a great deal to contribute as individuals and as a distinct nation. I want to focus on the opportunity and responsibility that that implies for our ability to influence the future political and social development of the EU. I must take issue with what Keith Raffan said—I am sorry that I cannot give way to him on this point—about our

ability to exert influence through the Committee of the Regions. The EU is based on an international treaty; treaties are brokered between power-brokers. The issue will always centre on the exercise of power; although it might sometimes be about an agreement to share power, it always centres on power. A delegate body such as the Committee of the Regions will never exercise that power, which is why regionalism is not enough.

We should aspire to the sovereign status that allowed Irish voters to have a referendum on the treaty of Nice. Through such a mechanism, people in all EU member states have been encouraged to challenge the anti-democratic, centralised policy making and future planning of the EU by EU leaders such as Chancellor Schroeder, President Prodi and Wim Kok.

It might be a little late, but democrats across all EU countries are beginning to wake up to the dangers of using a eurodiktat to forbid finance ministers of the member states to do what Charlie McCreevy has just done in Dublin. The Irish finance minister defied the instructions from Frankfurt and Brussels and kept Ireland's taxes at the levels he judged would mean that other countries in the eurozone would not experience inflation. He has been proved right and the Irish are still good Europeans; their democracy is stronger than ours because he exercised that democratic right on their behalf. Good Europeans will welcome Ireland's spirit of independence and action. People who mouth euroslogans miss the point and jeopardise the spirit of Europeanism, as more and more European citizens judge the EU to be just another powerless playground for politicians.

I am disappointed that David McLetchie thought that it is better to be a big gun in Europe. Bigness is not necessarily a sign of strength, as I am sure he will recognise with the small number of folk he has behind him. No one should imagine that the antithesis of global corporations is a situation in which states can get together to do away with the individuality and awkwardness that allowed Ireland to do what she has done. She has lit a beacon of democracy for the rest of Europe and I will be ashamed if the chamber does not implicitly endorse what Ireland has done by endorsing the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): We now move to winding-up speeches. As we are running over, I will be strict about time. I call Bristow Muldoon, who has four minutes.

10:55

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): The debate seems like another "Groundhog Day", with the SNP once again trying to pick away at the

constitutional settlement that the Scottish people have backed time and again, but once again failing to put forward any positive vision for enhancing Scotland's voice in the world.

As other members have pointed out, it is clear that the debate is not about Scotland's place in the world, but about John Swinney justifying his place in the SNP. He has just led the SNP to its worst election results since 1987, with the party losing one of its six Westminster seats and almost losing a second. His ultimate appeal this morning is to fundamentalists such as Margo MacDonald in an attempt to keep them on board.

Mike Russell said that some members should fear a future election. The members who should be afraid of any future election are Roseanna Cunningham and Alasdair Morgan, whose seats are under threat—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have made your point, Mr Muldoon. Please stick to the motion.

Mr Swinney: On the subject of the motion, will the member give way?

Bristow Muldoon: Does Mr Swinney not want me to speak about his leadership? Is that the problem?

I want to move on to consider Scotland's post-devolution place in the world.

Mr Swinney: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is not giving way.

Bristow Muldoon: The SNP secured the debate to talk about independence and to buttress Mr Swinney's position.

As I said, I want to consider Scotland's place in the world after devolution. First, in the past week, international leaders Thabo Mbeki and Bertie Ahern have addressed the Parliament. They recognise the strength of the Parliament and the devolution settlement. Furthermore, Scotland has engaged with Europe directly through ministers, parliamentary committees, Scotland House and the initiative on the Flanders declaration by the First Minister, which raises the debate as we approach the next intergovernmental conference.

Mr Swinney: I am interested in Bristow Muldoon's point about the constitutional settlement. Apparently, the SNP is the only party that wishes to change it. The political declaration that the First Minister has signed up to wants to change Scotland's relationship with Europe; that is the implicit statement behind the agreement. Does Mr Muldoon accept that point and recognise that the current constitutional settlement must move on?

Bristow Muldoon: The First Minister has signed

up to a statement that the regions and the constitutional Parliaments of Europe must play a strong role within Europe. Henry McLeish is trying to influence the debate as we approach the next IGC, which is a position that I fully endorse.

As far as Scotland's voice in the world is concerned, Jack McConnell pointed out the other benefits that we receive from our continuing partnership in the UK. He highlighted the fact that the SNP wishes to withdraw from the only country in the world that is a member of the G8, the EU, NATO, the Commonwealth and the United Nations Security Council. How would Scotland's voice in the world be enhanced by withdrawing from such a strong partnership?

As I am limited to only four minutes, I will conclude on two points. Scotland's voice in the world is improved by our continued partnership with the UK and it is enhanced by the positive engagement that the First Minister has endorsed by signing the Flanders political declaration and by the Parliament's engagement with the EU. Furthermore, the key choice for the people of Scotland is between the internationalism that is endorsed by the Labour party and its coalition partners; the isolationism of the SNP; and the isolation from Europe that is supported by the Conservatives.

10:59

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): In winding up for the Conservatives, I hope that it is appropriate for me to comment on what has been said in the debate. The debate has had very little to do with Scotland's place in the world and—as other members have pointed out—much more to do with the SNP's wish to return to a spiritual homeland.

Although I, too, welcome Brian Fitzpatrick and his opening speech, I did not welcome his comments about the Conservatives. He made one fundamental mistake. He will learn in his time in the Parliament that the SNP never mentions independence when there is an election in sight. Today is a safe day on which to mention independence, as we are some two years from an election and two weeks from the recess. Neither did we hear mention of Finland today, which, as Mr Fitzpatrick will learn, is usually trotted out along with a range of other small countries that we are repeatedly told are doing better than Scotland. Of course, the SNP takes a pick-and-mix approach to which small countries it mentions and refers only to countries that are relevant to the subject.

Alex Neil: The member was present at a presentation by the chief executive of Lloyds TSB that I attended about a month ago, at which it was pointed out that eight out of 10 of the richest countries in the world have a population equal to

or smaller than Scotland's. That is hardly pick-and-mix.

David Mundell: The way in which SNP members refer to small countries in relation to individual issues is pick-and-mix, especially—as David McLetchie pointed out—when Ireland is mentioned. The SNP is not crowing about the fact that Ireland has taken a stand against the EU, which would suggest that the voice of Ireland is to be rejected.

We must look towards what we can do and the model that we can build to take Scotland forward. Yes, we can learn from what other countries are doing as we develop and build our place in the world, but we will be at the forefront of any area of development only if we can produce novelty and innovation.

Alasdair Morgan (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP) rose—

David Mundell: I shall be pleased to take an intervention from Mr Morgan when I come to discuss the recent election result in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, which I am about to mention in the context of Tavish Scott's summary of election results. That was somewhat discriminatory, as it missed out the Conservatives' excellent performance in Orkney and Shetland, where our share of the vote increased significantly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Speak to the motion please, Mr Mundell.

David Mundell: Keith Raffan mentioned Wales. The Conservatives accept the fact that he played a fundamental part in reducing the number of Conservative MPs in Wales.

I shall return to the substance of the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That would be good.

David Mundell: Once again, Margaret Ewing presents the acceptable face of the Scottish National Party by calling for a clear and coherent debate. Nonetheless, she is complicit in the way in which the debate has been presented and the SNP's unwillingness to address real issues. There can and should be honest disagreement in the Parliament and it is important that we discuss the role of Scotland in the United Kingdom, Europe and the world. However, we must do that with reasoned thought and a clear idea of what we are seeking to achieve.

I do not often agree with what I read in *The Scotsman*, but today I do. In today's issue, Mr McConnell says:

"Scotland's interests in Europe are well served by the work done by our colleagues at Westminster and Whitehall."

That is true. Henry McLeish's signature to a political declaration such as the colloquium of the constitutional regions says more about the First Minister's delusions of grandeur than about Scotland's position in the world. I hope that, as the Parliament evolves and develops, we can have more fruitful discussion about Scotland's place in the world than we have managed today.

11:04

The Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Nicol Stephen): John Swinney began on the right note. He talked about the visits of President Mbeki and Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach. He talked about the new relationships that are being developed by Scotland in Europe and around the world, and, most important, about the signing of the Flanders declaration by Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhein-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders. He talked about the new thinking that is resulting from that declaration and the role of the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice. As a nation and a region of the European Union, we signed that document in support of all the issues that are being considered as part of the agreement.

We also support other initiatives, such as developing Scotland's influence in cities throughout the world and having a civil servant in Washington. Those are not new initiatives. We are already pursuing many projects around the world through organisations such as Scottish Trade International and Locate in Scotland. We already have individuals working for us in Florida, Texas, Virginia, California, Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Taiwan, Korea, India and Japan. We are developing new initiatives on a firm base of influence that already exists throughout the world.

Mr Hamilton: I ask the minister to address a point of confusion in the debate. He has just said that the Executive supports the proposals in the declaration. Why, therefore, did the Executive spokesman say that the Executive sees no need for those proposals to be introduced? Why would the Executive support them if it did not want them to be introduced?

I wonder whether the minister is able to answer the question that Tavish Scott was unable to answer. Do the Liberal Democrats support direct access to the European Court of Justice and is that the position of the Executive?

Nicol Stephen: The quick answer to the first part of that question is yes. I have also made it clear that the Executive supports having all those issues on the agenda for debate. That agreement was struck between the nations and regions that signed the declaration.

I do not want to reduce this important debate to laughter, but Duncan Hamilton used the phrase "an international laughing stock". I hope that what has been said in what should have been an uplifting, constructive and forward-thinking debate on Scotland's place in the world is not read widely by people around the world as reflecting the level of debate among Scotland's parliamentarians on an issue of such international significance.

There were some good contributions to the debate. I congratulate Brian Fitzpatrick not only on his election, but on his first speech in Parliament. The quality of his contribution on this important issue was high.

Mike Russell took the high moral ground in his quasi-leadership speech and covered the territory of midgets, fleas and seals—that was another interesting speech from Mr Russell. I ask him and all the other members who resorted to name calling and the kind of party politics that does little for the Parliament's image whether supporting all the constructive, forward-looking initiatives throughout Europe that have been mentioned and working with others in Europe make us nationalists. Do giving more power to the regions, allowing greater subsidiarity and developing devolution make one a nationalist? Is that the definition of nationalism? Are Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhein-Westphalia, Salzburg, Wallonia and Flanders claiming independence through those initiatives? No. They see an important and growing role for their countries and regions in the EU. The Scottish Executive wants to play a central role in that as well, as should every party in the Scottish Parliament. As Margaret Ewing said, the role of the Parliament must be for the Parliament to decide and develop. I am certain that there are many ways in which that will happen.

Ben Wallace: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I am in my last minute, so I will not.

The world is changing fast and Scotland is changing as well. All of us must help to drive that change. However, whatever its constitutional settlement, Scotland has never been slow to play its role in the world. Robert Burns, David Hume, Adam Smith, James Watt, John Logie Baird and Alexander Graham Bell did not depend on independence for their future and we continue to play a role through our politicians, universities, researchers, scientists, companies, industries, biotechnology and optoelectronics work and the dynamic international companies that want to locate in Scotland. We want to do more to encourage such important developments. The narrow and downward-looking political divide that has been displayed at times this morning will damage that.

Dennis Canavan made a measured speech that reflected his commitment to the role of the Parliament. As one would expect, Keith Raffan made a wholly constructive, pro-European speech.

Scotland has a developing role in the UK, Europe and the world. For the first time, we are establishing that role through the Parliament. Developing strategies, new mechanisms and new institutions is important but the most important aspect is people. The challenge that President Mbeki outlined in the chamber was, through our ideas, influence and action, to play our role in helping to create not only a better Scotland but, in every way in which we can, a better Britain, a better Europe and a better world.

11:12

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): Oh dear me—another day, another debate in the Parliament. In the past few weeks, there have been a number of debates and events in which the relationships between the Scottish Parliament and the world have been examined and in which, as today, the parochial and totally contradictory nature of the Scottish Executive's position has been exposed. That was evident in the debates on Europe day and the international criminal court. Rather more controversially, it was evident in the revelation that the First Minister had signed an international declaration on Scotland's behalf, but had forgotten to inform the Parliament or the people and is now trying to disown the principles to which he signed up.

We marked Europe day with a debate on the impact of the European Union on Scotland, a form of words that, as I said at the time, was an eloquent reminder of how the Executive perceives Scotland's role in the big picture. We are a spectator rather than a participant. The EU has had a profound impact on Scotland but why should that work only one way? In the debate on the international criminal court, we had a rare opportunity to debate an international issue on which Scotland is in a position to join other small nations such as Finland, New Zealand, Belgium and Sweden—to pick and mix a few—in blazing a trail for international justice by opting for universal jurisdiction and being in the vanguard of developments in international co-operation rather than adhering to minimal standards. However, once again, the Executive failed to meet that challenge.

In recent days, our Parliament has been addressed by the leaders of South Africa and Ireland. I hope that the SNP is not alone in recognising that, for all our talk of similarities between Scotland and Ireland, the most fundamental difference is the starkest: when decisions are taken on a global or European level,

the Scottish Parliament is not represented while the Dáil Éireann is.

Today's debate, brought by the SNP, follows from the outward-looking approach that we insisted would be more appropriate for the Europe day debate. To paraphrase John F Kennedy, we should ask not what the world can do for us but what we can do for the world. It seems to me that that was what Thabo Mbeki, the President of South Africa, called on us to do when he addressed the Parliament last week. Through the debate, the SNP has sought to contrast the inadequacy of Scotland's current position, in which we are excluded from European and world affairs, with the role that we would be able to play as a modern, progressive, independent nation. In comparison, the Executive is in an absolute mess. Ministers clearly cannot make up their minds as to how Scotland should relate to the rest of the world. Logic tells them one thing but subservience to London Labour tells them to shut up, backtrack and do as nanny tells them.

The First Minister's rare forays into world politics always follow those lines. Consider the plan for a trade embassy in the USA and the farce surrounding the signing of the Flanders declaration. As Duncan Hamilton said, when the First Minister signed the political declaration in Brussels on 28 May, there can have been only one of two reasons. Either he had no clue what the declaration was about and signed because everyone else was signing and it seemed like a good idea on the day or he knew exactly what he was doing and, on that one day, he found enough courage to do what he knew was right.

It is worth reiterating what the First Minister signed up to. The declaration reads:

"in order to ensure due compliance with the principle of subsidiarity and therefore guarantee full respect for the constitutional regions' own area of competence, the political role of those regions has to be strengthened within the European Union."

It continues:

"The constitutional regions demand that ... there should be a review of the division of political responsibilities between the European Union on one hand and the member states and the regions on the other".

It also states:

"The constitutional regions are not satisfied with the current institutional framework".

That is what the First Minister signed.

Hugh Henry: Will the member give way?

Roseanna Cunningham: I have heard enough drivel from the Labour benches for one day.

As we have to assume that the First Minister is not stupid—although that is perhaps a dangerous assumption—we can assume only that, since 28

May, he has suffered a catastrophic failure of nerve, has had a kicking from his London bosses or has had a combination of the two. His absence from the debate points to a failure of nerve. It seems that, having signed up to the principles in the declaration, the First Minister is disinclined to vote for them or publicly support them. Goodness knows what the political leaders in other European countries think. This farce makes Scotland a laughing stock.

I wish that the First Minister would not be coy about his support for such initiatives. The truth is that, if he had brought the proposals to Parliament, he would have found support from the Executive benches, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Scottish Green Party, the Scottish National Party and Dennis Canavan—although, like Dennis Canavan, most of us would prefer the word “nation” to the jargon of “constitutional region”.

The Executive has taken a whingeing and cringing approach in which having an international outlook is the equivalent of peeking over the back fence occasionally and running away when the big kids appear over the horizon or running back to the kailyard when the boss tells it to. The signing of the declaration gives official expression to the view that the current constitutional settlement must change. However, the Executive benches continue to display nothing but poverty of ambition while the SNP wants to rise to the challenge. It must be strange for Thabo Mbeki to ponder the fact that, in all the years during which he and others like him were told that they were not good enough to govern themselves and be players on the international scene, some of the people who were urging change for South Africa were—and remain—content with the same impotence for their country.

That brings me to Jack McConnell’s speech. How did he rise to today’s debate? He is obviously touchy about his boss’s absence. He talks about vision but displays no evidence of it. He started with a series of anti-independence clichés but, although my pen was poised to note any serious points he might make, he made none. We got 10 minutes of waffle, about which he is probably embarrassed, because the truth is that he is prepared to settle for so little.

Ben Wallace gave us the typical Tory line. He talked about the Executive doing things that were beyond its competence. As my colleague Duncan Hamilton said, most things are beyond the Executive’s competence. Otherwise, Ben Wallace’s contribution was just a Tory version of the Scottish cringe.

As for the Liberal Democrats—I will lump them all together, including the deputy minister—I was interested to hear whether there would be real support for their colleague in the European

Parliament. Instead, we got wibble, wibble, wibble. Otherwise, they were silent on their attitude to Henry McLeish’s apparent backtracking.

We can take it that the Lib Dems in the Executive have been whipped into line yet again because they have absolutely nothing to say about the subject of the debate. In typical Liberal Democrat style, when embarrassed about the detail of an argument, they retreat into generalised waffle. Frankly, I wish they would collectively get a spine.

The SNP has pointed to the positive role models that exist. They are countries that are much like ours but which have the full powers of independence. Norway was able to act as a conduit for direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in the search for peace in the middle east during the early 1990s. Finland’s president Martti Ahtisaari, along with Russia’s ex-foreign minister, brokered the deal that ended the war in Kosovo.

Contrast that with the sort of post-imperial desperation that leaves the United Kingdom Government tied too often to the coat tails of the United States of America. I am more interested in my country playing a positive role in brokering peace for the future than swaggering on the world stage trying to recapture old glories.

John Swinney referred to Mbeki’s challenge to us on globalisation. Blair will obviously bury his head in the sand on that issue and it looks as if the Executive will follow suit. Any legislature, wherever it is in the world, has to face that challenge. Any legislature should seek ways to do exactly that. That is what Mbeki wants us to do. Let us take up the challenge that Thabo Mbeki laid down and take our place in the world. Let us have some real ambition for Scotland, instead of succumbing to such fearful parochial cringe.

Central Heating Initiative

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-2023, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on central heating for the elderly, and two amendments to that motion.

I point out to members that we are extremely short of time and the debate will be short. We ran over time for the previous debate. I ask members to keep to the time scales that have been allocated and I apologise in advance to members whom it will inevitably be impossible to call this morning.

11:23

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): We have again, with some anger and frustration, to use parliamentary time to expose the Executive's incompetence and its fixation with spin over substance in relation to carrying out its duties to improve the lives of people in Scotland. Considering that the people about whom we are talking are the most vulnerable and frail in our society, we are right to call the handling of the central heating initiative a scandal. We are right to describe as a disgrace ministers' delays in addressing obvious flaws in the scheme—flaws that have been pointed out to them since October.

The central heating initiative is no small, incidental Government initiative; it is billed as the flagship policy to deliver social justice. It was billed and launched as a £350 million initiative—a far bigger budget than another project that we will discuss this afternoon. The £350 million tag is an illusion, because only one third of it can be accounted for. However, it is absolutely right that we use Scottish National Party chamber time to expose the fundamental flaws in the system.

As the motion does, we welcome the initiative to try to tackle fuel poverty and the initiative to install central heating in houses. However, if we are using public money, we want to ensure that we use it widely and we need to ensure that it reaches the people who need it. The initiative

“was fanfared as the most exciting initiative in years but it is merely a cruel deception on some of the most vulnerable in society”.

Those are the words not of an SNP spokesperson, but of Garry Coutts, who is the chair of housing and social work in Highland Council.

The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie): On the point about deception, I put it to the SNP that there has been a huge degree of scaremongering on that party's part. An old man came to my surgery and he was extremely distressed because he thought that the SNP was

saying that the programme had been cancelled. Does Fiona Hyslop agree that it is dangerous and highly irresponsible that cheap political headlines matter more to the SNP than do the people of Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: The minister will excuse me for pointing out that it is the responsibility of the Parliament to ensure that, when public money is being used to helping our pensioners, it reaches the people who need it. The scheme was started in April 2001, but I suspect that very few people have benefited from it as yet. Our motion contains positive proposals for rescuing what should be a good scheme, which could put it back on the rails and ensure that we provide central heating for those who need it.

The Government is moved more by headlines than it is by the harsh realities of people's need for the dignity of a warm home. An estimated 4,000 old people die in Scotland because of the cold and the Government is more interested in big fancy launches—as happened last September—than it is in whether the scheme is workable. That means another winter in an energy-rich nation for the fuel poor and another year of missed opportunities to start putting that right.

Why is it that one journalist, in following up an SNP initiative, can in one afternoon find out from Scottish councils that only 8,000 pensioners—rather than the promised 30,000 out of 100,000 tenants—can access the scheme? Why can that journalist also find that the Scottish Government with all its officials and contacts with Labour councils does not know those figures, or that if it does know, it refuses to act? Either way, that is incompetence. The Executive has talked about using the best information that is available at the time, which came from a 1996 survey. Scotland is a small country; surely to goodness the Executive can talk to people to understand what is required and then get on and deliver the system.

Jackie Baillie: Will Fiona Hyslop take an intervention? That is factually wrong.

Fiona Hyslop: It is interesting that, on 10 May, in answer to a parliamentary question that I asked of the minister to find out whether she was planning to review the Executive's position on support to pensioners with partial or old central heating systems, I received a reply that stated:

“We have no present plans to review the position.”—*[Official Report, Written Answers, 10 May 2001; p130.]*

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab) rose—

Fiona Hyslop: Why is it, then, that on Sunday we finally got an agreement and an admission from the Executive that it is considering extending the scheme? That is to be welcomed, but it should be done because the Executive is accountable to

the system.

Jackie Baillie *rose*—

Fiona Hyslop: I want to move on.

Of course we welcome the inclusion of a fuel poverty statement in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. We called for such a statement many months ago. The central heating initiative had the potential to deliver and it still has, but only if the Executive listens to criticisms when they are made.

It is interesting that, in the first year of the Parliament, questions on fuel poverty and the warm deal far outnumbered questions on other matters. Those were the subjects about which members wanted to ask the most questions because there was a problem with the warm deal. The SNP and other parties said that the problem was that the warm deal did not have a heating element and that it was just about draught-proofing and insulation. Pressure from the Parliament led to the introduction of the central heating initiative.

Bristow Muldoon: Will Fiona Hyslop join me in congratulating Labour councils, such as West Lothian Council, that have completed a central heating installation programme for every council house? Will she condemn SNP councillors who voted against the investment programmes that made that possible?

Fiona Hyslop: It is quite clear—as Bristow Muldoon knows well—that when the SNP was in control of West Lothian Council, it initiated a good number of such schemes to ensure that pensioners were protected. West Lothian Council, when it was led by the SNP, introduced winter bonuses to help the pensioners in West Lothian. I know that Bristow Muldoon has a particular interest in West Lothian.

I will move on to the national aspects of what we want to cover. There is another important point in the motion. Let us consider the situation of councils that are considering stock transfer. I raised that issue with Donald Dewar way back in October. I managed to secure an assurance that, whether tenants voted yes or no, they would be able to access funds for central heating. The only difference is that pensioners in stock transfer areas will have to wait until after the ballot on stock transfer to find out whether the vote is yes and whether the money will come from the new housing partnership budget. If the money comes from that budget, it cannot be part of the £350 million initiative.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab) *rose*—

Fiona Hyslop: If the tenants vote no, they will end up joining the back of the queue for the

scheme and there will be no guarantee that the funds will be available.

I will quote Karen Whitefield. In the Social Justice Committee, she rightly put it to the Minister for Social Justice that

“At present, the Government has allocated £110 million for”
the scheme and that

“Obviously, that means that there is a shortfall.”

She asked the minister whether she was

“confident that the funds will be available after 2004?”

The minister replied:

“I am confident that they will be available.”—[*Official Report, Social Justice Committee, 23 May 2001; c 2478.*]

But where is that money? How does the minister know that she will get that money? If it is part of the £800 million that is likely to come in at the next spending review, and if the Executive has yet to allocate it, does that mean that education does not get the money, or that our old folk—who are seeking free personal care—do not get it? The minister cannot give that guarantee and, if she cannot give that guarantee now, why did she announce back in September schemes that are worth £350 million?

The problem lies in the strict rules, which say that the provisions apply only to people who have no central heating. They do not cover people who have old, ineffective, broken or partial systems. I do not expect the minister personally to assess everybody's homes.

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): I don't know—I think she should.

Fiona Hyslop: Well, we could send her out on that mission.

There is a central question: does the Executive trust the councils to understand what stock they have, who needs it and why the programme is so centralised?

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): Will Fiona Hyslop take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I have given way too often. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Fiona Hyslop: Page 154 of the budget document—of the minister's budget—says, “We have allocated £110m”. That is all that is allocated to the programme. It is absolutely welcome—we have called for it—but I urge caution and concern. I look around the chamber and I do not see Angus MacKay but, if I were him, I would be seriously concerned. If we look at the communities budget and consider the competence—or incompetence—of it, we see that in February, 48

per cent of the rough sleepers initiative funding was allocated but not spent. We also see that 50 per cent of the new housing partnership budget was allocated but not spent, and that 50 per cent of the money for the empty homes initiative was allocated but not spent. I am seriously concerned: we should ensure that the poor and vulnerable families who should be serviced by the communities budgets do not allow themselves to be cut off, and I am worried that there might be some clawback of any underspend. I urge you to defend your budget strongly, minister, and to ensure that that does not happen. In order to ensure that, however, you must have the confidence of the chamber that you are spending the public's money wisely.

I want now to touch on the private sector aspects of the scheme. Although the programme was launched in September last year, the private tendering for the managing agent has not been completed and is unlikely to be completed until autumn this year. I have some concerns about its implementation. We have heard in other debates about the average age of gas fitters being 50. There is an aspect to what the minister intends to do that suggests that she wants to repeat the problems of the warm deal, by relying on new deal applicants to do the work. What will be their period of training? When will they be allowed access to homes so that they can implement the scheme? Would you, minister, let a young lad on the new deal fit your granny's central heating system? Some serious safety questions must be addressed.

In conclusion, I say that the Parliament is about accountability, and although the central heating initiative is a sham and a shambles, by agreeing to the motion we can rescue the initiative, put it back on track and put an end to the misery of so many pensioners and young families who want warm homes.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the introduction of a national central heating installation programme announced by the Scottish Executive on 19 September 2000; welcomes the principle of the programme, but expresses regret that the original amount of money announced to be invested in the programme was exaggerated, that those living in public housing in proposed stock transfer areas have been barred from participation, that the definition of eligibility to take part has been drawn too tightly and that those with old, ineffective, broken or partial heating systems have been excluded; believes that the Scottish Executive should come forward with an accurate appraisal of the investment available for the programme and new eligibility criteria which expand the range of people able to participate, and further believes that the programme should include those living in the public sector in proposed stock transfer areas and those with old, ineffective, broken or partial heating systems.

11:33

The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie): I wish to say at the outset that I welcome the debate, because it gives us an opportunity to set right the dangerous misinformation that is spread by the Scottish National Party. The SNP certainly thirsts for information about the central heating programme: since the programme was announced last September, that party has asked numerous parliamentary questions and written letters about it, and has raised it in debate whenever possible. However, its members still do not understand.

Let me explain why the central heating programme has been so widely welcomed—a fact that SNP members seem to ignore. The central heating programme is one of the best packages ever offered to vulnerable households in Scotland. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the UK—indeed, there is nothing like it in the SNP manifesto. All households who live in local authority and housing association stock will receive central heating and advice on its use. They will receive loft, tank and pipe insulation, draught-proofing, safety alarms, energy efficiency advice and a check of entitlement to state benefits. All private sector households in which the head of the household or spouse is aged 60 or more will receive the same package.

The central heating programme is not means-tested, and there are no hoops that people must jump through to qualify. If somebody needs the package, they get it—it is that simple. Those who get the package will see the cost of heating their homes cut by half. For many of them, fuel poverty will be a thing of the past; they will be warm.

Mr Gibson: Will the people of the city of Glasgow benefit from the initiative in the current financial year?

Jackie Baillie: The point is that anybody—whether that person is a pensioner or a tenant—who is without central heating will be eligible. We have always been clear about the time scale. It is a five-year programme and I hope, Mr Gibson, that you will welcome the fact that we are accelerating it.

As I was saying, for many of the people who need the package, fuel poverty will be a thing of the past, and they will be warm. We will cut the incidence of illness that is related to cold and damp. We will cut the number of excess winter deaths. Smoke detectors, carbon dioxide detectors and cold alarms will ensure that households are safe.

There is significant under-claiming of state benefit, particularly among elderly people, and I expect that the benefit entitlement checks will lead to increases in household income, in addition to

savings on fuel bills. That is why the central heating programme has been widely welcomed by a host of organisations, and that is why more than 4,000 people have already replied to our leaflet and registered an interest in the scheme. That is what will make the central heating programme a resounding success—something that the SNP simply does not understand.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I received a letter from Aberdeen City Council a few weeks ago that stated:

“It would appear ... the Council’s housing stock would not qualify for the Scottish Executive funding, reported to be £350 million.”

It will not receive that funding despite the fact that, in the city of Aberdeen, between 200 and 300 council houses have no heating whatever.

Will the minister explain how many households in Aberdeen City and in Aberdeenshire will qualify for that £350 million scheme, given that our understanding is that the answer is zero?

Jackie Baillie: The principle that is followed by the Executive—I hope by the Parliament as a whole—has always been that we start with the most vulnerable people; those who have no central heating at all. If there are people without central heating who fit the criteria of the scheme, they will qualify. What is depressing is that, while the Executive parties are more interested in people, the SNP is more interested in providers.

We based our original estimate on the information that was available at the time, from the 1996 Scottish house condition survey. That survey indicated that about 85,000 local authority houses lacked central heating. We now have actual figures from local authorities, which show that approximately 23,000 council houses now lack central heating. Clearly, local authorities have been active in protecting the interests of their tenants, and we commend them for that.

About 6,500 housing association houses also lack central heating. Scottish Homes is writing today to the associations concerned, to notify them of the additional grant aid that they will receive. We believe that about 40,000 elderly households in the private sector lack central heating.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the minister give way?

Jackie Baillie: No, because you gave way only once, Fiona. I have given way to SNP members several times.

Because the numbers involved are less than we anticipated—perhaps you should listen to this, Fiona—and because we have the resources, we will do more. First, we will accelerate the programme. Pensioners and all tenants will get

central heating faster, which means more warmth, less illness and fewer winter deaths, which the SNP would surely welcome.

Furthermore, we are going to extend the programme—something that we have always said we would consider. It is absolutely right to say that people who do not have central heating are the most vulnerable and that they must be attended to first.

We again hear the tired old nonsense from the SNP that those who live in stock transfer areas are somehow barred from participation. They are not barred from getting central heating. They will get central heating and refurbished homes from new community landlords.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the minister give way?

Jackie Baillie: No.

I repeat—perhaps this time you should listen—that if tenants in the areas concerned vote against stock transfer, they will be included in the central heating programme. Whatever they decide, they will not lose out. They will all get central heating.

What really matters is that we have a central heating programme that makes provision for all pensioners and all tenants in the social rented sector to have central heating; that there is a warm deal that helps our most vulnerable households; that for the first time we are making an historic commitment to tackling fuel poverty in Scotland; and that we are investing in our housing. It is important that we make a real difference to people’s lives—a difference that is based not on dangerous, irresponsible, cheap political headlines that frighten pensioners, but on delivering. That is what the Labour-Liberal Democrat partnership Executive is doing.

I move amendment SM1-2023.2, to leave out “notes” to end and insert:

“commends the Scottish Executive for its commitment to ensuring that all elderly households and all households in the social rented sector in Scotland have central heating by April 2005, one year earlier than anticipated, for the proposed extension of the scheme currently under consideration, for the investment it has already made through the Warm Deal in providing insulation to 80,000 homes occupied by vulnerable households, for the provisions within the Housing Bill which extend the scope of the improvement grant system to include energy efficiency measures, for the provisions within the Housing Bill which require Scottish Ministers and local authorities to set out what they will do to address fuel poverty and for the investment in local authority and housing association property to improve housing quality.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the next speaker, I remind all members that they should address the chair when they are speaking.

11:41

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): There is no better way to destroy a good case than to overstate it. That, with respect, is what Fiona Hyslop did this morning.

Undoubtedly, the Executive has put the usual spin on the initiative, which forces me to concede that some of the points that Fiona Hyslop made have some validity. Let us go back to the halcyon days of September, when the central heating scheme was introduced to a fanfare of ministerial trumpets. We welcomed that, because we acknowledged that something had to be done to assist the many people in Scotland who suffer from the effects of fuel poverty—780,000 households, to be precise. That is Shelter's figure, not mine. That being the situation, it was clear that some action had to be taken.

