

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 26 September 2001  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 26 September 2001*

*(Afternoon)*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** To lead our time for reflection today, we welcome Mr Ephraim Borowski, who is the honorary secretary of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities.

**Mr Ephraim Borowski (Scottish Council of Jewish Communities):** Thank you, Sir David.

It is an immense privilege to be invited to lead time for reflection, and all the more to be the first lay member of the Jewish community to do so. It is a privilege that would have been unimaginable to my parents—my late father was a refugee from the Holocaust, and my late mother's family were refugees from tsarist pogroms. In contrast, the fact that I stand here today is evidence of the rich mix of threads in the tartan of Scottish society—threads of faith, ethnicity, language, origin, history and geography—so that each of us is at the junction of so many intersecting minorities. Just as the strongest rope is made up of myriad overlapping fragile strands, we do well to remind ourselves that the strength of any society lies not in its homogeneity, but in its common purpose.

It is that consensus that the atrocity that engulfed Manhattan both shattered and—paradoxically—reinforced. When I was in the chamber only three days later to mark the jubilee of the Race Relations Act 1976, I remarked on the continuity of hatred—from racial discrimination, through murder and terrorism and ultimately to genocide. All depend on the objectification and demonisation of the other, which could be a whole nation or a whole people. Those who now blame the Arabs or the Muslims are no different from those who demonise the Americans or the Jews. To strive effectively against that mindset, we must realise how instinctive it is. As our sage Maimonides teaches, the first step to repentance is to recognise our faults; only then can we overcome them.

Last week, the Jewish world entered our 5762<sup>nd</sup> new year—a time for sober reflection on the year behind and fervent prayer for the year ahead. Tradition regards the new year as the birthday of the world. If the creation narrative of Genesis teaches us anything, it is that we are, all of us, whatever our colour, culture, or creed, made in the

image of God. Remarkably, the Hebrew word translated here as God is used elsewhere to refer to a human judge. It is our capacity for judgment that is in the image of God—our capacity to distinguish right from wrong and our capacity to make moral choices, together with the obligation to create institutions that uphold and respect the rule of law.

As we reach the end of our annual circuit of the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, we read Moses's final address to the Jewish people as they prepare to enter the promised land:

“See, I have placed before you today life and good, and death and evil ... And you shall choose life.”

To be able to choose good, the possibility of evil must exist. That freedom to choose is perhaps, as the existentialists taught, the curse of the human condition, for the price of that choice may be a rain of terror upon Manhattan. If the price of freedom is eternal vigilance, it is vigilance against the unimaginable consequences of other people's choices.

Truly, we saw on that terrible, terror-filled day, the consequences

“if your heart strays, and you ... worship false gods”;

not, that is, the worship of our one God by a different name, or in a different edifice, or with a different ritual, but the elevation of some human goal above God himself and above the common humanity symbolised by our common ancestry in Adam and Eve.

We are reminded, in the words of one of the most moving prayers that we will recite tomorrow on Yom Kippur, that humanity—in every sense of that word—is merely

“like withering grass, like a fading flower, like a flitting shadow, like a passing cloud ... and like a fleeting dream.”

So long as the human capacity for evil survives, it falls to you, members of the newest democratic Parliament in the world, to choose life—to shape a society that is based upon the principles of equal worth, mutual respect and the rule of law, and in which all may live in understanding, peace, and harmony.

To adapt another figure from our liturgy, which is appropriate to this momentous time: may the old year end along with its curses, and may a new year of blessings begin.

## Motion without Notice

14:35

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I am minded to accept a motion without notice from Euan Robson to change business this afternoon.

**The Deputy Minister for Parliament (Euan Robson):** I move motion S1M-2251.

**The Presiding Officer:** At the moment you are just moving to introduce a motion without notice. I have a request from Fiona Hyslop to speak on the matter.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** This is the second time that a Minister for Parliament has been forced to come to Parliament to move a motion without notice to provide for a ministerial statement on care development. Indeed, the first time that such a move was required was to establish the care development group. The SNP has been right to demand that the Parliament should have the opportunity to hear the results of that group's inquiry and the response from the Executive.

The SNP has offered its time on Thursday for the issue. We do not know what is in the statement—we will have to hear it—but if it is not satisfactory to the Parliament, we will have the opportunity, because of the provision made by the SNP in its own time, to debate this important issue and vote on it. We welcome the opportunity of a ministerial statement—a move that has been forced by the SNP—and we look forward to hearing that statement and having a debate tomorrow.

**The Presiding Officer:** Is it agreed that a motion without notice be moved?

**Members indicated agreement.**

*Motion moved,*

That motion S1M-2251 be taken at this meeting of the Parliament.—[*Euan Robson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Would you be minded to accept a motion without notice from me, so that the Parliament can attempt to bridge the democratic deficit that has been left by the Westminster Government's refusal to scrutinise and discuss the great matters that are in front of us, with troops being committed to adventures that many of us know nothing about, and about which we want to know much more?

**The Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that my answer is no, I am not minded to accept a motion without notice on that subject.

## Business Motion

14:36

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees as a revision to the Business Motion agreed on 20 September 2001—

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after "Time for Reflection", insert

*followed by* Ministerial statement on the Scottish Executive's Response to the Report of the Care Development Group—[*Euan Robson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Care of the Elderly

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The next item of business is a statement by Susan Deacon, on the Scottish Executive's response to the report of the care development group.

14:37

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon):** I welcome this opportunity to set out to Parliament the Scottish Executive's response to the care development group's report and recommendations. As members will recall, I announced the setting up of the care development group in January, to undertake an examination of long-term care provision for Scotland's older people. We asked the group to produce recommendations to ensure that high-quality and sustainable services could be provided now and in the future, and we asked it to produce proposals, together with costs and implications, for the implementation of free personal care for Scotland's older people.

We should not underestimate the scale and complexity of that remit. Today, I and my ministerial colleagues wish to place on record our appreciation to members of the group for the substantial personal and professional commitment that they have given to the group's work over the past seven months. I pay particular tribute to Malcolm Chisholm for driving the work forward.

I can confirm to Parliament today that the Scottish Executive has agreed to accept all the group's recommendations, and that we are committed now to implementing them. In doing so, we are honouring our pledge to the people of Scotland to provide better, fairer care for our older people, now and in the future. From April 2002, free nursing and personal care will be provided for all Scotland's older people. From that date also, substantial additional investment will be provided for care services for older people.

As an Executive, we have made clear consistently our determination to ensure that the people of Scotland are provided with dignity, security and support in their old age. We have consistently backed that commitment with action, investment and, where necessary, legislation. The implementation of the care development group's recommendations represents a significant milestone in the fulfilment of our commitment. In addition, yesterday we published the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Bill, which is another crucial step forward in providing the necessary statutory underpinning of our work to improve care services and providing universal free nursing and personal care from April 2002.

The care development group's report stretches to 101 pages and contains 39 recommendations. I will highlight some of the main points in the report.

The group welcomed and endorsed the policy of providing free personal care. It endorsed the existing policy that the balance of care should continue to be shifted towards enabling people to stay in their own homes. It also stipulated that investment in and improvement of care services must accompany the introduction of free personal care to accommodate unmet need and increased demand.

The group made specific recommendations about the definition of personal care and the assessment of care. It adopted a definition of personal care that is in line with that which was recommended by the royal commission chaired by Sir Stewart Sutherland. The group also endorsed the royal commission's view that people should continue to pay for their accommodation and living costs. It recommended the removal of all charges for personal care in the community.

For those who are in a care home and are currently self-funding, the group recommended a flat-rate payment of £90 a week for personal care and a further £65 for those who are assessed as needing nursing care. Those sums reflect the current average costs for those in similar circumstances whose costs are currently paid from the public purse. The implementation of the measures will therefore benefit many thousands of people who currently pay for their care. Self-funders in care homes will see a reduction in their costs. Those living at home who currently pay towards their personal care costs will no longer be charged for those costs. Investment in services will build upon the £100 million that I announced last October. We will therefore see a further expansion in the care and support that is provided to older people across Scotland.

In accepting the recommendations of the care development group, we are not looking at free personal care in isolation. As the group's report makes clear, the provision of free personal care in itself will not solve some of the other issues that are facing the care sector, such as delayed discharge from hospital or the need for stability in the care homes sector. We are pleased that the care development group report strongly endorsed the work that is already under way to provide better services, more care at home, and better joint working between professionals and agencies. As the care development group has asked us to do, we commit to continuing that work.

The report highlights the good work that is going on throughout Scotland, and we want to build on that. However, it also identifies the gaps, deficiencies and duplication that still exist. Too many people are still not getting the care that they

need when they need it or where they want it. That situation will not change overnight, but change is happening. I am pleased that the report identifies clear evidence that the actions and investment that the Executive put in place are bearing fruit. Rapid-response teams are providing quick, flexible support for people who fall ill and for whom a short period of help has avoided the need to go into hospital. Local authorities and the national health service are working together effectively to provide better, more responsive services and to deliver more care and support to people in their own homes. More long-term care is being provided at home for people who, for example, have suffered a stroke and might otherwise have had to go into residential care. More short-term help is being provided to support the recovery at home of people who come out of hospital—for example, after a hip replacement.

We applaud the efforts that are being made by local authorities, the NHS and the voluntary and independent sectors to improve the care of Scotland's older people. However, we believe that more needs to be done. We recognise that we have set a demanding agenda for local authorities in particular and that the introduction of free personal care from April next year is a further challenge.

The care development group recommended that an implementation group be established to take forward the report's recommendations. I am pleased to confirm that the Executive is acting on that recommendation and will bring together that group soon.

Delivering change on the required scale needs real partnership and teamwork. We will continue to work closely with the providers and the users of care to ensure that that change is achieved. However, change cannot be delivered successfully without proper resources being made available. That is why, last October, we committed substantial new investment to older people's services. We also made £25 million a year available for the introduction of free nursing care.

In July, the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Angus MacKay, set out how Executive budgets had been realigned to meet our priorities and to release a further £100 million next year and the year after to take forward the care development group's recommendations. By any measure, that is substantial additional investment. It is tangible evidence of the Executive's commitment to translating our promises into results.

We are aware, of course, that attention has focused in recent days on attendance allowance. I will set out clearly the position on that issue. As the care development group's report says, attendance allowance in care homes is a United

Kingdom contribution towards personal care costs on which Scotland is choosing to build. Most of the 8,000 people who meet their care costs in nursing or residential care would be eligible for payment of attendance allowance at the rate of £55 per week, giving an annual amount of just under £23 million. In other words, the full free personal care entitlement would be £145 per week, made up of £55 UK entitlement plus £90 from the Executive. In addition, we are making available free nursing care of up to £65 per week.

The group said that it would be odd and contrary to equity if entitlement to attendance allowance stopped for those in care homes because of a policy of free personal care in Scotland. Put simply, the group's view is that the money is in the system. It is meant for personal care and should continue to be used for that purpose.

The Executive is engaging in constructive dialogue on that issue with the Department for Work and Pensions. The situation is not constitutional turf war. We are, together, as responsible Government, managing the practicalities of the complex interrelationship between the UK benefits system and Scotland's care arrangements. The discussion concerns payments to individuals and who should make them. It may take time to resolve the issue, but as the First Minister said on Monday, whatever the outcome of those discussions, the provision of free personal care for Scotland's older people is a pledge that will be fulfilled.

Throughout the chamber, members have a genuine commitment to improving the lot of Scotland's older people, but I say more in sorrow than in anger that some have attempted to reduce the debate to simple slogans or political point scoring. The coalition Executive believes that Scotland's older people deserve better than that. That is why, at every turn, in every statement, in every investment and in every policy development, we have addressed the issues. We have set about making a difference.

The Executive has delivered record investment in services for older people in their homes; the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 to improve standards of care; radical changes to improve the way in which local authorities and the NHS work together, making care of older people a new priority for the NHS; and, more widely, cheap travel and free central heating for Scotland's older people. Those are real actions and real investments to deliver real improvements to people's lives. By its actions, the Executive has shown that it is rising to the challenge that the people of Scotland have set it.

I thank the Parliament for the opportunity to make the statement. I am, of course, pleased to answer members' questions. I hope that today will



be considered a further significant step forward for the betterment of the care of older people throughout Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** I invite those who would like to ask questions to press their request-to-speak buttons.

A debate is to be held on the issues tomorrow and I must protect the business that is scheduled for today, so I appeal for short questions and answers rather than long statements that could wait until tomorrow.

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** I pay tribute to the work of the care development group and warmly welcome today's statement from the minister. I am glad that, at last, the minister is now part of the consensus on this issue. I am sure that she will have noted that Westminster is watching.

The commitment to provide free personal care from next April is a victory for Scottish pensioners. Let us make no mistake, however, that it is also a victory for the independence and perseverance of the Scottish Parliament. Does the minister agree that the Parliament now has a duty to ensure that what has been promised is fully funded and deliverable?

The minister confirmed today that, without an agreement with Westminster on benefits payments, the Executive will require to find an additional £21.7 million. Will she now go further than simply stating the view of the care development group by making it clear that it is her view that the money that is currently paid by Westminster to Scottish pensioners in the form of attendance allowance—money that is derived from Scottish taxpayers—must, as a matter of principle, continue to be paid?

Does the minister agree that it would be a gross injustice if Westminster were to withdraw those benefits simply because Westminster does not agree with the policy of this Parliament? As the minister herself has said, that policy is designed to build on existing provision, not to replace it.

Finally, does the minister agree that her position in the on-going negotiations with Westminster will be strengthened if this Parliament agrees a motion tomorrow that makes it clear that we expect the Scottish Executive to win this battle?

**Susan Deacon:** Let me say sincerely that I am pleased that Nicola Sturgeon welcomes today's statement. I am genuinely pleased that she recognises that considerable work has been done to translate our promises into practice. I am bound to suggest to her that, if she is so welcoming of the progress that has been made, perhaps it is time for her to work constructively with that process.

From the outset, the SNP has attempted to confuse the debate and to undermine the

commitments that were given by the Executive. First, we heard that the definition would be watered down. Then, when it was clear that SNP members could not criticise the definition that would be adopted, they moved on to something else. Last week, Nicola Sturgeon claimed that we were making only £8 million available for free nursing care, when the real figure was in fact £25 million. The SNP realised—not for the first time in recent weeks—that its sums did not add up, so it then moved on to something else again. Now, the SNP is attempting to change the debate into a constitutional turf war.