It was also clear that the Labour Executive and the Labour Government had manifestly failed to build on the progress that was made by the previous Conservative Government in attacking the problem of fuel poverty. I refer to the home energy efficiency scheme and the right to buy, which generated funding for better-heated housing. We should also not forget the dramatic effects of the privatisation of the utilities, which reduced significantly the cost of fuel to everybody in Scottish society.

The Conservatives cannot possibly support the Executive's amendment, given its self-congratulatory tone. However, I would like to address a number of issues. First, I am pleased that the SNP has clarified its view on whether those who vote in favour of stock transfer will benefit from the scheme—it has previously implied that that will not be the case, which would be irresponsible scaremongering.

Secondly, as I recollect—I am sure that the Minister for Social Justice will, as ever, eagerly correct me if my memory is in some respects defective—some 140,000 households were to benefit from this initiative. As is usual with the Executive in general, and with the two social justice ministers in particular, the figures are sometimes not quite what they seem. I recall that a period of five years was envisaged for the scheme. However, is not it the case that only some 40,000 houses will benefit from the direct intervention of the initiative?

Jackie Baillie rose—

Bill Aitken: If the minister will hear me out, I will quantify that.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Bill Aitken: I will give way to Scott Barrie in a second.

An awful lot of the improvements were going to happen anyway. Despite the fact that their allocations are no longer ring-fenced—which has resulted in a cut in expenditure from £118 million in 1995-96 to £45.3 million in 1998-99—local authorities are making some progress. Bristow Muldoon mentioned West Lothian Council, but the first council in Scotland to complete its central heating installation programme was the Conservative-controlled Stirling Council, under the inspired leadership of my colleague Mr Harding.

Jackie Baillie: I will not address the situation in Stirling; I am sure that the leadership of Stirling Council was less than inspired when it was controlled by the Conservatives.

From the revised figures for the central heating programme, it is clear that about 80,000 central heating units will be installed. As I said, we are considering to which groups the programme should be extended. Once that process is complete, I will return to the Parliament with increased figures—just for Bill Aitken.

Bill Aitken: I look forward to those forthcoming revelations.

At the end of the day, the figures that the minister cites might not be grossly inaccurate. However, she is to some extent misleading members, because she fails to make the point that many rehabilitations and installations would have happened anyway.

Jackie Baillie rose—

Bill Aitken: I am in my last minute.

Those rehabilitations would have happened under stock transfer as a result of local authority initiatives. It is not good enough for the minister to say that the scheme, worth while though it is, is achieving what she claims.

I move amendment S1M-2023.1, to leave out from “, that those living” to end.

11:46

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Bill Aitken has restored a degree of balance, which was lacking from Fiona Hyslop's introductory speech. I do not know what it is about Fiona Hyslop; she might be a future leader of her party, but if that is her ambition she should not take lessons from Kenny MacAskill on how to rant in the chamber. That is what we had from her this morning. She greatly exaggerated the case that she had to put.

We need to put the central heating programme in context. It is not just another routine Government programme. It is part of a major and radical package to banish the horror of fuel poverty and damp, cold houses from our country, and to stop the toll of unnecessary winter deaths

to which Fiona Hyslop referred in her speech. That toll disfigures Scotland and is in stark contrast to the housing success of many of our north European neighbours, such as Sweden. Like some other members, I had discussions with the Swedish MPs who visited Scotland about six months ago. They found somewhat mysterious the idea of houses that are damp and cold and do not do their job. That kind of problem does not exist in countries such as Sweden, whose styles of houses have traditionally been much more successful than have ours.

In my view, the central heating programme will be and is the flagship achievement of the Parliament and of the Labour-Liberal Democrat Executive that leads it. The programme's objective is extremely worthy. However, worthiness of intent is not the test of good government. The test of a Government is its ability to bring to bear resources on a focused target, and that is what has happened behind the announcement of the central heating programme. Without the arguments that have surrounded private finance initiative projects, the programme has brought together private and public resources, expertise and skill in pursuit of a highly desirable social objective.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Robert Brown called the central heating programme the Executive's flagship policy. Does he agree that it would be inappropriate for the people who install the systems not to have the required skills? How will he feel if we end up with people who have done only six months' training entering old folks homes to carry out the work?

Jackie Baillie: That is scaremongering.

Bruce Crawford: It is not scaremongering; I am talking about reality as reported to us by the gas installation industry. Does Robert Brown support the situation that I described? Would such a situation make the programme a flagship policy?

Robert Brown: Although Bruce Crawford's question is couched in rather alarmist terms, it raises a genuine issue that must be dealt with. There is no doubt that the extension of programmes such as stock transfer, the hospital-building programme and the central heating programme requires the organisation of resources, not least of skills.

There are issues about the way in which the programme is managed and the way in which people are trained and brought into the programme. However, with respect, that is not the central point that the SNP has put before us today. If the SNP had knowledge, expertise and genuine background information that it could include in the debate, ministers would be prepared to consider those points, take them on board and deal with them.

At the end of the day, we have an innovative, successful project that will be good for the state of housing and for the comfort of people in their homes. However, it appears that the figures on which the project was originally based have changed—one might have expected that from figures that go back to 1996. To me, that is good news and it suggests that we have moved further down the line in dealing with the problem by reducing the number of houses that have no central heating. It also releases further resources within the programme. I am sure that when the deputy minister sums up for the Executive, she will confirm that the changes in figures will not affect the total resource that is allocated to, or the number of houses in, the programme. We are talking about releasing resources that can be used to deal with broken and inadequate central heating and with the other issues that have rightly been flagged up.

However, the Parliament is not in the business of waving magic wands so that, all of a sudden, central heating is provided for all. We must prioritise so that we can deal with the vulnerable households that must be tackled first. That is the proper way to deal with the situation—the Executive has taken that approach, which will lead to the success of the scheme.

The SNP motion is distinctly over-egged, alarmist and not worthy of debate in the Parliament. Nevertheless, there are a number of details within the central heating scheme that would be well worth revisiting by the Parliament and the Social Justice Committee, such as the resources that are to be put into the scheme, whether the skills mixes are in place, and the management of the project. That is a job for proper scrutiny by the Parliament, rather than the alarmist nonsense that we heard from the SNP.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move now to the open part of the debate. If I were to stick rigidly to the business programme, we would have fewer than four minutes for that part of the debate. However, I propose to run this morning's business into lunchtime, in order to accommodate as many members as possible. In the circumstances, I ask members to keep their speeches to three minutes.

11:52

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Robert Brown talks about the SNP over-egging the debate, but the real over-egging started with the Executive's press release of 23 February, which stated that it would provide central heating for

"140,000 households, over half being pensioner households"—

and that all would benefit.

We have just taken part in an election in which

the turnout was the lowest since 1918. There is a cynicism about politicians and the Government that is hardly surprising, when ministers cannot tell the truth about a modest scheme that will improve the lives of some people in Scotland.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member take an intervention?

Tricia Marwick: No.

Instead, we get spin, hype and, more cruelly, raised expectations that the Executive was never prepared to meet. I ask the minister to confirm that the central heating scheme was really about the headline, "Central heating for all".

In that first press release of 23 February, the minister assured us that

"all pensioner households and tenants in the social rented sector will live in a centrally heated and well insulated home by 2006."

She went on to say that she wanted to ensure that "everyone in Scotland has a warm dry home."

On 23 February, the Executive trumpeted that 140,000 households would benefit. However, in reply to my written question, the minister admitted that she had not asked the local authorities for an estimate until 26 February. Although the minister announced that 140,000 households would benefit, she could not have known the correct figure, as she had not asked local authorities for an estimate until three days after the press release had been issued.

During the debate on fuel poverty in March, Elaine Smith and I questioned the minister on who would be eligible for free central heating. I said:

"The Executive's scheme specifically excludes householders who have been saddled with old, unaffordable, inefficient, outdated heating systems. For those tenants, the prospect of affordable heating is as distant as ever."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 2001; Vol 11, c 185.]

The *Official Report* records that the minister indicated her disagreement to that statement.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member give way?

Tricia Marwick: I see that Elaine Smith is not here today.

Jackie Baillie: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is not giving way.

Tricia Marwick: No doubt, Elaine Smith has been gagged by the Executive, otherwise she might have made some of the same criticisms today that she made during the debate in March. Surely, even if the Executive had the most limited insight into housing, it must have been aware of the huge number of houses in Scotland that have

ruinously expensive electric underfloor heating, inefficient warm-air heating or dilapidated storage heaters. Those houses would never have met the Executive's criteria and would therefore never have been part of the central heating programme.

When the scheme was announced, Shelter Scotland said that it would be

"very concerned if the Executive think their central heating scheme will be a major step in eradicating fuel poverty."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please wind up.

Tricia Marwick: Four months later, Highland Council said that the scheme was "a cruel deception".

I welcome the commitment to extend the scheme that the minister gave today. However, she was dragged to that position kicking and screaming because of the embarrassment caused by the scheme.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Come to a close, please.

Tricia Marwick: In February, the minister said that money was available to tackle 140,000 households. I ask the minister to give a guarantee to the chamber that the central heating scheme will cover at least 140,000 households—not 8,000 households, as claimed by local authorities, or 29,000 households, as the minister claimed today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I advise members that they must stick to three minutes if I say that they have three minutes. That will assist the debate, although I realise that members will have to cut the speeches that they have prepared.

11:56

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): I am delighted that Tricia Marwick exemplified the contradiction and hypocrisy that lie at the heart of the contributions to the debate that SNP members have made so far. They usually come to the chamber and say to Scotland, "We don't have enough resources to deliver for the most needy, the infirm and the vulnerable in our communities." However, the minister demonstrated that we have those resources—in fact, we are doing more, as we are extending those resources because of our initial underestimate.

Rather than fake, indignant anger about the statistics—

Mr Gibson: Will the member give way?

Mr McAveety: No. I am sorry, but I am making a key point that I want Kenny Gibson to hear.

Rather than worry about statistics, we should be concerned about the people in communities

throughout Scotland who deserve and require good-quality central heating in their houses. I will not take lectures on statistics from the SNP, which has never been able to produce a financial programme for an independent Scotland. Yet SNP members crawl hypocritically to the chamber to say that they are really concerned about the impact of the Executive's scheme.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Mr McAveety: No. I will take no interventions as I have only three minutes.

The reality is that the SNP cannot accept that the coalition Executive is able to get things right in an area that is of obvious importance to the people of Scotland.

All the SNP members who have spoken misused and mangled the English language—they were a wonder to listen to. Let me give members a flavour of their speeches. Fiona Hyslop started by referring to a “scandal”, a “disgrace”, a sense of “anger” and a “cruel deception”. Then, out of the blue, came that wonderful line, “we welcome the initiative”. That is as credible as describing the Sex Pistols as a minor beat combo, but it is also the reality of the SNP's contribution to the debate.

I will conclude, Presiding Officer, as I like to make key points within time. First, the scheme will be extended to more people in Scotland than we initially thought—we said that at the beginning of the debate. Secondly, the scheme will be introduced a year early. Thirdly, while the SNP poses as the great guardian of the public purse—what a shocking revelation—we do not want to invest in stock that is to be transferred because we want tenants to determine the core stock in transfer areas. That will mean that we will not repeat the mistake of investing in stock that does not have a long-term future. Over the years, many elected members have faced that problem. The irony is that, rather than addressing the central issue, some SNP councillors jumped on that bandwagon because it was politically convenient and populist.

Will elderly folk in social rented and poor households get central heating? Yes, they will. Is it possible that the scheme will be extended to cover disabled folk? Yes, it is. Will we consider extending the ways in which we can attract investment, in order to deliver for folk in Scotland? Of course that can happen. I had hoped that SNP members would be able to come to the chamber and, for a change, welcome those developments. Unfortunately, they were not able to do so.

I am in my last 10 seconds, so I will finish with an interesting statement from Fiona Hyslop. She says that she has been complaining about the scheme for two years. However, the scheme was started up in September 2000. I know that SNP

members have problems counting, but I was sure that they could understand the calendar.

We do not care about process. We care about poor people and pensioners—those are the people we put first.

12:00

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): When the coalition Executive announced its central heating insulation programme in the autumn of 2000, like most if not all members, I gave that welcome initiative my enthusiastic support. I have not changed my mind, nor have I been persuaded to a contrary view. I am totally convinced that, in time, the scheme's implementation will prove it to be an undoubted success and will be accepted as such by those whom it is intended to benefit.

More important, the scheme will clearly demonstrate to the Scottish electorate that the Scottish Parliament is committed to providing for the needy and disadvantaged in our communities and that it is doing so with care, compassion and sensitivity.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

John Farquhar Munro: No. I am restricted for time.

My only criticism is directed at the excessive hoops and restrictive hurdles that local authorities and aspiring participants encounter when they attempt to gain approval under the scheme for what appear at face value to be simple, effective and necessary improvements to housing that is considered to be substandard. I fully appreciate and willingly accept that priority should be given to particular houses and that resources should be targeted in areas of greatest need. I suggest that, initially, we need to focus directly on all pensioners and the disabled and long-term ill of all age groups—those who are considered to be disadvantaged and vulnerable within our modern society.

We must also ensure that the scheme incorporates tenants in both public and private property. The scourge of cold and dampness and substandard housing is not the exclusive monopoly of social rented property.

I respectfully encourage the Executive to reconsider the extremely strict criteria, which should be relaxed. The criteria, which seem to exclude many needy and justified applicants who are therefore caused undue distress, have encouraged inappropriate public criticism.

Having expressed those few thoughts and given that advice, which I hope is helpful, I commend the Executive's efforts in promoting the package of

central heating and insulation grants. I am sure that, if the package is vigorously and enthusiastically promoted, it will ensure the comfort of tenants and, more important—it is very important to me—secure the gratitude of numerous disadvantaged and deprived households in our extended Scottish community.

12:03

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The minister said that we should be interested in people rather than statistics; in two years as a member of the Parliament, I have never met an MSP who is not interested in people. No party has a monopoly on caring. We were interested in the statistics, which were given in September 2000, of £350 million to be made available for the free installation of central heating, which would benefit 70,000 pensioners and 71,000 tenants. We were also interested to hear that elderly people would save £550 annually on heating bills. The scheme would have been an excellent example of joined-up government, which would have improved the health of the elderly, reduced winter deaths and reduced pressures on the health service. It is well known that poor heating and damp houses exacerbate arthritic conditions and chronic health problems, both of which are far more prevalent in the elderly.

Against that background, the Scottish Conservatives broadly welcomed the Executive's central heating initiative. The initial hope raised by the initiative was that all houses with inadequate heating would qualify. However, as Fiona Hyslop mentioned, Highland Council has written to the Scottish Executive to describe the scheme as a cruel deception, because the criteria were set far too low. Of Highland Council's total housing stock of 17,000, only four houses qualify under the scheme's eligibility criteria.

We are not being negative. We are not carping. We are not being critical. We simply want the expectations that have been raised to be met. That is a fair and honest assessment. In Highland Council, 1,700 homes are due to have deficient heating systems replaced or upgraded, but still only four would qualify under this initiative.

I understand that the Scottish Executive is requesting information from councils in Scotland on homes with deficient and inadequate central heating systems. This may be reading between the lines, but when the minister says that she is extending eligibility for heating and accelerating the programme, I hope that she will reconsider the tight-fisted, grudging and half-hearted announcement of last year.

Tricia Marwick *rose—*

Jackie Baillie: Will the member give way?

Mary Scanlon: I am in my last seconds.

I welcome the minister's promise to extend eligibility and accelerate the programme, but I must ask why a categorical announcement was made that 140,000 households would benefit when, in Highland, out of 17,000 households, only four would benefit.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move now to closing speeches. As a ministerial statement will follow, I ask members to exercise the same discipline as did those who spoke during the debate.

12:06

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):

This debate has been far too short, because this is a major Executive initiative. Fiona Hyslop talked about "spin over substance" and she used words such as "sham" and "shambles". I resent the constant misinformation that is peddled by the SNP. We have heard it on so many issues—from the abolition of tuition fees to the Executive central heating initiative. What the SNP says is deliberately designed to confuse the most vulnerable people in our society and I resent it.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: Jackie Baillie highlighted the dangerous misinformation that is spread by the SNP about the scheme. As she said, it is one of the best packages ever offered to vulnerable households. She also acknowledged the significant underclaiming of benefits by our elderly population in Scotland, and I am glad that the initiative is not means-tested.

Bill Aitken seems to be criticising the initiative on the bizarre ground that some councils have already started down that route. I find that simply bizarre. The whole point is that, at the end of the day, people will have the initiative delivered to them. Bill's was a bizarre criticism.

My colleague Robert Brown talked about the initiative as part of a major and radical package to address real issues—winter deaths and fuel poverty. Those issues come up regularly in my constituency, which has one of the coldest spots in Scotland—in Braemar. I am delighted that, as Robert indicated, the Executive is bringing together resources—which is what government is about—to bring about real change for the most needy in our society. I should have thought that everybody in the chamber would welcome that.

Bruce Crawford *rose—*

Mr Rumbles: Tricia Marwick's contribution was disappointing, again quibbling over figures. She actually said that the minister had been dragged

“kicking and screaming” into the debate. I risk damaging the ministers—and I know how highly I am regarded on the Labour benches—but I have nothing but praise for Jackie Baillie and Margaret Curran. They are among the best in the team.

Tricia Marwick: Will the member give way?

Mr Rumbles: No—I am pressing on because time is short.

Frank McAveety talked about the coalition getting it right. I am proud that Labour and Liberal Democrat MSPs, working together, are delivering real improvements for people in Scotland.

Mr McAveety: “Together we can make a difference.”

Mr Rumbles: Thank you, Frank.

Mary Scanlon was critical again. She used the words “tight-fisted” and “grudging”. The language of the SNP is not appropriate.

In conclusion, I reiterate the Liberal Democrats’ firm support for the initiative of the partnership Government. Frank McAveety talked about our getting it right. I am convinced that the ministers have it right.

12:10

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I will keep my remarks brief. First, we warmly welcome the ministers’ attempt to introduce the scheme, which is a step in the right direction, but there are substantial worries about the eligibility criteria. I welcome the comment of the Minister for Social Justice that she is considering extending and accelerating the scheme. It would be helpful if in the winding-up speech it could be confirmed that that will include an examination of the eligibility criteria, because John Farquhar Munro and Mary Scanlon gave evidence of the worries in the Highlands and other parts of Scotland about the extent of eligibility.

Jackie Baillie: We always said, and this chamber agreed, that we should start with those who are most vulnerable first, which is those who have no central heating at all. That is exactly what we are doing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the minister, but as she will be aware, people with old, ineffective, broken or partial heating systems have been excluded. That must be addressed.

Age Concern Scotland has argued powerfully that funds should be ring-fenced, because providing free central heating to owner-occupiers will not be a top priority for cash-strapped local authorities, which might wish to make sure that central heating is put in public sector houses. The

Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland has pointed out that the amount of money for private sector repairs and improvements has fallen from £120 million to £40 million. Can the minister provide an accurate appraisal of the funds that are required to match the Executive’s definition of eligibility? Can the minister say whether and when new eligibility criteria will be introduced?

In conclusion, some years ago I opened the Cardow Road scheme in Glasgow, which improved fuel efficiency, increased insulation and greatly reduced fuel costs, and which was extremely popular with tenants. The test for the Executive today is to find a way forward—I welcome the fact that it is seeking to do that—which is seen to be fair, gives hope to public and private sector tenants, and stands the test of time.

12:13

The Deputy Minister for Social Justice (Ms Margaret Curran): Yet again we have had a lively debate on this subject, on which there has been much discussion. It is disappointing that matters have not been clarified, despite strenuous efforts to do so. The most revealing speech was that of Tricia Marwick, who consistently refused the Minister for Social Justice’s offer of clarification. That revealed the SNP’s aim in the debate: not to examine the programme or assess it, nor to seek clarification—the aim was to score cheap political points. If Tricia Marwick had wanted answers to questions, she would have taken Jackie Baillie’s intervention. Tricia Marwick accused the Executive, and would not allow clarification.

Fiona Hyslop *rose*—

Ms Curran: Sit down. Your behaviour in the debate has been disgraceful.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Speak through the chair.

Ms Curran: As Jackie Baillie said, the Executive is on the right course—a point which I am glad to say has been accepted across the chamber. The central heating initiative has made a significant contribution to tackling fuel poverty in Scotland, and demonstrates our profound commitment to that cause. That has been underpinned by a range of programmes and policies, which are described in the Executive’s amendment. As Mike Rumbles said—and I thank him graciously for his comments—it is one of the best packages that has been offered to vulnerable households in Scotland. We have always said—and I repeat it today, because it underpins the entire approach of the Executive—that we will always start with the most vulnerable. It is in the nature of our approach to government to target resources first. If we can, we will always do that.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP) *rose—*

Mr Gibson *rose—*

Ms Curran: Kenny Gibson intervened earlier, and I will address the point that he raised. He talked about Glasgow. The SNP's position has shifted, as Bill Aitken showed. I own copies of leaflets that the SNP produced, which categorically state that if people do not vote for stock transfer, they will not receive central heating.

Fiona Hyslop *rose—*

Ms Curran: Fiona Hyslop has at last conceded that if people do not vote for stock transfer, we have made it clear that they will benefit from the central heating programme. Yet again, we have another policy U-turn from the SNP.

The SNP's other concession was to recognise the significance of the programme and to welcome it. Of course, SNP members are now beginning to understand the significance of our community ownership policy. Tenants are becoming aware of the tangible effects of the policy. Despite all the SNP's scaremongering, deliberate attempts to confuse—of which we have seen so much today—and efforts in Glasgow to undermine the process, its vote reduced at the recent election. I am glad that tenants in Glasgow are not listening to the SNP, its scaremongering and deceit.

Fergus Ewing: Will the minister give way?

Ms Curran: I will not.

Because of our prudent use of resources and because the numbers are lower than we thought, we are developing a rolling programme to accelerate implementation, so that tenants and pensioners receive central heating faster. I thought that members would welcome that.

The central heating programme is a central part of our plans to tackle fuel poverty. We published for consultation a fuel poverty strategy that commits us to ending the plight of fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010. Within that target, we will ensure that all pensioner households and tenants in the social rented sector live in well-insulated and centrally heated homes by 2005. We are committed to that.

We lodged amendments at stage 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill that require ministers and local authorities to set out a statement of what must be done to address fuel poverty and to provide regular reports. We have made a range of efforts to show our commitment to tackling the matter and introducing the central heating programme. We will do whatever we can to ensure that we maximise the opportunities that the programme provides.

The SNP has shown that its motion is more

about cheap political point scoring than a real consideration of the issues.

Fergus Ewing *rose—*

Ms Curran: Scotland, the public, the agencies and the staff care little about the political clashes in the chamber and the accusations that are flying about.

Fergus Ewing: Is the minister interested in debating the issues?

Ms Curran: They care about delivery. That is why the programme has been welcomed. That is why it has the support of the public throughout Scotland, and that is why we will continue with it.

12:18

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): During that woeful, cowardly rant, the minister tried to score cheap political points by talking about cheap political points. We should return to the issue.

Last Thursday, in response to my question on the Executive's central heating programme, the First Minister—I am pleased that he is with us now—said:

"It is the essential forms of central heating that we must put first into the homes of those who have maximum priority".—[*Official Report*, 14 June 2001; c 1653.]

However, on the previous day, the Minister for Social Justice said in the debate on the Housing (Scotland) Bill that

"central heating is required in fewer council houses, because Labour local authorities have acted in the interests of tenants by installing central heating".—[*Official Report*, 13 June 2001; c 1526.]

It is obvious that the minister is unaware that in Glasgow—Frank McAveety's former fiefdom—the Glasgow energy initiative, involving a partnership deal with Scottish Power, was terminated three years ago, for three reasons, of which I had confirmation from Glasgow City Council only this morning. The three reasons were a decision of new Labour not to transfer the city's housing debt, prioritisation of new housing partnerships and the subsuming of the central heating initiative within the stock transfer package.

The ministers talked about vulnerability. Everyone would agree that the most vulnerable people should have central heating first, but in the ministers' view, that should happen only if they do not live in Glasgow or any of the other authority areas that are subject to stock transfer. Those people will have no central heating installed.

Ms Curran *rose—*

Mr Gibson: I am speechless; Margaret Curran is trying to intervene after refusing to take any interventions from SNP members. If Margaret

Curran had accepted an SNP intervention, we would have accepted one from her. She knows the rules of the game in this place.

As a result, thousands upon thousands of tenants who were promised central heating in Glasgow and other local authority areas are still waiting. So who is right? Is it the First Minister, saying that the question is one of priorities, or the rather smug and complacent Minister for Social Justice, who seems to believe that no problem or need exists? Perhaps she should have said so when her predecessor announced the project.

Mr McAveety: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Gibson: You are another one who would not take an intervention. Sit back down, mate.

At that time, the party of the Minister for Social Justice was still trying to placate pensioners over the woeful 73p increase. Perhaps that had something to do with the timing of an initiative on which not a penny piece was spent until recently. Can the minister confirm how many households qualify for central heating under the initiative? No, she cannot. She cannot be specific about the number of households over and above those that are having central heating installed as of right during normal council investment programmes.

I notice that the minister has made no comment about where the mythical £350 million was supposed to come from, let alone any comment as to why those who live in the seven stock transfer authorities are currently being discriminated against. In the case of the Executive, investment is never going to happen now: it is always *mañana*, *mañana*. The statement was made last September. How much has been spent to date?

Mr McAveety rose—

Mr Gibson: Come on, Frank: you have been told already, mate. Sit down and behave yourself. I do not want to hear one of your Shakespearean quotations; we have a serious topic to discuss.

Last Thursday, the First Minister stated:

"We will meet our programme for Government commitment that every council and housing association tenant and every elderly person has central heating by April 2006, and we are already examining how the programme can be extended."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 2001; c 1652.]

It is interesting to note that the Executive talked about extending the programme way back in February, five months after the initiative was announced. Around that time, Tricia Marwick asked a question about the number of local authority houses that had no central heating. Jackie Baillie's answer was:

"The information requested ... is not held centrally."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 19 March 2001; Vol 11, c 209.]

That means that Jackie Baillie, or rather her predecessor, announced the initiative without having any idea as to who could or would benefit from it.

When is the date for completion? The Executive amendment mentions 2005. If it is 2005, we will welcome that, but is it 2006? A figure of 100,000 or 140,000 homes, or whatever the figure is, has been mentioned. The implication is that every month 2,000 to 3,000 homes will have central heating installed. Is that the number? Will the minister say what the figure is? I ask Jackie Baillie: is it 2,000 to 3,000 a month? If so, where? Does not the minister want to intervene to let me know? As I asked the minister earlier, how many heating systems will be installed in Glasgow?

We are disappointed that the minister has side-stepped any mention of extending the categories of potential beneficiaries of the programme to include vulnerable groups such as the long-term sick and families with young children. We are disappointed that she has not clarified the position of those with partial or inefficient central heating systems.

The minister will be aware of research that was carried out over the past couple of weeks, not by the SNP, but by the *Sunday Post*—not exactly a stalwart in the campaign for Scottish independence. Some of the figures that were alluded to earlier by Mary Scanlon were found by the *Sunday Post*. They showed that people are being betrayed up and down Scotland—

Jackie Baillie: My understanding is that the *Sunday Post* article was written on the basis of misinformation and scaremongering that it received from one Fiona Hyslop.

Mr Gibson: The information received by the *Sunday Post* was from each council; when the paper telephoned the local authorities, they confirmed the information that the SNP had given the paper previously.

Given that the Executive has promised that all pensioners will have central heating installed, it would have been of benefit to be told how many pensioners living in housing association or private sector housing have benefited to date. We know what the answer would have been. Time and again, we find the Executive living in a world of spin and of relaunch. The Executive has been so embarrassed by the SNP's exposure of this sham that it has had to look at the situation once again.

Bill Aitken talked at length about the issue. However, given that the Tories were in power for 18 years, they should take some responsibility for the issue. During that time, you did nothing to ensure—

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I was not in power.

Bill Aitken: Will Kenny Gibson concede that I highlighted the contribution that was made by the HEES; that electricity bills were significantly reduced as a result of privatisation exercises; and that the amount of money given to local government until 1995-96 was ring-fenced?

Mr Gibson: Does Bill Aitken accept that one of the reasons for the failure of the Glasgow energy initiative was the same under new Labour? It failed because the Tory Government, with Lord James Douglas-Hamilton as minister, did not transfer Glasgow's housing debt.

Robert Brown pointed out how successful an independent nation such as Sweden has been in eliminating fuel poverty and winter deaths. I look forward to the day when this nation is independent. We can then take similar steps to protect our most vulnerable people, as do other independent nations in northern Europe.

Tricia Marwick made an excellent contribution, in which she exposed the cynicism and arrogance of the Executive. Frank McAveety ranted about resources, but did not mention where those resources would come from. It takes more than eloquence: perhaps a bit of substance would help.

Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Mr Gibson: I am on my last bit.

Mr Rumbles talked about misinformation. This is the guy who told Aberdeenshire Council that it would get the most wonderful local government settlement this year, and it ended up with the biggest council tax increase in Scotland. He outdid his colleague George Lyon in the obscenity of his sycophancy towards the Executive.

I urge colleagues of all parties to accept the SNP motion. I am pleased that we have been able to put this extremely important issue back at the top of the political agenda.

Fergus Ewing: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I appreciate that you have just taken the chair, but the Deputy Minister for Social Justice began her speech by attacking an SNP member for not accepting an intervention, then went on to refuse to accept any interventions, despite making a series of personal attacks by name on members. Is that in order?

The Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order. Whether a member accepts interventions is a matter for them; it is not a matter of order.

Modernising Government (Non-departmental Public Bodies)

12:26

The Minister for Finance and Local Government (Angus MacKay): I thank my colleagues and the civil servants who have worked enthusiastically and energetically to bring the review forward to the statement today.

Labour came to power in 1997. Between the end of that year and the publication of our discussion paper, the number of quangos in Scotland fell from 242 to 183. In November last year, the First Minister promised further radical action on quangos, and today, I am announcing the conclusion of the review that resulted. In the past two years, the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive have transformed the accountability and democratic control and scrutiny of Scotland's public services. Our colleagues in local government are in the midst of a process of modernising their own structures and approaches to their work. It is in that context that I am reporting today on our review of non-departmental public bodies.

Public bodies have a long history in Scotland. Many have played important roles in advising Governments and delivering services. Their members have, over the years, provided valuable public service and contributed substantially to the well-being of Scotland. In the new context of devolution, questions have rightly been raised in public and political discussion about their representativeness, accountability and openness.

Scotland's 183 public bodies are immensely diverse and only a case-by-case review could properly determine their relevance and utility in their new context. Our review has asked many questions. Why do those bodies exist at all? What does each body do and is its function still needed? Are some bodies doing things that could now be done better by other organisations, or indeed things that no longer need to be done? Do the remits of some bodies overlap with those of others? Have some bodies outlived the circumstances for which they were created? Our review has acknowledged the complexity of those questions.

Fully two years into devolution, and with 183 quangos of varying ages and remits to consider, the decisions that I am announcing today represent a further major step forward in modernising the way that Scotland runs itself.

In January—had I been allowed to make my

statement, Presiding Officer—I would have proposed a clear set of principles for the running of devolved government services in the new Scotland. The report that we are publishing today embodies nine tests that reflect those principles and which will provide a proper framework for our approach to public bodies in future. Among other requirements, those nine tests will mean that quangos will be retained or established only if they have a distinct role to play and functions to perform that cannot be carried out at least as effectively by any other organisation; if they are clearly accountable to ministers and the people whom they serve for the functions they perform; if they are able to work in a joined-up way with other organisations and are able to draw new people into the processes of government; and if they are properly run, efficient and effective, and deliver value for money.

I promised in January to abolish the bodies that failed the test of those principles. Again, we are delivering. Today, I can announce the abolition of 52 quangos—that is almost a third of all Scotland's public bodies. For example, the water authorities will be merged into a single, accountable water authority, and the Scottish Hospital Trust will be abolished, as will the Scottish Conveyancing and Executry Services Board and the Scottish Valuation and Rating Council. The Scottish agricultural and biological research institutes, which perform no public service or central Government function, will cease to be quangos, and the 43 separate board structures of health boards and trusts in NHS Scotland will be rationalised into only 15 new NHS boards. Another 61 of our public bodies—again, a third—have been specifically identified in the review for further and more fundamental scrutiny by Executive departments, with a presumption in favour of abolition.

The action to modernise government cannot and should not simply be about numbers. It must also ensure that those public bodies that remain operate more effectively and are more appropriately accountable to ministers, to Parliament and to the people of Scotland. They must become more open and more representative. Today, we are again delivering. Public bodies, properly structured and in the appropriate circumstances, have an important role to play in the new Scotland. They carry out important functions on behalf of the Executive or advise the Executive in a variety of ways.

We are abolishing almost a third of all quangos and further scrutinising another third with an intent to abolish them, but we are also radically reforming those quangos that remain. To carry out that radical reform, we plan action in four key areas. First, we are fundamentally reforming the appointments process. We will actively seek out

candidates, rather than simply inviting applications, to ensure that a representative cross-section of the Scottish community serves on and runs Scotland's public bodies. We will also give the standards commission the power to oversee ministerial appointments.

Secondly, we are modernising the way in which board members are trained, supported and paid. All board members will be given the induction and training that they need, and an Executive unit will advise ministers on the proper rate for the job.

Thirdly, boards will be made more open, accountable and effective. Their meetings will be open to the public and summary reports of meetings will be made available, unless there are good reasons why they should not be. Boards will implement fully the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000. To ensure compliance with those points, ministers will issue guidance on the circumstances in which they may intervene or use their powers of direction.

Fourthly, we are redefining the relationship between the Executive and quangos to ensure that they work, where appropriate, to the Executive's agenda. We will make publicly available the explicit guidance for quangos, so that they know, understand, and implement ministers' priorities. The guidance will cover expectations on outcomes, monitoring and general intentions.

Our review of public bodies is an important further step in a process that began just over two years ago with the establishment of the Parliament. As a result of the review, our remaining public bodies will be fewer in number and fit for purpose in 21st century Scotland. They will do a job that needs to be done and that can be done best by a public body. They will be clearly accountable to ministers and to the people whom they serve. They will be effective and properly run, and will deliver value for money. They will be able to work in a joined-up way with other organisations such as local government, the private and voluntary sectors, and the Executive itself. They will also be fully representative of the diversity of Scotland's communities. As the First Minister said in November, there are high expectations of Parliament and there should be high expectations of the remaining quangos.

Our review acknowledges the achievements by public bodies in the very different circumstances of the past. The conclusions of our review are clear and practical and its principles will serve us well in the future.

The review's recommendations are detailed and will require major and time-consuming administrative and legislative action. As members are aware, the Executive has a full legislative programme until May 2003. Unfortunately, there

are substantial difficulties in finding time to implement our proposals, but the Executive has identified administrative action or legislation that will be completed by May 2003 for 46 of the 52 bodies that are to be abolished. That will abolish all but six of the bodies concerned. We wish to go further than that. We intend to introduce an omnibus bill in September 2002 to abolish the remaining six bodies. That means that all the bodies that we propose to abolish will be gone within the first Scottish Parliament. With further departmental scrutiny to come, the review could result in at least a halving of the number of quangos in Scotland.

Devolution is the settled will of the Scottish people. Our actions today show that devolution continues to deliver the will of the Scottish people. Others would deliver fiscal deficit; we are tackling the democratic deficit.

A third of quangos will be abolished and a further third will be reviewed with intent to abolish. The remaining quangos will be fewer, fitter and fairer—that is the action that we have taken on quangos.

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): The minister will be able to say that devolution is the settled will of the Scottish people when they are asked whether they prefer devolution to the normality of independence.

I welcome the minister's positive statement, particularly given the difficulties, shall we say, that he endured when the topic was discussed in Parliament on 18 January. The SNP warmly welcomes the statement, but, as always, we have a number of questions for the Executive.

The review of quangos was narrowly focused. Many bodies remain under the authority of Westminster. Will the minister discuss with Her Majesty's Government the transfer of responsibility to the Scottish Parliament for any quango that has a function that is currently reserved, but which operates within Scotland? At least that would ensure that duplication—a concern that the minister talked about—would not occur. If the minister will not do that, what will the Executive do to ensure that Scotland and its Parliament have a direct input in the functioning of such quangos?

Annexe C of the Executive's "Review of Public Bodies" discussion paper asks:

"Could the Function be put under Local Democratic control?"

I regret that the minister has failed to answer that question. The absence of any detailed reference to the relationship between NDPBs and local government is particularly surprising given the Executive's recent consultation paper on the power of community initiative, which

acknowledges the important strategic role of local government.

In "The Report of the Commission on Local Government and the Scottish Parliament", it is recommended that

"transfer to local government should always be considered in any review of other bodies delivering public services; and likewise where new services are developed, prior consideration should always be given to whether local government should be their vehicle, subject to consideration of efficiency and cost effectiveness."

Even the detailed advice from the UK Cabinet Office states:

"All options should be assessed equally on their merits and there should be no presumption at the start that any of the options is to be preferred over the others".

As local government is directly accountable and accessible to its citizens, does the minister agree that it is inappropriate that bodies that deliver local services should not be accountable locally? Has the minister fully investigated the benefits and merits of having public bodies held accountable by local government?

Angus MacKay: Not long ago, a general election took place in which the SNP stood on a ticket of independence and was thoroughly rebuked by the people of Scotland. If memory serves me correctly, the SNP was the only party in Scotland to have the number of its elected representatives reduced. That pains SNP members, so we will not pursue the matter.

I caught on one of the television monitors some of the earlier debate on Scotland's place in the world, and heard my newly elected colleague, Brian Fitzpatrick, give a reasoned argument about the incredible fetishism of the SNP in its desire to test every single aspect of policy in this Parliament through the prism of independence. In the context of an exercise that concerned trimming down the number of quangos, making them more open, accountable and fit for purpose, and ensuring that a much broader range of people serve on the bodies that represent Scottish culture, it is bizarre that Mr Gibson should focus primarily on whether we addressed independence as it relates, in some arcane way, to quangos.

Mr Gibson's focus is even more bizarre given that, at the start of the exercise, we invited views from everybody in Scotland, including the political parties. Strangely, no representations were received from the Scottish National Party about what it thinks we should do with Scotland's quangos or what the new terrain should look like. Even stranger is the fact that we received no representation about engaging in discussions with the UK Government about UK quangos that may have an impact on Scotland. It is strange that Mr Gibson should raise that issue in Parliament

today, when he has had so much time to do so in the context of the review.

On local government, I would be interested to hear from Mr Gibson which quangos he feels should have been transferred—

Mr Gibson: On a point of order.

Members are not allowed to answer questions. The minister said that he would like to hear from me, but he is the one who is answering the questions. Regrettably, we are not allowed to come back.

The Presiding Officer: We are listening.

Angus MacKay: If the toys are back in the pram, I will continue.

After the question-and-answer session, or at any point when he feels moved to do so, Mr Gibson could explain which of the quangos in Scotland should have been transferred to the control of local government, and in what way and when that should have happened.

Mr Gibson should take cognisance of the fact that today, as a result of the review, I have made clear our intention to abolish about a third of the quangos, while another third are being subjected to further scrutiny. The opportunity will exist during that scrutiny to make representations on whether the quangos in question should be abolished or subsumed within another quango, should come back into the Executive, or should have a closer relationship to local government.

The difficulty is that there are a large number of relatively small local authorities in Scotland. Finding a structure that fits the scale and role of quangos and the scale and role of local authorities is easier said than done. Having said that, my colleague the Minister for Health and Community Care has made substantial progress in the changes that are being made to the structures that oversee the role of the NHS. We have made substantial changes to the direction in which quangos are going, especially in trying to localise the accountability of quangos so that they are closer to the people who are on the receiving end of the services that they provide and the decisions that they take.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): The minister may consider that he was gagged back in January, but it seems to have induced a state of taciturnity. The statement, which we welcome, was anticipated at least six weeks ago, but a general election intervened.

When I read the statement and the accompanying documentation, I could see why the minister might have been diffident. I reckon that the proposals sent a chill through the spines of certain Labour fiefdoms throughout Scotland. I

derive great comfort from that, which is why I say to the minister—on behalf of the Conservative party in this Parliament—that I welcome the statement and the initiatives that are being taken.

We have all acknowledged, in particular during the inquiry into the governance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority last year, that after devolution nothing was going to be the same for quangos in their relationship with Government. That brings me to my questions, of which one is general and two are specific. The minister said, during his statement:

“we are redefining the relationship between the Executive and quangos to ensure that they work, where appropriate, to the Executive’s agenda.”

That may be boldly adventurous or it may be downright sinister. It suggests—I await the minister’s response with interest—that, whether intentionally or not, we are moving, where the activities of quangos are concerned, to a new relationship between the process of government and the responsibility of ministers to the people of Scotland. In general terms, I want to ask the minister this: if, henceforth, a disaster occurs in the public arena that emanates from a quango, can this Parliament and the Scottish public expect a minister to take responsibility for it?

Secondly, on the more specific aspects of the abolition and review that are proposed in the statement, I presume that some quantification has been made of the possible saving of resources. The statement mentions many abolitions, several reviews and unifications and one or two creations. I presume that, at the end of the day, we will satisfy one of the nine criteria, which is better value for money. Will the minister confirm to the chamber the exact cost saving of this initiative to the people of Scotland?

My final question relates to the composition of boards of quangos and the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000. The minister will be aware that, particularly in the context of boards of management for further education colleges, the act has already given rise to a practical difficulty. Many able and good members of local communities who serve on those boards are proving reluctant to continue their period of service because of what some regard as the oppressive inquisitiveness of the act, which seems to require disclosure of information at a level of detail that frankly is beyond the understanding of most sensible people. If the current effect of the act is to remove good and able people from the areas of activity where we need them, will the minister satisfy the chamber by reassuring us that the act is not a deterrent, but is instead beneficial and encouraging?

Angus MacKay: Perhaps I should begin my response by registering my usual concern when I

receive Conservative support for any matter of policy. I will count my fingers and check the details before putting the issue to bed.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): It is commonplace.

Angus MacKay: It might be commonplace for the SNP in terms of its right-wing alliance with the Conservatives; I can assure members that it is not commonplace for the Executive.

I am grateful if the Conservatives genuinely welcome the outcome of the review. However, I should say that, as they had 18 years in which to make similar proposals, their welcome would sound rather more authentic if we could point to any measures along the same lines that were introduced earlier in the recent history of Scottish politics.

I will leave that matter to one side. We are seeking to introduce changes that are appropriate and meaningful in the context of the current situation with Scottish quangos. In my statement, I referred to bringing the activities of quangos more closely in line with the policies of ministers, and I want to be absolutely clear about what that means. Certain quangos have a quasi-judicial role on which it would not be appropriate for ministers to give advice and direction beyond a certain point. We understand that that is absolutely the case, and that the letter of the law must be adhered to. However, as far as other quangos are concerned, there is a case for saying that guidance is required on the specific aspects of the work they conduct, on the generality of that work, and on how that work must echo and parallel ministers' policy intentions. That is what we intend to do.

Will ministers take responsibility? Where ministers are responsible, they take responsibility. The relationships between ministers and quangos are many and varied, depending on the individual body concerned, but we seek no lessening of ministers' current responsibilities in relation to the quangos and the people whom ministers appoint to them.

This whole exercise is not resource-driven, although I appreciate the important point that Annabel Goldie raised. The bodies that we propose to abolish—the initial third that I mentioned—account for a budget of more than £400 million a year. The bodies that are subject to the further review—the second third—account for a budget of about £4.8 billion a year. We will seek to secure best value from the activities of the remaining quangos and of those that will be subject to further scrutiny, and will examine the function of the quangos that are to be abolished to find out how we can maximise best value for money for any resources that are freed up. I stress

that the review has never been a cost-driven exercise; it is primarily about accountability, openness and fitness for purpose.

Annabel Goldie's final point about further and higher education institutions has been raised with me several times by representatives of those bodies and other institutions. I am sensitive to those concerns, and we are seeking to fine-tune how the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000 will impact on some of those institutions. As a result of those discussions, we believe that we might be able to put in place a proper regime of accountability and openness that will also safeguard appropriate levels of privacy for the individuals concerned. We do not want to end up chasing away individuals who have a substantial amount to contribute and who make, in essence, a voluntary contribution to those bodies, and we will take cognisance of that issue as we continue to work on the implementation of the act.

Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD): I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and the documents that I received, which have been helpful. The Liberal Democrats welcome the statement. We may not yet have a bonfire, but at least the minister has found the matches. We welcome the progress of the review to date, and the proposals in the document for improved governance and accountability of quangos are important.

I draw the minister's attention to concern over paragraph 15 of the report, which refers to bodies such as local enterprise companies, area tourist boards and further education colleges, which are not directly accountable to ministers but are accountable to another public body that is accountable to ministers. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that those bodies are also held to account by the public for their actions? What role does he envisage for local government in holding those bodies to account?

Angus MacKay: Iain Smith's general comments on the statement are welcome, and I am grateful that he has recognised that I am not a pyromaniac. What is important is not the size or the brightness of the flames, but the quality of the fire and the warmth that it generates.

Iain Smith raised the important issue of downward governance, with regard to bodies such as local enterprise companies and area tourist boards. I stress that the review is only the first step. The quinquennial reviews of the quangos, which they are expecting, will present an opportunity to continue to review the validity of the quangos that will remain after today and those that survive the further scrutiny process.

We must address some further issues. We need to consider the relationship between the quangos,

local government and the Scottish Executive over the longer term. Not everything can be dealt with in a single snapshot in this exercise. However, the exercise should not be regarded as some kind of embarkation on a voyage of permanent revolution; it is about properly addressing that part of the governance of Scotland that sits in the context of quangos. We have addressed the national governance of Scotland, through the creation of the Scottish Parliament. Local government is undergoing a number of exercises, not least of which is the review of internal governance that was begun recently and on which many local authorities have embarked enthusiastically. This is the third plank in the platform, which seeks to ensure that modernisation and devolution is taking place in quangos as well as in those two other areas. In that context, the work will have to continue—not as permanent revolution, but as constant fine tuning to ensure that the quangos are still fit for their purpose, appropriate and acting openly. We intend to see that process through.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): I welcome the reduction in the number of health bodies, which will also be welcomed in a number of local communities. My question for the minister is the reverse of Annabel Goldie's question. Those who serve on quangos are the so-called elite of society. What steps will the minister take to ensure that people who are representative of local communities will be appointed to quangos—for example, people who have served on housing associations, such as the late John Butterley, who served on a housing association for 25 years but was not considered for any of a number of local quangos to which he could have made a valuable contribution? What steps will the Executive take to ensure that community council members, tenants association representatives and health council representatives, who have been excluded from quangos in the past, are given a genuine opportunity to apply to sit on quangos?

Angus MacKay: I am delighted that Paul Martin raised that point. For me, that issue goes to the heart of the work that we have been trying to do. The review must ensure that proper representation from all sectors of Scottish society is secured on those non-elected bodies. Those people must be actively engaged in the membership and the running of those organisations, and there are several steps that we need to take.

First, our task is not just to advertise more widely to recruit people from different backgrounds; we must engage in a much more proactive process in which we go out into communities and try to identify people who have the necessary qualities. We must not only encourage them to apply, but approach them and ask, "Have you considered playing a full role in something like a quango in your local area, or for

Scotland as a whole, drawing on your qualities, experience and background and your capacity to deliver, not only in your local community, as you have demonstrated, but throughout Scotland?"

That means that we will have to set stringent targets in relation to women and ethnic minorities, for example, to ensure that, as far as possible, we increase the level of representation that all groups have on the quangos. In that respect, the appointments process will play an important part. I intend to ensure that this is not the end of the story with regard to appointments. Public confidence in quangos depends on the belief that the quangos are peopled by individuals who represent all parts of Scotland and not just some elite. Major steps have been taken in that direction, but we need to go further. I intend to flesh out the detail of that in the weeks and months to come.

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I want to ask the minister how two points in his statement will impact on a substantial quango that was not mentioned in his statement: *visitscotland*. I assume that it is not one of the 52 quangos that are to be abolished, unless those of us who attended the *visitscotland* event last night, including the minister with responsibility for tourism, were attending some sort of last supper.

The first point is overlap. The duplication of effort is as crucial a question as the number of quangos. Can anyone clarify why tourism is dealt with not only by *visitscotland* but by tourism departments in Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Executive?

The second point is guidance. Can we ensure that the direction and guidance that the minister talked about will address the question whether *visitscotland* is a marketing body or a regulatory body? That would ensure that we would not hear the excuse that the £4,000 that was spent on marketing Scotland in Canada, for example, was an operational matter for *visitscotland*. Such matters should become the responsibility of the Government.

Angus MacKay: Kenny MacAskill raises the important matter of how we can ensure that quangos act on the guidance that sets out the ways in which we expect them to act in relation to ministerial policy. Departmental colleagues will have the responsibility for ensuring that many aspects of the review are followed through in relation to their departmental responsibilities. The bodies that Kenny MacAskill mentioned will receive the same guidance that all the other bodies will receive. That guidance will outline the ways in which those bodies should take account of ministerial policy and will state that they should act in concert with that policy rather than in isolation.

On the future of *visitscotland*, the main

document makes clear which bodies fall into which categories. My understanding is that Kenny MacAskill did not attend visitscotland's last supper last night.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I apologise to those members whom I have been unable to call, but we have run well past our time.

Business Motion

12:57

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The next item of business is consideration of the business motion S1M-2026, in the name of Tom McCabe.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business:

Wednesday 27 June 2001

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Ministerial Statement

followed by Executive Debate on Serious Violent and Sexual Offenders

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1740 Michael Matheson: Lung Disease in Scotland

Thursday 28 June 2001

9.30 am Stage 1 Debate on the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Bill

followed by Finance Committee Debate on the 2002/2003 Budget Process

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 Debate on the New Opportunities Fund

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business - debate on the subject of S1M-1970 Annabel Goldie: Endometriosis

and (b) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 25 June 2001 on the Gaming Act (Variation of Fees) (No. 2) (Scotland) Order 2001 (SSI 2001/23)—[*Euan Robson*.]

Motion agreed to.

12:58

Meeting suspended until 14:30.

14:31

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We have a busy afternoon ahead of us, so let us try to keep to time.

Question 1 has been withdrawn.

Residential and Nursing Care (Funding)

2. Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in discussions with the purchasers and providers of residential and nursing care regarding the funding of such services. (S1O-3600)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): Officials representing the Scottish Executive, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and care home providers have met and had a useful discussion. They are to meet again. I hope that those discussions will help to resolve the current problems.

Elaine Thomson: Is the minister aware that Aberdeen was selected by Scottish Care for the current action because private nursing homes in the Aberdeen City Council area have a high occupancy rate with few vacant beds, despite a 40 per cent expansion in the number of nursing home beds? Private nursing homes in the Aberdeen City Council area are paid the highest local authority rates on mainland Scotland. Refusing to take council-funded admissions will not impact significantly on their revenue. If a negotiated settlement is not found quickly, their action could continue for quite some time.

What steps will the Scottish Executive take to assist Aberdeen City Council in ensuring that elderly and vulnerable people do not suffer as a result of Scottish Care's action?

Malcolm Chisholm: The issue is complex. Part of the complexity is that the situation that Elaine Thomson described for Aberdeen is different in several respects from the situation that may obtain elsewhere. We are doing a great deal of work on the issue in the care development group and through the series of meetings that the Executive is convening on the issue.

I will say two things. First, we are committed to finding a long-term solution to the important issue. Secondly, I reassure care home owners that there will be a continuing need for a large number of

residential and nursing places, notwithstanding the build-up of services in the community.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): Further to the minister's answer, will he assure us that he will provide sufficient funding to enable councils to pay the same rate for the same service regardless of whether it is provided by the independent sector, the voluntary sector or the council sector?

Malcolm Chisholm: Clearly, one issue is the money that the Executive provides to local authorities. We continue to give thought to that. The other issue that David Davidson and his Conservative colleagues often raise is the amount of that money that the local authorities devote to services for older people. Both of those issues will be part of the discussions in the coming period.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): As the minister is aware, the Church of Scotland is a major provider of residential care, with 900 residents in 34 homes but with a running deficit of £1.5 million per annum. Has the minister been in contact with the church's board of social responsibility? If so, will the Church of Scotland's account be in the black next year, or will elderly people find themselves homeless?

Malcolm Chisholm: We are certainly determined that nobody will find themselves homeless. We are working hard to avoid that. It would be preferable if the care home owners did not talk in those terms.

I met the Church of Scotland board of social responsibility in April. I am well aware of the difficulties that the church is encountering. The church is also at the table, with the voluntary sector as a whole, in the important discussions that we continue to hold. We are determined to find a solution in the very near future.

Telecommunications (Highlands and Islands)

3. Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to encourage the development of improved telecommunications infrastructure in the Highlands and Islands area. (S1O-3591)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic (Mr Alasdair Morrison): The Executive is developing a strategy for stimulating the provision of higher bandwidth services across Scotland. We are focusing on the impact of aggregating public sector demand. We are also directly involved in the Highlands and Islands partnership programme under which €9 million is allocated in principle under the special transitional programme for enhancement of telecoms infrastructure in remote areas.

Tavish Scott: If you will allow me, Sir David, I wish first to welcome the students from Zlín, in the Czech Republic, who are in the public gallery, and who will be visiting Shetland tomorrow as part of an educational exchange with Anderson High School in Lerwick.

Is the minister aware that a public-private partnership is being considered for connecting Orkney, Shetland and the Scottish mainland with a fibre optic cable? Is he aware that one of the impediments to the success of that project is the potential £64,000-a-year tax that may be charged by the Crown Estate for the use of the sea bed? Will he undertake to make representations to Her Majesty's Government and directly to the Crown Estate about that project, which could provide great advantages to businesses and individuals in the northern isles?

Mr Morrison: I am well aware of the initiative in Shetland. Mr Scott has already written to my colleague Wendy Alexander about the issue. Literally moments ago, I spoke to Peter Peacock, who was in Shetland last Friday. He was briefed on the issue, and commended the initiative in Shetland.

As far as the matter of the Crown Estate commissioners is concerned, I can assure Mr Scott that my officials will be liaising further with Department of Trade and Industry officials to ensure that they are aware of the concerns that Mr Scott has raised this afternoon.

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I draw the minister's attention to the recently published figures on international comparison, which give percentages of homes directly connected to the internet. I ask him to reflect on the fact that the figure for the United States of America is 55 per cent, while the European Union average is, I am afraid, 30 per cent, the Scottish average is 19 per cent and the Highlands and Islands average is only 15 per cent.

Does the minister accept that the Highlands and Islands, because of the physical barriers that exist, has the most to gain from economic growth, and that that is a reason why the Highlands and Islands should be prioritised, and not left behind in the digital wilderness?

Mr Morrison: Not for the first time, Mr Hamilton has his facts completely wrong. That is why we are developing a strategy, which is progressing well. I can assure Mr Hamilton, if he cares to engage sensibly in this important debate, that he will be fully informed, that the Highlands and Islands will not be left behind and that the Highlands and Islands are at the forefront of the Executive's thinking.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister also encourage the development

of improved telecommunications in NHS Direct call centres in the Highlands and Islands? Will he support Highlands and Islands Enterprise's bid to have those call centres located around Caithness, Sutherland and Inverness? Will he further ensure that there will be no displacement of nurses to man those call centres?

Mr Morrison: Mary Scanlon raises an important subject. We have to concentrate our efforts on improving the infrastructure. That is exactly what we are setting our minds to, and is exactly what the Executive is engaging in with all the agencies across the Highlands and Islands. We are also working closely with colleagues from the DTI.

Telecommunications Masts

4. Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made on the review of the planning legislation relating to telecommunication masts. (S1O-3602)

The Deputy Minister for Transport and Planning (Lewis Macdonald): We have now completed consideration of the responses to our consultation paper, and we aim to lay regulations before the recess.

Dr Jackson: In the light of recent experiences in Braehead, Stirling, in my constituency, where a local agreement between the community council, the local councillor and Orange to find an alternative site for a mast was totally disregarded when Orange began building on the originally chosen site, will the minister, prior to relevant legislation being drafted, intervene to urge telecommunications companies to work effectively with local communities and not to make a pretence of talking and then go their own way? At best, that is due to a breakdown in internal communications; at worst, it is a total disregard of public concern.

Lewis Macdonald: The member will be aware that mobile phone companies have made a commitment to improve consultation, and to work with communities to achieve that. I believe that they are genuinely committed to doing so, but the case that Sylvia Jackson cites is only one of several that have demonstrated that there is a gap between the mobile phone companies' intention and their achievement, and between the companies doing the consulting and those making the decisions. That is why, when we introduce the regulations, we will meet our commitment to extend planning controls, and why I intend, over the summer, to meet senior figures in the main operating companies and to press them to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of their commitment to consultation.

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): Can the minister assure the chamber that the anomaly of ecclesiastic exemption will be

addressed in the Executive's review? In Helensburgh, there are two churches in the centre of the town that are close to schools and have mobile telephone masts. That is causing great concern to the people of the area, who need to be able to see that councils' planning departments can exert authority and not have that authority overturned by that ecclesiastical anomaly.

Lewis Macdonald: We have reviewed the range of regulations that apply to telecom developments. When the new regulations appear, members will see that we have achieved a correct balance between the interests of communities affected by the developments that Lloyd Quinan describes and the interests of the wider economy in the continuing development of mobile phone technology.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): The European commissioner for competition, Mario Monti, recently expressed concern about possible objections to operators' sharing mast sites. What will be the practical implications for Scotland if that opposition persists?

Lewis Macdonald: In response to Sylvia Jackson's question, I mentioned a number of commitments that the companies have already given. One of those is to promote the sensible sharing of sites and masts where that is feasible and where companies can reach agreement on doing that. Both the Scottish Executive and the UK Government take the view that operators should be encouraged to share sites and masts. We will discuss these matters with colleagues, to ensure that nothing that has been said at a European level interferes with our meeting that objective.

Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency

5. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive how many Scottish and foreign fishing boats the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency has inspected so far this year to ensure that they conform to regulations on engine size. (S1O-3617)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): Responsibility for carrying out checks on vessel engine power rests with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency of the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions rather than with the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency.

During surveys of UK-registered fishing vessels, the MCA now checks the installed engine to confirm that it complies with the registered details. I understand that 32 Scottish fishing vessels have been inspected since the arrangements were introduced last year. The MCA does not carry out checks on foreign vessels.

Robin Harper: Will the minister confirm that he is aware that if engine-size regulations are not enforced vigorously, widespread infraction throughout the European Union will seriously undermine any decommissioning policy that is designed to reduce fishing pressure? Does the minister intend to campaign on an EU-wide basis for more vigorous and fairer application of the regulations governing engine size?

Ross Finnie: I am grateful to Robin Harper for that supplementary. The Scottish Executive, in collaboration with the UK Government, is involved in active discussions with the Commission on the issue that he raises. We share the member's concern that there is a lack of uniformity in this area across the EU. We have been pressing the European Union to ensure that there is a consistent approach to enforcing these regulations across the member states.

School Examinations (Markers)

6. Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what proportion of the markers employed to mark the current diet of higher exams are first-time markers and what action is being taken to offer them appropriate training and advice. (S1O-3615)

The Deputy Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Nicol Stephen): Recruitment of markers is the operational responsibility of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The SQA has advised me that approximately 18 per cent of markers employed for the 2001 diet will be first-time markers. All markers receive appropriate training and advice through attendance at markers meetings for their subject or through one-to-one briefings from the principal assessor in their subject.

Ian Jenkins: This is about quality assurance and monitoring of standards. The minister will recall that last year's appeals process was long-drawn-out and complicated. The SQA had to deal with two batches of appeals, as it were. Does the minister have plans to ensure that this year the appeals process is completed in good time and that standards are set in which the public and all concerned have full confidence?

Nicol Stephen: We have. Everyone is anxious to avoid the long-drawn-out process that Ian Jenkins describes. The SQA has carried out a major review of the appeals process, led by Anton Colella, a deputy head teacher who has been seconded to the SQA. Schools and other centres were contacted as part of that review. We have agreed with the SQA that all appeals and inquiries from pupils, parents and centres should be handled professionally and within agreed time scales, following the delivery of the results on 14 August.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): If there is concern about first-time markers, does not that reinforce the case for returning marked examination scripts to schools for checking, especially in cases where both the school and the candidate are dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal? Has the SQA reached a decision about that yet?

Nicol Stephen: We will pilot the return of scripts, but it was agreed—and endorsed by the ministerial review group, on which all the stakeholders in the examination process are represented—that we should not proceed with anything new that could prejudice in any way the delivery of efficient exam results in 2001. However, we will consider pilot schemes for the return of scripts in future.

On the use of new markers, it is clear that any system would require new markers to enter it. It is important that I emphasise that there has been no change to the qualification arrangements for new markers. All markers must have three years' experience, and we have been assured by the SQA that that remains the criterion this year. The SQA is unaware of any markers who have failed to match that criterion. There should be no such markers. If there are, we would like to know about them.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): The minister will be aware that the SQA succeeded in meeting by the skin of its teeth its targets for markers only yesterday.

There will be an increasing need for markers for future diets; indeed, there is an additional examination diet this year. What work is the Scottish Executive doing to research the reluctance to mark, despite the increase in fees? What work will it do to try to improve the situation and to overcome the fear already expressed by some people that compulsory marking might enter into teachers' contracts?

Nicol Stephen: We are considering the issue of markers, which we are reviewing. We announced that review when we announced the 50 per cent increase in fees payable to markers. However, I emphasise that there has been a significant increase in markers over the past few years, since the introduction of the new national qualifications. That increase was sustained and accelerated this year. It is not the reluctance of individuals to come forward that has been a problem in many cases. The problem has been the growth in the number of markers required. For the first time, more than 9,000 markers are involved in the process this year.

Aquaculture

7. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to encourage a more sustainable aquaculture industry. (S10-3605)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): A wide range of initiatives is already in place or planned, I think 17 in total. Notable among those initiatives are the tripartite working group, which seeks to enhance dialogue and trust between farmers and wild fishery interests; the transfer of planning powers to local authorities, to improve transparency and local accountability; the application of the environmental impact assessment regulations; the comprehensive review of fish farming regulation; and our plan to establish a longer-term strategic view of the development of the industry. All those initiatives aim to strike a balance between appropriate protection of the environment and the industry's important contribution to the rural economy.

John Farquhar Munro: I thank the minister for his answer. I am sure that he will accept that it is becoming increasingly clear that the gulf between the salmon farming industry and environmental concerns is growing ever wider. I ask the Executive whether it will reconsider its decision not to authorise an independent public inquiry, given that the Transport and the Environment Committee and the Rural Development Committee have neither the time nor the expertise to undertake the depth of inquiry that this subject deserves.

Ross Finnie: My difficulty is that, when I took office, I faced a raft of indicators—many of which have been repeated in recent days—of the environmental lobby's concerns on the impact of that industry. At that time, the Scottish Executive made it clear how concerned it was about the way in which the salmon farming industry operates. Therefore, as I said in my previous answer, we called for a complete review of aquaculture regulation, which, until now, contained no proper assessment of the environmental impact of the industry. We will transfer marine fish farming from the Crown Estate to local authorities and introduce locational guidelines, which are being developed and which have a presumption against development in some of our most sensitive northern areas. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency undertook modelling specifically to address the effluent and therapeutic and other chemicals that are used by the industry. Finally, we have also used ERSEM—the European regional ecosystem model—which deals with nutrients.

I am happy for a parliamentary committee to try constructively to balance the environment and the future of the industry and to indicate to me where it thinks that those initiatives are deficient or could be improved. However, I suggest to the Parliament that the measures that I have outlined are practical steps to address practical problems, which in no way can be construed as a clean sheet for that industry. That more constructive approach is preferable to having a grandstanding public inquiry.

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Is the minister aware how rare it is in the salmon farming debate in Scotland to have all sides singing from the same hymn sheet? However, on the need for an independent inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland, the industry, the anglers, the environmentalists and two cross-party parliamentary committees are all agreed that it is the best and only way forward. Will the minister confirm to the chamber that his mind is not completely closed on the matter? Will he confirm that he will listen to what the members of the Transport and the Environment Committee say when he or his deputy appears before it next week?

Ross Finnie: I will certainly not trade statistics during question time. Having spoken to a number of parties about the matter, I do not think that the member is entitled to claim that everyone across those sectors is unanimous about the need for an independent inquiry—

Richard Lochhead: Who? Name them.

Ross Finnie: There are individuals, both those with environmental concerns and others, who are quite keen to have those matters subjected to a review. That there should be an independent public inquiry is not the unanimous view of everyone across the industry.

Richard Lochhead also asked whether my deputy minister and I will remain of an open mind when we appear before the committee. The answer to that, as always, is yes.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I appreciate what the minister has said in his two replies today, but there is a perception among those who are concerned with wild salmon fisheries that the Executive is not taking seriously the effect of sea lice. Does the minister agree that there is evidence that sea lice and farmed salmon are affecting the health and, indeed, the survival of wild salmon? Will he outline the Executive's proposals to deal with that?