We work in partnership with our UK colleagues for the betterment of the people whom we are elected to represent. I recognise that partnership is something that the SNP finds difficult to understand, but we are committed to it. We are determined to continue to build upon that partnership for the betterment of the care of older people throughout Scotland. That has been our promise; our commitment is clear for all to see.

**Ben Wallace (North-East Scotland) (Con):** I thank the minister for allowing her statement to be made available earlier so that we could read it in advance.

At this stage, the Scottish Conservatives welcome the implementation of the majority of the care group's recommendations on personal care. I have to say that it has been a long time coming. This time last year, the minister stood in the chamber and said that free personal care would be wrong, so I hope that she remembers her U-turn. We question whether the minister is now able to implement a commitment that she did not, in the first place, believe in, but will she consider going further by implementing Sir Stewart Sutherland's recommendation that all community care funds be pooled?

Will the minister assure us that whatever comes out of her negotiations with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will be done in the interest of the UK and will not produce a separate benefits system, which the nationalists would very much like to create? Will she ensure that, between her and the UK secretary of state, we get a solution?

**Susan Deacon:** Let me first be clear about what has been achieved in a short period of time. It is only a year since we first set out in detail a demanding programme of investment and action to improve services for older people and to deliver greater equity in charging for those care services. In that time, we have translated into action much of the joint working that needs to be put in place to achieve that. We have introduced legislation and the care development group has completed its work. We should all applaud the work that has been done and what has been achieved in seven months.

As I said in the chamber in January, if the Executive promises change and improvements for older people in Scotland, we will deliver change and improvements for older people in Scotland. We will say when we will do it and how we can do it, we will explain the consequences of making changes and we will ensure that we deliver those changes. What members have seen from us in the past year is work—month in, month out and year in, year out—to ensure that those changes are delivered. Our on-going discussion with the Department for Work and Pensions is one strand of that much wider tapestry.

It is interesting that both Opposition parties desire to try to translate that discussion into a constitutional issue. We do not see it as a constitutional issue; we see it as providing the best care that we can for the people of Scotland and having an effective dialogue and partnership with our colleagues in the UK. That practical and pragmatic approach underpins our work in this area, as in many others.

**Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** What we are seeing today is Liberal Democrat policy being put into practice by the coalition Executive. Free personal care has long been a Liberal Democrat policy. On behalf of my colleagues, I am delighted to welcome today's statement. I thank Malcolm Chisholm and the care development group for their work, which builds on the work of the joint future group and the Health and Community Care Committee. I pay tribute to my colleagues on that committee for their work on the issue.

We all welcome the constructive dialogue with Westminster—I am glad to see that the minister of state is here, listening to the views of the Scottish Parliament that are being expressed clearly today. It is also important that the Executive continues to have constructive dialogue with local government, because our local councils will have an incredible role to play in taking forward this agenda from now on. How will the Executive implement the single assessment process and joint working policies between local authorities and the health boards, which should improve services and decrease delayed discharge?

Will the minister guarantee that the changes regarding local authorities that are envisaged in the care development group report will be fully funded, so that there will be no shortfall in actual expenditure on older people's services and so that other council services will not suffer?

**Susan Deacon:** As I have said, the Executive's approach is underpinned by partnership. That includes the partnership between Labour and the Liberal Democrats and a productive partnership between national and local government. I am pleased to give Margaret Smith the assurance that

she seeks that we will work closely with local authorities in implementing the changes.

As I said in my statement, we recognise that the programme of work will be demanding, but there are solid foundations to build upon. There are tremendous examples throughout Scotland of effective joint working. The effect of investment is starting to kick in. With the bill that was published yesterday, we are underpinning the move towards joint working, pooled budgets and practical changes that the Health and Community Care Committee has taken a keen interest in and has promoted over the past year. We have much to build on and we will continue to do that.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab):** I declare that I am the director of a nursing home company, albeit one that operates only in England.

I welcome the minister's statement. Will she indicate the numbers of long-stay NHS hospital beds in geriatrics, psychogeriatrics and learning disability that are still to close? In considering the care development group's recommendation for 100 per cent resource transfer of the funds realised by such closures from the NHS to the local authority community care budget, will the minister ensure that the community NHS medical and nursing services are funded to take over the health care?

Instead of ring-fencing the new money, will the minister consider requiring the local authority to publish its care of the elderly expenditure against grant-aided expenditure and resource transfer and consider, as part of a total settlement, making the local authority responsible for paying for nursing and personal care wherever the elderly person is situated, as that would remove the current perverse incentive? In Forth valley, that has led to the SNP-Conservative council in Falkirk increasing delayed discharges by unilaterally deciding not to take patients out of hospital because it saves the council money.

**Susan Deacon:** Richard Simpson's question serves to highlight how crucial and effective the working relationship between the NHS and local authorities is in ensuring that individuals receive genuinely responsive and seamless care that meets their needs. I will not repeat my earlier comments about the progress that has been made in that area. Long-stay NHS beds are touched on in the care development group's report, which recommends work that should flow from the group's consideration of the issue. We will be developing that work, and there are many areas in which we want to improve the data that are available, on the use of resources through the system and on the results that those resources deliver.

We are focused on results, and we want to strike

a balance between monitoring and assessing how money is spent, in the NHS or by local authorities, and monitoring the results of that investment. The move towards outcome agreements between the Executive and local authorities on older people's care services signifies our determination to focus on results and improvement. It is a continuing debate, and I am sure that people in this Parliament and beyond will continue to consider how further improvements can be achieved.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** As a socialist, I accept 100 per cent the positive aspects of the report. Does the minister recognise that, if free personal care is part of the overall universal provision that makes up a clear socialist principle, she must be prepared, in her constructive dialogue with the Westminster Government, to argue that the other side of the universal provision bargain now has to be met, and that we need progressive taxation—with higher taxes on the higher earners—to make universal provision available?

**Susan Deacon:** The balance between universal provision and targeted benefits, or targeting in other areas, has been a matter of debate for a century or longer, and I am sure that it will continue to be so. Here in Scotland, within the powers available to us, we have exercised judgments about how and where to draw that line in other areas. I am pleased that my colleague, the Minister for Social Justice, is with us in the chamber this afternoon. In areas for which she is responsible, we have focused on targeting resources to those who are in greatest need. There is often no right or wrong and no black-and-white answer in such areas, but we will concentrate our efforts, our powers and our resources on striking an appropriate and fair balance for the people of Scotland.

**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I pay tribute to the work of the care development group, and to the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, who seems to be ever the bridesmaid and never the bride at such big events.

The group's report sets the cost of free personal care at £145 per person per week. We know that the Executive has set aside £90 of that, and that there is continuing debate with Westminster about the remaining £55. Does Susan Deacon accept that not all people on attendance allowance receive the top rate of £55, and that some of them get the lower rate of £37? Even if Westminster agrees to allow people to retain attendance allowance, the Executive will still have an extra £18 to find for everyone on the lower rate. Has the minister calculated how many people are in that category, what the total additional bill will be and where the extra money will come from?

**Susan Deacon:** If there were time, I would take

issue with one or two of the details of Shona Robison's question. However, the very nature of her question illustrates some of the complexities and technicalities that are involved. That is why we are not prepared to reduce the issue to simplistic terms. We want to hold constructive discussions with our colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that the arrangements that we put in place are effective and practical, and we will continue to do that.

Those members who know the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care will know that he can rarely be said to hide his light under a bushel, and nor, today, can the Executive.

**Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the minister reassure us that the press coverage suggesting that many elderly people in Scotland will, despite today's welcome announcement, be worse off than their counterparts in England is untrue?

**Susan Deacon:** We dismiss absolutely the claims that were made in the press report to which I think the member refers. If it is the same report, Malcolm Chisholm responded directly to it in the press. I therefore refer the member to Malcolm Chisholm's letter.

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I, too, welcome the minister's statement and the Executive's achievement in full of its pledges.

I will return to the questions that were asked by Margaret Smith and Richard Simpson about the effective use of money and previously announced money. Will the minister give an assurance that measures will be put in place to ensure that the money adds value to local authorities' spending on care? There is an impression among some care groups that money is not producing much additional resource. Will the minister keep a close eye on that? Will she ensure that local authorities deliver in the sector in question?

**Susan Deacon:** I am happy to give the member the assurance that he seeks.

**Colin Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I declare an approaching chronological interest.

The Executive's intention is that people receive £145 per week for personal care; however, £145 is the average cost of personal care and 40 per cent of people who currently fund their own residential care pay more than the average. Does the minister accept that the Executive plans amount only to subsidised personal care for those people?

**Susan Deacon:** The care development group has carefully considered those matters. I commend the report to members who have not yet read it, because the group has considered not only how much people should be paid towards the cost of care, but how that system can be as fair,

transparent and equitable as possible.

As I said in reply to previous questions, there are no absolute right or wrong answers, but the Executive and the care development group have set out the issues more transparently than they have been set out on previous occasions.

Colin Campbell mentioned a chronological interest, but not only those in the chamber with slightly greyer hair have an interest. A key part of the care development group's remit was to come up with recommendations for sustainable services. Many members are part of the baby boomer generation and will have needs further down the track. The care development group's approach is balanced and meets needs for the care of older people now and in the future.

## Voluntary Sector

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-2245, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on Executive support for the voluntary sector, and two amendments to the motion.

15:08

**The Minister for Social Justice (Jackie Baillie):** Parliament has not had a general debate on the voluntary sector for around two years. Things have moved on considerably since then and I want to update Parliament on the progress that we are making in our partnership with the sector.

The voluntary sector is vital to Scottish life and is a major player in all aspects of Scottish society and the Scottish economy as well as at a local, community level. The voluntary sector's potential comes from its distinct characteristics and values. It engages individuals in the life of communities and is close and sensitive to marginalised groups and areas. The sector's services are invariably delivered at a local level, at the sharp end of society's problems. The sector has a key role in helping to develop policies that work.

We believe that the sector can help us to achieve a much more inclusive and just society. The sector can provide sustainable jobs and services and build the capacity of people and communities. It is also a particularly important resource for those who face difficulties in respect of access or limited choice. We also believe that the involvement of civic society in shaping policies for Scotland is one of the opportunities that the Scottish Parliament has brought and that we should capitalise on that.

I want to remind members of the scope of the sector. There are 44,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland, which employ around 100,000 people. The sector enjoys income of more than £2 billion a year, which is around 4 per cent of our gross domestic product, and that income is growing. As well as having a large number of thriving voluntary organisations, Scotland enjoys the benefits of a long tradition of volunteering. Around 27 per cent of adults regularly take part in voluntary activity.

The outlook is positive. I see a sector that is improving in shape and is delivering more for the increased resources that have been invested in it, but that is capable of delivering more. The Executive wants the voluntary sector to bring its strength, sensitivity and responsiveness to local needs to the strategy to achieve social justice for Scotland.

Given that vision, what policies have we put in place to assist the sector in its development? We have committed to providing the legal, financial and structural framework that will enable the sector to reach its full potential in the contribution that it can make to Scotland. For the first time, a Scotland-wide network of councils for voluntary service and local volunteering development agencies provides support to volunteers and voluntary organisations in local communities. We have increased our funding to the sector, we are reviewing how we deliver that funding and we have introduced new financial vehicles such as social investment Scotland. I will say more about that and our review of charity law a little later.

The starting point in our partnership with the sector is the Scottish compact, which is the formal agreement between the Executive and the voluntary sector on working in partnership. The compact underpins and strengthens our relationship. Crucially, it gives the voluntary sector a place at the policy development table, which ultimately will make our policies much more responsive. The compact recognises the independence of the sector. I will always protect the sector's right to be critical of Government. If the sector was not independent, it would lose one of its greatest strengths.

The Executive and the voluntary sector are monitoring the implementation of the compact via a joint group. I undertook to come back to Parliament to report on progress. Today, I published the joint group's report on compact implementation for 2000-01 and copies are now available in the Scottish Parliament information centre and on the Scottish Executive website. The report reflects the broadly positive experience that we have of working together.

The adoption of the compact's principles makes a difference to the experience of the sector on the ground in dealing with the public sector. We want to develop further that area of work. The Executive is starting to take a much more sophisticated approach to compact implementation. We have followed up the publication of the compact and good practice guidance with training seminars for Executive staff and we hope to develop further support materials for officials.

The improvement in conditions for the sector is not all to do with the compact. Funding also plays a key part—obviously, levels and stability of funding are of critical importance to the sector. Our funding for the sector is growing. In 1998-99 the then Scottish Office provided £23 million directly to the voluntary sector. Earlier this month I announced that the figure had risen to planned expenditure of £39 million in this financial year. A further £270 million goes to the sector indirectly, through Scottish Homes, health boards and local

enterprise companies. Total Executive direct and indirect funding to the sector is estimated at around £309 million.

As well as giving the voluntary sector more money, we have committed ourselves to reviewing how we fund the voluntary sector. In April we published a consultation document on the subject. The responses to that document welcome the review and generally express support for our aims and objectives. The development of a more stable funding environment, provision of three-year funding packages and steps to minimise bureaucracy were welcomed. Concerns were expressed that the Executive and other funders favour innovative projects, at the expense of existing core services with a proven and successful track record. There was support for the simplification and standardisation of grant processes. There was also support for making information more accessible on the Executive's website and enabling grants to be done online.

We shall take on board all those issues and we intend to pilot a model scheme in 2002-03, before moving to full implementation across the Executive from 2003-04.

The next stage is to turn our attention to considering our indirect funding of the sector. The recent consultation sought views on scoping that work further. We will also work with other funders to try to ensure that the funding schemes available to the sector offer resources that are complementary and that are not at cross-purposes.

We are also committed to undertaking a review of the social economy. With the aid of Stephen Maxwell, the assistant director of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, who has joined the Executive on secondment, we are examining the current contribution of the social economy to service provision and economic prosperity and the potential for social enterprise and the development of social capital. We will also consider what actions the Executive and others must take to grow that contribution.

We are considering new ways of funding the sector. Last week we launched social investment Scotland, a new loan fund for the social economy. It will provide loan finance and technical assistance to social economy organisations with the aim of stimulating wealth in disadvantaged communities by encouraging enterprise. The four Scottish clearing banks are providing loan finance of £3 million and public sector funding is £2 million, which includes £1.2 million of Executive grant.

As well as addressing funding issues, we recognise that charity law in Scotland needs to be updated to take account of changes in the

structure, nature and role of the voluntary sector. We established an independent commission, under Jean McFadden, to examine the issues involved. Its report was submitted to ministers in May and the Executive is currently consulting widely on the recommendations made. We anticipate publishing a full response early in 2002.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I welcome the Scottish Charity Law Review Commission. Can the minister indicate when we might expect legislation to allow charity Scotland to be set up?