Ross Finnie: I acknowledge that there is clear evidence of serious problems in relation to sea lice. That is one of the reasons why we established the tripartite working group. It is also the reason why we established the inquiry into the

use of nutrients and, much more important, of therapeutic medicines to try to cure lice. We believe that problems may be caused not only by lice but by the use of chemicals. We are dealing with those matters as part of the programme that I gave in my earlier answer to John Farquhar Munro.

National Health Service (Value for Money)

8. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures are in place to ensure value for money in the national health service in Scotland. (S1O-3603)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon): Chief executives of all NHS Scotland bodies are responsible for ensuring that value for money is obtained from public funds. The effectiveness of local health bodies is kept under constant review by my department. In addition, Audit Scotland carries out periodic reviews of value for money in a variety of different areas.

Scott Barrie: I thank the minister for her reply. Does she agree that value for money is not simply another phrase for the lowest possible cost? Does she agree that previous contracting out of ancillary services in the NHS has led not only to severe reductions in the working conditions and pay of the staff who have been affected, but to a deterioration in services? Can she assure me, therefore, that future contracts will ensure that staff are properly paid for the work they do and that standards in cleansing and catering are achieved?

Susan Deacon: I welcome Scott Barrie's question. I have said before, and make no apology for repeating, that one of the many flaws of the Tory internal market in the NHS was that it knew the price of everything and the value of nothing. We are still picking up the pieces of that approach—in, for example, reduced standards. As Scott Barrie said, the internal market looked for what was cheap rather than what was good and of high quality. That was true of the support services as well as of other areas.

I am happy to repeat the assurance that was given in the Scottish health plan: that for key services such as cleaning, real best value must govern local decisions. The best value will not simply be the lowest price; it will be the best quality and best value. We have made it clear that while it may be appropriate to contract out services on the basis of that test, contracting out should no longer be regarded as the norm.

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP): This question is for all who sympathise with those who are suffering severe pain, usually from chronic back conditions or arthritic conditions. I hope that the minister agrees that value for money could be

provided by ending the agonising and expensive journeys that many people in severe pain have to make—sometimes as far as from Aberdeen to England—to receive proper pain relief. They have to do that because we have so few facilities here. The minister will note the petition that has been sent to her this week by 58 Scots doctors, nurses and patients. It begs for mercy for people in severe pain.

The Presiding Officer: That is just what I am about to do. [*Laughter.*]

Dorothy-Grace Elder: It is not funny for people in severe pain. They are appealing to the minister for mercy and for proper facilities for chronic pain relief in Scotland.

Susan Deacon: The essence of Scott Barrie's question was to note the importance of value for money and best value; and the essence of best value is quality. The key issue for us is to provide the best quality of care that we can to people across Scotland. Co-operating effectively to provide the best quality specialist services may mean, in some cases and in some services, that we cannot provide services in every part of Scotland, and it may even mean that Scots will go south of the border. However, in some cases people will come here from south of the border.

I know that Dorothy-Grace Elder takes pain and chronic pain seriously and that there are examples of where services can be improved. They are being improved at a local level and we will continue to work with the NHS to ensure that that happens.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): After that question on best value, I am sure that the minister will be interested to learn that, at the Unison conference last night, the health union voted to subject itself to a best-value review of what it gets for its funding of the Labour Party. I am sure that the result will be interesting.

Given the minister's comments last week and today, and given that, for the first time in their history, medical secretaries are being balloted on strike action, will the minister tell us what she is doing to help in the regrading issue and what she is doing to help to increase the wages of the medical secretaries of this country?

Susan Deacon: I will tell Tommy Sheridan exactly what we are doing—just as I told him in this chamber last week. He has asked the same question again. Either he is not listening, or he is not hearing, or—yet again—he simply wants to do some petty point scoring. It is precisely because we think that medical secretaries' grading is important that the Scottish Executive has convened meetings between NHS employers and the trade unions. Constructive talks have been held and constructive negotiations are taking

place. I hope that we will reach a resolution that will be in the best interests of all concerned.

Nephrops Quota

9. Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in the negotiations to restore the 10 per cent cut in the nephrops quota. (S1O-3606)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): All relevant data have been collected and are ready for submission to the European Commission. It will be possible to present a stronger case after the related package of measures to protect cod in the North sea has been agreed with Norway, as the outcome is likely to feature measures to reduce bycatch in the nephrops fishery.

Iain Smith: I am sure that the minister will be aware of the importance of the prawn fishing industry to small fishing villages such as Pittenweem in north-east Fife. He will also be aware that the prawn fisheries fished by people from those small fishing villages have very little impact on other fish stocks such as cod or haddock. Can the minister assure us that he and the Scottish Executive will do all that they can to ensure that the 10 per cent cut is restored as soon as possible so that those industries can get on with fishing the prawns that are in their waters?

Ross Finnie: I appreciate that those in small fishing communities are not affected by the wider cod issues. Given that we will get only one chance to put this case, I hope that Iain Smith will accept that if we can establish that there has been a serious reduction in the bycatch as a consequence of wider discussions, that will strengthen our case. Our information suggests that it would be possible to restore that 10 per cent without damaging the fish stocks.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Does the minister agree that there never has been any threat to prawn stocks on the west coast and that the only justification for the reduction in the quota was the possibility of a bycatch? Does the minister agree with the Mallaig and North West Fishermen's Association that there has been minimal cod bycatch? Is it not therefore extremely bad news that there is to be a further delay before the application to the Commission can be made? When will that application be made, to protect the livelihoods of fishermen on the west coast of Scotland?

Ross Finnie: I detected the anger, but I was not sure what Fergus Ewing was driving at. Let us be serious about this. There will be one opportunity to negotiate the recovery of that 10 per cent of the quota, which is necessary for Scottish nephrops fisheries.

I hope that Fergus Ewing will agree that if we agree on the wider picture—which is, according to the information we have, that it is possible to reduce the bycatch—it will be possible to restore the 10 per cent cut in the quota. That will strengthen our hand and we will proceed as soon as we can.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Is the minister aware that the Clyde estuary is very well stocked with prawn? Does he recall the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development saying that she would go to Troon harbour to talk to local fishermen about conditions in the Clyde estuary? I acknowledge that other events took over, but will he encourage the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development to come to Troon harbour to talk about fishing in the Clyde estuary?

Ross Finnie: Yes.

Erskine Bridge

10. Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether summonses have been served on those parties considered responsible for the damage to the Erskine Bridge; whether it will identify those parties, and when judicial proceedings are due to take place. (S10-3604)

The Minister for Transport and Planning (Sarah Boyack): The summons has been served and will be lodged for calling at the Court of Session at the beginning of July. The identity of the parties will come into the public domain only when the summons is called. The case will then proceed under the normal rules of the court.

Trish Godman: I thank the minister for her response. I am sure she agrees that it has taken some time to settle this matter. Indeed, it was August 1996 when a passing oil rig that should have gone under the bridge bumped into it. When those who are responsible for that maritime blunder have paid their dues, can the money be shared between the local communities north and south of the river? I can think of a number of public transport issues that could be addressed with £3 million or £4 million.

Sarah Boyack: I am happy to tell the member that the Executive is seeking to recover the full cost of repairs plus interest from August 1996 to the present day, which is a substantial amount of money. If the Executive is successful, I will be happy to consider where to spend that money most effectively.

National Health Service (Tayside)

11. Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it expects to meet Tayside Health Board and Tayside University

Hospitals NHS Trust to discuss the implications for patient care in Tayside of the trust's deficit recovery plan. (S10-3588)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon): The last meeting between Scottish Executive health department officials and Tayside national health service representatives was at the accountability review that took place on 29 May 2001. The next planned meeting with the trust and board is scheduled for 3 July 2001. I plan to meet local NHS leaders when I am next in Tayside, on 4 July.

Mr McAllion: Does the minister accept that even if Tayside University Hospitals NHS Trust meets the demanding targets that have been set to balance its expenditure with its income, by April of next year it will face an outstanding accumulated deficit of £21 million? Given the huge efforts that have been made to balance the books, plus the unprecedented warnings from Tayside clinicians about the impact on patient care of any further cuts, does the minister accept that it would be not only unfair but unsafe to demand another £21 million of cuts in Tayside's NHS? Will she therefore discuss the issue with Tayside Health Board and Tayside University Hospitals NHS Trust when she meets them in July?

Susan Deacon: We have to be careful about using the language of cuts when the NHS in Tayside, just like every other part of the NHS in Scotland, is receiving record levels of additional investment. It is undoubtedly true that there have been profound problems with the financial management of the NHS in Tayside that have to be resolved. The Audit Committee of this Parliament has spent a considerable amount of time examining the issue and I cannot begin to do justice to the extent of the committee's examination.

Any public sector organisation, and any NHS organisation, must manage its finances effectively. There are clear signs of progress in Tayside. We will continue to work closely with the service locally to ensure that services are protected as it goes about improving the way it is managed.

Foot-and-mouth Disease (Information)

12. David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in providing information on restocking and farm management to farmers who have been affected by the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak. (S10-3612)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): Detailed guidance on restocking and farm management is being drawn up and will be issued shortly to every affected farmer.

The member will be aware that the Scottish Executive environment and rural affairs department, working with Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway and the National Farmers Union of Scotland, has brought together a group of farmers from Dumfries and Galloway to provide support and advice. Since its inception in April, the farm business support steering group has organised about 20 meetings, providing an opportunity for farmers to raise a wide range of issues, including preliminary views on how restocking should be undertaken. The results of those meetings are available on the Scottish Executive website, which is updated regularly.

David Mundell: Does the minister agree that it is becoming increasingly obvious that restocking will not be possible this year? Would it be better to accept that, so that appropriate plans for contingencies and for financial and farming matters can be made? Does the minister accept that opening auction marts will play a vital part in restocking? When does he expect that to happen?

Ross Finnie: The member raises two separate, but related, matters. I do not wholly accept that it will be impossible to restock this year. However, issues must be dealt with. First, we must establish the regulatory issue of the time scale after the disinfectant programme has been fully completed. We await an answer on that matter before issuing guidance. We must also deal with the details of the way in which farmers will wish to restock.

I continue to keep the issue of auction marts under review. The veterinary advice that I have opposes the opening of auction marts, but just as I announced yesterday a further relaxation of movement controls, so will I relax controls on auction marts as soon as I receive the appropriate advice.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): On restocking, has the minister considered resolving possible problems with autumn sales of pedigree rams in infected areas? That will require animal movement, at least in those areas, to allow breeding of next year's lambs to progress.

Ross Finnie: I have considered that. Restocking and the way we deal with such issues are under serious discussion between my department and the state veterinary service. We are conscious of the difficulties that may be caused. I hope that the present situation continues—it is 14 to 16 days since a disease outbreak, which gives the veterinary service greater comfort. If that continues, I hope that we will be able to make appropriate adjustments.

Mr George Reid (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the minister provide information on the 50,000 gallons of animal blood that have been doing the rounds in Clackmannan and Stirling

since before the foot-and-mouth outbreak?

Ross Finnie: I am aware of the letter that George Reid sent me on that vexed subject. I understand that the matter has been referred to the procurator fiscal. In the circumstances, I should say nothing further in the chamber.

Scottish Enterprise Borders

13. Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when it last met representatives of Scottish Enterprise Borders and what matters were discussed. (S10-3598)

The Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Ms Wendy Alexander): The First Minister, ministerial colleagues and Executive officials met representatives from the Scottish Borders on 29 May to discuss the impact of foot-and-mouth disease on the Borders and the medium and long-term measures that might be required to assist recovery. A positive meeting between local agencies and Executive officials took place on 8 June to discuss the detail of the plan. Representatives from Scottish Enterprise Borders were present at both meetings.

Christine Grahame: As the minister is aware, the Scottish Borders has a low-wage economy in which average earnings are some £50 a week less than the Scottish average. Does the minister agree that that depressed economic climate contributes to a lack of training opportunities and a skills shortage, particularly in the construction industry and related trades? From her discussions with SEB, is the minister satisfied that those skills shortages will be met, so that local businesses and not just large national companies will benefit from the contract opportunities that will come on-stream when the Borders railway build begins?

Ms Alexander: I hear a tempting whisper in my ear.

Under the stewardship of the UK Government and subsequently the Scottish Parliament, the economic needs of the Borders have been recognised in several ways. This year alone, its local action plan has been given an additional £1.4 million. In each of the past four years, the Borders benefited from more than £6 million of additional moneys. One year ago, 43 per cent of the Borders area became eligible for assisted area status. That led to 10 companies receiving additional assistance of up to £4 million. In turn, that has levered in capital investment of £21 million. New training opportunities are being created. In the reshaping of Scottish Enterprise, we have put learning and skills in all the local enterprise companies, including Scottish Enterprise Borders, at the heart of its mission.

First Minister's Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S1F-1159)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): The Cabinet will next meet on 26 June when it will discuss issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Mr Swinney: I am sure that the First Minister will agree that it is a matter of profound regret that 13,000 people die in Scotland each year as a result of smoking-related illness. The Scottish Parliament has asked the Westminster Parliament to legislate for a ban on tobacco advertising in Scotland. No such ban has been approved and, in the Queen's speech yesterday, no such plans were announced. Given that omission, will the First Minister take this opportunity to give a commitment to Parliament that he will introduce legislation to ban tobacco advertising in Scotland?

The First Minister: I am pleased that John Swinney has asked that question, post the Queen's speech, as the issue is one that unites the chamber. We have to move forward on the issue of tobacco advertising in relation to the bill that was discussed. However, it is also right to accept that, when the issue was discussed before, the Westminster Government was moving the item forward.

That position was reaffirmed to our Minister for Health and Community Care. Legislation will be introduced at Westminster in this Parliament, which means that there would be little point in our moving forward unless and until we discuss the issue with our UK colleagues. People may ask why, but it is simply the case that banning tobacco advertising and promotion in Scotland would create a range of practical, commonsense difficulties. In the first instance, such matters should be discussed between the respective ministers and that is what is happening.

Mr Swinney: The First Minister's reply has not taken us much further forward. I draw to his attention comments made by the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care at a meeting of the Health and Community Care Committee in January. He said:

"Speaking for the Labour party, I would say that there is little doubt, given the commitment that has been made, that the issue will be in the Queen's speech after the general election."

However, the bill was omitted from the Queen's speech yesterday. Mr Chisholm went on to say that, if the Queen's speech did not mention such a bill,

"We would have to review the situation."—[*Official Report, Health and Community Care Committee*, 10 January 2001; c 1342.]

Will the First Minister give a commitment to review the situation and to bring forward legislation? He has promised the people of Scotland that he will do so.

The First Minister: There is nothing inconsistent in what the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care said and what I have said. I have said that there are strong arguments for a UK-wide ban. There are significant reasons why an item that was included in a Labour party manifesto should be moved forward. The Queen's speech has not changed that specific commitment. I assure the chamber that, because of the seriousness with which we view the issue, we want to look at the position. Discussions are ongoing between the Minister for Health and Community Care in Scotland and Alan Milburn.

We want a UK-wide ban. Advertising does not respect national boundaries. A UK bill would avoid the tobacco companies exploiting any inconsistencies in the legislation that applied in different countries. It would ensure that the ban came into effect in all parts of the UK at the same time. UK-wide legislation would also promote consistent enforcement of the ban. If people want to apply politics to the issue, they are entitled to indulge themselves. However, at the end of the day, the bill is important for the people of this country, whether they live north or south of the border.

Mr Swinney: There are two problems with the First Minister's answer. There is no bill: it was not in the Queen's speech. The First Minister has said that there is no change as a result of the Queen's speech, but no progress has been made as a result of it.

Yesterday, the secretary of the British Medical Association in Scotland said:

"Westminster has let these generations down. It is time for the Scottish Executive to match words with actions and introduce legislation to ban tobacco advertising in Scotland."

Those are not my words, but the words of the BMA in Scotland. We have the powers in the Parliament; we must have the will. I invite the First Minister to demonstrate the will.

The First Minister: I repeat that the will exists to ensure that we move on this important item. The Labour party manifesto made a commitment to do so in Scotland; that same commitment was also contained in the United Kingdom manifesto. It is

absolutely vital that we work together to have that legislation within the UK as quickly as possible, for all the practical reasons. As I have said, Mr Swinney can politicise the issue, but health and the impact of tobacco are too important to become a political football. A more moderate view of the matter would show that we want to go forward positively. Let us have a commonsense perspective that acknowledges the importance of implementing legislation on a UK-wide basis.

Mr Swinney: I ask the First Minister to answer one simple question. If there is that will, when will the legislation be enacted in the United Kingdom?

The First Minister: We cannot give a specific commitment on the time scale. That is a commonsense answer to a situation that has arisen since the Queen's speech was published. When we have just reaffirmed the commitment of Labour in Scotland and in the United Kingdom on this matter, it does nothing for the importance of the issue to undermine it with politics. Of course we want to move as quickly as possible. Discussions between the Scottish and United Kingdom health ministers should be allowed to proceed, to see what outcome they produce.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues he will raise. (S1F-1157)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): I last met the Prime Minister on 25 May. I expect that we will meet again soon.

David McLetchie: I thank the First Minister for that answer. I am sure that the Prime Minister will be interested to know what the First Minister and the Executive intend to do with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget allocation of an additional £200 million to Scotland over the next three years, which—as the First Minister will recall from his press release—was supposed to be for key public services such as health and education. Will the First Minister tell us whether that is still the case or whether that allocation will now be used in part to meet the spiralling costs of the Holyrood project?

The First Minister: The answer to the first part is yes; the answer to the second part is no.

David McLetchie: That is an interesting answer, especially as I suspect that later today the First Minister and his colleagues will vote for the blank-cheque motion to provide additional funding for the Holyrood project, which will now cost well in excess of the £195 million that was initially authorised by the Parliament. Given that the Scottish Executive has a fixed block grant of money from the Treasury, if more money is spent on Holyrood, less will be spent on public services in Scotland. Before we decide on the blank-

cheque motion this afternoon, will the First Minister, if he intends to vote for the motion on Holyrood, tell us which budgets will be cut to pay for it?

The First Minister: It is complete nonsense—I repeat: complete nonsense—to suggest that the Executive will use money that is allocated for education spending to pay for the Holyrood building project.

David McLetchie: Which budget?

The First Minister: Be patient. I knew that the first question was just a teaser. We will get to that point. The Executive has a reserve built into its plans, which enables it to live with additional costs while retaining existing levels of service and investment. Forgive me for being mischievous, Sir David, but the £20,000 million of cuts that we were faced with during the election campaign slightly puts into perspective Mr McLetchie's question and the answer that I have just given.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I have a more specific question for the First Minister. Yesterday, the *Daily Record*—which, as you know, Presiding Officer, is a reliable and accurate paper—carried a front-page story about existing education budgets, alleging that there would be a £25 million cut. Can the First Minister give an absolute guarantee that there will be no cut in the education budget? Furthermore, will he give a guarantee about the pledge made by the chancellor, Gordon Brown, before the election, that £66 million would be spent on school buildings and equipment in Scotland? Is that money guaranteed—yes or no?

The First Minister: On the latter point, the figure that Mr Neil has quoted is wrong, but we do not want to get too involved in the details. The suggestion that any funds from education will be used for the Holyrood project is simply untrue. Very soon indeed, we shall have a full budget announcement, which will look at the consequentials left by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and which will detail significant extra spending on health, education and drugs in line with the consequential issues that Gordon Brown lays down. As I said, that budget will be before the chamber soon, and we shall have a full discussion and debate on the matter.

Transport (Urban Areas)

3. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive will ensure that the needs of commuters are balanced with the need to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas. (S1F-1163)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): Commuters want real travel choices, not

congestion. That is why we have substantially increased the public transport fund, set up a new integrated transport fund, given local authorities new powers to introduce congestion charging and, only this week, launched a travel awareness campaign aimed at encouraging motorists to think before they drive into our congested urban areas.

Des McNulty: I draw the First Minister's attention to the fact that the number of Scots journeying by bus rose last year by 4 per cent, which is the first time in 13 years that bus use has increased. Is the Executive considering a variety of further steps to promote public transport as a means of curtailng traffic growth and the problems of congestion?

The First Minister: I am pleased to say that the Executive is considering further measures not only to improve public transport but to encourage more people to use it. The 4 per cent figure is encouraging. We are spending £150 million on the public transport fund, £75 million on the integrated transport fund, £200 million on the ScotRail franchise and £55 million on support for the bus industry. From autumn 2002 we will also have a radical new scheme to ensure that the 960,000 pensioners in Scotland can travel free on off-peak services every day of the week. That will reinforce the central message—travel by bus—and ensure that the viability of bus services in Scotland is enhanced. That has to be the way forward.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): The First Minister says that commuters want real travel options, but the question that he should be answering is how he intends to ensure that Scotland gets its hands on the serious money to transform Scotland's railway industry and to reduce traffic congestion. How will Scotland secure its appropriate share of the £7 billion rail development fund that the Strategic Rail Authority is holding? How much of that £7 billion has Scotland already secured and what plans does the Executive have to ensure that we get our share?

The First Minister: With the Strategic Rail Authority and the ScotRail franchise, we want to ensure that Scotland gets its share of investment, as it will do. People ask in a pathetic way, "When will Scotland get a hold of serious money?" Is anyone in any doubt that £20 billion of investment in Scotland is serious money? It would be beneficial for Scotland if the substance of the vital issues that have been raised were taken more seriously and the politics were taken less seriously.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): Will the First Minister tell us how many new rail routes the Executive is actively considering for development in the near future?

The First Minister: The financial figure is £30 million in the past three years, but Robin Harper raises a fair question. As a detailed answer is required, I would like to respond to his question in correspondence, if that is acceptable to him.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Question 4 is withdrawn.

Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. A question that is withdrawn so late prevents you from selecting questions in an appropriate order for First Minister's question time. Would you ask SNP front-bench members to talk to one another and to get their questions right? Some of us had important supplementaries to question 4.

The Presiding Officer: A note was passed to me that said that question 4 was withdrawn and that is the end of the matter.

Research (Nuclear Radiation)

5. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the First Minister whether an inquiry will be carried out into the use of children's bones without parental consent for research into nuclear radiation in the 1960s. (S1F-1161)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): I am pleased to announce that the independent review group on the retention of organs at post mortem has agreed to investigate that very disturbing issue.

Mary Scanlon: I appreciate the First Minister's answer. Does the First Minister share my concern that 2,100 femurs and bone samples were taken without parental consent? Does he support the inclusion of that information in Professor McLean's inquiry? Obviously, he does. Is he concerned that Professor McLean was unaware of the issue? Will he guarantee that the practice will not happen again? Will he confirm whether any other human studies have been carried out under the Atomic Energy Act 1954?

The First Minister: The issue is important and I will answer the questions as best I can. The Executive is deeply disturbed by recent press reports that suggest that, between 1959 and 1972, children's bones were removed at post mortem for research without parental consent. I think that the Executive's feelings are shared by all members. The Executive and the Parliament sympathise with all parents who have been distressed by that news. The Minister for Health and Community Care has stated publicly that parents are entitled to find out what happened to their children and that they should contact Yorkhill hospital.

I have confirmed that the review group will consider the issue. We take such matters seriously because they are distressing for families

and a whole community of interests that I have not mentioned. We will do everything possible not only to uncover the details of the case that Mary Scanlon has mentioned but to make it absolutely clear as a sentiment and a policy that we do not want to see such a thing happening again. Similarly disturbing issues have arisen in recent weeks and months.

Schools (Disruptive Behaviour)

6. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what further progress is being made in reducing disruptive behaviour in schools and creating a school environment where all children can pursue their education. (S1F-1164)

The First Minister (Henry McLeish): The discipline task group's report was published on Tuesday 19 June. It makes 36 wide-ranging and comprehensive recommendations about ways in which school discipline can be improved. I am sure that the report will make a real difference to the ethos in our schools. Copies of the report are being issued to all schools and MSPs before the end of term. An implementation plan will be drawn up and published in the autumn.

Mr McNeil: Will the First Minister confirm that, to help children to pursue their education, the provision of modern learning environments is vital? It will cost my local authority, Inverclyde Council, £60 million simply to keep its schools wind and watertight for the next 15 years. Will the First Minister confirm that local authorities throughout Scotland can expect the Executive's support in developing the educational infrastructure that our children deserve?

The First Minister: Yes. There has already been significant investment in the fabric of teaching environments in schools and in school buildings. The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs is keen to promote positive educational environments. Over the next three years of the spending round, there will be significant investment in our schools to ensure that. Quality is essential and the Executive will invest in it.

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the First Minister explain why, since new Labour came to power, the backlog of school repairs throughout Scotland has grown from £1 billion to £1.4 billion? Is he aware that, in evidence to the Local Government Committee, both Falkirk Council and Dundee City Council advised that capital depreciation on assets—including schools—is twice the current level of capital expenditure? Does he agree that the Executive's stinginess has led to the continuing state of chronic disrepair of many of our schools?

The First Minister: Many phrases come to mind, but "No" would be the most suitable start to this answer. It is important to recognise that there is a backlog of work, which we must tackle—no one denies that. After many decades of underinvestment, it is important that we start investing. The second point is that we have a phased programme, which considers the priorities in Scotland and where the first investment should go. We hope that, over the next three years, the three years after that and beyond, the backlog will be tackled and every child in Scotland will have a school environment in which they can work and be successful and of which their parents can be proud.

Holyrood Project

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We now come to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body debate on motion S1M-2012, on the Holyrood project. The debate, which is already heavily oversubscribed, has to conclude at quarter to 5 to allow for other business before decision time. I appeal to those taking part in the early stages of the debate to take less than the allocated time so that as many members as possible get to speak. It will not be possible to call all the members who have requested to speak.

15:31

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Let me deal first with the resignation of Mr Alan Ezzi from the post of project director. A press statement was issued by the SPCB on the matter, which made it clear that mutual expectations had not been fully realised.

As colleagues will recollect, the Holyrood progress group, which has general oversight of the project, was created at the instigation of Parliament. It is made up of three MSPs, together with independent professional advisers. The involvement of members ensures that this prestigious project remains a parliamentary project and that the design concept remains true to the principles of openness and accessibility.

The HPG has worked very hard in conjunction with the project team. The pressures on the post of project director are considerable and increasing. Mr Ezzi has maintained progress on a number of fronts but, as it turns out, each party has perceptions on how matters connected with the Holyrood project should be progressed. The SPCB has accepted Mr Ezzi's resignation, expressed its appreciation to him and wished him well for the future.

Architects are designing the building, engineers and quantity surveyors are contracted to achieve its completion and a firm of international reputation is responsible for managing the construction on the Parliament's behalf. In addition, there is a project team of highly qualified technical people and there is technical expertise on the progress group. There is no shortage of highly skilled professional and technical people. What is required is greater emphasis on co-ordinating the work of those highly skilled people to drive forward the project to completion.

The HPG has assured the SPCB that Ms Sarah Davidson has demonstrated outstanding co-ordination skills in her role to date. Ms Davidson enjoys the full confidence of the HPG and, in particular, of the independent professional people

who serve on the group. On advice from the HPG, the chief executive, Mr Grice, has appointed Ms Davidson to the post of project director.

I hope that all members have had an opportunity to read carefully the report that has been produced for the SPCB by the Holyrood progress group. Over the past year, in our role as the legal client for the Holyrood project, the SPCB has met the progress group monthly. Throughout that period, our focus has been on ensuring that the project is progressing to the timetable, that costs are contained, that outstanding risks are properly identified and effectively managed and that the quality and functionality of the building is protected.

It has become clear to us from the reports that we have received from the progress group that factors such as inflation in the construction industry in Edinburgh, coupled with some tenders coming in over the estimated price, have reduced the amount left in the contingency. That means that—

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Will Des McNulty give way?

Des McNulty: I am sure that Margo MacDonald will get her opportunity to speak.

That means that the budget figure set for the project is now unlikely to be sufficient to meet the requirements of completing the building. With that in mind, the SPCB asked the project group to conduct an exercise to review current and projected expenditure, to identify the impact of inflation on the project and to conduct an assessment and quantification of outstanding risks, so that we would be in a position to report fully to the Parliament and to indicate as realistically and accurately as possible the state of play with the project.

The current position is as follows. The construction phase of the project is still scheduled for completion at the end of December 2002. Forty-seven per cent of the total cost plan value of the project has now been let and a further 35 per cent is going through the tender process, which leaves a balance of 18 per cent that has still to be tendered. Inflation aside, the overwhelming majority of packages have been let at a price that is broadly in line with the cost plan estimate. However, it is clear that inflation is affecting the project much more than could have been anticipated. Spencely's estimate of £195 million for the project was based on 1998 prices.

Estimates of construction industry inflation show that it is currently running at 16 per cent in the Edinburgh area. That has had a significant impact and will result in additional cost. Inflation has cost an additional £8.3 million on the tenders let and it is expected that it will affect the remaining tenders

by £10.4 million. There have been cost overruns excluding inflation of just over £6 million, which have been partly offset by cost savings on other packages of about £3 million. Throughout the process, opportunities for cost savings have been carefully considered and a balance of judgments made to protect the quality and functionality of the building, especially in the public areas.

The Holyrood progress group is required to manage all risks and to be vigorous in keeping up strong pressure on costs. A risk register has been produced that categorises and quantifies all outstanding risks that might affect the project; they have been identified at £14.2 million for tender risk and £12.1 million for construction risk. It will be up to the HPG and the design team to contain any potential costs arising from those risks. We intend to provide the Finance Committee with information about any variations from the expected budget on a very regular basis so that both the Parliament and the Executive are informed at the earliest date about any impact on the final outturn costs.

If we exclude future inflation and the risk factors that have been identified, the project's outturn costs would be £197 million. Inflation for the tenders that have already been let is known and an informed estimate has been made about the likely impact of inflation on the outstanding tenders. Although the risk analysis has been commissioned to allow us to move towards greater certainty about the final costs, it is clearly the nature of such an analysis that a firm figure for the final outturn cannot be set at this stage.

We cannot ink in the final cost for Holyrood, but I make it clear that there is no question of giving out a blank cheque. Instead, the efforts of the SPCB and the HPG have concentrated on reducing uncertainty, controlling costs, identifying appropriate opportunities to make savings and managing all risk factors so that the project can be brought in on time, to standard and at the minimum cost consistent with the aspiration of achieving a fitting parliamentary building for Scotland's new democracy.

John Young (West of Scotland) (Con): If the Scottish Parliament maintained the present expenditure level of £195 million—or even £198 million—what would be the consequences? Secondly, Mr McNulty has said that we cannot put a figure on the final construction costs, which is partly to do with the 16 per cent inflation in the construction industry in Edinburgh—a figure that is equal only to the London figure. Finally, I understand that even the Forth bridge was not constructed within its budget.

Des McNulty: A building with which both John Young and I are familiar—Glasgow City Chambers—overran its cost. It would be very difficult to find anyone in Glasgow who would think

it reasonable—

Ms MacDonald rose—

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the member give way?

Des McNulty: Excuse me—I am answering John Young's question. No one in Glasgow would say that savings should have been made in the construction of that building. We are well committed to constructing this building and it should be finished to the standard that Scotland expects.

If people want to ask why costs have risen, it is legitimate to highlight the factors identified by John Spencely and by David Davidson in his report to the Finance Committee. Spencely made it clear that the cost of the building is substantially a consequence of the number of people working in it and the functions that they must perform. The changes that took place in the design brief mean that comparisons between earlier estimates of the Parliament's cost and those that have been made in the context of the design brief are virtually meaningless. The design brief reflects the functioning of the Parliament as it emerged post 1999 and the work load that was generated by what members did and the expectations of the public.

The Finance Committee's report makes it clear that the scope for cost savings is limited. The report states:

"if the project is to be delivered to the agreed timescale, then drastic redesign to make large savings would probably not be cost effective."

That answers John Young's question. It is a matter of regret that the Holyrood progress group was denied the financial expertise of David Davidson, the knowledge of information technology that could have been supplied by David Mundell and the potential contribution of any member of the Conservative group, which contains a considerable wealth of expertise.

We are the first generation of members of the Scottish Parliament, and it is our lot to construct the building that will be the hallmark of the Scottish Parliament and, in many ways, a hallmark for Scotland. There is huge interest in our building elsewhere—not on the ground of cost overrun, but on the ground of the architectural quality and the functionality of the building that we are trying to construct. I believe that the building should be finished, that it will be genuinely representative of Scotland and that it will be something of which our successors will be truly proud.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the terms of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's (SPCB) report of 13 June 2001; notes that £60 million of the construction costs for the

new Parliament building has been committed to date and that a further £57 million (at 1998 prices) remains to be let; further notes that building industry inflation is currently estimated to be adding at least 16% to the costs of packages remaining to be let and that under the construction management contract there are additional and not fully quantifiable risks to which the project may be exposed between now and completion; directs the SPCB, through the Holyrood Progress Group, to work with the design and project teams to complete the project without compromising quality, while managing risks rigorously, and requires the SPCB, on a quarterly basis, to provide information to the Parliament's Finance Committee on the progress of the project in respect of inflation and materialisation of risk in order to inform the committee's consideration of the annual Budget Bill.