**Jackie Baillie:** As I said, we anticipate publishing a full response early in 2002. Any bill must take its place alongside competing priorities in a full legislative programme. I cannot give Tricia Marwick a commitment that legislation will necessarily be brought forward in this session.

I mentioned the key role of volunteers. We are committed to increasing the number of people from all communities who take part in voluntary activities. To achieve that we are pushing forward our active communities initiative. Last year, we made available £650,000 to support the initiative. This year, we have increased that to £1.65 million. We have also joined in the celebration of the United Nations international year of volunteers 2001. I know that many members throughout the chamber have also been involved.

We also support the millennium volunteers programme, which is a UK-wide initiative that promotes volunteering specifically among 16 to 24-year-olds. It creates opportunities for young people to contribute to their community and to their personal development through volunteering. We currently fund about 2,000 places across Scotland at a cost of just under £700,000 per year. The millennium volunteers programme is relatively new and we are keen to learn from its early experience. I can announce that the programme will continue in its present form until the end of 2002-03.

We have already announced that we will make available £1 million a year to ensure that people who volunteer to work with children and vulnerable adults in the voluntary sector may have criminal record checks carried out at no cost to the volunteer or to the voluntary organisations concerned. At the same time, we said that up to £250,000 a year would be available for a central registered body. I am pleased to announce today that Volunteer Development Scotland will be invited to act as that central body. As the national centre for volunteering and community involvement, VDS already has close links with volunteers and with the voluntary sector. We can feel confident that the sector will receive the necessary help and guidance to make the best possible use of criminal record checks.

The Scottish Executive values the contribution across Scotland of the voluntary sector—from small community groups to Scotland-wide providers; from playgroups to care providers; and from faith communities and their volunteers to the way that the sector tackles homelessness, drug addiction and the other difficult issues faced by our communities. The sector is a key partner for Government, but it is also a key partner in our communities, whether they are geographical communities, disadvantaged communities or communities of interest. The sector tackles and alleviates poverty and helps to renew our neighbourhoods. Partnership will deliver social justice in Scotland. Our partnership with the voluntary sector is critical for success. Together, we can—and will—make a difference.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the Executive's recognition of the important role of the voluntary sector in Scottish society through the contribution it increasingly makes to promoting social justice, encouraging active citizenship and widening economic prosperity; endorses the progress made by the Executive in its commitment to working in partnership with the sector through the framework of the Scottish Compact, and welcomes the commitment demonstrated by the Executive through its increased resourcing of the sector.

15:21

**Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP):** I warmly welcome this debate and agree wholeheartedly with much of the minister's speech and the objectives and aims that she outlined.

Increasingly, the Parliament has recognised the third sector's invaluable contribution to Scottish life. Without it, how could we begin to tackle poverty, regenerate communities or promote active citizenship? How could society function with any real quality of life and how could we replace volunteers' ceaseless commitment and their massive contribution to the Scottish economy and society? In previous debates, I have been impressed by the commitment that members across the chamber have shown to the voluntary sector and by their clear understanding of it. Those members include Cathy Peattie, Des McNulty, Robert Brown, Jamie McGrigor, Keith Raffan and George Reid, to name but a few.

Although the SNP is broadly supportive of the Executive, I wish to raise a number of points. Across the voluntary sector, the issue of funding is often at the forefront. Financial support must not come at a price. Organisations must retain their independence without big brother looking over their shoulder. No doubt Bill Aitken will cover that point when he speaks to his amendment, which specifically addresses the issue. I am pleased that the minister has offered reassurances with regard to the Scottish compact on that matter.

The public must have equality of access to independent advice and information services and the Executive must ensure an even spread of services across Scotland. As the minister will acknowledge, much essential work has still to be done in that area if social exclusion is to be tackled effectively.

The Government and Executive should consider the impact on the voluntary sector when implementing legislation or making changes in benefits. For example, 77 per cent of Department of Social Services forms advise people to go to citizens advice bureaux for help and advice, but little thought has been given to the increased work load that such a suggestion places on CABx. The need for additional resources in such circumstances is often ignored. It should not be.

The minister mentioned additional resources for the voluntary sector. The SNP welcomes funding increases even if, in some cases, they simply fill a gap left by cuts elsewhere, but as the minister is aware and as the SNP amendment points out, a number of concerns about statutory funding procedure remain.

At last week's Social Justice Committee meeting, the SCVO raised a number of matters that our amendment touches on. For example, high transaction costs might arise when a voluntary organisation applies to a variety of funding schemes that all have different timetables, compliance regimes and application forms. The smaller the organisation, the greater the hurdle to overcome. The Executive has acknowledged that problem in the past and, in the voluntary sector debate on 23 September 1999, the former Minister for Communities, Wendy Alexander, committed the Executive to resolving the issue. However, it has not been entirely resolved.

Consistency among public sector funders is essential if we are to have a true measure of how effective an organisation is. Standardised audit procedures, funding periods and inflation costings would go a long way to ensuring that consistency.

Pilotitis—a great word for “Call My Bluff” aficionados—is the issue that causes most irritation to voluntary organisations and was touched on in the minister's opening speech. Pilotitis is the funding of exciting and innovative new projects that are unproven, which soak up resources that are urgently required by established organisations that provide vital services, yet which often struggle to survive, let alone excite or innovate. A more appropriate balance must be struck to ensure that new projects can emerge without cannibalising money that is required by existing, successful ventures.

One hopes that the power of community initiative that is to be introduced will secure

leadership in the public sector in relation to the cocktail approach to funding, which can, on occasion, cause voluntary organisations to divert considerable staff resources and time to the accessing of funds. I trust that the minister will address that issue in her winding-up speech.

The lack of agreement on the scope and rationale of core funding impacts on any voluntary organisation. Having read our amendment, the minister touched on that matter in her speech. Placing emphasis on projects rather than organisations can lead to instability in the sector, making it more difficult to make long-term plans and leading to a detrimental effect on morale, staff retention and the day-to-day running of an organisation. Direct funding is a nettle that has been grasped south of the border, yet it is still to receive proper consideration in Scotland. Robert Brown may want to elaborate on that issue in his speech, in the context of citizens advice bureaux.

The SNP agrees with the SCVO that more thought should be given to the changing children's services fund—the specific role of which we hope the Executive will soon clarify—to the development of child care services and to community empowerment funding. As the minister will know, an uneasy feeling remains throughout the voluntary sector that real empowerment is still elusive, with resources remaining tightly controlled by the Executive through local government, social inclusion partnerships and so on. I am sure that the minister will agree that that issue continues to vex the voluntary sector, which seeks genuine community empowerment. I am pleased that the secondment that the minister mentioned will work towards addressing that.

Members will recall a rather heated debate last spring on the phasing-out of relief from water and sewerage charges for charitable bodies. During that debate, members from all parties raised concerns regarding the impact that that could have not only on small and fragile organisations, but on larger groupings that may have to cut staff as a result. In May, the Executive announced the postponement of the phasing-in of its policy until April 2002, but 40 per cent of reliefs will be withdrawn in the first year, which will cause hardship.

Even if the Executive introduced a new, more targeted relief scheme, as suggested by the Transport and the Environment Committee, the overall loss to the sector would be considerable. We could argue about statistics—for example, the withdrawal of relief would cost the voluntary sector £4 million in the first year according to the Deputy Minister for the Environment and Rural Development, compared with £54 million according to my colleague Richard Lochhead—but whoever is right, the withdrawal of relief will have

an adverse impact, which could outweigh the additional support that the minister has recently allocated to the sector. Therefore, the SNP endorses the view of the Scottish Charity Law Review Commission that Scottish charities should receive at least 80 per cent relief from water and sewerage charges.

The SNP also shares concerns about the role of the national lottery. The UK Government is funding more and more statutory bodies via that route, which will undoubtedly impact on the voluntary sector; for example, the community fund is set to decline. Although the lottery is a reserved matter, the Parliament must develop a role in holding national lottery funding distribution bodies to account.

I am sure that this afternoon's debate will be positive. However, everything is not quite rosy and much remains to be done. I urge members to acknowledge that fact by supporting the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S1M-2245.1, to leave out from "the commitment" to end and insert:

"additional direct funding, while acknowledging that many issues such as transaction costs, consistency, sustainability, leadership, core and statutory funding and the adverse impact of planned phased removal of water reliefs from charitable organisations remain to be addressed."

15:29

**Mrs Lyndsay McIntosh (Central Scotland) (Con):** I am pleased to make the opening speech for the Conservatives in this timely debate on the voluntary sector. It is my first opportunity to speak from our front bench on social justice issues and I look forward to working and debating with colleagues, the Minister for Social Justice and her deputy.

I had hoped that the change in my portfolio responsibility would mean putting some distance between me and motions that are full of self-congratulatory pats on the back and about how wonderful the Executive is. However, that was not to be. The minister has set before us a motion that exhorts us to recognise

"the important role of the voluntary sector in Scottish society"

and encourages us to endorse

"the progress made by the Executive in its commitment to working in partnership with the sector".

On behalf of my party, I am happy to agree that the voluntary sector plays an enormous part in Scottish society, but the amendment in Mr Aitken's name urges the Executive to allow

"a more independent role for the voluntary sector in future."

Members would not expect a signal that we on the Tory benches have no concerns that we wish to express or observations on which the minister might usefully reflect. She should think of what I am about to say as helpful suggestions, offered in a spirit of encouragement.

It is difficult to get a perspective on how important the voluntary sector is, but we know that it is undoubtedly the fastest growing area of employment in Europe and that that trend is likely to continue. As the minister mentioned, there are 44,000 organisations with 100,000 paid staff and up to 500,000 regular volunteers. That is to say nothing of the income, which is estimated to be between £1.6 billion and £2 billion a year.

The voluntary sector covers a huge and diverse range of interests, including economic and community development, education and training, campaigning and advocacy, culture and recreation, health, environment, housing and child care. There is barely an area of our lives that the voluntary sector does not touch. All the organisations have a general definition, in that they are non-profit distributing—which is, in itself, an interesting facet—non-statutory and autonomous and may be charitable. The autonomous and non-statutory nature of the organisations is highly prized by the volunteers who give their time and effort to support them. Despite the amount of funding from Government and local authority sources, that independence entitles the voluntary sector to make critical observations. As I have said, critical observation can sometimes help to channel one's vision.

SPICe has produced an excellent briefing, which shows the sources of funding: loan finance provides 9 per cent; grant-making trusts provide 6 per cent; trading rents and investments provide 30 per cent; the public sector provides 26 per cent; the national lottery provides 7 per cent; and donations provide 22 per cent. Not all voluntary sector organisations get their money from the same sources or in the same ratio and finding out how much goes to whom is like asking about the length of a piece of string. Funding varies from organisation to organisation.

What gives rise to concern is the fact that the overall contents of the piggy bank remain the same and are probably decreasing. That gives the lie to the Executive's proclamation that it is committed to the sector through its increased resourcing. If the Executive views the voluntary sector as a crucial social partner, why are there increasing calls from organisations for further resources? The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations has identified some of the problems—the minister and Kenny Gibson commented on them. They include: transaction costs; unsustainability and the cocktail approach



to funding, which reeks of the reinvention of the wheel and, sometimes, of job creation; failure to agree on the dimensions and purpose of core funding; and, subsequently, a focus on projects alone. I enjoyed Kenny Gibson's definition of that a great deal. It was wonderful.

I did not dream up those problems. They are to be found in the briefing for today's debate prepared by the SCVO as it awaits the outcome of the consultation by the voluntary issues unit. If the minister will not listen to my entreaties to let the voluntary sector be her guide, I ask her to listen to the SCVO, whose members, as she pointed out, are at the sharp end.

I know that MSPs' time is limited and that, if there were 25 hours in a day and eight days in a week, we would all like to donate more time to charities and organisations that have a special place in our hearts. We have all had the opportunity to be VIP volunteers—some of us for several organisations—and I will wager that, on all of our guest appearances, we heard tales of a shortage of provision and of a lack of dedicated funding. Our job is to raise awareness and see for ourselves the work that is being done week in and week out.

My most recent experience of VIP volunteering was in the lunchtime cafe at the Morven House day centre project in Kilmarnock. That was on 1 June. I cooked, cleaned and waitressed—it was a bit like being a housewife—not just for the centre's clients, but for the volunteer staff. The work was intense and I confess that, at the end of the shift, I was glowing. That cafe could run seven days a week given the opportunity.

I read with interest the Executive's press release of 4 September, which announced a £39 million cash bonanza. The image of the minister playing the parts of Little Joe, Hoss and Paw Cartwright, weighed down with saddlebags of money from the Carson City Bank, ably supported by the deputy minister in the role of Miss Kitty, was a delight.

**Jackie Baillie:** I regret that I am from a different generation to Mrs McIntosh and so I am not picking up the references that she is making.

**Mrs McIntosh:** Some of the old stuff was broadcast on satellite. I do not recall the theme tune for "Bonanza" too clearly myself, but there is a prize for the person who can remember it.

**Mr Gibson:** Where is John Young?

**Mrs McIntosh:** He is probably back in the office somewhere.

Although the latest announcement may be the biggest ever allocation of direct funding to voluntary groups, we must be concerned about the squeeze on council budgets, which has frozen or reduced grants to voluntary groups in a number of

areas over recent years.

We should also be concerned about the reduction in charitable giving due to the national lottery. I ask members whether they remember the jackpots that there used to be as we waited with bated breath for Lancelot or Guinevere to throw up the numbers that were on our tickets. Now we wait for a roll-over before we part with our cash. Anyone can see that charitable giving is down. Perhaps colleagues will return to that point later in the debate.

The Executive offers pockets of money and—in the interests of balance—big wedges of money for its pet projects. I say to the minister that that reeks of control freakery gone mad.

Although the Scottish compact is an agreement between the Government and the voluntary sector, its prime motivation seems to be for the Executive to have control to target Government priorities. I am not saying that the Executive and the voluntary sector do not have a lot of shared goals—of course they do—but that marriage of ideals is likely to end up on the rocks if the Executive's emphasis on its priorities leads to loss of independence for the voluntary sector, which will be directed by Government under contract, rather than by its own principles of channelling funding—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson):** Wind up, please.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Mrs McIntosh:** I cannot give way, as I am in my last minute. I am sorry.

**Karen Whitefield:** Is what Mrs McIntosh says the view of the voluntary sector?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Carry on please, Mrs McIntosh. You are winding up.

**Mrs McIntosh:** It is the view of the voluntary sector. Further confirmation of that view comes from a senior committee of the Parliament. The Finance Committee stated:

"The emphasis on meeting the Executive's priorities leads to voluntary organisations distorting their work and organisation in fact or appearance, to make it appear that they are meeting these priorities."

Such concerns are not new. As long ago as 1998, Neil McIntosh—he is no relation of mine—then convener of the SCVO, wrote in the SCVO's annual report:

"Of course we need to be aware of the dangers of loss of individual identity—what makes the voluntary sector special is its diversity and pluralism which do much to enrich our society."

We are now full circle. The voluntary sector values its independence and it likes to be able to respond quickly to needs rather than wait for the

lumbering involvement of Government.

Other members will develop those thoughts further, but I ask members to support the amendment in Mr Aitken's name and allow a more independent role for the voluntary sector in future.

I move amendment S1M-2245.2, to leave out from "and welcomes" to end and insert:

"regrets the Executive's use of funding mechanisms to direct the work of the voluntary sector and urges the Executive to allow a more independent role for the voluntary sector in future."

15:39

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I hesitate to follow in the footsteps of Lyndsay McIntosh, who has given an inimitable view of the problems of the voluntary sector.

To be more serious, there can be little doubt that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive have been far more supportive of and engaged with the voluntary sector than any Government or Parliament before us. I do not make those rather extravagant claims lightly. Members share with the voluntary sector many things, such as a belief in the value of public service and a welcome for the invaluable role of the voluntary sector throughout Scottish society and, as the minister said, in major contributions to policy. We also share a recognition that organisations outwith and independent of Government can not only provide the human touch, but relate in ways that are accepted by and relevant to the situations of people who are in various forms of need.

We have had many debates on the voluntary sector in the Parliament. Those debates have acknowledged that Scotland would be a much poorer place without the 40,000 voluntary groups and the work of the 500,000 regular volunteers. Those are the figures for the SCVO. For some reason the Scottish Executive consultation document "Review of Funding for the Voluntary Sector" talks about 700,000 volunteers. I hope that we have not lost 200,000 since the document was produced in April.

The truth, more seriously, is that all those figures are estimates and they may well be an understatement of the true extent of volunteer activity in Scotland. The Scottish Executive has done much to sharpen the principles of its support for the voluntary sector and to increase the level of available funding. I will not rehearse the minister's arguments again. I agree with them all.

I do not think that the debate is all that suitable for party-political motions. It is perhaps slightly regrettable that we have two amendments to the motion before us today. I was particularly intrigued by the SNP amendment, which did not appear to

represent either SNP policy or a commitment to go about things differently. In fact it is a straight lift out of the SCVO briefing to which we referred earlier.

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Does the member accept that if the coalition Executive is more than willing to consult and take the voluntary sector on to working groups and task forces and to increase participation, it is perfectly acceptable for the Opposition to consult the voluntary sector?

**Robert Brown:** Indeed, I accept that entirely. However, the issue is the use of that consultation in terms of the debate—it is as if the Opposition is putting some sort of alternative on show. The fact is that the issue should be viewed more positively because we are at a milestone for the voluntary sector. We have the local councils for voluntary service now in place throughout Scotland as well as volunteer development agencies. The Executive has gone over to three-year funding, charity law is to be modernised, and the SCRO—Scottish Criminal Record Office—checks funding issue is resolved.

The Scottish compact has recognised in principle, and increasingly in practice nationally, the independent role of the sector. I pay tribute to the personal commitment of the ministers in that regard. Work has to be done in a number of areas to build on that. We cannot get away from the problem of core funding. The whole chamber would accept that too much time is wasted by government—largely local government—and by voluntary groups in putting together packages for funding. That is a skilled task, which often requires the expertise of experienced fundraisers.

Many important organisations are still not funded by local authorities on a three-year basis. Often there is little recognition that employees in the voluntary sector are not volunteers—they earn their livings and they feed their families. That is an important point. There needs to be adequate provision for pensions, for appropriate gradings and for funding the higher cost of a long-serving employee. That cannot be spread across other activities in an organisation with only one or two employees.

We need to recognise, as Executive officials did—to their credit—when they gave evidence to the Social Justice Committee last week, that although innovation is good, it is not always possible to churn over the projects. Lyndsay McIntosh and Kenny Gibson touched on that. There is a place for capacity building and for weeding out those projects that do not work from those that do.

There is also undoubtedly a need for stable and reliable core funding, which is extremely tricky to bring about. There has got to be some sort of

independent mechanism, perhaps standing slightly outside the local authorities, for doing part of the work of deciding which projects are good and which are bad and for deciding the levels at which they are funded for some of the major bodies.

I am slightly concerned at the implications of the statement made by one of the Scottish Executive officials to the Social Justice Committee last week. He said:

"There is a growing recognition that the voluntary sector is a commercial sector in many ways and ought to be capable of finding solutions that are more commercial for some of its funding problems."—[*Official Report, Social Justice Committee*, 19 September 2001; c 2516.]

I do not disagree with that, so far as it goes. However, there is a limit to that—it does not apply to many sorts of voluntary groups. We must beware of creating a sort of voluntary sector public finance initiative philosophy, because the resources derived from the private sector in various ways, or even, in some other ways, from public sector paying through charging are not illimitable and do not necessarily apply in all sectors.

The other milestone area, which comes back to Kenny Gibson's prediction, is the potential for an effective, accessible and adequate national advice service on debt and housing matters in particular. That is a vital priority because of the implications of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and of the diligence report, "Striking the Balance", which the Parliament will consider shortly. In my view, it is time to place a statutory duty on local authorities to provide independent advice and, more important, to fund such services appropriately. I welcome the steps that the Executive has taken in that direction.

Kenny Gibson touched on the issue of the DSS forms and the resulting pressures on people to visit CABx for advice and assistance. Of course that is why CABx exist, but they also deal with other activities such as eviction notices. In the past financial year, CABx dealt with about £60 million-worth of debt advice, seeing about 140,000 clients and obtaining about £5 million-worth of additional benefits. I am talking about additional benefits that have been identified and I probably understated the total. The work of CABx and other agencies, such as money advice agencies, is simply irreplaceable.

The demands on existing projects will grow substantially. I do not know whether ministers have costed the extent of those extra demands, but I urge them to examine urgently the establishment of a national debt advice network and to agree an adequate level of resource—perhaps through a system of joint funding with local government—in order to make such a network a reality. There may be a case for an

independent commission—similar to Malcolm Chisholm's care development group—to establish the extent of need and the resources required to meet that need. Irrespective of how the Executive does so, it must link need with the provision of resources.

The independence of the voluntary sector will be tested most effectively at the local level, where the concerns to which Lyndsay McIntosh referred echo more strongly than they do nationally. Local authorities have their own funding pressures and may not have the sophisticated approach that has been taken by Scottish Executive ministers.

There is no easy solution, but perhaps there is scope for more funding. For example, the Department of Trade and Industry provides funds to Citizens Advice Scotland to allow a mechanism under which the centre can encourage local authorities to enter into partnership. There may be a case for an independently funded voluntary sector trust.

Those important issues are worthy of more long-term consideration than we are able to give them today. It is important that, irrespective of political philosophy or party view, members across the chamber recognise the significance of the voluntary sector. I pay tribute to the Executive, which has gone further than others before it in supporting the voluntary sector. Let us, in partnership, build on that work, move forward and make the 21<sup>st</sup> century a milestone for the achievements of the voluntary sector.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open part of the debate. As a large number of members wish to speak, I ask those who are called to limit their speeches to fewer than four minutes.

15:47

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** The facts and figures about the third sector are almost common knowledge. Certainly, most members are aware of the size and scope of the voluntary sector in Scotland and of the level of finance that is attached to it. Most members also have a deep appreciation of the important role that the third sector plays in nurturing and sustaining all aspects of life in Scotland.

That level of awareness is testament to the significant impact of devolution on involving civic Scotland in the process of government. The voluntary sector in Scotland has gained a level of involvement and influence that would not have been possible at Westminster. However, we must not be complacent. We must work continuously to ensure that support for our voluntary sector remains a priority.

That is why I welcome the Scottish Executive's commitment to increase direct funding to the sector. As the minister said, in 1998-99, the Scottish Executive funded the voluntary sector to the tune of £23 million. That sum increased to £39 million in this financial year. Much of that additional funding has gone, rightly, into the development of the infrastructure of the voluntary sector, ensuring that Scotland has a national network of councils for voluntary service and contributing to the development of the SCVO web portal.

It is also right that other additional funding has gone into ensuring that voluntary organisations are not financially damaged by an issue that exercised many members: the need to carry out SCRO checks on volunteers. Ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with volunteers is a priority—one that is shared by the voluntary sector and the Executive. I especially welcome the minister's announcement that Volunteer Development Scotland will become the central registered body for the processing of applications for criminal record checks. It seems eminently sensible to place that responsibility on an organisation that understands volunteering in Scotland at every level.

The voluntary sector is at the heart of many of our debates, but it is also an important and influential partner in the development of all areas of policy and legislation. From my experience during stage 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, I know that voluntary organisations such as Shelter Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations played a vital part in the development of housing legislation. They were able to bring a high level of expertise and, at the same time, a sound knowledge of how legislation would impact at grass-roots level. Other voluntary organisations have been equally influential in the development of other pieces of Scottish legislation.

However, this Parliament still needs to address some voluntary sector issues. The complexity and variance of statutory funding mechanisms can be a real barrier to sustaining many voluntary organisations. It is important that the provision of funding should be seen as an opportunity for developing responsive services rather than as a constraint. It is also important that large funding bodies such as the national lottery should complement our specific social justice aims.

I am pleased to support the Executive's motion. The creation of the Scottish Parliament, with its Labour-led Executive, has already begun to deliver for the voluntary sector in Scotland. That delivery is evident in the creation and implementation of the voluntary sector compact; it is evident in the network of CABx across Scotland; it is evident in the active community strategy; and

it is evident in the increased funding over the past few years. Most of all, it is evident in the strength of the voluntary sector's voice in Scotland. At long last, it is being given the recognition that it deserves.

15:52

**Mr George Reid (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I want to pay tribute to the volunteers from Scotland who are playing a notable part in the fight against world poverty and, thereby, against terrorism. They are the Scotsmen and Scotswomen who are working in the relief and development agencies around the world on behalf of the poorest of the poor—the billion people who live, every day, below the poverty line and who are so easily attracted, through lack of hope and lack of food, to false gods.

People have been hurt this week. I think of former colleagues who are working in Taliban areas in Afghanistan on breast-feeding programmes and mother-and-baby programmes—they have been pulled out for their own safety. I think of water engineers whom I know in the Horn of Africa—again, pulled home for their own safety. I think of a dear, sweet Norwegian friend who has devoted all his life to making prostheses for young victims of land mines—he has been pulled back to Norway for his own safety. One of those people said to me last night that, if there is to be infinite justice, there must also be boundless mercy.

We in Scotland play our part. In the Parliament we have a cross-party group involving 40 international development and relief agencies. They do extraordinary work: microcredit in Uzbekistan; reforestation in Africa; clean water programmes for mothers and babies; fish farming in areas that are deprived of food—the list is infinite.

Last night, under the patronage of the Princess Royal in Edinburgh Castle, was launched the BESO Scotland strategy—the British Executive Service Overseas Scotland strategy—which involves the entire business community in Scotland in exporting their skills, as volunteers, to areas of need and, especially, to areas in accession states in eastern and central Europe. Two ordinary Scots were quite remarkable. One was Margaret Dryden, a primary teacher. Virtually single-handedly, she revitalised the whole primary school system in Douala in Cameroon, after which she went on to do the same in Kirovohrad in central Ukraine. The other was the remarkable Joe Tarnowski from St Andrews who, at the age of 78, has just completed his 43<sup>rd</sup> mission to Poland to help to restructure local companies and local government.

We have a part to play in this. I know that this

issue is a reserved matter. I pay the highest tribute to Clare Short, because she properly has focused British international relief on the support of the poorest of the poor. I pay tribute also to George Foulkes when he was in his previous job, when he was Clare Short's deputy. In August 1999, he called for much closer twinning between the voluntary sector in Scotland and the voluntary sector in countries overseas. One or two of the steps that he called for we have outlined already. We have a development group, we are working on development education, and there is a specific network—the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland—of the agencies that are working in Scotland. But much more has to be done.

I throw a few ideas to the Minister for Social Justice and the Deputy Minister for Social Justice. Frankly, if they can do Mothers Against Drugs in Alloa and Cranhill, they can help to do it in Narva. If they can do clean water programmes here, they can do them in Africa. If they can do meals on wheels in our multistoreys where the lifts do not work, they can do them in eastern Europe. If they can do sex education in Scotland, they can do it in some of the emergent states of eastern and central Europe. If they can do deaf-blind surveys in Scotland, they can export them to other parts of the world. They can provide special help to the poorest of the poor, because I know who the poorest person in the world is—it is a young woman amputee. From my experience, such people are never released from camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organisations. We could take some of those people here.

I hope that the Minister for Social Justice will reply to a recent letter that she received from Paul Chitnis, the chief executive of NIDOS, in which he said:

"it was suggested that I request a meeting with you so that I can tell you more about our work and discuss ways in which the Executive might support the Network."

I hope that the minister will agree to that, and I hope that she will take one or two members of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on international development. She may just have a word with her colleague Jack McConnell so that when he publishes his external affairs policy, he encourages the efforts of Scots relief and voluntary agencies as part of that effort.

15:57

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate George Reid on his speech, which puts some of today's debate into a world perspective, and brings a sense of reality to our discussion.

I speak today as a father who willingly and without strings supported his daughter's wedding on Saturday—a voluntary but expensive activity. The Deputy Minister for Social Justice may raise her eyebrows and wonder what is coming next, but there is a moral to the story, which is that apart from giving my daughter away, my contribution was to sign the cheque. What I did not do was put in place a bureaucracy that interfered with her freedom and independence to organise her wedding.

The Deputy Minister for Social Justice may know what I am about to say, which is that I agree with most people that our Scottish volunteers are unsung heroes. They work in every community and they add to the quality of life for so many. We cannot quantify how much they do in our society.

Community implies the coming together of people with a common interest or a shared location, and it only works when people have the freedom to join together to work for the common good, while ensuring that no one is left out. That is the sentiment behind my colleague Bill Aitken's amendment. We Conservatives want to see a set of strong and vibrant communities doing many things for themselves in creative and locally focused ways. The problem is that the Labour Government over the past four years has taken away the freedom of the voluntary sector to do what it does best, which is to organise locally and nationally to meet perceived need in the way that it thinks it should go about doing so.