16:41

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): It is a matter of huge regret to all members that, once again, we are debating the Holyrood project not in terms of its advantages to the people of Scotland, the progress of Scottish confidence in its new democracy or substance with regard to construction and content. We are debating it in the context of further confusion, further adverse publicity and a further lack of transparency, which—regardless of the reasons for it—increases rather than decreases press speculation and public concern.

The SNP and many members of other parties believe that we must get a grip on what is happening once and for all and attempt to regain the confidence of the people of Scotland in this institution. The endless rows about the Holyrood project are damaging the reputation of Scotland's new democratic institutions and, by extension, damaging Scotland. However, we do not avoid dispute by insisting on the false unity of the graveyard. We overcome disputes by honest debate and by tackling the problems of the past. My amendment seeks to do both those things.

We are in this mess not because of individual culpable error by members of the corporate body or the Holyrood progress group. I pay tribute to those who are working tirelessly to bring the project to fruition, not least my colleague Linda Fabiani, who is a long-term supporter of the project and whose skills and expertise are ideally suited to the role that she is fulfilling on the progress group. We are in this position because the original decisions that were made in the UK Cabinet Office by Westminster politicians and anonymous civil servants—together and separately—were fatally flawed.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Will the member give way?

Michael Russell: I am sorry, but I have a lot to get through.

Instead of being admitted and corrected, those

errors were compounded by misinformation that was given regularly to the Parliament and the public. As recently as last June, the Parliament agreed to a cost ceiling for the project that was impossible to achieve even at that time. That mistake led directly to the terms of the motion that we are debating. That near-fatal mistake was made by new Labour and proposed by a new Labour member.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con) rose—

Michael Russell: I apologise to Mr Gallie, but I want to get through the burden of my argument.

If those mistakes were admitted openly, we could still salvage something from the situation. I hope that we will hear that admission from ministers today. That point is dealt with at the end of my amendment, but there are two more important points in the amendment, both of which relate to the issue of public responsibility.

The Scottish Executive is the ultimate paymaster for the new building. When the original cost of £40 million was announced, it was assumed that such a sum could be met fairly easily from revenue expenditure. That cannot be the case for a sum of £250 million or even £300 million. It would add insult to injury if Scotland's young people, old people, sick people, homeless people and unemployed people were to suffer because of the flawed decisions of their representatives. Accordingly, the Executive must proceed to a new financial plan, treat the project as it would any other major capital project and seek loan finance at Government rates. That would reduce the yearly cost to a more acceptable level. I suggest that a Scottish trust for public investment would be an appropriate vehicle for that and I offer to lend Mr Wilson to the Executive so he can help ministers to sort that out—I promise that we will take him back afterwards.

The Scottish Executive must engage with this project as paymaster and begetter because it is the source of many of the mistakes that have been made. When the SNP agreed to nominate a member to the progress group, it was on the understanding that the Executive had not yet ruled out the possibility of a minister joining the membership. The Executive has still not acted on that matter. Neither have the Conservatives. I would have more time for the arguments that Mr McLetchie is muttering and for those of his more sane colleagues if the Conservatives were taking part in the debate as a party that was trying to find a solution. Perhaps Mr McLetchie will indicate later that he will nominate a member if the Executive does.

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): We have been saying that for two years.

Michael Russell: Excellent. We have taken a step forward.

A minister attending every meeting of the progress group with a desire to help with the financing and the planning is an urgent imperative. Every day that goes by without such a nomination to a group that controls the largest capital project in Scotland serves to strengthen the perception that the progress group exists merely to carry the can rather than to solve the problems.

This is a parliamentary project and the Executive is part of the Parliament—in this case, it is an essential part of the parliamentary process. I want to make a positive suggestion as to who in the Executive might be able to help. Out of the great range of talent on the front benches, there is one obvious choice: the man who carries in his title the word “Parliament”. The chamber knows that I have a great admiration for my friend the Minister for Parliament’s skills in the arena of political fixing. Cometh the hour, cometh the man. Mr McCabe cannot sit idly by at this moment of crisis for the Parliament—for that is the way in which the situation is perceived. The events of the past few days show that the addition of high-level political skills, which Mr McCabe has aplenty, and some clout in fixing can only assist the Holyrood progress group to achieve a successful outcome. I therefore challenge Mr McCabe to nominate himself to the job.

It is no great secret that I have never been convinced by the plans for Holyrood. It has been an ill-starred project from the beginning. Perhaps the most sensible investment would be in a feng shui consultant.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Michael Russell: No, thank you. The Holyrood project remains a source of anguish and concern for most members, as does Mr Gallie. I would have been much happier if we had decided to wait in these premises for a while until we could judge what Scotland’s new democracy needed. I would have been content if we had decided on a more modest vision and had moved to a refurbished complex in St Andrew’s House and Calton hill. However, neither of those options was permitted by the UK Labour Government—we must never forget that it made the key decisions. The Liberal Democrats are not responsible and not even the Scottish Labour party is responsible. The responsibility lies elsewhere.

The determination of the Scottish Executive to do what it wishes was well summed up by the former project manager, William Armstrong, who was quoted in *The Herald* today as saying:

“The problem is the agenda. The building is going to be built whatever it costs and however long it will take.”

He goes on to say:

“It is very sad because this should have been an icon for Scotland and devolution but it has become a bit of a Dome”.

That would be a terrible epitaph for Scotland’s new Parliament, but the SNP’s amendment offers us a way in which we can avoid that. It will bring honesty and rigour into the process. It will allow the Scottish Parliament to say that we will watch what is happening and that all of us will take responsibility for it.

I will support the amendment in my name. I will abstain from voting on the motion if my amendment is not accepted, because it will not deliver the honesty, the rigour and the joint responsibility that the project demands.

I move amendment S1M-2012.3, after “rigorously”, to insert:

“calls on the Scottish Executive to work with the SPCB to agree a financial plan for the completion of the project which has no adverse implications for revenue expenditure on public services in Scotland and which recognises that the project must be funded through normal procedures for major capital works, for example through borrowing at government rates; further demands that the Scottish Executive appoint a minister to attend the progress group in order to engage the Executive fully in the project and its financing; notes that the financial and other problems of the project now being tackled by the progress group are a result of deeply flawed decisions made by Westminster politicians prior to the establishment of the Parliament and by repeated misinformation thereafter from New Labour and the Scottish Executive on the likely costs of the project.”

15:49

David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): The public views the Holyrood project not as a monument to democracy in Scotland but as a national folly that brings politics into disrepute. It is small wonder that far too many of our people are apathetic and cynical and have turned their back on the democratic process when they witness the cavalier, self-seeking behaviour that has characterised the ill-fated project from the outset. Michael Russell was right when he said that it brings disgrace on the Parliament and on the institutions of democracy.

The scandal of the escalating costs of the Holyrood project is well documented. The issue is where we go from here. I believe that there is only one way forward: the Executive must put schools and hospitals before political egos and false pride, finally get a financial grip on the project and rein in the expenditure. We should not authorise the expenditure of one penny more on the Holyrood project until we get real answers on the cost-cutting and funding options that are available to the Parliament.

However, the talent of the Holyrood project team seems to be for spending money rather than saving it. Mr Ezzi's resignation and the cloak of secrecy that surrounds it demonstrate that apparently, rather than implement the cost-cutting measures that Mr Ezzi thought were necessary, he and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body agreed to part company.

Robert Brown: As Mr McLetchie was making those strictures, I wondered why the Conservatives did not put a member on the Holyrood progress group who would have been involved in the decisions and would have had an opportunity to have an influence on matters.

David McLetchie: I have answered that question a dozen times or more. We have made it clear from the outset that the Scottish Executive has financial responsibility for the project, that it should be represented on the project group, that it abdicated that responsibility and that we are not prepared to be part of the progress group until the Executive takes on its financial responsibility. I am pleased to see that Michael Russell and the SNP now realise that they were a bunch of mugs for being part of the group in the first place.

The fact is that Mr Ezzi has a long track record in project management and is well used to working on high-profile projects such as the Museum of Scotland. Suddenly, he has given up his position after a mere seven months, apparently because mutual expectations were not fully realised. Mr McNulty—I think—talked about different perceptions. If Mr Ezzi was not pushed, why has he been gagged? Why will not the SPCB and the Holyrood progress group tell us exactly why he left? Why all the secrecy if there is nothing to hide? What price, I ask Jamie Stone, freedom of information now? The suspicion is that the so-called confidentiality is nothing to do with protecting the rights of Mr Ezzi as an employee, but is all to do with protecting the backs of the people who are allowing the project to escalate out of financial control.

It is perfectly obvious that public services will lose out to the Holyrood project. Every extra pound that is squandered on Holyrood is a pound less for public services, such as schools, hospitals and roads. Aneurin Bevan stated:

"The language of priorities is the religion of Socialism."

Clearly the Executive has a warped sense of priorities and a belief system that defies belief.

When I asked the First Minister earlier, he said that the money was coming not from health or education but from a magical thing called reserve. Did he imagine that he would hand that reserve back to Gordon Brown? No he did not. Would not that reserve have been available in this year or later years to spend on health, education, roads or

any of the other things for which we are responsible? Yes it would. It is therefore true to say that every pound that is poured down the Holyrood money pit is a pound less for public services in Scotland. No amount of financial sophistry from the First Minister about reserves can disguise that fact.

In March 2000, when I asked the late First Minister Mr Dewar about the Holyrood project and its financing, he said that he thought that it could be managed

"without impacting on other things"

and that he was

"certainly prepared to listen to suggestions about other methods of funding"—[*Official Report*, 30 March 2000; Vol 5, c 1226.]

Unfortunately, nothing was done. The Executive refused to put a minister on the Holyrood progress group and sat on its hands.

There are options, even at this late stage. For example, why not sell off the MSP office block and lease it back? The Parliament will have spent the first four years of its life in leased premises; MSP constituency offices are all leased; and the First Minister's offices are apparently leased twice over—why not our parliamentary offices? According to the surveyors, DM Hall, that would recoup more than £20 million for the public purse immediately.

All the arguments that building projects of this scale cannot be brought in within budget because of inflation and building prices in Edinburgh are absolute nonsense. Only a few miles away, another £200 million building project, called the Edinburgh royal infirmary, is being brought in on budget and on time.

Tommy Sheridan: Will David McLetchie give way?

David McLetchie: No, thank you.

That is because that project involves a true partnership with the private sector, which is something that we suggested and which should have been pursued by the Executive and the corporate body from the outset.

The fact is that the Executive is responsible for the Holyrood project and that members of the Executive parties—Labour and the Liberal Democrats—with a few honourable exceptions, have time and again voted to pour money down the drain. I plead with them to reconsider the issue and to authorise not one penny more until there is a grip on the project. They might not succeed, but they certainly have a duty to try.

I move amendment S1M-2012.1, to leave out from "without" to end and insert:

"within the previously approved cost ceiling of £195 million, and to this end calls on the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body in conjunction with the Scottish Executive to consider alternative methods of funding elements of the project through partnership with the private sector which will achieve that cost target and avoid cuts in other budgets."

15:56

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I am the first member of the Holyrood progress group to speak in the debate and I wish to make three points. The first regards our functions. In going for a quality building, I point out—I have spoken about this before—that we are making savings in the longer term. It is not jerry-building; it is about building properly, so that in 10, 20, 30, 50 or 100 years' time, we will see real value for money.

Secondly, I think that it is a bit tough that we in the progress group get shot at for being honest. When we put together the risk register, we put everything in there, from the sky falling on our heads to industrial disputes. It is all there, in black and white.

Ms MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Mr Stone: I will give way to Margo MacDonald in due course, but I want to get through my points first, because I am coming, as it were, from the coalface and I mean what I say.

We have been up front. For people to add figures together to make ever bigger sums is having a go at us. We do not deserve it. If we were less than honest and did not come to the Parliament with all the risks, we would be culpable. That is not the case.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way on the subject of honesty?

Mr Stone: I will come back to Mr Gallie in due course.

The Holyrood progress group leads from the front. We do not shirk making decisions and I am proud of that. We face the Parliament, the public and the press at our question-and-answer sessions. It is a pity that more people did not attend last night.

When I have spoken in the chamber before, I have sometimes amused members with things that I have done in the past. Once upon a time, I had a proper job. I worked for an international construction company, as the man in charge of putting together bid documents for construction projects, particularly in Saudi Arabia. I had to know my construction managers, my senior field engineers and my project directors. It was my job to consider the people and put seven, eight, nine or 10 names together. The names were then

approved by a vice-president and the list went out. I might say that we were quite successful. We got the lion's share of the construction business in Saudi Arabia, including airfields and factories, so I know what I am talking about.

That leads me to the subject of Sarah Davidson, who has had what I think is very unfair treatment in some sections of the press. I want to go on record as saying that I am quite disgusted by some of the things that have been said about her. In my view, the job of project director is about communications; it is about team building; and it is about leading.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP) rose—

Mr Stone: I will come back to Alex Neil in due course.

The job is about having the most astute political radar, because that is what we will need in the final stage, as we near completion of the Parliament building.

Let me put it the other way round. If we take a single-skilled project director, such as an architect or engineer, there is a danger—in my experience—that they will concentrate on their own discipline to the detriment of the other important disciplines, and in particular to the detriment of co-ordination and communications.

Alex Neil: Will Jamie Stone take an intervention?

Ms MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Mr Stone: I will come back to members. I want to make this point. I will give other members a chance to intervene if I have time at the end.

Let us think about Sarah Davidson for a second—she has been mentioned in the press, so I have no qualms about mentioning her now. In fact, she is in the chamber. In any other project, had a bright, able, young Scottish lady advanced in this manner, we would have said amen and hallelujah to that, but because it is the Holyrood project, she has been shot at.

There is also something slightly blacker at work, which I do not like the look of.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the member give way?

Mr Stone: I will not. This is serious. If a bright, clever young man were appointed to a position such as this, there would be a tendency in society to say, "Well done. He is getting on." I appeal to every female member in the chamber, from all parties, to support me on this—they know that what I say is true. Because Sarah Davidson happens to be female and young, it is suggested that she is incompetent. That is disgraceful; in our heart of hearts we know that.

Michael Russell: On a point of order. We have spoken on many occasions about the propriety of discussing civil servants in the chamber. I know that there has been unfair criticism in the press, but I think that Mr Stone is now erring very badly against the Presiding Officer's previous advice on the matter and against good sense.

The Presiding Officer: Discussion of this point should be limited, as it is not good practice to mention civil servants in the chamber.

Mr Stone: Sir David, you will be glad to hear that I am moving on to my third and final point.

The Presiding Officer: Good. You are over time, so you will need to be very quick.

Mr Stone: We are sick of this debate. I say to the leaders of the parties, particularly the leader of the Conservative party, that their troops are too. Mr McLetchie should hear what is said behind his back. I have received apologies for what was to come in this debate—no names and no pack-drill. Mr McLetchie has not read the temperature of his party. He should be careful. On this project, I say to him, "Do not do a Hague."

The Presiding Officer: At the beginning, I said that the debate was heavily oversubscribed. It is now even more oversubscribed, so I will have to put a three-minute time limit on speeches.

16:01

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I begin by thanking the members of the Holyrood progress group: Jamie Stone, John Home Robertson and Linda Fabiani. I mean that, because I do not envy them the job of having to make sense of all the demands that we place on them. I am and will continue to be four-square behind what they are doing.

I speak in support of Des McNulty's motion. All things considered, it sets out the right and only way forward. Mike Russell's contribution was quite helpful, as he accepted that the building has to be built. The first half of his amendment is constructive, but the second half is not. If Mike Russell were prepared to apply the same scrutiny to the SNP's financial commitments in its uncoded manifesto for an independent Scotland, perhaps we could take his views more seriously.

This is the hardest decision that the Parliament has had to make. We are all accountable for what we do and what we say. We are equally accountable for what we do not do and what we do not say. If members believe in this project, as I do, they should be prepared to stand up and be counted. Mike Russell is right to say that we need to get a grip on what is happening. I want answers and explanations and I want to hold the progress group to account for what it does, but it is right that

the group should report to a parliamentary committee that has the power to get on with the job. I trust the Finance Committee to do that.

Most tenders have been broadly in line with the cost estimates. Those facts should be presented to the public, who have the impression that nothing has gone right, when quite a lot has.

Ms MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: No.

The project is suffering because it is the most publicly debated and talked about project around. That is as it should be, but it has a knock-on effect. An uncompetitive environment has been created and the complexity of the project has not made it appealing. Mike Russell's continued use of the word "crisis" is not helping us to get the job done.

Even in the fantasy world of David McLetchie, there must be an acceptance that there is such a thing as construction industry inflation. Are the Tories claiming that the construction industry is making it up? Mr McLetchie says that we should not spend one penny more, but he refuses to say whether he would use cheaper materials, to keep to an upper limit of £195 million. He must answer that question.

We know that the real problem is the Tories' lack of commitment to devolution. That is why they continue to refuse to participate in the progress group.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: I am sorry, but I am running out of time.

Nobody is gung-ho about committing this amount of public expenditure to the project—it is a serious consideration for us all and I expect that we will be asked to account for every penny every step of the way—but in 100 years' time we will all be held to account for what we said in this debate. All members should think seriously about what future generations will say about their contributions.

I do not apologise for repeating the same points that I made in the previous Holyrood debate. This is not just a building; it is a facility to encompass the democratic process. It is as much about the people as it is about the politicians. The cost is high but, to give us a building that is fit not just for the 21st century but for the next 300 years, we must think seriously about getting it right. We cannot afford to get it wrong.

16:05

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): The Assembly Hall is a fine

debating chamber. In my opinion, it is better than any new debating chamber could be. I support that view, but the Labour party and the Labour Government have decided that we will go to Holyrood, so that is where we will go. We should all be sensible and responsible when we address this issue.

When a project goes over budget, the first step any sensible person would take—and the first step we should take—is to consider ways of minimising the final expenditure. As the SNP's rural development spokesman, I met representatives of the Scottish Timber Trade Association, who told me that the wood that is being used for the MSP block windows is oak, which will be laminated, or glued together. The oak is not grown in Scotland but in America. It will be shipped to Thailand, laminated and brought to Scotland. It was suggested that, if we were to use a native Scottish wood such as Douglas fir, we could save up to £1 million on the cost of the wood alone. I do not know whether that figure is correct but, in the interests of finding savings, the point is certainly worth exploring.

I am pleased to say that John Home Robertson, who sits on the Holyrood progress group, agreed to a meeting, which the STTA and I attended. As a result, Mr Home Robertson agreed to do an accelerated weather test—he will not conduct that test personally, I am pleased to say—to see whether the misgivings and concerns are well placed. If they are, we may need to reconsider.

Surely we should consider responsibly what we could do to effect savings. Surely that would be a mature and responsible decision, although it may not be interesting or grab headlines. Last night, during our question-and-answer session, a member stormed out of the chamber—I see that he is present today—and got great headlines for his contribution. When it comes to constructive debate, the Conservatives espouse the Rab C Nesbitt school of politics, as they have nothing positive to say—not even their leader.

This morning, when Mr McLetchie was asked on radio what savings he would make, he said, "That's not for me to say." I am extremely surprised that the Conservatives pursue that line. It seems that instead of the Conservatives using the slogan "carpe diem", we see them carping daily; instead of looking for savings, we see them grabbing headlines.

We should use Scottish businesses and materials wherever we can and we should find savings wherever they can be found.

16:08

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Like many members, I am disappointed that we are

having this debate today. I am disappointed that the costs have risen yet again and I am equally disappointed to hear the tired old arguments from those who have never accepted the Holyrood project in the first place. However, I would be more disappointed if I thought that costs were spiralling out of control, that the project was not being managed properly or that we were being ripped off in some way. That is not what is happening, nor is it why we are debating the subject today.

The most recent rise, which is likely to take the Parliament costs beyond the £195 million ceiling, comes from building cost inflation in Edinburgh and from the fact that we are constructing the Parliament building in a boom town.

Ms MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Mr Macintosh: I will press on, if Margo MacDonald does not mind. I will see how much time I have left at the end of my speech.

Rather than repeat the endless debates and rounds of recriminations, all members should lend their support to our colleagues on the progress group and the SPCB, to enable them to concentrate their efforts on managing the project as rigorously as possible. We must face up to our collective responsibility for building a Parliament that we can all be proud of. It is not the Executive's Parliament—it is our Parliament.

I am disappointed at the prospect of the Parliament costing even more than we had anticipated, but I am not that surprised. The architect John Spencely thought that £195 million was a tight target and that £230 million was a more realistic total. The Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black, also warned of the risk of a cost overrun because of the very reasons that we are hearing about today. I also understand the project team's desire to minimise costs and to use tight targets and restraints as a tool to drive costs down.

There is no doubt that the process has not been very transparent. I am still uncomfortable with the fact that costs for road realignment are not included in the grand total. I understand that those costs are not within the competence or the control of the corporate body and so must be dealt with separately, but that does not add to the transparency of the process.

I believe that it is the job of us all in the Parliament to grasp the problems and to deal with them. We should not try to allocate blame; we should face up to and accept our responsibilities. It is disingenuous—if not downright hypocritical—of the Opposition parties to pretend that there are simplistic or cost-free solutions to our difficulties.

The turning point in the project was when the project group was established. I believe that John

Home Robertson, Linda Fabiani and Jamie Stone have applied the effective scrutiny that the project needs. I also welcome Sarah Davidson's appointment. I was fortunate to work with her when she was clerk to the Finance Committee. Her ability and talent are not in doubt.

The Parliament building will not be for our personal enjoyment, nor, indeed, is it likely to house this session's crop of MSPs. This morning, SNP members talked about having ambition for our country, yet they will not face up to their responsibility for a building that will stand as a symbol of our place in the world.

Ms MacDonald *rose—*

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

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP) *rose—*

Mr Macintosh: I am sorry, but the SNP is trying to blame the Executive. It is our Parliament, not the Executive's.

Scotland has a tradition of architecture of which we can be proud. Edinburgh's Georgian new town, the Forth bridge and the Forth rail bridge have all stood the test of time.

Let me conclude with a story I heard earlier this week. It is about a young girl who is 15 years old and is at boarding school, who writes to her parents,

"Dear Mum and Dad,

I have bad news to tell you. I am pregnant. The father is the school gardener, but we love each other very much. He has a beautiful little house at the bottom of the school grounds where we intend to set up home. I look forward to you meeting him, as I know that you will like him as much as I do.

Of course, none of the above is true. What is true is that I failed my French higher, but I wanted you to get it into perspective."

We need to get things into perspective. We are building a Parliament that will last a hundred years. We need to take decisions today that will last the test of time. I urge members to support the motion.

16:12

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Presiding Officer, since you have already said that the time for the debate is limited, I will give a wee piece of information and ask a question.

My views on the project are well known. I do not quibble about the cost of a magnificent Parliament; I quibble about whether it is guaranteed to be magnificent. I also think that, just as our democracy is ill served by retrospective legislation,

it is even more ill served by retrospective spending, which is what the motion asks for. I see no reason to believe that the project group has shown such management efficiency and expertise that we should continue to trust its judgment, which is what the motion asks us to do.

Just before we came here today, John Home Robertson admitted in a television interview with me that he knew nothing at all about a planned closing ceremony. Although I am told that it is being planned, I am not at all sure that it has been budgeted for. Who knows about a closing ceremony? How much is it costed at? Is it just another figment of my imagination?

I also want to correct the misapprehension about inflation in the building industry in Edinburgh which, once again, the motion rests on. The motion claims that inflation is 16 per cent. Last night, we heard from the progress group, which estimates that inflation of 16 per cent has been built into the contracts that have been let and that are about to be let. Because only British indices for inflation exist, it is difficult to get a figure specifically for Edinburgh, but according to the Halifax house price survey, we should allow for 8.5 per cent inflation for house building in Edinburgh. That is half of what is being claimed. I suggest to the progress group that if it had a professional manager running the project, he might tell them that contractors sometimes—only sometimes—add in a little bit to cover contingencies. Perhaps that is why we estimate inflation to be twice the rate that everybody else who is building in Edinburgh just now is working to.

I said that I would not take any more time, Presiding Officer, but I sincerely hope that my friend and colleague Donald Gorrie will be given time.

The Presiding Officer: Because of your brevity, I can call Donald Gorrie next.

16:15

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I am obliged to Margo for her generosity. An author of soap operas might, for a plot, be tempted to draw on the saga of the Scottish Parliament enterprise. The only problem is that the public would never believe it. The whole thing passes any human belief because of the series of mishaps and mistakes.

My quarrel is not with the progress group or with Sarah Davidson—and, in that context, the headline in *The Sun* is entirely fabricated. The progress group has been given what in rugby is called a hospital pass.

My quarrel is with the shadowy coalition of people who have been promoting this project from

the start and who are described in David Black's excellent book. Those people have promoted the project relentlessly, they have treated the Parliament with complete cynicism, contempt and dishonesty and they have traded on the decent loyalty of many members to Donald Dewar. The previous two votes were presented as votes of confidence in Donald Dewar and not as votes on the new Parliament. On both occasions, we were given totally fictitious figures.

Mr Stone rose—

Donald Gorrie: We have heard too much from Jamie Stone already—sit down.

We were given totally mendacious figures of £109 million and then £195 million. There were then comments like, "We did not really mean £195 million." However, a successful amendment—S1M-720.2—talked about completing

"the project by the end of 2002 within a total budget of £195 million".

We were given totally dishonest amendments.

There is now a change of tactic: we are told to write a blank cheque. That is at least a step forward for honesty, but it is totally unacceptable. I appeal to members not to support the motion. This is no longer an issue of confidence in Donald Dewar and it is no longer an issue of whether to have the Parliament on one particular site. We are obviously going to complete the Parliament, so it is now an issue of management and democratic accountability. It is not acceptable for the Parliament to be asked to write a blank cheque and for the people in charge of building just to go ahead and do what they can. That is just not on. We are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. None of us would run our private affairs in this way. Why should we run the nation's affairs in this way? No other organisation would run things like this. Even in much-maligned local government, if this sort of thing happened there would be resignations and early departures. In this project, nobody has ever carried the can for anything. It is a complete scandal and I urge members to vote against this awful motion.

16:18

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I speak on behalf of the progress group. Some people have suggested that that must be a difficult position for a member of the SNP, but it is not. SNP members have a free vote on the motion, which is the responsible position to take. I have no difficulty in supporting the SNP amendment because it is absolutely right. It reflects what the corporate body, the progress group and the Scottish Executive—once it came into being— inherited: an ill-thought-out project that suffered from a lack of honesty.

I am pleased to say that for the first time we have absolute honesty in the project. The corporate body and the progress group are to be commended for that. I do not mind patting myself on the back because it has taken a lot of hard work to get here. I also pat Andrew Welsh and the rest of my colleagues on the back. My colleagues had the strength and the public commitment to say, "We were handed this. It was done completely wrongly and we accept that, but now we are moving towards a Parliament for the people of Scotland. We must take part in that." We will work collectively to ensure that what we get at the end is a Parliament that is fit for the people of Scotland.

I was not going to be political, but I will reply to Ken Macintosh, who accused the SNP of being irresponsible. What we have been doing has not been irresponsible. What was irresponsible was the mass agreement to the £195 million cap that was put in place last year, which came from a base of no knowledge of how the project was being run and how it would continue.

The project that we inherited is now different. It is well managed and tightly run. Much has been thrown at us over the Alan Ezzi situation, but I tell members that Alan Ezzi came on board and made a valuable contribution. It was then realised on both sides that the project had moved on a stage, and that different skills were required. It is to the credit of the character of Alan Ezzi and to the tight management of the progress group and the SPCB that mutual agreement was reached on a parting of the ways. That is a mark of how the project is now being run—with control.

In relation to the SNP amendment, it is clear that no public service money should be spent on the project. However, that is not within the remit of the project group, so I will hand that issue back. The SNP amendment also seeks to have a minister on board. For the record, I would be delighted to welcome Tom McCabe to the progress group, but I will lay down the ground rules now. If Tom McCabe comes on to the progress group, he will not be in charge and there is no way that he will fix me. [*Laughter.*]

I urge every member to think for themselves and to vote the way that is right for Scotland, which is to support the SNP amendment and fully support the motion lodged by the SPCB.

The Presiding Officer: We are past the time to begin summing up. I apologise to the five members whom I have been unable to call.

16:22

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): The debate is fundamentally about whether we want a first-class Parliament building using Scottish

building materials, or a second-rate Parliament building in which corners have been cut and for which Scottish products are dumped in favour of cheap overseas alternatives. I find with some amazement that I agree with Fergus Ewing, because I want Scottish timber to be used where possible in the new Parliament building. I want Scottish Kemnay granite to be used, not Portuguese granite, and I want Caithness flagstone to be used. Above all, I do not want our new Parliament building to be compromised by cutting corners.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): George Lyon and Fergus Ewing talked about using Scottish products, but how will they get round European competition law?

George Lyon: One specifies and then purchases. Is David Davidson arguing that we should not use Scottish materials? That may explain why the Conservative party came fourth in the recent election.

The motion in April last year set a budget of £195 million, but left the door open for the progress group to come back and argue for more resources if it believed they were needed. Above all, the group had to come back to Parliament to justify the need for that extra resource. Extra expenditure is justified and I am willing to support it, but I am not happy with the blank-cheque approach set out in the motion. Surely, given that 47 per cent of the contracts are let and a further 35 per cent are out to tender, it would have been possible to update the budget figure.

Indeed, the SPCB report to the Scottish Parliament has figures for the likely outturn cost. The progress group should have had the confidence to come here and put that figure before us and if there were a need for further adjustment, to come back and argue the position. That would have given us all confidence that the progress group has a fixed budget in mind and is seriously working towards achieving that figure.

A number of colleagues have asked serious questions about the departure of Alan Ezzi. I am willing to accept that there are personal and commercial confidentiality issues surrounding his departure. I am, however, deeply concerned about the appointment of the new project director. I question not the competence of the appointee, but the process. The swift appointment and its manner undermine the SPCB's credibility and, above all, the trust of MSPs.

Linda Fabiani: I am devastated.

George Lyon: I am making constructive comments. I say to Linda Fabiani that laughing is inappropriate. The progress group should recognise that serious concerns have been expressed about that issue and should respond

positively to such constructive criticism.

Linda Fabiani rose—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Lyon is in his last minute and can take no interventions. Please finish, Mr Lyon.

George Lyon: I believe that everyone—apart from the Conservatives—wants a first-class new Parliament, not a second-class building on which corners are consistently cut. I want a new Parliament building that uses Scottish materials where possible. I am willing to pay for that vision and to pay extra, if that is what it takes to make it happen. However, I am unhappy about the blank cheque that is being requested. I am deeply unhappy about the project director appointment process. I hope that the progress group will address those concerns.

16:26

The Minister for Parliament (Mr Tom McCabe): This is our fourth debate on the Holyrood project. It has provided a useful opportunity to take stock and consider advice from those who have been charged with developing the project.

The project is important. I say to Margo MacDonald that any suggestion of closing ceremonies is, to my certain knowledge, only the product of a fertile imagination. However, I fail to understand how that matter is relevant to the debate.

Margo MacDonald also talked about house price inflation in Edinburgh. How can we take seriously any suggestion that there is a valid comparison between house price inflation and major civil engineering projects? The project is too important for such a flippant comparison.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Mr McCabe: Not at the moment.

It is right and proper that the debate should take place, so the Executive greatly welcomes it. I must say to Mr Russell that, rather than complain about the adverse publicity that the project has attracted, perhaps he should take time to consider how and by whose hand that adverse publicity was created. I notice that Mr Russell left the chamber for about 15 minutes during the debate. I will accept his assurance that he did not leave to converse with the press.

Michael Russell: I left to have a conversation with the clerk, who sent me a note about another matter. I hope that the member will accept that assurance, as I know that he does not talk to the press.

Mr McCabe: How true. I am more than happy to accept Mr Russell's assurances and to acknowledge that that is a first for Mr Russell's departures from the chamber.

There is more than a little discord in the SNP group, but new depths were plumbed when Mr Russell offered to transfer Mr Wilson to Labour and the Liberal Democrats. I have always paid attention to the counsel that we should beware Greeks bearing gifts. I tell Mr Russell that I am wary and that he can hold on to Mr Wilson on this occasion. I will accept Mr Russell's kind words, but I assure him that my political skills guide me to resist his flattering charms.

To be serious, the Holyrood progress group is concerned with a rigorous analysis of a complex project. The Executive is aware that the group has reported its views fully to the corporate body and that that information is being transmitted to the Parliament, as is right and proper.

Some members would prefer the debate to focus on whether we should proceed with the project. That would be improper. The need to complete the project is a long-settled issue. There is widespread acknowledgement that it is Parliament's responsibility to provide a building of which our MSPs and country can be proud. It is also acknowledged that the project is extremely challenging, as it should be. The project is of enormous importance to Scotland and to the new democracy that we have established. We are a young Parliament and steps are being taken to ensure that the building design proceeds in accordance with our evolving needs. That has added to the complexity of the project.

Fergus Ewing: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr McCabe: No, but I will in a moment.

The project has evolved—and will evolve—as politicians and the staff who support them identify their needs. That adds to the challenge, but in no way does it suggest that we should be deterred from that challenge.

Fergus Ewing: Given that the Scottish Executive is the paymaster for whatever amount the blank cheque requires, will the Executive put an appointee on the Holyrood progress group?

Mr McCabe: Mr Ewing is well aware that the Executive keeps in close touch with the project. We are explaining today, as we have explained in detail on previous occasions, the arrangements that we have put in place. Senior civil servants keep in close touch with the project. The liaison arrangements between the Executive and the Holyrood progress group are first class and they are working well.

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister give way?

Mr McCabe: Not at the moment.

From the outset, we have asserted that we want a permanent home for the Parliament. That is in line with our ambitions for the Parliament and for Scotland. We believe that we will achieve a building of high quality and of international stature.

On behalf of the Executive, I want to pay tribute to the Holyrood progress group. I pay tribute to their energy and enthusiasm and to the skill that they have applied to what is a complex task. I am sure that members of the corporate body, and indeed all members of the Parliament, will join me in that acknowledgement.

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister give way?

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): Will the minister take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: To which member is Mr McCabe giving way?

Mr McCabe: Tavish Scott.

Tavish Scott: Will the minister comment on the exclusive story that appeared yesterday in the *Daily Record*, which alleged that £25 million will be taken out of schools to be spent on Holyrood? Will he confirm categorically that that is not the case?

Mr McCabe: I can certainly do that. In journalistic circles, it is said that there is nothing like a good exclusive. It gives me no pleasure to confirm to the chamber that what appeared in yesterday's papers was no good exclusive. The Executive is committed to seeing an important building completed in an appropriate manner. We are even more committed to ensuring that the appropriate expenditure is guided towards our health and education services.

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister take an intervention?

Mr McCabe: I will be as clear as the First Minister was during question time: not one brown penny will be removed from the health or education budgets in order to fund the Holyrood project.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): Will the minister be reporting new Labour's favourite newspaper to the Press Complaints Commission for telling lies?

Mr McCabe: I seem to remember a time not so long ago when that newspaper was also a favourite of Mr Canavan. It is sad if that situation has changed to such an extent. Let me further emphasise the point—

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister take an intervention?

Mr McCabe: No. I have taken enough interventions.

The Executive has allowed for a significant reserve in next year's budget and that of the following year. It is a compliment to the prudence and responsibility of Angus MacKay, our Minister for Finance and Local Government, that we are in a position to be able to deal with the contingencies and unexpected events that occur during the lifetime of any government.

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister please take an intervention?

Mr McCabe: The debate has exposed the immaturity and the opportunism of the SNP and of Mr Wilson, its finance spokesman. The SNP has consistently criticised and resisted the concept of reserves. We can demonstrate today, through Angus MacKay's good work, that those reserves are in place and that they will be well used on the project.

Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Who is it who is irresponsible? The man sitting next to Mr McCabe is Mr McConnell who, when he was the minister with responsibility for finance, said that it was not Government policy to create a contingency reserve.

Mr McCabe: That statement is not true. I say to Mr Wilson that he has been consistent in his criticism of reserves. The situation that we find ourselves in today demonstrates that his criticism was ill judged, ill placed and irresponsible. Mr Wilson's careless claims demonstrate that Scotland's finances would be in tatters if they were in the hands of the SNP.

It is now clear, on the basis of a very full report, that it will be necessary to sanction further expenditures to complete the project. The motion purposely does not give a final figure. Anyone who is involved in major construction projects of this nature will know that it would be commercially damaging to do that. As the report from the SPCB makes perfectly clear, there are genuine uncertainties about future risk. What is proposed instead seems to us to be a prudent and sensible arrangement. Quarterly reporting to the Finance Committee by the SPCB will ensure the highest standards of parliamentary scrutiny on a continuing basis and allow budgetary implications to be addressed regularly throughout the year.

The Executive welcomes that means of proceeding. As members are aware, the Parliament's own budget has a prior call on the Scottish consolidated fund. It is for the Parliament to vote its own expenses. The Finance Committee is well placed to assess the demands of the project. As I have said, the Executive quite rightly has a reserve built into its plans. That will enable us to absorb additional costs. It should be remembered that, as the project proceeds, the range of uncertainty narrows. The process of

budgetary management, by its nature, becomes more straightforward and certain. The Executive is more than happy that it can work with the grain of the parliamentary authorities' budgetary judgments. As I have said, there is already close contact over such matters.

We are therefore happy to endorse the motion that is before us today and we strongly urge each member to consider seriously the importance of the building, not only to our new democratic arrangements, but to the reputation of Scotland and to vote for the motion before the chamber.

16:37

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): I speak today not as the reporter on the Holyrood project to the Finance Committee, but as a member of the Conservative party in the Parliament.

I start with a little piece of truth. During their speeches, many members talked about transparency and integrity. The word honesty was sometimes used and respect for the Parliament was mentioned on many occasions. The truth is that, time and again, the Parliament has been blamed for the action—or inaction—of the Executive. The Holyrood project was a Labour Government project that was started before the Parliament came into being. It has been stated clearly that the Parliament inherited the project—we all agree with that. It is therefore incumbent upon the Labour party, especially the part of it that is represented here by the Executive, to help to shoulder the load. That means taking an active part in the mess that we are in today.

The construction management process is an inherently flawed system. I am not worried whether the Jackson motion about £195 million that was passed last year was badly drafted—it came from the Labour party, not the SPCB. As most of the building had not been designed at the time, there was an opportunity to carry out radical work to contain the project within the costs that the Parliament had dictated. The fact is that that was not acted upon quickly enough. I do not blame the Holyrood progress group; from my perspective, it has done a fairly good job of cleaning up what was going on.

Today, we heard another exclusive, which Mr McCabe seemed to want to talk about. That exclusive, which came from the First Minister, was that the reserve would be used. That reserve came about as the result of underspends in health, justice and education. It is money that the Parliament approved, under previous budgets, for spending on public services. That money was not spent, however and one must ask whether Mr McCabe and his team did some clever forward

thinking and said to themselves, "This is going a bit pear-shaped. We'd better have a reserve. We'll just shave a bit back from different services." One could make that assumption.

Mr McCabe: Would Mr Davidson be more content if the Executive had no reserve?

Mr Davidson: Unlike Andrew Wilson, I have never been against reserves, but I want clarity. If one budgets for a reserve, one must say where the money comes from and what the rules are for taking the money out again. The reserve is supposed to be for emergencies, but the Holyrood project cannot be an emergency; the situation has been going on for two years now.

I notice that evidence on the project will be given to the Finance Committee. I am pleased about that, and I shall certainly call on the Finance Committee to take evidence surrounding whatever issues come forward. That includes calling in members of the progress group and some of their employees. As Mr Ezzi no longer has a contractual obligation to the task, perhaps he will be in a position to clarify where things are going wrong and how they might be amended.

Ms MacDonald: Will Mr Davidson give way?

Mr Davidson: I do not think that I am allowed to.

The Presiding Officer: No, you are not.

Mr Davidson: The interesting thing about today's debate is that we have heard that the Labour and Liberal Democrat members are prepared to make Scotland's doctors and teachers pay for the Holyrood project and that the SNP, as usual, wants English and Welsh taxpayers to pay up for it. What we have suggested—which I said on television last week—is a positive contribution to looking at new funding methods to ensure that the money for public services can be preserved. David McLetchie gave evidence from DM Hall, with facts and figures about the £20 million sale-and-lease-back arrangements that would help to ensure that we do not hit the reserves. Where is the money for adopting the Sutherland report's recommendations going to come from? It is not in the budget at the moment. That is something that we must be very careful about.

The Conservative party has made it clear time and again that, if an Executive minister was involved in the progress group, the Conservatives would also put somebody on that progress group; we have never shied away from that. We are now in the business of protecting public services where we can and we must consider creative accounting processes to be able to do that. If Jim Wallace wants to make comments about that outside the chamber, I shall speak to him later.

16:42

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I shall be brief. The most revealing but least constructive comment of the afternoon came from Mr McCabe. At the moment, he is speaking in his role as whip. The moment a member is out of Mr McCabe's sight, they must be briefing somebody against him, and the solution to any public concern, disquiet or dissent is to order members not to talk to journalists. That does not seem to me a sensible approach to a project that is the cause of huge public concern. If Mr McCabe does not understand that concern, he is simply not listening to what is happening.

SNP front-bench members have attempted today to help the situation by injecting some new elements into the motion while taking nothing out. I know that some members who are tempted to support my amendment regard the rhetoric of the last few lines as unacceptable. I am sorry about that, but I think that the rhetoric of those lines was cancelled out by Mr McCabe's rhetoric this afternoon, so we are equal. In those circumstances—

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD) *rose—*

Michael Russell: I am sorry, but I would like to finish my speech. I know that Mr Jenkins always dislikes my rhetoric and wants me to be to be simpler and plainer, and he is probably right. However, the balance of this afternoon's argument has been to inject new elements of accountability and openness into the debate, to engage the Executive in the project, which is absolutely—even symbolically—essential, and to make certain that the financing arrangements are more sensible than those that have been proposed. I urge members to support my amendment. It does not detract from the motion, and it is being supported by a member of the progress group. I hope that members will support it, because it will make a difference.

16:44

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): I am happy to reply to the debate in my capacity as convener of the Holyrood progress group. The public debate has tended to be dominated by a minority of people, if I can put it that way, who are very hostile to the Holyrood Parliament project. We have heard from some of those people again today, but I do not complain about that because they are quite entitled to put their views. However, I welcome the fact that this is a well-attended debate, because the Holyrood Parliament building will be the property of the whole Parliament. More importantly, it will be the property of all the people of Scotland. That is why all of us have such a heavy responsibility to get it

right and to get value for money.

I shall deal quickly with the sad question of the departure of the previous project director and the appointment of his successor. The project director reports to the Holyrood progress group. One of the key priorities of the project director is to control costs. Mr Ezzi was in the job for eight months. At this stage, all that I can say is that neither he nor we were happy with how things were going. He therefore decided to leave. I do not want to say any more than that. However, we are very grateful for the work that he has done and we wish him well. I am particularly grateful for the £2.5 million of savings that he identified. We will benefit from that.

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): With the benefit of hindsight, does John Home Robertson accept that the progress group's handling of the process of the appointment of Mr Ezzi's successor was contrary to Parliament's principles? Openness, transparency and equal opportunities are not the least of those principles. The process was rushed and badly handled. The process was wrong, rather than the individual who has been appointed.

Mr Home Robertson: I will come back to that.

I was talking about the savings that the previous project director proposed. One of the alternative savings that he suggested was the use of Portuguese granite instead of Kemnay granite. To make that suggestion was perfectly fair and using Portuguese granite would have saved some money. However, we considered the matter and, on balance, we felt that Enric Miralles' suggestion that Kemnay granite was more appropriate for the new Scottish Parliament building was better. We therefore set aside the project director's suggestions in that regard. Mike Rumbles' constituents might be grateful for the fact that the work will go to Kemnay.

Mike Rumbles mentioned the new director. We were consulted about the appointment of the new director. The Holyrood progress group's unanimous view—not just that of Linda Fabiani, Jamie Stone or myself, but, most important, that of the independent professional colleagues who work with us—and the unanimous opinion of the SPCB was that Sarah Davidson could and should be offered the job. We believe that she is the best person for the job at this time and we are delighted that she has accepted the responsibility. Her appointment has also been endorsed by the SPCB. We have complete confidence in her ability, experience and commitment. I can only express contempt for some of the offensive personal comments that have been made by certain people about a dedicated servant of the Parliament who is not allowed to answer or speak for herself in public.

On the motion and amendments, some members are irreconcilably opposed to the Holyrood project. Some would have preferred a different site or a different architect and some have strong feelings about the construction management contract system, which makes it impossible to cut the cost. Some have a different political agenda altogether in respect of the principle of devolution. I understand those arguments and I respect colleagues who have put them forward, but we cannot go on debating yesterday's arguments for ever.

The site and the architect were chosen in 1998. Forty-seven per cent of the value of the building has already been contractually committed and 16,000 cubic metres of concrete have already been poured on the Holyrood site. Everybody refers to the Parliament as the Holyrood Parliament and I do not think that anybody seriously wants to stay indefinitely in our temporary premises. The idea of aborting the Holyrood project at this late stage cannot possibly make sense. Apart from anything else, doing so would be a diabolical waste of money.

Tommy Sheridan: What evaluation has been carried out on marketing what has already been constructed? What assessment has been made of some of the other appraisals that were unfortunately ignored before Parliament had the right to decide on them?

Mr Home Robertson: Such evaluations could not possibly produce value for money. We are totally committed. Money is being spent. The idea of aborting the whole project at this stage and starting all over again on another site with another architect would evidently cost much more.

I understand Mike Russell's historic points and the case that could have been made for alternatives, but we must live in the world as it is. It is not realistic to seek at this late stage a fundamental change to the basis of the contract arrangement. With respect to Mike Russell, it is not helpful to make references to the millennium dome as a comparison to Scotland's new Parliament. It is important that all of us who are committed to the future of Scotland's Parliament should treat it with the respect that it deserves.

David McLetchie's amendment would compel us to ignore the effects of inflation, to ignore the risks that inevitably arise in major construction projects and to try to finish the job in 2002 at 1999 prices. To put it crudely, that would mean putting a cheap and nasty roof on our new Parliament building, which would be a seriously short-sighted decision that would lead to far higher costs in the not-so-distant future. Anybody can understand that.

Ms MacDonald: Will Mr Home Robertson give way?

Mr Home Robertson: No, sorry.

The motion, S1M-2012, from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which was moved by Des McNulty, would give me and my colleagues on the Holyrood progress group the responsibility to complete our new Parliament building to the highest possible standard, on time and securing the best possible value for money. I would be the first to admit that that is a heavy responsibility, but it is one that we take very seriously.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to many other people. I am grateful for the comments that have been made about the work that has been done by members of the Holyrood progress group, but many people are working much harder than we do down at the Holyrood site. I pay tribute to those who are fulfilling their responsibilities while working on the project. Those include site workers, quarrymen in Aberdeenshire and elsewhere, contractors, the design team and everybody else.

Phil Gallie rose—

Mr Home Robertson: And maybe even Phil Gallie, to whom I give way.

The Presiding Officer: No. You are in the last minute of your speech.

Mr Home Robertson: I apologise. As I have not got time, I cannot give way.

All those people who I mentioned are working flat out for us. They deserve our support and they could do without some of the gratuitous abuse that is coming from certain quarters.

I have spent my whole political career fighting to win this Parliament for Scotland. I submit two personal observations at the end of the debate. First, the Holyrood Parliament is going to be a wonderful building. It will be a working home for our new democracy and, very important, it will be a huge asset for all Scotland and especially for the capital city, Edinburgh. Holyrood is going to be as important to Edinburgh as the Palace of Westminster is to London. Incidentally, the Westminster project went 350 per cent over budget back in 1840, but we will leave that aside. Most of us are grateful that our predecessors did not bottle out and go for a cheaper version of the Houses of Parliament, maybe without Big Ben. We have been waiting for 300 years for our Parliament building in Scotland—let us get it right.

Finally, I urge colleagues to get the cost into proportion. It is an expensive building. We must control costs and we will control them, but it is a one-off, once-in-a-century investment of about £40 per head of Scotland's population. That is the cost of a night out or a pair of trainers. We cannot apply a rigid cap to the cost, but I promise on behalf of my political and professional colleagues on the

Holyrood progress group that we will do everything in our power to deliver the best possible value for money.

I urge the chamber to reject the amendments and support the motion that Des McNulty moved on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

Members' Allowances

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The next item of business is consideration of motion S1M-2034, in the name of Des McNulty, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the members' allowances scheme and equipment and furniture scheme.

16:54

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): I express my thanks, and that of members of the SPCB, to all the members who have assisted in the consultation process that preceded the review of the structure of the allowances scheme, and to the staff who have done a great deal of work in taking the process forward.

I move,

That the Parliament

(a)

- (i) directs the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (the SPCB) to provide information technology and other office equipment in accordance with the Equipment and Furniture Scheme annexed hereto as Annex One;
- (ii) determines that the said Equipment and Furniture Scheme shall come into effect from the first date when a member takes the oath or affirmation after the next ordinary or as the case may be, extraordinary, general election, except in relation to a new member returned prior to the next general election under section 9 or 10 of the Scotland Act 1998, when the Scheme shall come into effect for that member on the date when such member takes the oath or affirmation;

(b)

- (i) confers functions upon the SPCB to pay allowances in each financial year to members in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme annexed hereto as Annex Two and confers other functions upon the SPCB as specified in that said Scheme;
- (ii) determines that the said Members' Allowances Scheme shall come into effect on 1 July 2001;
- (iii) directs the SPCB to pay on and after the date the said Scheme comes into effect until 31 March 2002, the rates and amounts of allowances for the whole of that financial year, under deduction of such amounts paid to or claimed by members in respect of the period commencing on 1 April 2001 to the day preceding the date of this Scheme coming into effect;
- (iv) directs the SPCB to make such other deductions or adjustments in respect of employers' National Insurance and pension contributions between the current Scheme and the said new Scheme as the SPCB considers equitable;

(c) rescinds:

- (i) the Resolution of the Parliament of 16 March 2000 agreeing the Equipment and Furniture Scheme, on the first date when a member takes the oath or affirmation after the next ordinary or as the case may be, extraordinary general election as provided for in a(ii) above;
- (ii) the Resolution of the Parliament of 16 March 2000 agreeing the current Members' Allowances Scheme on the date specified in b(ii) above.

ANNEX ONE

This is the Equipment and Furniture Scheme referred to in the foregoing motion.

"The Equipment and Furniture Scheme"

1. Provision of Information Technology and other Office Equipment, and Office Furniture

(1) The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body ("the SPCB") shall provide information technology and other office equipment, and office furniture for an office, within the constituency/region from which a member was returned.

(2) Such information technology and other office equipment and office furniture is provided for the use of a member for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties and

- (a) a member may select during a Parliamentary session the equipment and furniture concerned but only from a list of items specified by the SPCB and subject to not exceeding the maximum number permitted for each item on that list;
- (b) the member shall be responsible for the protection and security of such equipment and furniture and the SPCB may, if it has reasonable grounds to believe that any such equipment or furniture is being misused, require the return of the equipment or furniture;
- (c) the replacement of any item referred to in (a) shall be permitted where the SPCB is satisfied that it is necessary.

(3) Where, arising from an election or the filling of a regional vacancy in terms of section 10 of the Scotland Act 1998, equipment becomes available, it shall be utilised by a new member and sub-paragraph (2)(a) would only apply where, in the opinion of the SPCB, additional or replacement items are required.

(4) Where a member is re-elected the equipment and furniture utilised by the member in the previous session shall continue to be utilised by the member and sub-paragraph (2)(a) shall only apply where, in the opinion of the SPCB additional or replacement items are required.

2. Provision of Office Supplies

(1) The SPCB shall provide office supplies and postage stamps or postage paid envelopes to a member for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties.

(2) Where such office supplies are provided for the use of a member for the purpose stated in sub-paragraph (1) the member may select the supplies concerned but only from a list of items specified by the SPCB.

3. Publication

The SPCB shall publish for each financial year information on this Scheme in such form as the SPCB may determine.

4. Parliamentary Duties

For the purposes of this Scheme, "Parliamentary duties" shall have the same meaning as in rule 8 of Part A of the Members' Allowances Scheme."

ANNEX TWO

This is the Members' Allowances Scheme referred to in the foregoing motion.

"Members' Allowances Scheme"

The following Parts A, B and C together with the Annexes attached shall be the Members' Allowances Scheme ("Scheme")—

Part A - General Rules in relation to the Scheme

The following general rules shall, unless the context otherwise requires, govern the Scheme—

Rule 1 - Interpretation

In this Scheme—

"parliamentary complex" means the place where the Parliament or any of its committees or sub-committees meets from time to time;

"remuneration of employees" includes gross salaries, employers' National Insurance contributions and employers' pension contributions;

"main residence" means the property in which the member is resident for council tax purposes under section 75 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

"member" means a member of the Scottish Parliament;

"other residence" means any residence which the member owns or leases other than his or her main residence;

"staff" means an employee or employees of a member and/or a person or persons on a contract with an agency and/or on a contract for services;

"motor vehicle allowance" means the maximum rate set for local government under section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and shall apply to all motor vehicles irrespective of engine size or annual mileage;

"motor cycle mileage allowance" means the maximum rate set for employees of the Scottish Administration;

"pedal cycle allowance" means the level of the maximum tax free allowance set by the Inland Revenue;

"travelling expenses" means—

- (a) the actual cost of any travel ticket purchased or fare paid in making a journey, or part of a journey, by public transport;
- (b) where such a journey, or any part of such a journey, is made by means of a motor vehicle, motor cycle or pedal cycle, owned or wholly maintained by the member, such amount per mile travelled on the journey, or that part of the journey, by means of that motor vehicle, motor cycle or pedal cycle as is determined by the motor vehicle, motor cycle or, as the case may

be, pedal cycle, mileage allowance;

- (c) in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body ("the SPCB"), the actual cost of car hire and associated petrol costs; and

- (d) tolls and car parking charges;

"public transport" means any service or services provided to the public at large for the carriage of passengers by road, rail, air or sea but includes travel by taxi service only where the use of such a service is required for reasons of urgency or where it is not reasonably practicable for the member to use other forms of public transport.

and any reference to a Part is a reference to the Part so lettered in this Scheme and any reference to an Annex is a reference to the Annex so lettered in this Scheme.

Rule 2 - Verifiable Expenditure

(1) The SPCB may, on an application for the purpose made to it by a member in accordance with this Scheme, make payments to that member by way of allowances for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by that member.

(2) Subject to paragraph (3) of this rule, allowances for which a member is eligible shall be paid by the SPCB only upon the production to the SPCB of evidence of relevant expenditure in the form of invoices or receipts and, in respect of a taxi fare exceeding £10 per journey, written justification for the use of a taxi shall be required and it shall be for the SPCB to determine whether it is satisfied with the justification offered and whether payment should be made.

(3) Supporting invoices and receipts are not required:

- (a) for payment of the motor vehicle, motor cycle, or, as the case may be pedal cycle mileage allowance; or
- (b) for the reimbursement of travelling expenses where the actual cost of any travel ticket purchased or fare paid in making a journey, or part of a journey, by public transport or tolls and car parking charges is £10 or less.

(4) Paragraph 3 of this rule does not apply to taxi fares and car parking charges, other than parking meter charges.

(5) The SPCB shall provide forms for the purposes of administering the Scheme which members shall complete and sign in order to claim the relevant allowance.

Rule 3 - The Allowances Code

The proper use of allowances payable under this Scheme shall be governed by the Allowances Code at Annex A.

Rule 4 - Publication

The SPCB shall publish information on allowances under this scheme for each financial year in such form as the SPCB may determine.

Rule 5 - Enforcement

(1) The SPCB shall be responsible for supervising members' adherence to the Scheme.

(2) Where eligibility for any of the allowances in this Scheme is in dispute, and cannot otherwise be resolved, the matter shall be referred to the SPCB for determination.

(3) Any member may make a complaint to the SPCB about another member where he or she has reason to believe that allowances under this Scheme have not been expended in accordance with the Scheme (hereinafter referred to as an improper use of allowances), and where such a complaint is made, the SPCB shall normally hear that complaint within one month.

(4) Where the SPCB has reason to believe that a member has made an improper use of allowances or where the SPCB has received a complaint under sub-paragraph (3), the SPCB may, after raising the matter with the Business Manager of the relevant political party, initiate investigations into the matter.

(5) Where the SPCB has reason to believe that a member has made excessive or unreasonable use, in the opinion of the SPCB, of taxis the SPCB is empowered to:

- (a) refuse to pay to that member any further taxi fares; and
- (b) set a financial limit on future taxi fares for that member; and
- (c) set a financial limit for taxi fares which shall apply to all members;
- (d) and to take such other action as the SPCB deems appropriate.

(6) Where the SPCB has initiated investigations in accordance with paragraph (4) and finds that a member has made an improper use of allowances, the SPCB may report to the Standards Committee with its recommendation; and such a recommendation may propose the removal of all or part of the member's allowances.

Rule 6 - Virement

A member shall not vire amounts between one allowance and another allowance.

Rule 7 - Uprating

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) of this rule, the SPCB shall uprate allowances in Part B and the notional amount referred to in paragraph 1(a) of Part B on 1 April each year from the year 2002 onwards, having regard to such indices as the SPCB considers appropriate. The amounts of the uprated Members' Support Allowance (paragraph 1(1)) and Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance (paragraph 4(2)) shall be rounded up to the nearest £100 at each uprating.

(2) The SPCB shall, unless the Parliament does not agree, uprate the motor vehicle allowance in line with the maximum rate in respect of vehicles over 1199cc set for local government under section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and the uprating will become effective and payable at the same time as it does for local government.

(3) The SPCB shall uprate the motorcycle mileage allowance at the same time as and in accordance with the corresponding allowance set for staff of the Scottish Administration.

(4) The SPCB shall uprate the pedal cycle mileage allowance at the same time as and in accordance with the maximum tax-free allowance set by the Inland Revenue.

Rule 8 - Parliamentary Duties

(1) All of the allowances referred to in this Scheme are to be used only for the purpose of members carrying out

their Parliamentary duties.

(2) In this Scheme, "Parliamentary duties" means the undertaking of any task or function which a member could reasonably be expected to carry out in his or her capacity as a member of the Parliament including:

- (a) attending a meeting of the Parliament;
- (b) attending a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the Parliament of which the member is a member or which the member is required to attend because of being in charge of a Bill or other matter under consideration by the committee or sub-committee or for any other valid reason relating only to the business of the committee or sub-committee;
- (c) undertaking research or administrative functions which relate directly to the business of the Parliament;
- (d) attending meetings for the purpose of representing electors or explaining the application of policy including attending meetings for the purpose of seeing a constituent or constituents;
- (e) attending Parliamentary party group meetings in Edinburgh or such other place in Scotland as may be approved in advance by the SPCB;
- (f) attending a meeting, ceremony or official function which relates directly to, or in connection with, the business of the Parliament;
- (g) attending an international conference which relates directly to, or in connection with, the business of the Parliament with the prior approval of the SPCB.

but does not include a member's activities which are wholly in relation to that member's role as a Party spokesperson or representative.

Rule 9 - Equality

All members shall be treated equally irrespective of whether they have been returned as constituency members or as regional members, subject to paragraph 1 of Part B.

Rule 10 - Allowances: general

(1) Where a member has claimed an allowance from any other source or had expenses reimbursed from any other source, the member shall not be eligible to claim the same allowance or reimbursement of expenses (as the case may be) under this Scheme.

(2) Where a person becomes eligible for an allowance part way through the financial year, then the amount of any allowance payable under this Scheme shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

(3) Where a person ceases to be a member part way through the financial year, the SPCB shall decide whether or not any allowance shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

Part B - Allowances

1. Members' Support Allowance

(1) A Member shall be eligible for an allowance of up to £49,300 for each financial year ("the maximum Member's Support Allowance") for the purposes set out in sub-paragraph (2) and subject to the conditions as appropriate set out in sub-paragraphs (3) to (13).

(2) The purposes of this allowance are to enable a

member: -

- (a) to engage as an employee (whether full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent) or through an agency or on a contract for services, personnel to assist the member in carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties. The allowance shall include employers' costs other than employers' National Insurance contributions and employers' pension contributions which are provided for under paragraph 2;
 - (b) to establish and run an office, within the constituency/region from which the member was returned;
 - (c) to meet with constituents either on a one-to-one basis or as a group;
 - (d) subject to sub-paragraph (16), to meet his or her travelling expenses and overnight expenses relating to travel commencing within Scotland to destinations within the UK (but outside Scotland) and return incurred whilst undertaking Parliamentary duties;
 - (e) to pay fees of attending a seminar/conference which relates to the member carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties;
 - (f) to meet travelling expenses, overnight expenses, and fees of attending a seminar/conference incurred by a member's staff or volunteers who are assisting the member in his or her Parliamentary duties, which costs are not otherwise covered by paragraph 7;
 - (g) to pay staff and volunteer training costs;
 - (h) where any member pays an employee a "one-off" bonus payment, to meet any employers' National Insurance contributions which arise;
 - (i) subject to sub-paragraphs (16) and (17) to meet travelling expenses and overnight expenses relating to travel to Brussels/Strasbourg for meetings with members of the European Parliament and/or representatives of European Union institutions, as part of his or her Parliamentary duties.
- (3) An employee of a member shall be employed on the terms and conditions determined by the SPCB from time to time.
- (4) A member may employ his or her employee on conditions which are more favourable to the employee, provided that this does not entail the member exceeding the amount of this allowance.
- (5) Staff and volunteers of a member shall be bound by the Allowances Code at Annex A.
- (6) Whilst the remuneration of employees shall be the responsibility of the member the SPCB shall provide:
- (a) payroll services for members' employees; and
 - (b) arrangement for employers' pension contributions to be paid to an employee's choice of pension scheme,
- and members shall provide the SPCB with details about their employees to enable the SPCB to provide such services and make such arrangements.
- (7) A member may pool his or her allowance with another member or other members in order to employ employees who are shared between or amongst them, provided that:

- (a) the employee remains employed by a single member; and
 - (b) the members concerned give written notice to the SPCB.
- (8) Where a member establishes an office under sub-paragraph (2)(b) the allowance shall be used for the following:
- (a) lease of a property or rental of premises;
 - (b) the provision of utilities;
 - (c) the purchase or lease of office furniture or equipment or the purchase of stationery;
 - (d) the member or his or her staff using telecommunications, IT and photocopying equipment at a location other than the member's Parliamentary office base; and
 - (e) other purposes ancillary to those specified in (a) to (d) above.
- (9) Where in a particular region more than one regional member is returned from a registered political party's regional list the notional amount in this allowance for establishing and running an office in each financial year shall be £12,000 and the maximum Members' Support Allowance for regional members concerned shall be computed as follows:
- (a) there shall be added together the notional amount of £12,000 per financial year in respect of one such regional member and 30% of that amount in respect of each of the other such regional members;
 - (b) the resulting total sum shall be divided by the number of such regional members; and
 - (c) that amount shall be deducted from the notional amount and the difference (if any) shall be deducted from the maximum amount in sub-paragraph (1) above. The sum thereby produced shall be the limit of Members' Support Allowance for which a regional member shall be eligible.
- (10) Subject to sub-paragraph (11) below, where sub paragraph (9) applies, whatever amount of the allowance is used for establishing and running an office shall be used to enable the regional members concerned:
- (a) to run only one office in a particular region; and
 - (b) to meet constituents on a one-to-one basis or as a group;
- and accordingly some or all of the regional members concerned may pool all or part of their allowances under this paragraph in order to run such an office provided the members concerned give written notice to the SPCB.
- (11) Where sub-paragraph (9) applies in relation to a region mentioned in Section C of Annex C (Eligibility for exceptional needs allowance: The largest regions), the SPCB:
- (a) may determine after inquiry that the regional members concerned may run one additional office because that is necessary for the regional members concerned to carry out their Parliamentary duties effectively; and
 - (b) in those circumstances may increase the amount of this allowance to which each of the regional members concerned is entitled by such a sum as

the SPCB may determine but the total of such increases shall not exceed 100% of the notional amount of £12,000 referred to in sub-paragraph (9) above, and under no circumstances shall any increase under this provision result in the maximum Members' Support Allowance specified in sub-paragraph (1) above being exceeded.

(12) Where the SPCB has made a determination under sub-paragraph (11) the regional members concerned may pool their allowances under this paragraph with any other member or members for that region provided that all members concerned first notify the SPCB.

(13) A constituency member may locate his or her Parliamentary office base in a constituency other than the one from which the member was returned provided that the location has prior approval of the member returned from that other constituency and the SPCB is notified immediately.

(14) An amount of £12,000 for each constituency member and the amount computed in accordance with sub-paragraph (9) above for regional members per financial year for the establishment and running of an office are notional but the actual amount to be spent shall be for each member to determine subject to the limit of his or her Members' Support Allowance.

(15) Where local office costs are higher than in other parts of Scotland due to the state of the local economy, a member may refer the matter to the SPCB for its determination as to whether the member should be eligible for an allowance greater than the maximum Members' Support Allowance mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) but any increase shall be not greater than 10% of the notional amount of £12,000 per financial year.