We see a trend towards over-regulation and direction, despite the warm words of the Minister for Social Justice earlier. In fact, in some areas the Government could be accused of seeking to provide services on the cheap through the way that it directs the voluntary sector. I have no difficulty with a trained and resourced voluntary sector providing subcontracted services when that is the best way to deliver them, but allowing the sector to do the jobs in the way that it would like to do them is much better than the heavy-handed approach that we see.

The voluntary sector was robbed when lottery funding was directed from good works to supporting core, centrally delivered services that used to be delivered from taxation. The increased burden on UK taxpayers of more than £1,500 per person has reduced their ability to donate to charity. That reduction is shown in the contribution of the public to the national lottery, which is down from £411 million in 1996 to around £300 million today.

The double hit for the rest of the community was the increase in taxation under the Government. Again, that reduces people's ability to give to charity. Many of the Government's actions have hit the voluntary sector directly by reducing people's

ability to contribute and adding to running costs.

Some members have talked about overburdening bureaucratic costs and the worries and work of people that have to sign so many forms and agree with so many agencies to do a simple task. We must address that issue.

Other members have mentioned today the effect of water rates on the charity sector. I call on the Scottish Executive to continue with full water rates relief until the water industry bill passes through the Parliament's committees and comes to the chamber. It is to be hoped that that bill will provide some support to the voluntary sector.

Others have mentioned today the squeeze on the central direction of council budgets. In many cases, that has frozen or reduced grants to voluntary groups.

Lyndsay McIntosh mentioned the loss of lottery funds to the new opportunities fund. There is a distortion—which I have mentioned in a previous debate—in the separation of capital from revenue funding. It is time that we move towards abandoning that fund, but only after current projects are allowed to complete.

The chancellor has hit charities hard. Advance corporation tax credits have been removed. There is a great list of things that must be done by the Government to solve some of the problems that charities face today. I welcome the minister's offer to contribute to the payment of the police's checking system charge. I have argued strongly for that in the chamber and the minister has listened.

I do not argue about the fact that the Executive is trying to move forward. However, it has to pay more than just lip service to some of the things that it has said to us today. I hope that the minister in her winding-up speech will give us a real guarantee that we will see the removal of the bureaucratic burden that currently faces the voluntary sector.

16:02

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** I begin by expressing my support, too, for much of what the minister said in her opening speech. In rural Scotland—for example, my constituency—the voluntary sector is absolutely vital to the life-blood of many local communities, especially those in our marginalised areas. If one looks at the role of the voluntary sector in a constituency such as mine, one sees that it takes up many of the activities that one would expect to be delivered by the public sector.

The voluntary sector has taken on the public sector's role in many areas—for example, in leisure provision—and made a much better job of

it than the public sector did previously. The voluntary sector provides a wide range of activities, such as leisure, advice centres—which are crucial—care groups and special needs. Many economic development activities, such as highland games, cattle shows and folk, seafood and jazz festivals, are delivered by the voluntary sector for one simple reason: to develop economic activity in the area. The activities bring visitors and tourists and provide the life-blood for many of the tourist businesses in the villages where those activities go ahead.

The voluntary sector is vital, yet there are great gaps in provision throughout rural Scotland, for example, in the provision of citizens advice bureaux. In my constituency of Argyll and Bute we currently have no such bureaux. We have two advice centres, one in Bute and one in Islay. The Islay one is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Only now do we have a proposal in front of our local council to fund CABx for the first time in Argyll and Bute. If one considers the number of towns and villages in my constituency, that is a huge gap in basic provision.

When I speak to and attempt to help the existing voluntary organisations, which are operating well, they give me the same message time after time: that, although they have to go through a bureaucratic system, capital funding is not, by and large, a big problem. The main issue that faces those organisations time after time is core funding—revenue funding. Revenue funding lacks stability. A year-on-year scramble is required to try to secure funding from the council or another public body. No simple system guarantees that an organisation will be able to access its core funding for next year. A lack of core funding creates big problems for staff, because they are not sure whether they will have a job at the end of the financial year.

I welcome much of what the Minister for Social Justice said. She recognised that we must develop stable funding packages for such organisations. We must recognise that we cannot always come up with innovative projects and that the core projects that exist deserve support and must be continued if they are to supply those vital services for communities. Simplifying the funding systems would also go a long way towards helping, because in trying to access capital—whether from rural challenge funds or myriad other funding bodies—a huge amount of resources is often used up in developing a bid, although organisations are never sure whether their bids will be successful.

I will return to Islay, to show how serious the situation can be in small communities. I mentioned the Islay and Jura advice centre, which is about to go bankrupt because it cannot secure core funding. It serves a population of 3,000. There is

no benefits agency, jobcentre or other body to service that community. The only voluntary body that provides that community with advice could go out of business in the near future if it receives no funding. That is how serious the situation is.

I would like the minister to recognise that rural Scotland has special problems, especially in remote communities such as those which I represent. I wonder whether the pilot projects that the Executive proposes will involve pilot work in rural communities to ascertain whether different mechanisms need to be put in place to address rural Scotland's needs. I hope that the minister will give us some assurance on that. I know that Jackie Baillie is coming to Argyll CVS's annual general meeting on Monday night. By God, she will be pressed hard for answers to the problems that I described.

16:07

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** The debate allows members to pay tribute to Scotland's voluntary sector—the paid workers and the volunteers without whom many services would grind to a halt or would never have existed.

Just before the 1999 election, I was asked to address the SCVO on the voluntary sector and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. If my memory serves me well, I think that Sarah Boyack spoke for the Labour party. At that time, I worked for Shelter. I said that the voluntary sector had a huge opportunity to participate, influence and act in partnership with the Parliament and its committees.

The voluntary sector's policy development work is firmly rooted in practical concerns and action, which makes it uniquely placed to influence and inform debates, policies and legislation. I believe that the voluntary sector has done that. It is to be congratulated on engaging not only with the Executive and committees, but with MSPs of all political parties.

However—there is always a however with me—in 1999, I said that the voluntary sector had to retain its independence from the Government, regardless of the Government's political complexion. I hoped that the SNP would be the Government. Despite that, I urged the voluntary sector to retain its independence, because its primary interest is the people whom it represents and those for whom it provides services. The sector's primary interest is not simply in carrying out the latest Government initiative. It has a duty to speak out on behalf of the most vulnerable.

I was concerned when I read the suggestion in the Finance Committee report that the voluntary sector's emphasis on meeting the Executive's priorities

"leads to voluntary organisations distorting their work and organisation in fact or appearance, to make it appear that they are"

making Government priorities their priorities.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** Does the member agree that what is on offer is the possibility that the priorities of the voluntary sector will become the Government's priorities and that neither the voluntary sector nor the Government should shirk away from that?

**Tricia Marwick:** I accept Johann Lamont's point that the Government often takes on board the priorities of the voluntary sector—and so it should. We also need to acknowledge that the Government's priorities are sometimes fed through to the voluntary sector and that that is a problem.

I believe in partnership between the voluntary organisations and local government and central Government. I am in favour of complementary working. However, there is no excuse for leaving the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces that are left in the wake of budgets set by central Government and local government.

I welcome the report of the Scottish Charity Law Review Commission, which I have already mentioned. I hope that, notwithstanding the minister's response to my intervention, we move quickly to introduce a regulatory framework for charities in Scotland. That is long overdue and has simply never existed before.

Those of us who have worked in genuine organisations that particularly rely on fundraising know that there have been many scams in the past that the Scottish charities office has been absolutely unable to tackle. Such scams suggest that all charities are not quite kosher and are not quite what they claim to be. We need to take steps to root out those that are involved in scams and cons. I urge the minister to consider the time scale closely to see whether we cannot, in this first session of the Scottish Parliament, make a real difference to the charity and voluntary sector in Scotland.

16:12

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** I apologise to the minister for being slightly late for her speech. I regret that. I should declare two interests. I am a board member of the Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust. I am also an ambassador for the girl guides—which may be a remarkably brave move for the girl guides.

Those two areas of activity represent spheres of operation in Scotland in which a huge mass of voluntary activity takes place to very good effect. Perhaps it is always invidious to select individual areas of activity but, as other speakers have so

eloquently indicated, the voluntary activity that takes place in Scotland is the backbone of much of our community and society.

In debates such as today's and in company such as this, it is tempting to ask, "What can politicians do?" Perhaps the more important question is, "What should politicians not try to do?" I recognise that the Scottish compact with the voluntary sector is a genuine attempt to identify the respective roles of the Government and the voluntary sector and to explore the mutual effort that may exist between those two agencies.

However, although the compact contains much that I believe to be good, it reflects the extent to which politicians expect to be involved. Therein lies the rub. It seems to me that people who engage in voluntary activity do so because they want to do it. They have a personal commitment, a conviction and an interest. They want to help. They certainly do not see themselves as Government agents or deliverers of Government policy.

I suggest that that distinction is important. Where public money is used, it is right that Government takes a proper interest in what that money is funding, but in my judgment Government should not have a prescriptive role or instruct a charity or other voluntary sector organisation how to spend money. The distinction is a fine one, but it is vital.

I was heartened that the minister said that she is committed to encouraging more volunteers to take part in Scottish life. That is a worthy sentiment, which I certainly applaud. However, people will not sign up if they think that they will become invisible, indirect agents of the Government. They will be resentful—that has to be avoided at all costs. The first question that such people will ask is whether they are being used to provide services on the cheap. Many others in the chamber who are involved in voluntary activity would echo me when I say that that is a patronising and insulting charge, but it is an understandable reaction from people who look at the spread of expenditure and say, "Why am I doing this? Does the Government provide the money to me to do this only because it is a cheap way of delivering policy?"

I support the view that the voluntary sector should be as flexible and as autonomous as possible, so that it can do what it thinks it ought to do, in the best manner that it can. That is the most effective way of allowing the voluntary sector to operate.

It is impossible to consider the issue merely in the context of Scotland; we have to consider the economic regime in the United Kingdom. Where the Government can help is by making some of the financial hurdles less challenging for the

voluntary sector. Many parts of the voluntary sector pay VAT—many in the chamber would ask whether that is necessary. Is there not some mechanism whereby VAT is recoverable by those payers?

When the Conservatives were in power, they introduced gift aid and payroll tax. Those may sound like innocent, unimportant initiatives, but I think that they now represent the most common mechanism whereby funds are donated to the voluntary sector. That is indicative of a fine distinction: it is one thing for the Government to have a laudable intent about what should be going on and to be prepared to make money available to assist with doing it, but it is quite another for the Government to want to become involved indirectly in the discharge of that task. It is essential that, in our efforts to improve life for the voluntary sector in Scotland, we recognise that important distinction.

16:17

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** I will reinforce three points that other members have made and add a point of my own.

First, I had the honour of being present at the presentation from BESO Scotland, the business volunteering organisation that George Reid mentioned. The presentations by Margaret Dryden and Jo Tarnowski were absolutely inspiring—it is a pity that they could not speak to us today.

Secondly, I reinforce the points made by George Lyon and Robert Brown on citizens advice bureaux. Along with John McAllion, Christine Grahame and other MSPs, I attended the Citizens Advice Scotland conference in Dundee last month. The part that CABx play in developing social inclusion in Scotland is absolutely crucial. It is important that the Executive listens to the points that have been made on CABx and that it gives CABx the support that they need to function securely and effectively.

Thirdly, there is the complexity of funding that Robert Brown referred to at length. My experience, from talking to small groups, is that it is still the case that, if two or three people are running a small voluntary organisation, one of them might spend most of his or her time looking for funds. That is an appalling waste of voluntary resources, as that person could be doing something else.

Finally, voluntary organisations play a crucial part in the protection and enhancement of Scotland's environment. Over the next few years, we will need further help with areas such as recycling and conserving biodiversity in Scotland—help that many voluntary groups throughout the country already provide. I would like to know whether the Executive is asking itself



how to take full advantage of what the voluntary sector is offering in respect of our environment. I have asked before whether the Executive has requested a full review of the policy on the administration of landfill funds. I know that the way in which those funds are administered is bound by regulation, but it is time that those regulations were changed to allow more of the funds to go into recycling.

16:20

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** There is clearly a wide welcome in the chamber for the initiatives to set up councils for volunteering and for volunteering development. The key question remains: are volunteers merely the cannon fodder for salaried staff in the voluntary sector? I was encouraged to hear Jackie Baillie say that there is £39 million for the voluntary sector; that tells us just how important it is.

I found much to agree with in Annabel Goldie's comments, as she pled for diversity through the voluntary sector. We should not be afraid of voluntary agencies taking approaches that diverge not only from one another's but perhaps from those of Government and local authority agencies. We can test other approaches and provide different doors for people with different needs or different attitudes to authority to walk through, if that is what they require.

I will focus on the problems faced by unpaid agencies and their workers and I will give some specific examples from the north-east of Scotland. The Grampian Addiction Problem Service—GAPS—was originally created to respond to a perceived local need and a desire to serve the local community. Highly qualified people work for the service, but they are unpaid. The ethos is therefore to serve the local community and to put local interests first. However, such agencies find it increasingly difficult to deliver their services, because of numerous problems. A voluntary agency with no salaried staff is not an agency with no financial overheads; it will have premises, phones and computers to maintain, and a whole series of activities and expenditures that continue between projects.

There has been a reduction in local government funding. GAPS and the Buchan Alcohol Service Information Centre had funding from Aberdeenshire Council withdrawn a couple of years ago. However, the council has still found £80,000—much more than either of those services got—to create its own in-house service, which has yet to prove that it can deliver anything of particular value.

At local level, there is competition between the

professionals, who want to keep control of what is going on, and the volunteers, who work in the front line to respond to people's needs. The lack of core funding is making morale drop in the voluntary sector. It is becoming increasingly difficult for voluntary agencies to sustain themselves between projects. Indeed, agencies can be diverted from providing a service to their clients because they are having to create bids for funding. That is not terribly helpful.

It is great that the Executive has lifted the direct expenditure on the voluntary sector from £23 million to £39 million but, as has been said, £10 million might have to be taken off that total for water and sewerage charges, although the introduction of those charges has been postponed.

Robert Brown made a plea for direct funding from the Executive to many local agencies. I am in two minds about that. It may or may not work, but many voluntary agencies certainly believe that it is the way forward. However, if we cannot find a way of providing core funding to ensure continuity of service, many in the voluntary sector will simply be unable to deliver services and their clients will suffer.