(16) The rates applicable to travelling and overnight expenses referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(d) and (f) above shall not exceed those specified in paragraphs 3 and 6 below.

(17) A member who intends to travel to Brussels/Strasbourg in accordance with sub-paragraph (2)(i) above shall be required to give the SPCB a minimum of 14 days advance notice thereof unless there are exceptional circumstances, in the opinion of the SPCB, which would justify a lesser period of notice.

2. Support Fund - Employees and Contingencies

(1) There shall be a Support Fund, maintained, administered and subject to qualifying conditions determined by the SPCB, from which shall be disbursed the following:

- (a) the National Insurance contributions incurred by a member as an employer under this Scheme;
- (b) pension contributions by a member as an employer under this Scheme but subject to a maximum of 10% of gross basic annual salary except in the case of existing employees in post as at 1 March 2001 where the actual contributions, if in excess of 10%, will be paid;
- (c) the salary and employment costs including pension contribution to limits set in sub-paragraph (b) above in respect of the employment of an employee to cover for sickness absence or maternity leave of an employee of that member but subject to the following:
 - (i) that the salary payable to the temporary employee does not exceed, pro-rata, the

salary payable to the absent employee;

- (ii) that the requirements of paragraph 1(3), (5) and (6) are met;
- (d) the cost of telephone line provision, up to a standard and price specified by the SPCB from time to time, in the constituency or regional office of a member;
- (e) the cost, up to a maximum to be set by the SPCB from time to time, for each financial year, of advertising, (which includes the production of posters and leaflets) a member's availability, at specified times and places, for consultation in relation to enquiries and problems of the public in the constituency or region of the member;
- (f) the cost of such other items of a kind which reflect good employment or workplace practices and facilities for members and employees of members as may be determined, and with such conditions as may be specified, by the SPCB from time to time.

3. Members' Travel Allowance

(1) A member shall be eligible for the reimbursement of travelling expenses, at the rates or level specified, necessarily incurred by that member within Scotland in performing his or her Parliamentary duties.

(2) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 1(2)(i) any travel outside the UK shall be eligible for reimbursement only where the travel concerned has been authorised in advance by the SPCB.

(3) Reimbursement will not be made of the cost of travel between the Parliamentary complex and accommodation rented or bought under paragraph 4(3)(b) where the accommodation is outside the City of Edinburgh.

(4) Where a member has spent or has commitments to spend his or her Members' Support Allowance and the member can establish to the satisfaction of the SPCB that there are very exceptional circumstances and there is a definite need which would justify an additional payment from this allowance for travel outside Scotland but within the UK as set out in paragraph 1(2)(d), or travel to Brussels/Strasbourg as set out in paragraph 1(2)(i), application may be made to the SPCB for its determination.

4. Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance

(1) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group One of Annex B, he or she shall not be eligible for any allowance under this paragraph.

(2) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group Two of Annex B, the member shall be eligible for an overnight expenses allowance of up to £83.97 per night for each night that he or she requires to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(3) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group Three of Annex B, the member shall be eligible for a total allowance of £9,446 for each financial year comprising either—

- (a) an allowance of up to £83.97 per night for each night that he or she requires to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh; or
- (b) subject to sub-paragraph (4), an allowance in order to cover the costs of those items mentioned

in sub-paragraph (5) below, where such costs are a necessary consequence of having to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(4) Where the member claims an allowance under sub-paragraph (3)(b) part way through the financial year, then the amount of the allowance payable under that paragraph shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

(5) The costs referred to in sub-paragraph (3) relate only to the provision and use as residential accommodation of a property located within a constituency mentioned in Group One of Annex B and are—

- (a) the rent payable for the lease of the property;
- (b) the interest on the capital required to purchase the property;
- (c) the conveyancing fees and outlays, and the surveyors' fees, incurred in the purchase of the property;
- (d) council tax;
- (e) factoring charges;
- (f) the provision of utilities;
- (g) building and contents insurance;
- (h) TV Licence;
- (i) reasonable removal costs; and
- (j) reasonable costs of securing the property such as:
 - (i) the provision of door/window locks;
 - (ii) the installation and maintenance of an intruder alarm;
 - (iii) the installation and maintenance of external security lighting;

but not major capital items such as security cameras nor the hiring of security guards.

(6) Where a member's main residence falls within Group Two of Annex B and the member believes that there are exceptional circumstances applying to him or her, that member may apply in writing to the SPCB setting out those circumstances, requesting that the SPCB treat that member's residence as being in Group Three of Annex B and it shall be a matter within the sole discretion of the SPCB whether to grant such a request.

5. Exceptional Needs Allowance

(1) This paragraph applies to members returned from those constituencies or regions which are set out in Annex C.

(2) A member shall be eligible to claim an exceptional needs allowance of up to £83.97 per night where it is unreasonable for the member to return to his or her main or other residence before or after undertaking Parliamentary duties within the member's constituency or region.

6. Overnight Expenses Allowance

(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (4) and (5), a member shall be eligible for an overnight expenses allowance where he or she requires for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties to spend a night away from his or her main or other residence.

(2) The amount of the overnight expenses allowance shall be—

(a) up to £83.97 per night; or

(b) up to £104.96 per night in Greater London; or

(c) in respect of a stay outside the United Kingdom an amount determined by the SPCB.

(3) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 1(2)(i) any claim for overnight expenses in connection with a stay outside the UK shall be eligible for reimbursement only where the stay concerned has been authorised in advance by the SPCB.

(4) A member is not eligible for an allowance under this paragraph in connection with Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(5) A member is not eligible for an allowance under this paragraph in connection with Parliamentary duties within his or her constituency or region.

(6) Where a member has spent or has commitments to spend his or her Members' Support Allowance and the member can establish to the satisfaction of the SPCB that there are very exceptional circumstances which would justify an additional payment from this allowance for overnight expenses outside Scotland but within the UK as set out in paragraph 1(2)(d), or overnight expenses in Brussels/Strasbourg as set out in paragraph 1(2)(i) application may be made to the SPCB for its determination.

7. Employee Travel Allowance

(1) This paragraph applies only to employees paid through the SPCB payroll service.

(2) Each member is eligible for an allowance in respect of the travelling expenses incurred by his or her employees on journeys:

(a) between the constituency or region from which the member was returned, or the main residence of the employee, and the Parliamentary complex; or

(b) within that constituency or region undertaken in support of the member in undertaking his or her Parliamentary duties; or

(c) a combination of (a) and (b).

(3) A journey shall be the sum of all such travel completed within one day.

(4) The maximum number of journeys in relation to which reimbursement may be claimed under this allowance in each financial year shall be equivalent to twice the number of weeks that the Parliament meets in that year, not including weeks when only committees of the Parliament meet.

(5) The SPCB shall keep a record of each member's entitlement to an allowance under this paragraph and its use to date.

(6) Daily commuting journeys by an employee to and from his or her normal place of work do not qualify for payment under this allowance.

8. Family Travel Allowance

(1) Each member is eligible for an allowance in respect of the travelling expenses of 12 single journeys for each financial year between his or her constituency, region or main residence and Edinburgh for each member of his or her immediate family.

(2) In this paragraph, "immediate family" means—

(a) the member's spouse or another nominated person; and

(b) any child under the age of 18; and

for the purposes of this paragraph "child" includes any step child, adopted child, foster child or any other child living with that member as part of his or her family.

(3) The SPCB shall keep a record of each member's entitlement to an allowance under this paragraph and its use to date.

(4) In order to qualify for the family travel allowance, a member must register with the SPCB who are his or her immediate family eligible to take part in the Scheme.

9. Disability Allowances

(1) This and the following sub-paragraph apply to any member whose ability to undertake his or her role as a member is impaired by reason of disability.

(2) The SPCB may award an allowance up to a maximum of £10,496 per session to a member for him or her to use in any way which the SPCB decides is helpful to the member in undertaking his or her work.

(3) Any member may apply to the SPCB for an allowance to meet costs the member may incur in:

- (a) making reasonable adjustments to his or her local office to accommodate a member's employee who has a disability and/or facilitating access for disabled members of the public;
- (b) providing equipment and/or parking spaces for disabled persons;
- (c) facilitating meetings for disabled persons by hiring (on an occasional basis) alternative office and meeting premises; and
- (d) contracting sign language interpreters for meetings with members of the public;

and the SPCB may determine, from time to time, such other services which qualify for consideration for payment from this allowance.

10. Winding Up Allowance

(1) Where a member ceases to serve as a member of the Parliament, he or she shall be eligible for a winding up allowance.

(2) The amount of the winding up allowance shall be the equivalent of one third of the Members' Support Allowance payable in any one financial year to which the member would otherwise have been entitled.

ANNEX A

ALLOWANCES CODE

A Offices

(1) Each member will normally have one Parliamentary office base within the area from which he or she was returned that will be his or her registered local address for correspondence.

(2) Parliamentary offices may be acquired in association with political party premises, but must be a clearly definable office space. Party political material is not permitted to be externally displayed in areas occupied by the Parliamentary office.

(3) Parliamentary offices should be suitable for public access.

(4) Each member will be able to use offices/locations, other than his or her main base, within the area for which he or she was returned for surgery purposes.

B Activities

(1) Premises, or the relevant part of premises, acquired as Parliamentary offices shall be used only for parliamentary activities, and not for party business.

(2) During the hours that they are employed by a member under his or her Members' Support Allowance, a member's employees may not undertake any significant party political activity.

(3) A member will be responsible to the SPCB for his or her own activities and for the activities of his or her staff.

(4) Premises, or the relevant part of premises, acquired as Parliamentary offices shall not be used as a base for canvassing or election campaigning, or any party activity related to elections.

(5) Parliamentary stationery and office equipment must not be used for party purposes.

C Responsibilities

(1) A member has a duty to ensure that he or she utilises the allowances to which he or she is eligible for the purpose for which they were intended. This includes any allowances for which he or she is eligible, but which are utilised by staff or immediate family of the member. A member has the responsibility of ensuring that his or her staff and volunteers adhere to the terms of this Code.

(2) A member has a duty to ensure that he or she adheres to the terms of this code in spirit and in practice.

ANNEX B

ELIGIBILITY FOR EDINBURGH ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES

Group One

Edinburgh West
Edinburgh Pentlands
Edinburgh Central
Edinburgh North & Leith
Edinburgh South
Edinburgh East & Musselburgh
Linlithgow
Livingston
Midlothian

Group Two

East Lothian
North East Fife
Central Fife
Kirkcaldy
Dunfermline East
Dunfermline West
Ochil
Falkirk East

Falkirk West
 Cumbernauld & Kilsyth
 Airdrie & Shotts
 Coatbridge & Chryston
 Hamilton North & Bellshill
 Motherwell & Wishaw
 Hamilton South
 Glasgow Anniesland
 Glasgow Baillieston
 Glasgow Cathcart
 Glasgow Govan
 Glasgow Kelvin
 Glasgow Maryhill
 Glasgow Pollok
 Glasgow Rutherglen
 Glasgow Shettleston
 Glasgow Springburn
 Strathkelvin & Bearsden
 Paisley North
 Paisley South
 Stirling
 Perth
 Dundee East
 Dundee West
 Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale

Group Three

Aberdeen Central
 Aberdeen North
 Aberdeen South
 Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine
 Angus
 Argyll and Bute
 Ayr
 Banff & Buchan
 Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
 Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley
 Clydesdale
 Clydebank & Milngavie
 Cunninghame North
 Cunninghame South
 Dumbarton
 Dumfries
 East Kilbride
 Eastwood

Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
 Gordon
 Greenock & Inverclyde
 Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber
 Kilmarnock & Loudoun
 Moray
 North Tayside
 Orkney
 Renfrewshire West
 Ross, Skye & Inverness West
 Roxburgh & Berwickshire
 Shetland
 Western Isles

ANNEX C

ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

A: Constituencies of over 250,000 hectares

Argyll & Bute
 Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
 Galloway & Upper Nithsdale
 Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber
 North Tayside
 Ross, Skye and Inverness West
 Roxburgh & Berwickshire
 West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine
 Western Isles

B: Constituencies which contain significant island communities

Orkney
 Shetland
 Cunninghame North

C: The largest regions

Highlands & Islands
 North East Scotland
 South of Scotland
 Mid Scotland and Fife."

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the following instruments be approved:

the draft Scotland Act 1998 (Transfer of Functions to Scottish Ministers etc) (No 2) Order 2001; and

the draft Consumer Protection Act 1987 (Product Liability) (Modification) (Scotland) Order 2001.—[*Euan Robson.*]

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001 be approved.—[*Euan Robson.*]

16:55

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): The Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001 flesh out the skeletal terms of the Education (Graduate Endowment and Student Support) (Scotland) Act 2001. However, they are neither benign nor benevolent; they represent the imposition of a tuition fee at the end rather than at the beginning of a course of study. The SNP's position has been quite clear and consistent. A tuition fee is a tuition fee whether it is paid at the beginning or at the end of a course, and whether or not it has been renamed a graduate endowment.

It is a retrograde step. The price will be paid by individual students in years to come and by the nation collectively as we provide a disincentive for people, especially from disenfranchised backgrounds, to proceed to higher education. Finally, it is shameful that members, especially on the Labour benches, who benefited so much individually, and members—especially on the Liberal Democrat benches—who have preached so much about education should impose this iniquitous tax on each and every student who will go forward to study. I oppose the regulations.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): I must apologise to Miss Annabel Goldie. I am allowed to take only one speaker in this debate. I call Alasdair Morrison to respond.

16:56

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning and Gaelic (Mr Alasdair Morrison): I have had the pleasure of listening to Mr MacAskill's speech six times now, and I can assure him that the sixth rendition is no better than were the first, second, third, fourth or fifth.

The Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001 govern the arrangements for the payment of the endowment and make provision for loans to be made available to graduates to

discharge their liability. By using the existing income-contingent student loans scheme, we can ensure that no graduate will face a monthly deduction from their income to repay a loan for living costs and an additional monthly deduction for the graduate endowment.

The graduate endowment is an integral part of the new student support arrangements. Those arrangements were developed as a result of an independent inquiry and wide-ranging consultation to provide improved support that is better targeted at those who need it most. By paying the graduate endowment, graduates are contributing towards the support of future generations of students. The request is reasonable, and will help to ensure that the benefits of higher education are extended to those who have traditionally been excluded from advanced learning.

We have also made a commitment that no student will face more debt as a result of the introduction of the new student support arrangements, and that includes those who will be liable to pay the endowment when they graduate. That guarantee can be kept because we have developed efficient administrative arrangements as laid out in the regulations. They make effective use of existing resources without adding layers of bureaucracy, which will be fair because they will exempt those who have traditionally been excluded from advanced learning.

The Parliament has now debated the issue on a number of occasions. As I said, I have had the pleasure of listening to Mr MacAskill's speech six times. I remind him that on each occasion, the Parliament has agreed to our proposals. On that basis, I urge the Parliament to approve the draft Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001.

Decision Time

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): We now come—slightly ahead of time—to decision time. As a result, I will allow two minutes for the first division, in case some members have not yet arrived.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-2030.2, in the name of Henry McLeish, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2030, in the name of John Swinney, on Scotland's place in the world, be agreed to. Are we all 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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 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)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)

Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S1M-2030.1, in the name of Ben Wallace, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2030, in the name of John Swinney, on Scotland's place in the world, 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (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)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (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)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 18, Against 102, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S1M-2030, as amended, in the name of John Swinney, on Scotland's place in the world, 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)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
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)
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
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)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 69, Against 50, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament welcomes the political declaration by the governments of Bavaria, Catalonia, North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg, Scotland, Wallonia and Flanders on the future of the European Union, signed by the First Minister on 28 May 2001; recognises that such initiatives play a part in Scotland enjoying profile and influence in Europe and the rest of the world as a dynamic country within the United Kingdom, and firmly rejects the view that Scotland can only achieve international prominence by separating itself from the United Kingdom.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that amendment S1M-2023.2, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2023, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on central heating for elderly people, 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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)

Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (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)
 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)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)

Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 52, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: As that amendment is agreed to, Mr Aitken's amendment falls.

The fifth question is, that motion S1M-2023, as amended, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on central heating, 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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)

Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGregor, 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)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)

Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 23, Abstentions 30.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament commends the Scottish Executive for its commitment to ensuring that all elderly households and all households in the social rented sector in Scotland have central heating by April 2005, one year earlier than anticipated, for the proposed extension of the scheme currently under consideration, for the investment it has already made through the Warm Deal in providing insulation to 80,000 homes occupied by vulnerable households, for the provisions within the Housing Bill which extend the scope of the improvement grant system to include energy efficiency measures, for the provisions within the Housing Bill which require Scottish Ministers and local authorities to set out what they will do to address fuel poverty and for the investment in local authority and housing association property to improve housing quality.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-2012.3, in the name of Michael Russell, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2012, in the name of Des McNulty, on the Holyrood project, 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)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)

Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (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)
 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, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (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)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 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, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 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)
 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

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 33, Against 84, Abstentions 3.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S1M-2012.1, in the name of David McLetchie, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2012, in the name of Des McNulty, on the Holyrood project, 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)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 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)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 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)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (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)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (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)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 19, Against 100, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-2012, in the name of Des McNulty, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the Holyrood project, 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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 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, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (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)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)

Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (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 75, Against 33, Abstentions 10.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the terms of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's (SPCB) report of 13 June 2001; notes that £60 million of the construction costs for the new Parliament building has been committed to date and that a further £57 million (at 1998 prices) remains to be let; further notes that building industry inflation is currently estimated to be adding at least 16% to the costs of packages remaining to be let and that under the construction management contract there are additional and not fully quantifiable risks to which the project may be exposed between now and completion; directs the SPCB, through the Holyrood Progress Group, to work with the design and project teams to complete the project without compromising quality, while managing risks rigorously, and requires the SPCB, on a quarterly basis, to provide information to the Parliament's Finance Committee on the progress of the project in respect of inflation and materialisation of risk in order to inform the committee's consideration of the annual Budget Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-2034, in the name of Des McNulty, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the members' allowances and equipment scheme, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament

(a)

- (i) directs the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (the SPCB) to provide information technology and other office equipment in accordance with the Equipment and Furniture Scheme annexed hereto as Annex One;
- (ii) determines that the said Equipment and Furniture Scheme shall come into effect from the first date when a member takes the oath or affirmation after the next ordinary or as the case may be, extraordinary, general election, except

in relation to a new member returned prior to the next general election under section 9 or 10 of the Scotland Act 1998, when the Scheme shall come into effect for that member on the date when such member takes the oath or affirmation;

(b)

- (i) confers functions upon the SPCB to pay allowances in each financial year to members in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme annexed hereto as Annex Two and confers other functions upon the SPCB as specified in that said Scheme;
 - (ii) determines that the said Members' Allowances Scheme shall come into effect on 1 July 2001;
 - (iii) directs the SPCB to pay on and after the date the said Scheme comes into effect until 31 March 2002, the rates and amounts of allowances for the whole of that financial year, under deduction of such amounts paid to or claimed by members in respect of the period commencing on 1 April 2001 to the day preceding the date of this Scheme coming into effect;
 - (iv) directs the SPCB to make such other deductions or adjustments in respect of employers' National Insurance and pension contributions between the current Scheme and the said new Scheme as the SPCB considers equitable;
- (c) rescinds:
- (i) the Resolution of the Parliament of 16 March 2000 agreeing the Equipment and Furniture Scheme, on the first date when a member takes the oath or affirmation after the next ordinary or as the case may be, extraordinary general election as provided for in a(ii) above;
 - (ii) the Resolution of the Parliament of 16 March 2000 agreeing the current Members' Allowances Scheme on the date specified in b(ii) above.

ANNEX ONE

This is the Equipment and Furniture Scheme referred to in the foregoing motion.

"The Equipment and Furniture Scheme"

1. Provision of Information Technology and other Office Equipment, and Office Furniture

(1) The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body ("the SPCB") shall provide information technology and other office equipment, and office furniture for an office, within the constituency/region from which a member was returned.

(2) Such information technology and other office equipment and office furniture is provided for the use of a member for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties and

- (a) a member may select during a Parliamentary session the equipment and furniture concerned but only from a list of items specified by the SPCB and subject to not exceeding the maximum number permitted for each item on that list;
- (b) the member shall be responsible for the protection

and security of such equipment and furniture and the SPCB may, if it has reasonable grounds to believe that any such equipment or furniture is being misused, require the return of the equipment or furniture;

- (c) the replacement of any item referred to in (a) shall be permitted where the SPCB is satisfied that it is necessary.

(3) Where, arising from an election or the filling of a regional vacancy in terms of section 10 of the Scotland Act 1998, equipment becomes available, it shall be utilised by a new member and sub-paragraph (2)(a) would only apply where, in the opinion of the SPCB, additional or replacement items are required.

(4) Where a member is re-elected the equipment and furniture utilised by the member in the previous session shall continue to be utilised by the member and sub-paragraph (2)(a) shall only apply where, in the opinion of the SPCB additional or replacement items are required.

2. Provision of Office Supplies

(1) The SPCB shall provide office supplies and postage stamps or postage paid envelopes to a member for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties.

(2) Where such office supplies are provided for the use of a member for the purpose stated in sub-paragraph (1) the member may select the supplies concerned but only from a list of items specified by the SPCB.

3. Publication

The SPCB shall publish for each financial year information on this Scheme in such form as the SPCB may determine.

4. Parliamentary Duties

For the purposes of this Scheme, "Parliamentary duties" shall have the same meaning as in rule 8 of Part A of the Members' Allowances Scheme."

ANNEX TWO

This is the Members' Allowances Scheme referred to in the foregoing motion.

"Members' Allowances Scheme

The following Parts A, B and C together with the Annexes attached shall be the Members' Allowances Scheme ("Scheme")—

Part A - General Rules in relation to the Scheme

The following general rules shall, unless the context otherwise requires, govern the Scheme—

Rule 1 - Interpretation

In this Scheme—

"parliamentary complex" means the place where the Parliament or any of its committees or sub-committees meets from time to time;

"remuneration of employees" includes gross salaries, employers' National Insurance contributions and employers' pension contributions;

"main residence" means the property in which the member is resident for council tax purposes under section 75 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

"member" means a member of the Scottish Parliament;

"other residence" means any residence which the member owns or leases other than his or her main residence;

"staff" means an employee or employees of a member and/or a person or persons on a contract with an agency and/or on a contract for services;

"motor vehicle allowance" means the maximum rate set for local government under section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and shall apply to all motor vehicles irrespective of engine size or annual mileage;

"motor cycle mileage allowance" means the maximum rate set for employees of the Scottish Administration;

"pedal cycle allowance" means the level of the maximum tax free allowance set by the Inland Revenue;

"travelling expenses" means—

(a) the actual cost of any travel ticket purchased or fare paid in making a journey, or part of a journey, by public transport;

(b) where such a journey, or any part of such a journey, is made by means of a motor vehicle, motor cycle or pedal cycle, owned or wholly maintained by the member, such amount per mile travelled on the journey, or that part of the journey, by means of that motor vehicle, motor cycle or pedal cycle as is determined by the motor vehicle, motor cycle or, as the case may be, pedal cycle, mileage allowance;

(c) in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body ("the SPCB"), the actual cost of car hire and associated petrol costs; and

(d) tolls and car parking charges;

"public transport" means any service or services provided to the public at large for the carriage of passengers by road, rail, air or sea but includes travel by taxi service only where the use of such a service is required for reasons of urgency or where it is not reasonably practicable for the member to use other forms of public transport.

and any reference to a Part is a reference to the Part so lettered in this Scheme and any reference to an Annex is a reference to the Annex so lettered in this Scheme.

Rule 2 - Verifiable Expenditure

(1) The SPCB may, on an application for the purpose made to it by a member in accordance with this Scheme, make payments to that member by way of allowances for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by that member.

(2) Subject to paragraph (3) of this rule, allowances for which a member is eligible shall be paid by the SPCB only upon the production to the SPCB of evidence of relevant expenditure in the form of invoices or receipts and, in respect of a taxi fare exceeding £10 per journey, written justification for the use of a taxi shall be required and it shall be for the SPCB to determine whether it is satisfied with the justification offered and whether payment should be made.

(3) Supporting invoices and receipts are not required:

(a) for payment of the motor vehicle, motor cycle or, as the case may be pedal cycle mileage allowance; or

- (b) for the reimbursement of travelling expenses where the actual cost of any travel ticket purchased or fare paid in making a journey, or part of a journey, by public transport or tolls and car parking charges is £10 or less.

(4) Paragraph 3 of this rule does not apply to taxi fares and car parking charges, other than parking meter charges.

(5) The SPCB shall provide forms for the purposes of administering the Scheme which members shall complete and sign in order to claim the relevant allowance.

Rule 3 - The Allowances Code

The proper use of allowances payable under this Scheme shall be governed by the Allowances Code at Annex A.

Rule 4 - Publication

The SPCB shall publish information on allowances under this scheme for each financial year in such form as the SPCB may determine.

Rule 5 - Enforcement

(1) The SPCB shall be responsible for supervising members' adherence to the Scheme.

(2) Where eligibility for any of the allowances in this Scheme is in dispute, and cannot otherwise be resolved, the matter shall be referred to the SPCB for determination.

(3) Any member may make a complaint to the SPCB about another member where he or she has reason to believe that allowances under this Scheme have not been expended in accordance with the Scheme (hereinafter referred to as an improper use of allowances), and where such a complaint is made, the SPCB shall normally hear that complaint within one month.

(4) Where the SPCB has reason to believe that a member has made an improper use of allowances or where the SPCB has received a complaint under subparagraph (3), the SPCB may, after raising the matter with the Business Manager of the relevant political party, initiate investigations into the matter.

(5) Where the SPCB has reason to believe that a member has made excessive or unreasonable use, in the opinion of the SPCB, of taxis the SPCB is empowered to:

- (a) refuse to pay to that member any further taxi fares; and
- (b) set a financial limit on future taxi fares for that member; and
- (c) set a financial limit for taxi fares which shall apply to all members;
- (d) and to take such other action as the SPCB deems appropriate.

(6) Where the SPCB has initiated investigations in accordance with paragraph (4) and finds that a member has made an improper use of allowances, the SPCB may report to the Standards Committee with its recommendation; and such a recommendation may propose the removal of all or part of the member's allowances.

Rule 6 - Virement

A member shall not vire amounts between one allowance and another allowance.

Rule 7 - Upating

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) of this rule, the SPCB shall uprate allowances in Part B and the notional amount referred to in paragraph 1(a) of Part B on 1 April each year from the year 2002 onwards, having regard to such indices as the SPCB considers appropriate. The amounts of the uprated Members' Support Allowance (paragraph 1(1)) and Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance (paragraph 4(2)) shall be rounded up to the nearest £100 at each uprating.

(2) The SPCB shall, unless the Parliament does not agree, uprate the motor vehicle allowance in line with the maximum rate in respect of vehicles over 1199cc set for local government under section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and the uprating will become effective and payable at the same time as it does for local government.

(3) The SPCB shall uprate the motorcycle mileage allowance at the same time as and in accordance with the corresponding allowance set for staff of the Scottish Administration.

(4) The SPCB shall uprate the pedal cycle mileage allowance at the same time as and in accordance with the maximum tax-free allowance set by the Inland Revenue.

Rule 8 - Parliamentary Duties

(1) All of the allowances referred to in this Scheme are to be used only for the purpose of members carrying out their Parliamentary duties.

(2) In this Scheme, "Parliamentary duties" means the undertaking of any task or function which a member could reasonably be expected to carry out in his or her capacity as a member of the Parliament including:

- (a) attending a meeting of the Parliament;
- (b) attending a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the Parliament of which the member is a member or which the member is required to attend because of being in charge of a Bill or other matter under consideration by the committee or sub-committee or for any other valid reason relating only to the business of the committee or sub-committee;
- (c) undertaking research or administrative functions which relate directly to the business of the Parliament;
- (d) attending meetings for the purpose of representing electors or explaining the application of policy including attending meetings for the purpose of seeing a constituent or constituents;
- (e) attending Parliamentary party group meetings in Edinburgh or such other place in Scotland as may be approved in advance by the SPCB;
- (f) attending a meeting, ceremony or official function which relates directly to, or in connection with, the business of the Parliament;
- (g) attending an international conference which relates directly to, or in connection with, the business of the Parliament with the prior approval of the SPCB.

but does not include a member's activities which are wholly in relation to that member's role as a Party spokesperson or representative.

Rule 9 - Equality

All members shall be treated equally irrespective of whether they have been returned as constituency members or as regional members, subject to paragraph 1 of Part B.

Rule 10 - Allowances: general

(1) Where a member has claimed an allowance from any other source or had expenses reimbursed from any other source, the member shall not be eligible to claim the same allowance or reimbursement of expenses (as the case may be) under this Scheme.

(2) Where a person becomes eligible for an allowance part way through the financial year, then the amount of any allowance payable under this Scheme shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

(3) Where a person ceases to be a member part way through the financial year, the SPCB shall decide whether or not any allowance shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

Part B - Allowances

1. Members' Support Allowance

(1) A Member shall be eligible for an allowance of up to £49,300 for each financial year ("the maximum Member's Support Allowance") for the purposes set out in sub-paragraph (2) and subject to the conditions as appropriate set out in sub-paragraphs (3) to (13).

(2) The purposes of this allowance are to enable a member: -

- (a) to engage as an employee (whether full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent) or through an agency or on a contract for services, personnel to assist the member in carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties. The allowance shall include employers' costs other than employers' National Insurance contributions and employers' pension contributions which are provided for under paragraph 2;
- (b) to establish and run an office, within the constituency/region from which the member was returned;
- (c) to meet with constituents either on a one-to-one basis or as a group;
- (d) subject to sub-paragraph (16), to meet his or her travelling expenses and overnight expenses relating to travel commencing within Scotland to destinations within the UK (but outside Scotland) and return incurred whilst undertaking Parliamentary duties;
- (e) to pay fees of attending a seminar/conference which relates to the member carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties;
- (f) to meet travelling expenses, overnight expenses, and fees of attending a seminar/conference incurred by a member's staff or volunteers who are assisting the member in his or her Parliamentary duties, which costs are not otherwise covered by paragraph 7;
- (g) to pay staff and volunteer training costs;
- (h) where any member pays an employee a "one-off" bonus payment, to meet any employers' National Insurance contributions which arise;
- (i) subject to sub-paragraphs (16) and (17) to meet

travelling expenses and overnight expenses relating to travel to Brussels/Strasbourg for meetings with members of the European Parliament and/or representatives of European Union institutions, as part of his or her Parliamentary duties.

(3) An employee of a member shall be employed on the terms and conditions determined by the SPCB from time to time.

(4) A member may employ his or her employee on conditions which are more favourable to the employee, provided that this does not entail the member exceeding the amount of this allowance.

(5) Staff and volunteers of a member shall be bound by the Allowances Code at Annex A.

(6) Whilst the remuneration of employees shall be the responsibility of the member the SPCB shall provide:

- (a) payroll services for members' employees; and
- (b) arrangement for employers' pension contributions to be paid to an employee's choice of pension scheme,

and members shall provide the SPCB with details about their employees to enable the SPCB to provide such services and make such arrangements.

(7) A member may pool his or her allowance with another member or other members in order to employ employees who are shared between or amongst them, provided that:

- (a) the employee remains employed by a single member; and
- (b) the members concerned give written notice to the SPCB.

(8) Where a member establishes an office under sub-paragraph (2)(b) the allowance shall be used for the following:

- (a) lease of a property or rental of premises;
- (b) the provision of utilities;
- (c) the purchase or lease of office furniture or equipment or the purchase of stationery;
- (d) the member or his or her staff using telecommunications, IT and photocopying equipment at a location other than the member's Parliamentary office base; and
- (e) other purposes ancillary to those specified in (a) to (d) above.

(9) Where in a particular region more than one regional member is returned from a registered political party's regional list the notional amount in this allowance for establishing and running an office in each financial year shall be £12,000 and the maximum Members' Support Allowance for regional members concerned shall be computed as follows:

- (a) there shall be added together the notional amount of £12,000 per financial year in respect of one such regional member and 30% of that amount in respect of each of the other such regional members;
- (b) the resulting total sum shall be divided by the number of such regional members; and
- (c) that amount shall be deducted from the notional amount and the difference (if any) shall be

deducted from the maximum amount in sub-paragraph (1) above. The sum thereby produced shall be the limit of Members' Support Allowance for which a regional member shall be eligible.

(10) Subject to sub-paragraph (11) below, where sub-paragraph (9) applies, whatever amount of the allowance is used for establishing and running an office shall be used to enable the regional members concerned:

- (a) to run only one office in a particular region; and
- (b) to meet constituents on a one-to-one basis or as a group;

and accordingly some or all of the regional members concerned may pool all or part of their allowances under this paragraph in order to run such an office provided the members concerned give written notice to the SPCB.