16:24

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's speech, particularly what she said about increased funding for the councils for voluntary service and volunteer development agencies. I am sorry that Lyndsay McIntosh is no longer in the chamber, because it is clear that she knows little about the voluntary sector and has little knowledge of what that sector was like under the Tories. She has clearly not spoken to the councils for voluntary service, which were better funded in areas with Tory MPs—that was the funding situation that the voluntary sector faced. The Tories' notion of the voluntary sector was a lady bountiful idea. The sector has changed—thank goodness for that.

The voluntary sector is an integral part of our society and this is our fourth debate on it. As we have heard, many volunteers are involved in the sector and there are 100,000 full-time workers. I challenge anyone to tell me of a sector in Scotland in which the workers—whether they are volunteers or paid workers—work harder or are more committed.

The councils for voluntary service play a key role in developing the infrastructure of the voluntary sector in our communities. They support the development of partnership at all levels; they are involved in training and in promoting participation and they support proactive campaigning. There are people from all classes, all ages and both genders in the voluntary sector.

We must never take the sector for granted. Sometimes, we have airy-fairy ideas of what the voluntary sector is and what it does. It is important that debates take place. The minister takes the voluntary sector seriously.

It is absolute nonsense and naive to say that, because the minister or the Executive is listening to the voluntary sector, the sector is expected to do as it is told. The voluntary sector in this country is active, independent and will not listen to any Government.

The voluntary sector is active at community level, in the local economy and in developing local exchange trading system—LETS—schemes, food schemes and credit unions. It is involved in training and education, supporting families in fighting drugs, environmental action and all aspects of our communities at different levels.

Organisations such as the Community Training and Development Unit in Falkirk—of which I am a member—take a key role in promoting links between local and national organisations. George Reid spoke on that subject. They encourage active citizens to consider political issues at local level and civic processes and they visit Parliament to listen to MSPs.

Scottish Women's Aid and the Scottish Rape Crisis Network provide support for women and their families. Such organisations work with local authorities and other agencies to build a coherent strategy to address problems. Voluntary Arts promotes the participation in the arts by young people and other groups and the development of folk, jazz and other festivals to which people go at weekends to enjoy themselves. Advocacy groups, campaigning groups, international aid and development groups all contribute to the vital work of the voluntary sector.

As I said, the voluntary sector has moved on and we should not get airy-fairy ideas that it is about nice people running jumble sales for poor people. The voluntary sector is the life and soul of Scotland.

All organisations face the issue of funding and resources, which inevitably I must talk about. Organisations say that funding—particularly from local authorities—has been static for several years and that they are trying to do more with less. I therefore welcome the minister's commitment to the voluntary sector, which will mean that it can tackle some of the obstacles in its path. In particular, I welcome the fact that the Social Justice Committee is to conduct an inquiry into the voluntary sector and will get out and listen to people. That is important—we should commend the committee for that and wish it good luck. It is important that the information that it gathers from the voluntary sector is included in the debate, but

it is also important that that is not seen as the committee or the minister telling the voluntary sector what to do.

Funding consistency is needed. The voluntary sector needs to be sustainable and it needs to be encouraged to do the work that it is doing. For too long, innovation has been overemphasised. We need to deal with that. The voluntary sector cannot be expected to reinvent itself continually. Matched funding can be a nightmare and European funding can be a bigger nightmare.

We have an opportunity to work with the voluntary sector—of which we can be rightfully proud—and the minister is committed to doing so. We are in the right climate to listen to what the voluntary sector is saying and to ensure that it has the funding that it deserves.

16:30

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I follow on from what Cathy Peattie said—I agree with almost all of it—by making the point that we should recognise that we sometimes play on the voluntary sector. In particular, in the area of drugs, many people do voluntary work who, in an ideal world, would be backed by professional people or have such people involved in their work. Many a time we have to say, "Thank God people are prepared to volunteer to do the work," because if they were not there, many local issues would not be addressed properly.

We have heard some excellent speeches and some poor ones, but I will not say who comes into which category. It is fair to say that the best speech—from all the parties—came from George Reid. I will add a word or two to what he said. When international events and the impact of those events at home are uppermost in everyone's minds, the international dimension to volunteering and to the voluntary sector must have top priority from the minister.

That is not a constitutional point. I know that international development is a reserved issue—although I wish that it were not—but that does not prevent us from encouraging the voluntary sector to play an international role. That humanitarian—not constitutional—point must be uppermost in our minds.

I will give two examples of situations in which we should be encouraging urgent action by the international voluntary sector. The first is what will be a substantive refugee problem on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The second is the most urgent situation in Palestine and that area of the world.

Through the voluntary sector, we have a major contribution to make and, although I recognise that

the matter is reserved, I encourage the minister to do what she can to encourage, co-ordinate and facilitate voluntary working. She can make a significant contribution.

One of the great points about international affairs is that small nations that are not big power players are often trusted to do voluntary work. It is no accident that most of the secretaries-general of the United Nations come from small nations—the secretary-general could not come from America or Russia. We have a lot to contribute and we have done so down the years.

**Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Alex Neil:** Unfortunately, I do not have time.

My other point is a more domestic one about what the minister said on the social economy review that Stephen Maxwell is carrying out. The social economy has not been mentioned much in this debate, but it has an enormous role to play, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation. In this country we think of entrepreneurship as being about profiteers or someone looking for a fast buck. However, there are many honest entrepreneurs. There are many entrepreneurs in the public sector—in education, health, transport and other areas. There is enormous scope for social entrepreneurship that is not about making a fast buck for oneself, but about serving the community. There are enterprising people who are capable of setting up and running businesses for the benefit of the whole community. I hope that the review will be positive and that action will be taken as a result of it.

There has been broad consensus among members in this debate—more or less. I have some empathy with aspects of the Tory amendment. However, I was persuaded by Conservative members' speeches not to vote for it. That is a pity, because it is important in a democratic society to ensure that the voluntary sector is not dictated to by the Labour party, by its coalition partners in the Executive, by my party or by any other party. The voluntary sector is there and the key point is that it must be independent and remain independent.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to closing speeches.

16:35

**Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Jackie Baillie started the debate by emphasising the excellent work that is being done by the voluntary sector. She said that 100,000 people are employed in the voluntary sector and highlighted that 27 per cent of adults regularly take part in voluntary work.

I emphasise the excellent work that is being done by our Labour colleagues in the ministerial team. I believe in giving credit where it is due and I congratulate the ministers on some very effective work. A comprehensive network of voluntary organisations has been set up. It is excellent that the Executive is working with the sector through the framework in the Scottish compact.

Projects are benefiting from the £39 million of funding, which is an increase of 18 per cent from last year. That is a real increase. I will give examples from my constituency. Family Mediation Grampian receives about £44,500. It aims to reduce the effect of parental separation or divorce. It helps couples to reach, after separation, negotiated agreements about residence, contact with children and other practical problems. It deals with real issues for real people.

Small projects also receive funding, for example Aberdeenshire Life Education Centre. It has received almost £4,500 to supply a mobile classroom and an educator to deliver a holistic approach to the prevention of substance abuse and to provide health education to schoolchildren. Those are two examples of the Scottish Executive helping to produce effective service delivery.

Having said that—there is always a but—I attended Gordon Rural Action recently. That organisation serves the Donside area of my constituency. Genuine concerns were expressed to the effect that funding goes to the network generally and there are worries about money not getting down to service providers. I emphasise those concerns.

I also receive observations, or complaints—call them what you will—from many organisations in my constituency, for example in Donside, Deeside and the Mearns, about too much time needing to be spent on accessing project funding. George Lyon and others have raised that point in the debate. Not enough attention is being given to core funding. Many groups, such as Gordon Rural Action, which I mentioned, and Mid-Deeside Ltd, which is a community-based company on Deeside, express that concern. I attend Gordon Rural Action's annual general meetings and they constantly tell me that core funding is a major issue for them.

I will focus on the main points that have come out of the debate. Cathy Peattie gave a first-class analysis of Lyndsay McIntosh's knowledge of the voluntary sector. I do not think that Lyndsay McIntosh was in the chamber to hear it, but I hope that she reads the *Official Report* tomorrow. She made some very negative comments about the Executive always indulging in backslapping and being self-congratulatory. I must say that I—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry; I find the Tories' constant negative amendments—such as the one that is

before us today—to be the mirror image of that. The pot is calling the kettle black.

It is important to get across three points. One is the point that was made by Robert Brown about a statutory duty on local authorities to provide independent advice; that is essential. George Lyon said that there was no citizens advice bureau in his constituency; neither is there one in my constituency and that is the case in many rural areas of Scotland. A statutory duty must be put on councils in that regard.

George Reid's contribution unexpectedly and rightly opened up the debate to the role of Scots abroad in the voluntary sector. As Alex Neil said, it was the best speech of the afternoon. George Lyon concentrated on the difficulties of core funding.

The three core points are Robert Brown's point about a statutory duty to provide independent advice, George Reid's point about Scots working abroad in the voluntary sector and George Lyon's point that we must concentrate on the core funding issues.

16:40

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** Perhaps uncharacteristically, I agree with many of the minister's comments. Indeed, I can take issue only with her claim not to remember the cowboy series "Bonanza". When she stated that she was not of that generation, I think that she was asking us to accept a little porky pie. On the other hand, Mrs McIntosh remembers seeing only the repeats.

The debate has been fairly consensual and I do not wish to part from the combined approach that the Parliament has taken. We have heard some very good speeches from members and some good news from the Executive. First, I was pleased to hear that the long-overdue reform of charity law is well advanced and I look forward to seeing what is produced early next year. As Karen Whitefield correctly pointed out, anybody who has any connections to the voluntary sector will be pleased that the prospect of the potentially considerable damage that might have been caused by the funding of SCRO checks has been removed.

That said, the Conservatives differ from the Executive on one issue. The minister claimed—with some justification—that she has put more money into the voluntary sector. However, why has she done so? Surely the answer is that she trusts the sector to administer the funding. Having gone to that length, why does not she take the next step and allow the sector to get on with what it is good at doing, namely serving the community?

The debate takes place against the background

of the justifiable pride that we can all take in the fact that 10 per cent of the Scottish population give of their time and do volunteer work. That is very beneficial. However, the minister should support that and not seek to stand in the way of and inhibit those volunteers. After all, they know best.

**Cathy Peattie:** I ask Bill Aitken to go back and read "The Scottish Compact". One of its major aspects is an agreement that the voluntary sector must remain independent.

**Bill Aitken:** I have read the document and agree with much that is in it. However, at the same time, it contains an inhibition. It is implied that the Executive will control funding and that funding will be diverted along what the Executive feels to be the appropriate channels. That is not the way to run things. The people out there know what is good for their communities. For example, George Lyon told us about the good that the voluntary sector does in the islands and Stewart Stevenson dealt with the situation in the north-east. People on the ground know far better than do people sitting in Edinburgh or Glasgow about what is best for their charity or good cause. That is the route that we should go down.

If the minister wishes to help—I know that she does—she should seek other ways in which she can assist the voluntary sector. She should ask her colleagues in Westminster to examine the effects of the taxation regime on charities. Furthermore, she should examine how the lottery operates. The lottery was introduced as a simple expedient to make more money available for charities. However, as David Davidson pointed out, over the past few years lottery funds have been used more and more to fund work that would otherwise have been funded from general taxation.

**Johann Lamont:** Does Mr Aitken share the concern that has been expressed by several of my constituents that disproportionate amounts of national lottery funding go to better-off areas and that proportionately little money comes into deprived areas? Furthermore, would he welcome an inquiry into the matter?

**Bill Aitken:** That intervention raises an interesting point that was dealt with to some extent in last week's debate on the situation in Sighthill. Perhaps it is the case that certain areas should be given assistance in the preparation and lodging of lottery applications. There is a case for that, because people in better-off areas are sometimes more able to complete applications than people in areas such as that which Johann Lamont represents.

George Reid was correct: we owe a particular debt to so many people who find themselves in possible danger as a result of their volunteering.

However, the debate concerns the approach that we should take to the voluntary sector. Much of what the Executive says is of benefit and we agree with it, but it should realise that the voluntary sector is best left to its own devices.

16:45

**Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I say to Annabel Goldie that I, too, was delighted to be asked to be a guide ambassador, having never been a girl guide. I then discovered that Jamie Stone was one, which tarnished the honour a wee bit.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I most certainly was not a girl guide at any stage of my existence.

**Mr Gibson:** He just liked the uniform.

**Mr Stone:** I would say that Linda Fabiani is having a bad hair day but for the fact that I just saw her hair at close quarters down at the new Holyrood building.

**Linda Fabiani:** I meant that Mr Stone was a girl guide ambassador, not a girl guide.

Members have rightly paid tribute to many different volunteers from all over the country who carry out work here and abroad. I pay tribute to the volunteers who are working here on an international level, with refugees and asylum seekers who come here. I know that Jackie Baillie and Margaret Curran will meet many of those people in their new roles and that they will back me up on that. A lot of great work is going on in Sighthill and elsewhere in Scotland.

The SNP is broadly in agreement with what the Scottish Executive is trying to achieve and what it is achieving in our third sector. Anything that I say is meant in a spirit of co-operation. It is the role of the Government to put things in motion and the role of the Opposition to try to point out the shortcomings. In the creation of a better country for us all, it is also our role to point out what is likely to be problematic and to work together to find a better solution.

I make no apology to Robert Brown for quoting the SCVO—after all, the Executive looks on those people as experts in the field, which they are. That fact should be recognised. The SCVO has said that it is worried about the strategic overview of the voluntary sector. One part of the submission that it made to the Social Justice Committee concerned new approaches that have been taken in participation, planning and service development, which have had the effect of making the relationship among the voluntary sector, statutory agencies and councils less clear cut. There is concern about the way in which the Scottish Executive, local authorities and the voluntary

sector are interacting and working together.

I have been told that many existing organisations in Lanarkshire feel that, although they have been assured by the Scottish Executive that the local authority has been given funding for specific projects in specific fields of voluntary work, the money is not getting through. There is a perception that, in wishing to be seen to fulfil their obligations in relation to consultation, the statutory agencies, health boards, health trusts and councils are starting to set up their own groups and are not acknowledging the views of the groups that have for many years been working at the front line.

I use the word “perception” because I do not know the reality of the situation. I raised the matter at the Social Justice Committee and was told by Executive representatives that the Scottish Executive is not monitoring whether the money that is given to local authorities is spent on the purposes for which it is given, when that money is not ring-fenced. I ask the minister and the Scottish Executive to address that.

Members mentioned voluntary organisations in relation to poverty in our country. We know about urban deprivation and rural deprivation, but I was stunned to hear George Lyon say that there is no citizens advice bureau in Argyll and Bute.

**Jackie Baillie:** George Lyon might not be aware that Argyll and Bute Council has recently agreed to fund a citizens advice bureau. I take it that he would welcome that.

**Linda Fabiani:** I am sure that George Lyon will thank the minister for that welcome information.

Members have spoken about the SCVO. I hope that this information is wrong—I ask the minister to correct me if it is—but I was told recently that the services within the council for voluntary services network are being given a set amount of money. I am worried that no account is taken of the areas in which those services operate.

**Jackie Baillie:** Account is taken of the areas in which the services operate and we specifically recognised in our review of the council for voluntary services that rural areas require additional input. As a consequence of that, we have made sure that extra money is available. For example, I believe that £290,000 is being made available in the Highlands, whereas less than that is being made available in urban areas.

**Linda Fabiani:** I would like to make a special plea for South Lanarkshire Council, which faces both urban and rural problems.

Kenny Gibson talked about the effects of legislative change on the voluntary sector. For example, he said that social security forms tell the applicant to go to a citizens advice bureau, which is difficult to do if there is none in the area.

The Executive must think strategically about the voluntary sector at every point, because its decisions and actions impact on the voluntary sector and its services. For example, although the problems relating to the SCRO checks have been sorted, we could have avoided the lobbying that took place on that if the proposal, which was worth while, had been thought through when it was introduced.

I read recently about hygiene regulations that will come into force and that will impact on the ability of soup kitchens to provide food for homeless people. I appreciate that hygiene regulations must be put in place, but the Executive must have regard for the impact that such regulations might have on the voluntary sector. I am worried that if an additional regulation is put in place without additional support, there will be less volunteering.

While the SNP broadly accepts the terms of the motion, we have a problem with the line that mentions

“the increased resourcing of the sector”.

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations believes that there is evidence to suggest that, proportionally, the overall pot of voluntary sector funding is stagnant and is probably shrinking. Given the increased expenses for water companies—the removal of water relief, for example—we must think about that.

There is nothing in the SNP amendment that has not been mentioned by almost every speaker: transaction costs; consistency; sustainability; leadership; core and direct funding; and the adverse impact of the removal of water relief. I must therefore ask ministers to consider accepting the SNP amendment in the spirit of all that has been said today.

16:59

**The Deputy Minister for Social Justice (Ms Margaret Curran):** I am pleased to be here to respond to the debate on the voluntary sector. I welcome the changes that the various parties have made in their portfolios and greet my new sparring partners.

I came to the chamber today in a consensual mood, thinking that all members would do likewise. However, after a few words from the Tories, I found myself rolling up my sleeves. In response to Bill Aitken’s rather impolite comments about Jackie Baillie’s age, I must say that she has asked me to confirm that she does not remember “Bonanza” at all. The proof of that is that she is an ambassador for the brownies. I am glad that that is now established.

On a more serious note, the debate has been

substantial. Many points have been made that are of great importance to the voluntary sector. There have been many speeches of quality and substance throughout the debate. The speeches attempted to deal with some of our policies and I will attempt to deal with those speeches in turn.

I particularly welcome the inquiry by the Social Justice Committee, which is examining the work of the voluntary sector. We look forward to working closely with the committee on the inquiry in the coming months.

I am sure that all members are aware that, as has been said in the debate, the Executive is acting decisively by pursuing a new relationship with the voluntary sector in Scotland. Over the past two years we have seen that improved partnership work. Indeed, the Executive considers the sector to be a key social partner. That can be demonstrated on a number of fronts.

The Executive’s immediate aims have been to modernise the legal, financial and infrastructure framework for the voluntary sector. We have more recently placed an increasing emphasis on the social economy in Scotland, on which Alex Neil made some important points.

As Cathy Peattie said in a strong speech, “The Scottish Compact” is an extremely valuable document for promoting a strengthened partnership between the Executive and the voluntary sector. We aim to develop the compact further as the basis on which to strengthen relationships between the sector and Executive departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies. The aim is to bed down the principles of the compact throughout the public sector. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities have been active in promoting and developing local compacts and funding policies for their relationship with the sector.

As well as our commitments to the sector as set out in “The Scottish Compact”, we have spelt out commitments—as Linda Fabiani was trying to encourage us to do—in our programme for government and the social justice action plan. Our commitment to take positive action to benefit the sector is even imbedded in the budget process. Those commitments form a continuing programme to provide the best environment in which the sector can develop. We do not underestimate the complexities that are involved.

I return to a significant theme of the afternoon’s debate. The Executive has always respected the voluntary sector’s independence and its campaigning role. I argue that the Executive has shown willingness to listen to that sector. We appreciate that there are tensions inherent in that approach—we cannot be simplistic about it—but

we believe that there is more to gain than there is to lose from partnership.

I listened carefully to the speeches about and the pleas for independence for the sector from throughout the chamber. In all sincerity, there is a degree of misunderstanding. I say to Lyndsay McIntosh that we could not allow the sector to be independent even if we wanted to. It is not within our gift to bestow that independence on the voluntary sector. Our partnership with the sector does not in any way undermine its autonomy.

On the personal comparisons that David Davidson made, as a good feminist I make it absolutely clear that partnership does not mean domination. The Executive's partnership with the voluntary sector does not mean that we dominate the sector—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** Far too many conversations are going on. That is very unfair to the minister, who is closing the debate. I appeal to members to sit down, keep quiet and listen to what is being said.

**Ms Curran:** The Executive recognises that, although we might sometimes get hurt by the voluntary sector's independence as the sector criticises us, we have more to gain than we have to lose from it. We acknowledge the pioneering role of the voluntary sector and want to facilitate that as much as possible. We recognise that the voluntary sector has prefigured a lot of what are now regarded as mainstream services, particularly in child care, but also in many other areas.

Throughout the voluntary sector, there is a willingness to recognise that it now has a receptive Government. Although it will never suspend its criticisms entirely, the sector has recognised and welcomed the reception that we have given to it because we have responded positively to major issues of concern to the sector. For instance, we have introduced a review of charity law, we meet the costs of criminal record checks on volunteers and fund the registration body and we have delayed for one more year the withdrawal of water rates relief for charities.

Points on water rates relief came up in the debate and I wish to address those. Ross Finnie announced on May 17 that the phased withdrawal of relief from a range of charitable organisations, which was to start this year, will be delayed for a year. That is to allow those who are affected some time to plan and budget. All remaining relief will be phased out by 31 March 2006. The water authorities have agreed to provide free water meters on request to the voluntary and charitable sector and are happy to provide advice on that matter.

**Mr Davidson:** I called on the Executive to maintain the relief until the Parliament has dealt

with the proposed water services bill. What is the Executive's answer to that?

**Ms Curran:** That is a matter for Ross Finnie to answer specifically. Those of us who are responsible for the voluntary sector have gone some way toward ensuring that we support the sector in trying to adjust to the change.

The Executive has made available increased resources across the board. That is well recognised. We are increasing funding for the voluntary sector infrastructure from £4 million to £10 million over our first term of office. Direct funding has risen from £23 million to £39 million annually. We have instituted myriad new developments in funding. We are strengthening the voluntary sector infrastructure. Many of those points have been made in the debate and I will not repeat them.

We recognise that much of the increased funding will go into national voluntary organisations and infrastructure and into central initiatives. The Executive's approach has been strategic. Generally speaking, Executive funding for local service delivery is available only on an exceptional basis—for instance for pilot projects—and that has been mentioned.

We expect public sector funding for local bodies normally to come from other agencies, such as local authorities, health boards, local enterprise companies and some non-departmental bodies. We have recognised—as has been said in the debate—the need to address some fundamental points. The first phase of our funding review was, crucially, to deal with the need to bring stability to the sector. Our three-year indicative funding settlements within local authorities have contributed to that.

We are now aiming, within the second phase of our review, to look for a common approach across all our funding schemes. That will take on board the points that were raised about core funding. Through our work on underfunding, we aim to reduce concern about issues such as transition costs, which Kenny Gibson mentioned.

Another aim of our funding review was to identify gaps in the funding of the voluntary sector. We have already made extra funding available, for example, to BEMIS—the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland. That is an important part of the support that we offer.

It is important that we discuss volunteering. We recognise the unsung heroes about whom many members have talked. Increasingly, volunteering is flourishing in its own right and making a difference, not only in the voluntary sector, but in public sector settings. All MSPs are well aware of that vital contribution to the fabric of local communities, to key organisations and to innovative service

development. The Executive strongly supports the active communities initiative and will continue to do so.

We are strongly committed to maintaining our work in the rural sector and this year we have committed £2.6 million to the national network.

I am happy to address the points that George Reid raised, many of which were on overseas development. We strongly support his suggestions. Briefly, I say yes to those—the member will receive ministerial responses.

I am proud to be part of a Government whose first instincts were to use Britain's membership of the G8 to keep debt reduction on the agenda. I do not mean that in a party political sense. It is important that we now have a target to lift 1 billion people out of poverty by 2015.

I am being hurried to conclude. I assure the Parliament that the debate was not a cosy one for us—it was not about complacency. We have an ambitious agenda for the voluntary sector, which is a key partner that we will never dominate. The voluntary sector contributes to policy. We continue to fund it and look forward to an invigorating partnership in delivering the social justice agenda.

## Scottish Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Annual Report

17:04

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S1M-2238, on publication of the Scottish parliamentary ombudsman and health service ombudsman for Scotland's annual report.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman for Scotland intends to lay his Annual Report for 2000-01 before the Parliament and orders the Clerk to publish the report.—  
[Mrs Margaret Smith.]

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:04

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S1M-2255, on the designation of lead committees.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following designations of Lead Committee—

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/306);

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/307);

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2001 (SSI 2001/315); and

the Local Government Committee to consider the Firemen's Pension Scheme (Pension Sharing on Divorce) (Scotland) Order 2001 (SSI 2001/310).—[Euan Robson.]



## Decision Time

17:05

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** There are five questions to put to the chamber as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-2245.1, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2245, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on Scottish Executive support for the voluntary sector, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

### AGAINST

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)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (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)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 47, Against 57, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S1M-2245.2, in the name of Bill Aitken, which seeks to amend motion S1M-2245, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on Scottish Executive support for the voluntary sector, 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)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**AGAINST**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 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, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 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)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**ABSTENTIONS**

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 61, Abstentions 28.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that motion S1M-2245, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on Scottish Executive support for the voluntary sector, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 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)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 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, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 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)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 75, Against 1, Abstentions 29.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament welcomes the Executive's recognition of the important role of the voluntary sector in Scottish society through the contribution it increasingly makes to promoting social justice, encouraging active citizenship and widening economic prosperity; endorses the progress made by the Executive in its commitment to working in partnership with the sector through the framework of the Scottish Compact, and welcomes the commitment demonstrated by the Executive through its increased resourcing of the sector.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that motion S1M-2238, in the name of Margaret Smith, on publication of the Scottish parliamentary ombudsman and health service ombudsman for Scotland's annual report, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman for Scotland intends to lay his Annual Report for 2000-01 before the Parliament and orders the Clerk to publish the report.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth question is, that motion S1M-2255, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the designation of lead committees, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees the following designations of Lead Committee—

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/306);

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2001 (SSI 2001/307);

the Justice 1 Committee to consider the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2001 (SSI 2001/315); and

the Local Government Committee to consider the Firemen's Pension Scheme (Pension Sharing on Divorce) (Scotland) Order 2001 (SSI 2001/310).

## European Day of Languages

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The final item today is the interesting members' business debate on motion S1M-2221, in the name of Irene Oldfather, on the European day of languages. I say bonsoir and au revoir to those who are not staying—[*Interruption.*] Order. Perhaps I should have said taisez-vous. Those who wish to take part should press their request-to-speak buttons now.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes European Day of Languages and the publication of *Citizens of a Multilingual World* by the Action Group on Languages, which makes recommendations on the future provision of language education in schools; recognises the vital role of language education in promoting cultural awareness; notes the positive response to the report, and looks forward to innovation in language teaching and an expansion of opportunities in primary schools.

17:10

**Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** C'est avec plaisir que je propose ce débat en partie en français. Aujourd'hui, c'est un moment important dans l'histoire du Parlement écossais. En fait, c'est une journée historique car, pour la première fois, nous avons un débat dans une langue autre que l'anglais, l'écossais ou le gaélique. Nous sommes membres du Parlement le plus jeune et le plus récent d'Europe. Donc, en ce jour de célébration des langues dans toute l'Europe, nous voulons laisser notre marque distinctive.

En mettant ce sujet à l'ordre du jour, nous signalons que notre jeune Parlement souhaite que notre nation soit un véritable acteur de l'héritage européen commun. Nous ne voulons pas être des simples observateurs.

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** On a point of order.

**The Presiding Officer:** In English?

**Members:** En français!

**Mr Home Robertson:** Signor Presidente, mi dispiace, ma io non capisco neanche una parola di questo discorso. [*Laughter.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** It has been agreed that those who speak in a foreign language will also translate in due course.

**Irene Oldfather:** Merci, Monsieur le Président. J'affirme cela car les langues sont plus qu'un simple moyen de communication. Elles représentent l'instrument de la compréhension et de la connaissance des cultures, le moyen d'encourager la diversité et la tolérance. Ce sont

les thèmes sur lesquels l'Union européenne est fondée, et pour lesquels ce Parlement ne cesse de se battre.

L'idée d'une journée des langues, c'était d'encourager les citoyens de tout âge et de toute nationalité, à travers l'Europe, à reprendre l'étude des langues pour le plaisir. Ce discours en français était mon défi personnel.

Voilà! That was my challenge for languages day. [Applause.] Thank you very much. I will briefly summarise in English.

It is with pleasure that, partly in French, I am proposing this debate. Today is an important moment in the Scottish Parliament. In fact, it is an historic day because, for the first time, we are having a debate in a language other than English, Scots or Gaelic.

We are members of Europe's youngest and newest Parliament and therefore, on this day of European languages, we want to make our mark. In choosing this subject for debate, we are sending a message that our new Parliament wishes our nation to share our common European heritage. We do not want to be only observers. Languages are about more than communication: they are about understanding other cultures and encouraging diversity and tolerance—themes upon which the European Union was founded and to which this Parliament lays claim.