(11) Where sub-paragraph (9) applies in relation to a region mentioned in Section C of Annex C (Eligibility for exceptional needs allowance: The largest regions), the SPCB:

- (a) may determine after inquiry that the regional members concerned may run one additional office because that is necessary for the regional members concerned to carry out their Parliamentary duties effectively; and
- (b) in those circumstances may increase the amount of this allowance to which each of the regional members concerned is entitled by such a sum as the SPCB may determine but the total of such increases shall not exceed 100% of the notional amount of £12,000 referred to in sub-paragraph (9) above, and under no circumstances shall any increase under this provision result in the maximum Members' Support Allowance specified in sub-paragraph (1) above being exceeded.

(12) Where the SPCB has made a determination under sub-paragraph (11) the regional members concerned may pool their allowances under this paragraph with any other member or members for that region provided that all members concerned first notify the SPCB.

(13) A constituency member may locate his or her Parliamentary office base in a constituency other than the one from which the member was returned provided that the location has prior approval of the member returned from that other constituency and the SPCB is notified immediately.

(14) An amount of £12,000 for each constituency member and the amount computed in accordance with sub-paragraph (9) above for regional members per financial year for the establishment and running of an office are notional but the actual amount to be spent shall be for each member to determine subject to the limit of his or her Members' Support Allowance.

(15) Where local office costs are higher than in other parts of Scotland due to the state of the local economy, a member may refer the matter to the SPCB for its determination as to whether the member should be eligible for an allowance greater than the maximum Members' Support Allowance mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) but any increase shall be not greater than 10% of the notional amount of £12,000 per financial year.

(16) The rates applicable to travelling and overnight expenses referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(d) and (f) above shall not exceed those specified in paragraphs 3 and 6 below.

(17) A member who intends to travel to Brussels/Strasbourg in accordance with sub-paragraph (2)(i) above shall be required to give the SPCB a minimum of 14 days advance notice thereof unless there are exceptional circumstances, in the opinion of the SPCB, which would justify a lesser period of notice.

2. Support Fund - Employees and Contingencies

(1) There shall be a Support Fund, maintained, administered and subject to qualifying conditions determined by the SPCB, from which shall be disbursed the following:

- (a) the National Insurance contributions incurred by a member as an employer under this Scheme;
- (b) pension contributions by a member as an employer under this Scheme but subject to a maximum of 10% of gross basic annual salary except in the case of existing employees in post as at 1 March 2001 where the actual contributions, if in excess of 10%, will be paid;
- (c) the salary and employment costs including pension contribution to limits set in sub-paragraph (b) above in respect of the employment of an employee to cover for sickness absence or maternity leave of an employee of that member but subject to the following:
 - (i) that the salary payable to the temporary employee does not exceed, pro-rata, the salary payable to the absent employee;
 - (ii) that the requirements of paragraph 1(3), (5) and (6) are met;
- (d) the cost of telephone line provision, up to a standard and price specified by the SPCB from time to time, in the constituency or regional office of a member;
- (e) the cost, up to a maximum to be set by the SPCB from time to time, for each financial year, of advertising, (which includes the production of posters and leaflets) a member's availability, at specified times and places, for consultation in relation to enquiries and problems of the public in the constituency or region of the member;
- (f) the cost of such other items of a kind which reflect good employment or workplace practices and facilities for members and employees of members as may be determined, and with such conditions as may be specified, by the SPCB from time to time.

3. Members' Travel Allowance

(1) A member shall be eligible for the reimbursement of travelling expenses, at the rates or level specified, necessarily incurred by that member within Scotland in performing his or her Parliamentary duties.

(2) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 1(2)(i) any travel outside the UK shall be eligible for reimbursement only where the travel concerned has been authorised in advance by the SPCB.

(3) Reimbursement will not be made of the cost of travel between the Parliamentary complex and accommodation rented or bought under paragraph 4(3)(b) where the accommodation is outside the City of Edinburgh.

(4) Where a member has spent or has commitments to spend his or her Members' Support Allowance and the member can establish to the satisfaction of the SPCB that

there are very exceptional circumstances and there is a definite need which would justify an additional payment from this allowance for travel outside Scotland but within the UK as set out in paragraph 1(2)(d), or travel to Brussels/Strasbourg as set out in paragraph 1(2)(i), application may be made to the SPCB for its determination.

4. Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance

(1) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group One of Annex B, he or she shall not be eligible for any allowance under this paragraph.

(2) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group Two of Annex B, the member shall be eligible for an overnight expenses allowance of up to £83.97 per night for each night that he or she requires to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(3) Where a member's main residence lies within a constituency mentioned in Group Three of Annex B, the member shall be eligible for a total allowance of £9,446 for each financial year comprising either—

- (a) an allowance of up to £83.97 per night for each night that he or she requires to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh; or
- (b) subject to sub-paragraph (4), an allowance in order to cover the costs of those items mentioned in sub-paragraph (5) below, where such costs are a necessary consequence of having to stay overnight for Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(4) Where the member claims an allowance under sub-paragraph (3)(b) part way through the financial year, then the amount of the allowance payable under that paragraph shall be apportioned on a pro rata basis.

(5) The costs referred to in sub-paragraph (3) relate only to the provision and use as residential accommodation of a property located within a constituency mentioned in Group One of Annex B and are—

- (a) the rent payable for the lease of the property;
- (b) the interest on the capital required to purchase the property;
- (c) the conveyancing fees and outlays, and the surveyors' fees, incurred in the purchase of the property;
- (d) council tax;
- (e) factoring charges;
- (f) the provision of utilities;
- (g) building and contents insurance;
- (h) TV Licence;
- (i) reasonable removal costs; and
- (j) reasonable costs of securing the property such as:
 - (i) the provision of door/window locks;
 - (ii) the installation and maintenance of an intruder alarm;
 - (iii) the installation and maintenance of external security lighting;
 but not major capital items such as security cameras nor the hiring of security guards.

(6) Where a member's main residence falls within Group Two of Annex B and the member believes that there are exceptional circumstances applying to him or her, that member may apply in writing to the SPCB setting out those circumstances, requesting that the SPCB treat that member's residence as being in Group Three of Annex B and it shall be a matter within the sole discretion of the SPCB whether to grant such a request.

5. Exceptional Needs Allowance

(1) This paragraph applies to members returned from those constituencies or regions which are set out in Annex C.

(2) A member shall be eligible to claim an exceptional needs allowance of up to £83.97 per night where it is unreasonable for the member to return to his or her main or other residence before or after undertaking Parliamentary duties within the member's constituency or region.

6. Overnight Expenses Allowance

(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (4) and (5), a member shall be eligible for an overnight expenses allowance where he or she requires for the purpose of carrying out his or her Parliamentary duties to spend a night away from his or her main or other residence.

(2) The amount of the overnight expenses allowance shall be—

- (a) up to £83.97 per night; or
- (b) up to £104.96 per night in Greater London; or
- (c) in respect of a stay outside the United Kingdom an amount determined by the SPCB.

(3) Subject to the provisions of paragraph 1(2)(i) any claim for overnight expenses in connection with a stay outside the UK shall be eligible for reimbursement only where the stay concerned has been authorised in advance by the SPCB.

(4) A member is not eligible for an allowance under this paragraph in connection with Parliamentary duties in Edinburgh.

(5) A member is not eligible for an allowance under this paragraph in connection with Parliamentary duties within his or her constituency or region.

(6) Where a member has spent or has commitments to spend his or her Members' Support Allowance and the member can establish to the satisfaction of the SPCB that there are very exceptional circumstances which would justify an additional payment from this allowance for overnight expenses outside Scotland but within the UK as set out in paragraph 1(2)(d), or overnight expenses in Brussels/Strasbourg as set out in paragraph 1(2)(i) application may be made to the SPCB for its determination.

7. Employee Travel Allowance

(1) This paragraph applies only to employees paid through the SPCB payroll service.

(2) Each member is eligible for an allowance in respect of the travelling expenses incurred by his or her employees on journeys:

- (a) between the constituency or region from which the member was returned, or the main residence of the employee, and the Parliamentary complex; or

(b) within that constituency or region undertaken in support of the member in undertaking his or her Parliamentary duties; or

(c) a combination of (a) and (b).

(3) A journey shall be the sum of all such travel completed within one day.

(4) The maximum number of journeys in relation to which reimbursement may be claimed under this allowance in each financial year shall be equivalent to twice the number of weeks that the Parliament meets in that year, not including weeks when only committees of the Parliament meet.

(5) The SPCB shall keep a record of each member's entitlement to an allowance under this paragraph and its use to date.

(6) Daily commuting journeys by an employee to and from his or her normal place of work do not qualify for payment under this allowance.

8. Family Travel Allowance

(1) Each member is eligible for an allowance in respect of the travelling expenses of 12 single journeys for each financial year between his or her constituency, region or main residence and Edinburgh for each member of his or her immediate family.

(2) In this paragraph, "immediate family" means—

(a) the member's spouse or another nominated person; and

(b) any child under the age of 18; and

for the purposes of this paragraph "child" includes any step child, adopted child, foster child or any other child living with that member as part of his or her family.

(3) The SPCB shall keep a record of each member's entitlement to an allowance under this paragraph and its use to date.

(4) In order to qualify for the family travel allowance, a member must register with the SPCB who are his or her immediate family eligible to take part in the Scheme.

9. Disability Allowances

(1) This and the following sub-paragraph apply to any member whose ability to undertake his or her role as a member is impaired by reason of disability.

(2) The SPCB may award an allowance up to a maximum of £10,496 per session to a member for him or her to use in any way which the SPCB decides is helpful to the member in undertaking his or her work.

(3) Any member may apply to the SPCB for an allowance to meet costs the member may incur in:

(a) making reasonable adjustments to his or her local office to accommodate a member's employee who has a disability and/or facilitating access for disabled members of the public;

(b) providing equipment and/or parking spaces for disabled persons;

(c) facilitating meetings for disabled persons by hiring (on an occasional basis) alternative office and meeting premises; and

(d) contracting sign language interpreters for meetings with members of the public;

and the SPCB may determine, from time to time, such

other services which qualify for consideration for payment from this allowance.

10. Winding Up Allowance

(1) Where a member ceases to serve as a member of the Parliament, he or she shall be eligible for a winding up allowance.

(2) The amount of the winding up allowance shall be the equivalent of one third of the Members' Support Allowance payable in any one financial year to which the member would otherwise have been entitled.

ANNEX A

ALLOWANCES CODE

A Offices

(1) Each member will normally have one Parliamentary office base within the area from which he or she was returned that will be his or her registered local address for correspondence.

(2) Parliamentary offices may be acquired in association with political party premises, but must be a clearly definable office space. Party political material is not permitted to be externally displayed in areas occupied by the Parliamentary office.

(3) Parliamentary offices should be suitable for public access.

(4) Each member will be able to use offices/locations, other than his or her main base, within the area for which he or she was returned for surgery purposes.

B Activities

(1) Premises, or the relevant part of premises, acquired as Parliamentary offices shall be used only for parliamentary activities, and not for party business.

(2) During the hours that they are employed by a member under his or her Members' Support Allowance, a member's employees may not undertake any significant party political activity.

(3) A member will be responsible to the SPCB for his or her own activities and for the activities of his or her staff.

(4) Premises, or the relevant part of premises, acquired as Parliamentary offices shall not be used as a base for canvassing or election campaigning, or any party activity related to elections.

(5) Parliamentary stationery and office equipment must not be used for party purposes.

C Responsibilities

(1) A member has a duty to ensure that he or she utilises the allowances to which he or she is eligible for the purpose for which they were intended. This includes any allowances for which he or she is eligible, but which are utilised by staff or immediate family of the member. A member has the responsibility of ensuring that his or her staff and volunteers adhere to the terms of this Code.

(2) A member has a duty to ensure that he or she adheres to the terms of this code in spirit and in practice.

ANNEX B

ELIGIBILITY FOR EDINBURGH ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES

Group One

Edinburgh West

Edinburgh Pentlands
 Edinburgh Central
 Edinburgh North & Leith
 Edinburgh South
 Edinburgh East & Musselburgh
 Linlithgow
 Livingston
 Midlothian

Group Two

East Lothian
 North East Fife
 Central Fife
 Kirkcaldy
 Dunfermline East
 Dunfermline West
 Ochil
 Falkirk East
 Falkirk West
 Cumbernauld & Kilsyth
 Airdrie & Shotts
 Coatbridge & Chryston
 Hamilton North & Bellshill
 Motherwell & Wishaw
 Hamilton South
 Glasgow Anniesland
 Glasgow Baillieston
 Glasgow Cathcart
 Glasgow Govan
 Glasgow Kelvin
 Glasgow Maryhill
 Glasgow Pollok
 Glasgow Rutherglen
 Glasgow Shettleston
 Glasgow Springburn
 Strathkelvin & Bearsden
 Paisley North
 Paisley South
 Stirling
 Perth
 Dundee East
 Dundee West
 Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale

Group Three

Aberdeen Central
 Aberdeen North
 Aberdeen South
 Aberdeenshire West & Kincardine
 Angus
 Argyll and Bute
 Ayr
 Banff & Buchan
 Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
 Carrick, Cumnock & Doon Valley
 Clydesdale
 Clydebank & Milngavie
 Cunninghame North
 Cunninghame South
 Dumbarton
 Dumfries
 East Kilbride
 Eastwood
 Galloway and Upper Nithsdale
 Gordon
 Greenock & Inverclyde
 Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber
 Kilmarnock & Loudoun
 Moray
 North Tayside
 Orkney
 Renfrewshire West
 Ross, Skye & Inverness West
 Roxburgh & Berwickshire
 Shetland
 Western Isles

ANNEX C

ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

A: Constituencies of over 250,000 hectares

Argyll & Bute
 Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
 Galloway & Upper Nithsdale
 Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber
 North Tayside
 Ross, Skye and Inverness West
 Roxburgh & Berwickshire
 West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine
 Western Isles

B: Constituencies which contain significant island communities

Orkney
Shetland
Cunninghame North

C: The largest regions

Highlands & Islands
North East Scotland
South of Scotland
Mid Scotland and Fife."

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-2027, in the name of Tom McCabe, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the approval of statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the following instruments be approved—

the draft Scotland Act 1998 (Transfer of Functions to Scottish Ministers etc) (No 2) Order 2001; and

the draft Consumer Protection Act 1987 (Product Liability) (Modification) (Scotland) Order 2001.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S1M-2028, in the name of Tom McCabe, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the approval of the draft Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001, be agreed to. Are we all 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)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)
MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)
McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
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)
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)

Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Graduate Endowment (Scotland) Regulations 2001 be approved.

Young Carers

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S1M-1959, in the name of Donald Gorrie, on young carers.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates the young carers who, at their recent conference in Linlithgow, formed a National Young Carers Forum; pays tribute to the huge contribution to family life made by young carers; welcomes the support given by some local authorities to local young carers' groups, and urges the Scottish Executive and local authorities to give a high priority to bringing together national and local staff and resources in education, social work and health to provide joined up services to ease the burden on these young people, who are often the only person holding their family together.

17:11

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): The genesis of the motion was the recent meeting of young carers groups in Linlithgow, at which they formed themselves into a national forum. Like other members, I have supported local young carers groups, which perform a valuable service. The meeting was the second time that such groups had come together and the first time that they had agreed to form a national organisation. The Parliament should encourage the Executive to give practical support to that organisation.

The young people obviously benefited a lot from sharing experiences and discussing their problems and opportunities, as well as just having a good time, but they were extremely critical of most teachers and social workers with whom they came into contact. They said that the teachers and social workers were often ignorant of the commitments that the young people had and did not bother to find out why the youngsters were missing school a lot or falling behind with their work. They said that social workers varied, but quite a lot of them were unhelpful to those young people's cause. We have to address many issues.

Local carers groups are very important in that they allow the young people to share experiences and to socialise, so that they have a combination of a good time and learning how to deal with the various problems that they confront.

Undoubtedly, many young people carry a huge burden. They sustain family units. They perhaps have elderly or disabled family members and they are the only people who are capable of looking after them. They perhaps have a single parent who has a problem with alcohol or drugs and has to be sorted out and perhaps the younger children need to be looked after. Some of those quite young children carry an enormous burden. I found

their stoicism and acceptance of the tasks that are placed on them extremely humbling.

Some councils have started to give good support to the young carers groups. In particular, West Lothian Council seems to have given distinct support. It enabled the national gathering to take place and provides continuing staff and financial support to build up young carers organisations. However, other councils have not yet started on that path. We have to encourage them to do so.

Carers—especially young carers—experience difficulty because dealing with them requires the joined-up government that we all talk about and do not have. Teachers, social workers and general practitioners have to co-operate, first to identify young carers and then to do something about them. Identifying them is a huge problem.

This is one of those iceberg-type things: a great many young carers do not figure in the statistics at all. Nobody really knows about them, partly because the young carers do not know how to approach the system and partly because they are afraid to approach it; young carers fear that social workers will break up the family and send people off to residential homes and so on. We have to get over that innate fear in families with problems and the feeling that the local social work department is some sort of malign force.

We have to provide support for young carers in school. The number of carers who are bullied is remarkable. It is perhaps because they miss out on school and their minds are elsewhere that they are more prone to being bullied than other people. The whole issue of helping those young people to cope with the benefits system, which is baffling to adults and much more baffling to children, and of helping them to help themselves is serious. The Parliament is very suited to getting something done about that.

I hope that the minister will accept some national responsibility for the very small sum of money that would help the new national forum develop, that he will encourage councils to support carers groups and that we will develop a system of co-operation between departments and between national and local government and voluntary organisations. That will help young carers, who are shouldering huge burdens on our behalf. If young carers were removed, many families would collapse. They perform a very important function for society. I think that we should applaud their actions and do what we can to support them. I look forward to the minister's contribution along those lines.

17:17

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I congratulate Donald Gorrie on securing the

debate. In national carers week, it is right that the Parliament recognises a group of carers who give their time and energy and often receive very little support in return.

When I became an MSP, I received a briefing from Sutherland Young Carers Project, which believed that there were more than 70 young carers in Sutherland alone. That is a significant number given the population of the area. I was also amazed at how that group had been able to identify those carers in a remote, rural community. I agree with Donald Gorrie that, as a priority, we must consider ways of identifying young people who are performing the role of carer.

The Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh young carers organisation, for example, has worked closely with schools to identify those involved in caring for a close relative. That includes going to the school and speaking to the pupils. We need to involve other agencies and general practitioners to ensure that the young carers are all identified. In the study that was carried out in Sutherland, one of the young carers was five years old. It is difficult to envisage how children so young could be identified as carers without all the agencies working together.

Once carers have been identified, it is essential to give them the support that they need. There are a number of groups in the Highlands and Islands that are trying to do that. I am impressed with the vision that such groups have shown in bringing support to young people.

The distance that many young carers live from one another can hamper efforts to provide support and can reduce their social contact with people who are in a similar situation. One of the ideas that is being put into practice is to encourage more access to e-mail and the internet, which allow young people to contact fellow young carers on a regular basis. That opportunity has been taken up by many young people in the area. Schools have allowed young carers time off to meet carers in other areas, which is a very good thing, because it is not always possible for them to meet people who are in a similar situation. That social contact is very important.

I am pleased that in its consultation proposals on new laws to help carers the Government has highlighted proposals for young carers. The report of the Scottish carers legislation working group addressed whether young carers should have statutory rights to assessment. The Executive has pointed out that a statutory right could cause difficulties if parents did not believe that an assessment was warranted. However, I have discussed the issue with carers groups, which generally favour the right to an assessment. They acknowledge that cases must be handled sensitively and that an assessment of the whole

family's needs may be required. If the whole family were assessed and additional care were put in place, that would take the pressure off the young carer and remove the care burden from them.

It is essential that young people should be able to reach out for help without the threat of a family break-up. They need to know that their family can be supported and can remain as a unit.

There are also less obvious ways in which young carers can be supported. Ensuring that carers in remote rural communities have proper access to services and transport is a key issue. I encourage the Scottish Executive to address that issue across departments and other interests. I am sure that the Executive will act on the views that it receives in the consultation and will ensure that all carers groups feel that they have an input.

It is important that in the consultation the Executive targets young carers, who often do not realise that they are carers. They have no preparation, no training and no example to follow. Their lives are turned upside down. In rural areas social isolation is compounded by physical isolation. The least that we can do is listen to their views about what they need and endeavour to produce a real change for them.

I hope that the Parliament and the Executive will keep this issue high on the agenda and work together to help an important sector of our community.

17:21

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

I, too, congratulate Donald Gorrie on bringing this important issue to the fore once again.

Many young carers are carers not through choice, but because the burden lands on them. They care for a parent or a sibling unselfishly, against a background of missed school, lost education and poorer job prospects. They are also likely to be socially isolated: they cannot readily join clubs or go away on trips because of the need to remain at home to provide care. Their whole childhood is affected and their health may be at risk. I was shocked to discover the significant finding that children from families in which a parent suffers from mental illness are themselves at risk of developing mental health problems.

The social and educational needs of young people with caring responsibilities have been neglected. Children who are carers have rights—rights as children. For example, they have the right to education and the right to be able to go out to play.

As Donald Gorrie said, there is a problem identifying young carers. That is why I welcome the census question on carers. I hope that it will

allow us for the first time properly to quantify the number of young carers in Scotland.

Caring can often go on for years, and young carers can encounter problems when they move into adulthood. They may have difficulty finding work or a home of their own, or in establishing relationships. There are parallels between the problems that they face and the problems faced by looked-after children.

Some time ago, I attended a briefing session for MSPs presented by young carers from across Scotland, who spoke about their experiences with great directness and often with a great deal of humour. Everyone who attended that briefing was touched by the stories that the young carers had to tell. It is important that young carers have a voice, because only by listening to them can we provide the support structures that they need.

There is no doubt that greater assistance for young carers could be provided through more coherent, integrated services for young people. Health, social work, education and other services must work together to provide information and support, both practical and emotional, along with services that are geared towards ensuring that young carers' education and general development do not suffer. There is a need for co-operation between adults and children's services in social work departments. That might mean that the community care assessment of a disabled parent has to take into account that person's role as a parent.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places a duty on local authorities to provide support to children in need, but only 6 per cent of known young carers have been assessed under that act, notwithstanding the fact that one third of young carers at secondary school miss lessons, have educational difficulties or signal in some other way that they are children in need.

The young carer's assessment is an important policy area because it will provide a framework for assessing young carers, giving those who are aged under 16 a direct assessment of their needs. The outcomes from the consultation that is being considered by carers' organisations will be warmly welcomed as a positive step forward.

17:25

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I share Donald Gorrie's view that the problem is identifying young carers, of whom around 6,000 have been identified in Scotland.

The "Strategy for Carers in Scotland", which was published in November 1999, contains excellent commitments to young carers. When the minister sums up the debate, I ask him to give us an

update on the proposal to introduce

“legislation to enable carers under 16 to have for the first time a direct assessment of their needs”

and the further commitment that local authorities are

“to pay particular attention to young carers’ services.”

A further proposal from the carers’ strategy, which Donald Gorrie mentioned, was that the Executive was to

“work up proposals for research on what support is available to young carers in Scotland and what guidance is needed for professionals in health, education and social care.

The strategy also mentioned schools.

While the strategy’s commitments and proposals are first class, we would have expected some progress on them after 18 months.

Eighty-six per cent of young carers are of compulsory school age and one in five of those children misses school regularly because of their responsibilities. Lateness for school, tiredness and missing school can lead to underachievement. We should not consider only the problems of school-age children, as their problems are likely to stay with them throughout their lives. As others have said, young carers can become isolated from their peers and may experience emotional problems such as stress, depression and the feeling that they have no control over their life or environment.

I have served on the Health and Community Care Committee for two years, during which we have examined care in the community for the mentally ill, the disabled and the elderly. We have complained a lot about councils failing to meet needs but, having done some reading for the debate, I was suddenly made aware of the fact that while some needs can be identified, we should be concerned about the needs that cannot be measured. I became aware that a level of responsibility that would be difficult for an adult to undertake mars the childhood of young carers. The problems of someone with a physical difficulty are evident—it is easier to assess their needs and for support groups, doctors, nurses and social workers to meet those needs.

When I was reading up on the issues that surround this subject, I learned that the most serious problems are those of children who care for parents with drug and alcohol problems. Not only are those problems immeasurable, they are exacerbated by the household debts that can arise when a parent’s addiction becomes the household’s main financial priority. I do not understand drug and alcohol problems and I do not know how I would cope in such a situation, but we expect children to cope with adults who can change from being loving parents to being violent

and aggressive in a short period of time. It is little wonder that the lives of young carers can be muddled, confused and unstable, which can result in children becoming ill-equipped for relationships in adulthood.

Many children are drawn into the world of illegal drugs before they have any understanding of what that world is all about. All they have is a willingness to tend to their parents’ needs to get the love and security they seek, while their parents offer little or no guidance or support in the early years.

When the minister sums up the debate, I ask him to consider the problems of drug and alcohol abuse, rather than the needs that can—or cannot—be measured, or the availability of access to the internet or NHS helplines. When someone presents at a GP surgery with alcohol or methadone addiction problems, we should also take into account the children in their household.

17:30

Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab): I join other members in congratulating Donald Gorrie on securing this debate, which is on an important area. It is useful to celebrate the occasion of the formation of the national young carers forum. I support Donald Gorrie’s call for that forum to be helped.

I feel strongly that, among other things, young carers need to have an advocate. The problem for many young carers is that they have to find their own way round so many different services and so much bureaucracy that it is extremely difficult. Instead of things being made easier for them, things are made more difficult.

Mary Scanlon referred to needs assessments. Young carers are entitled to needs assessments, but do they know that? How do they know that they are entitled to needs assessments? If we do not identify young carers in the first place, they will not look for needs assessments.

Much more careful planning and much more joined-up thinking is needed. Young carers need relief and respite as much as adult carers do. The welcome additional funds that are going into respite care, which the Executive has announced, need to be used for young carers.

The other thing that we need, which the Executive has largely recognised, is one point of contact for all young carers—or at least for the vast majority of them, who are of compulsory school age—which must be the school. We need to establish units like the one in Alloa Academy, in which youngsters who are in difficulties or who are having problems can be supported or helped. Such units are important. The unit in Alloa

Academy takes youngsters who have perhaps arrived in the morning tired and without breakfast—perhaps having supported a difficult family situation in which they have acted as the carer—and negotiates on their behalf what they will do within the school that day. The unit provides them with breakfast, if that is the first thing they need.

There is a caring approach within the school. Previously, although individual teachers may have recognised the problem and on occasion endeavoured to give support, such children either ended up being excluded from school or would feel that schooling—which was already difficult for them—was becoming impossible. I welcome the establishment of such units and I hope that they will be extended. I know that the Executive's strategy documents have recognised that problem, which Mary Scanlon also referred to. We need to hear how progress is being made.

Community schools are an example of where progress is undoubtedly being made in joined-up thinking. Community schools involve not only the teachers and those in the units that I mentioned but other health professionals and other care workers. Such schools provide a better opportunity for joined-up thinking.

However, there has not been enough joined-up thinking about the group that I am most concerned about—the people who have either a temporary illness or an illness, such as a terminal illness, that is of a fixed period. The current division between primary care and social work does not serve people in those circumstances well.

During my 30 years in general practice, there were at least four periods when we had social workers attached to our practice. The enhancement to my ability as a doctor and to the ability of my team to provide a comprehensive service to families and to recognise the needs of groups such as young carers who have to deal with a family illness was very much enhanced during those times.

Reversal of the separation of social work and primary care would provide the opportunity for joined-up thinking. There would be ready identification, which would mean that services could be provided.

I thank Donald Gorrie for giving us the opportunity to have today's debate.

17:34

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): I congratulate Donald Gorrie on securing today's debate, which follows national carers week. I join him in congratulating the young carers who, at their recent conference in Linlithgow, formed a

national young carers forum.

As more than one member has said, estimates show that there are more than 6,000 young carers in Scotland—that is, carers under the age of 18. The wide range of roles embraced by the word “carer” and the fact that some young carers and the people for whom they care are not known to the statutory agencies mean that the figure is likely to be much higher, as Rhoda Grant confirmed.

Many young carers find that helping to care for an ill or disabled parent, or other relative, is rewarding. However, many are likely to find themselves spending a large part of their time providing care or taking on full responsibility for doing so. Like Donald Gorrie, I pay tribute to the huge contribution that they make to family life.

Young carers, like all carers, need recognition of, and support for, the invaluable work that they do. At a reception hosted in Edinburgh Castle by the First Minister and Mrs McLeish to mark the start of national carers week, the Scottish Executive paid tribute to the remarkable contribution made by Scotland's carers, including our young carers. I was pleased to meet some young carers at that event, two of whom specifically lobbied me in support of Donald Gorrie's motion. We need to ensure that we listen to carers if we are to fulfil our commitment to support them as a central and vital component of a modern health and social care service that is fit for the 21st century.

Mary Scanlon and others demanded Executive action and a report. Our commitment to carers is evidenced by our carers strategy and the changes that we have introduced as a result, which are already beginning to benefit young carers. Young carers support groups are now expanding as a direct result of the £10 million a year for carers services that is available to local authorities under the strategy. As I indicated in yesterday's debate, we are monitoring the use of that money and the extent to which carers have been involved locally in decisions on its use.

Young carers will also benefit from the additional resources that are being made available from this April to authorities to provide an extra 22,000 weeks of short-break services across Scotland each year by 2003-04. A total of £5 million is being put in this year; £6 million will be put in next year; and £11 million will be put in by year 3. Social inclusion partnership resources are also helping young carers. For example, £210,000 is being spent in Dundee on a project to identify and support young carers and £500,000 has been given to the voluntary sector for carer-related projects, including £37,000 to the Princess Royal Trust for Carers to help to develop standards for young carers projects and to help with other purposes. We plan to do more.

Mary Scanlon asked about legislation. We are consulting on proposals for legislative changes to help carers, including the proposal to give young carers for the first time the legal right to a direct assessment of their support needs. Rhoda Grant commended that and, of course, young carers support projects have been consulted about it.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I wonder whether it would help to inform the consultation process on legislation, and whether it would be an indication of positive support by the Executive for the national young carers forum, if the minister agreed that it would be helpful to hear the stories of some young carers in this chamber and to have young carers from throughout Scotland come to this chamber—in a similar way to what has happened on other occasions on other issues—so that we can hear their stories and hear what they would like from legislation.

Malcolm Chisholm: The consultation has certainly been very inclusive already. I am sure that, during the stages of the long-term care bill, the Health and Community Care Committee will ensure that that request is complied with.

Mary Scanlon also asked about research. We will shortly be commissioning research to establish how young carers' needs are being addressed across the key agencies of health, education and social work—the very agencies that Donald Gorrie mentions in his motion. Through that research, we hope to identify best-practice examples of how best to meet needs. Thereafter, through guidance, we shall promote those examples across the various agencies. That will result in more effective partnership working, quicker decision making and better support packages for young carers.

Donald Gorrie referred to teachers. Teacher education institutions have been asked to include the needs of young carers in initial teacher training. The research that I referred to will help to assess its impact.

The carers strategy focuses on services, legislation, monitoring, standards and information. I have covered, albeit briefly, the first four. The last aspect—information—is important for all carers, but perhaps particularly so for young carers.

To help to raise awareness of young carers issues in schools and to help young carers—hidden or otherwise—we have made young carer information packs available to all primary and secondary schools in Scotland. I am pleased to say that we are also helping to fund, through the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, the creation of a young carers website and the production of a young carers practice guide, which will set out best practice on how support projects for young carers can be delivered efficiently and effectively.

Of course, there is more to do. Several members have referred to the need to address the issue of hidden carers. We are determined to do that. In fact, that is a major subject of the consultation paper that has been drawn up by the carers legislation working group.

Richard Simpson made an important and interesting suggestion about advocacy. We are driving that agenda forward and have asked health boards and their partners to have integrated advocacy services in place by the end of the year. The intention is that there should be seamless services across health and community care.

In conclusion, it is vital that the many young carers who have made a conscious decision to help vulnerable family members should be supported and protected from the stresses that caring can bring. At the same time, we need to protect those young carers who may not be caring through choice and we need to safeguard young carers against having to provide inappropriate levels and types of care.

In discussions on those complexities, the voices of young carers need to be heard. That is why we helped to fund the young carers conference, which led to the establishment of the national young carers forum. I welcome the concept of the forum as an avenue for discussing the wide range of issues that affect the lives of young carers and I look forward to the forum's contribution to improving those lives.

I end by welcoming once again the two debates that we have had on important carers issues this week and by assuring members of our determination to make further progress on those issues for the benefit of all concerned.

Meeting closed at 17:42.

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