The idea of languages day was to encourage people of all ages and all nationalities across Europe to take a language challenge for fun. This speech in French was my personal challenge.

I acknowledge that I have taken up a bit of time with my language challenge, but I would like to take the opportunity to make a few brief points. As I have said, languages can be fun; but there is also a serious note to language development. In a single market, in which it is just as easy to place a call centre in Irvine as in Italy, there can be no doubt that language skills will be decisive factors in job and inward-investment markets. I believe that we, as politicians, have a duty and a responsibility to push forward the frontiers of language development so that Scottish children can compete on an equal basis with their European counterparts. In an increasingly mobile labour market, such skills are no longer luxuries but necessities.

"Citizens of a Multilingual World" makes a number of suggestions for improving language skills, including greater innovation in the teaching of languages. I fully endorse that. In North Ayrshire, we host the virtual school of modern languages, which is a joint initiative using videoconferencing, information technology and other technology. It is welcome and allows children to interact with their European

counterparts in a modern way.

We must diversify the languages that we teach. I suspect that there will be a preponderance of French speaking today. It is important that we include other languages. I am prepared to take my own advice and try another language next year.

I am pleased to welcome to the gallery pupils from Kilwinning Academy, which is in my area. I am proud to say that this year, Kilwinning Academy offers classes in four languages: French, German, Italian and Spanish. The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs will recall that he visited Kilwinning Academy earlier this year and I know that he will be delighted to hear of the further developments in the language curriculum. That is in no small measure due to the commitment of the head teacher and the modern languages staff.

We will all watch with interest the results of the immersion teaching pilot scheme in Aberdeen, which allows children to learn physical education, arts, expressive arts and drama in a foreign language. The fact is that teaching in that way makes sense. Too often in years gone by—and when I was at school I was taught this way—the whole modern language class was taken in English. A good modern language class should be taught for the most part in the language that is being learned.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that the age at which we start teaching languages is crucial to improved linguistic development. We have moved languages into the primary school curriculum, but there is a long way to go. In my area, we are fortunate to have some nursery classes in Spanish. In St Luke's Primary School in Kilwinning we are establishing the reputation of the borough for culture. I hope that Tom Shields will take careful note. The fact is that young children soak up information like sponges and are much less self-conscious in displaying their abilities than are older children, who are often shy about language learning.

As I said in my opening remarks, language is about more than just communication; it is the key to appreciating other cultures, raising our horizons and broadening our experiences, for it is upon the foundations of respect, understanding and tolerance that economic prosperity and peace will be built.

I conclude by saying that I look forward to the day when the children in our schools, who after all are tomorrow's tartan army, can cheer for Scotland and order a pie and a pint not just in one European language, but in several. Perhaps our football as well as our language prospects will be enhanced.

Je me suis bien amusée. J'attends avec plaisir

les interventions des mes collègues. Je vous remercies.

I have enjoyed myself very much and I look forward to hearing my colleagues.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson):** Surprisingly, many members wish to speak in this evening's debate. If all members are to be called, I ask members to restrict their speeches to three minutes.

17:18

**Mr George Reid (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Госпожа Президент, спасибо большое. Дорогие коллеги, дорогая Патриция: для меня большая честь говорить сегодня не по-английски, а по-русски. Вы не понимаете, что я говорю? У вас есть вопросы? Переводчика нет? Поэтому, я говорю по-английски.

I suppose that it is a bit odd to start in Russian, but it is a privilege to speak Russian in this chamber. I should say how I fell into it, because sometimes one falls into languages. I am of such an age that I was sent to Russia to protect people like you, Ms Ferguson, when you were in your pram, at a time when the Soviet hordes and those from other parts of eastern Europe may have been coming up Maryhill Road.

I did not use Russian much for 25 years, then I found myself in the Armenian earthquake zone. It is funny what sticks in one's mind. For example, "Руки вверх!" which is, "Get your hands up"; "Где ваш штаб?" which is, "Where are your headquarters?"; "Где ваша команда?" which is, "Where is your command headquarters?"; and "Говорите, или я буду стрелять," which is, "Speak, or I shoot." It was not quite so easy in times gone by to learn simpler phrases.

A little later, at a meeting between the Minister for Parliament and I and a Russian delegation in the royal apartments of Edinburgh Castle, I said, "Что бы вы хотели делать в Шотландии?" or, "What would you like to do in Scotland?" They said, "Мы хотим виски," or, "We want whisky." Then, there was the perevodchik—the interpreter—going off to the loo, and me being left to translate. I was told, "Скажите, господин Рид, моему другу Тому,"—which means, tell my friend, Tom—"что Шотландия - четырехкнопочная демократия," Scotland is a four-button democracy." Tom McCabe, not surprisingly, asked what that meant. It meant that, on going to the Presiding Officer's desk, the President of the Duma had found three buttons and a zap button—which is unique to this Parliament—to switch members off. The President ended by saying, "Россия - более демократичная, чем Шотландия."—"Russia is a much more democratic society than Scotland these days."

Madame le Président, j'ai trouvé du travail durant les années 1980, mais j'ai dû quitter l'Ecosse. C'était les années Thatcher, et il n'était pas facile pour un ex-parlementaire du SNP de trouver du travail ici en Ecosse. J'ai trouvé du travail en tant que directeur des affaires publiques auprès de la Croix Rouge Internationale, à Genève. Dans la maison, il y avait cinq langues officielles: l'allemand, l'anglais, l'espagnol, le russe et l'arabe. En plus, on parlait, probablement, 40 ou 50 autres langues dans les couloirs. In the house where I worked in Geneva, 30 or 40 languages were spoken. One immediately finds oneself dans le bain—in the bath. One is submerged in languages. They have an osmotic effect on you—you pick them up in all quarters.

One begins to have different perceptions. Consider the words that we use for disability: we have the words "incapacity" and "handicap". The French have only "handicapé". That leads to great difficulties in European translation. Consider the Spanish word, "minusválidos". That is the old word for handicapped people and literally means "people of less value". Geneva is having difficulty working in the new word, "descapacitados".

I have two final thoughts. In the Europe of new languages, there is someone who sits in the chamber and asks to intervene on the Presiding Officer. If he were to say that in German would the effect be as satisfactory? "Passen Sie auf, Frau Präsidentin. Beeilen Sie sich! Es ist mein absolutes Recht zu sprechen!" I do not think that that would get too far. Perhaps it could be tried in Italian—"Signora Presidente. Sono solamente un povero ragazzo da Glasgow. Potrebbe aiutarmi?" or, "Please give me a shot, Madam President, I am just a poor guy from Glasgow and I would like so much your assistance." The important thing, in this bath, is to speak the language, to perceive the differences in culture and attitude that come from it, and above all, to enjoy it in a Europe that is not just multifaceted but multicultural.

Спасибо большое, Госпожа Президент, merci pour votre attention, et j'offre mes félicitations à Irene Oldfather pour le débat.

17:23

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Je suis l'heureux père de deux jeunes filles, qui ont été élevées dans un environnement bilingue depuis leur plus jeune âge. J'ai pu ainsi constater moi-même les immenses avantages que cela représente. Cela leur a permis une plus grande ouverture d'esprit aux cultures différentes de la leur. Cela leur donne aussi une confiance en elles, ce qui est bien nécessaire chez les adolescentes, lorsqu'elles rencontrent les gens d'autres pays.

I start by declaring an interest in that I am the proud father of two teenage daughters who have been brought up in a bilingual climate from the earliest possible age. I have seen the enormous benefits at first hand. They possess a tremendous advantage in appreciating other cultures and in having extra confidence when meeting and making friends with people from other countries. That is why I congratulate Irene Oldfather on lodging this motion for debate and why I thoroughly agree with most of the aims set out in "Citizens of a Multilingual World".

I have always found it embarrassing that people visiting Scotland seldom receive the courtesy of being addressed in their native language, whereas when we go abroad we gaily expect those from other nations to understand English and are surprised and even indignant if they do not. That must often convey an impression of arrogance and bad manners to non-English speakers. The only way to stop that and to enable our citizens to comprehend a new range of cultures and histories is to start at the education level, where it matters.

One of our key industries is tourism. If we want to please customers from other countries, it would be a good start for future generations of Scottish tourism operators to have a basic command of the main European languages. This summer, I was asked to open the great glen raid at Corpach near Fort William. It was a regatta from west to east through the Caledonian canal and organised by a French company. The event was an enormous success and especially helpful to tourism in this year of foot-and-mouth.

For the event, I put on my most beautiful kilt and made a welcoming speech to 150 competitors, most of whom were French. I therefore spoke in French and told them that the Caledonian canal had been constructed to protect British shipping from French privateers. That seemed to amuse them. Afterwards, I received a letter from the company's director, telling me how delighted and surprised the assembled company had been to be addressed in its native tongue. The gesture was small, but valuable.

We should make Scots better linguists. We Conservatives think that the £50 million that the Labour party saved by scrapping the assisted places scheme should be used to bring in specialists to teach foreign languages in primary schools.

Labour's record is not good. It has used money that it said it would spend on cutting class sizes to help such bodies as Scottish Opera. I agree that Scottish Opera deserves support, but ministers should please bear it in mind that most operas are sung in foreign languages. Therefore, will the Scottish Executive please provide future Scottish generations with the ability to understand those

languages better? Further, the Executive should fulfil its declared commitment to Gaelic by giving more encouragement to Gaelic-medium education.

17:26

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I declare an interest. I have had a French mistress as a partner for more than 30 years.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab):** That lost something in the translation.

**Ian Jenkins:** Yes. I speak of my wife, who has taught French for all that time.

Yesterday, I was putting the bins out when I met a former colleague, who is a modern languages teacher. He had just had a German exchange group at his school and two of the teachers had stayed with him for about 10 days. When I went into my house and read the post, I found a request to sign a document for the local twinning association: it wants to obtain a lottery grant because it wants to explain local culture to visitors from Hendaye in the Basque country.

I pay tribute to modern languages teachers and people in twinning associations who have taken on the idea of spreading and sharing culture: language is at the heart of understanding other cultures and how people think. Language is an instrument of understanding. If ever the world needed instruments of understanding, it needs them now. People who have taken the time and trouble to help share cultures and spread their knowledge of other cultures are doing us all a service.

I welcome the day of languages and the year of languages. It is important that we should understand the value of those initiatives. As we stand back and consider the global position, we can see a problem with English spreading to the point at which it offers not only opportunity, but danger. It provides the opportunity for broader communications, ease of trade, business, travel and other matters, but when everyone shares something, there is a danger of blandness, uniformity and a lack of subtlety.

English is continually changing. The language is not set in stone. Many local dialects exist and there is international influence even on standard English. The language develops. We must not pretend that in linguistic terms we can escape the fate of King Canute if we try to stop change, development and the spread of English. However, it is vital that we should cherish and protect all languages—minority languages included—and recognise their importance in a world that would be impoverished if languages and the cultures that

they represent were lost or damaged.

"Citizens of a Multilingual World" is an excellent report that sets out a rationale for the importance of including and promoting the teaching of modern languages in schools. I have no time to go into the details, but the arguments are substantial and well argued. Old assumptions about language teaching are brought into the modern context and much is made of the fact that Britain itself is now a multilingual society—Gaelic, Scots, Urdu and so on are mentioned. The case for multilingual provision in our schools, which Irene Oldfather mentioned, is argued and its authors regret the fact that French is perhaps squeezing out other languages as the second language of choice in the school system.

The arguments in the report are powerful, but practicalities tend to work against diversity, so we need to be careful. Irene Oldfather mentioned some examples of how it can be difficult to make diversity available unless we really work hard at it. Although I support the rationale behind the report in full, I would enter one or two caveats about the suggested way ahead. The proposals for the primary curriculum would involve substantial changes to initial teacher training. The McCrone settlement can make a difference to teachers who are already in the classroom, but the proposals for initial teacher training would take many years to work their way through. We must be careful that we do not assume that by saying that we approve of something it will be done straight away.

When language teaching was introduced into primary schools, the practicalities were not observed and there were difficulties with teachers shifting from one class to another. There was also the difficulty that if the teacher with language skills left the post, the school was left without someone who was trained for it. I worry about the practicalities of the proposals.

Having expressed those reservations, I would like to concentrate on the more positive aspects of the European day of languages. Like everyone else, I express the hope that practical difficulties can be overcome. The opportunities are many; the rewards are even greater.

17:32

**Dr Richard Simpson (Ochil) (Lab):** Confrères, je suis très content de participer dans cette discussion et j'offre mes félicitations à Irene Oldfather, qui est l'instigatrice de la motion. J'ai choisi le français pour mon discours aujourd'hui. L'Ecosse a une tradition ancienne d'alliance avec la France, même plus ancienne que notre alliance avec l'Angleterre, et le français est la langue étrangère la plus enseignée dans nos lycées.

Récemment j'ai assisté à un événement à

l'Université de Stirling pour célébrer l'année des langues européennes. Notre ministre pour l'éducation, l'Europe et les affaires extérieures a fait la présentation. La moitié de son discours a été en français, mais il a avoué que, comme beaucoup d'entre nous, sa capacité et sa bonne volonté de parler les langues étrangères étaient, malheureusement, limitées. Il nous faut changer ces attitudes. Il nous faut moderniser nos méthodes pour enseigner les langues aux enfants.

Quand j'étais élève, on a appris les langues, d'habitude, par la répétition et par les devoirs couchés par écrit. Je devais apprendre le latin au lieu des langues modernes parce qu'autrefois, c'était obligatoire pour l'étude de la médecine. L'enseignement des langues étrangères aux universités était aussi très traditionnel.

Au cours de mon association avec l'Université de Heriot-Watt, il y a 20 ans nous avons fondé une école de traduction, qui n'était que la deuxième en Grande-Bretagne, et qui employait les méthodes les plus modernes.

Nous devons faire du progrès. Les petits enfants possèdent une grande aptitude pour apprendre les langues, et il faut leur donner les occasions d'acquérir ces habiletés. Nous devons préparer nos enfants écossais pour un monde qui est de plus en plus accessible et de plus en plus communicatif.

Je recommande la motion.

Colleagues, I begin by welcoming this debate and congratulating Irene Oldfather who lodged the motion.

I have chosen to make this speech in French.

Scotland has a great tradition of alliance with France that goes back even further than our junction with England.

I attended the launch recently of the celebration of the year of European languages by the Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs at the University of Stirling. His speech was in part in French but he admitted, as so many of us have to, that our ability and willingness to speak foreign languages is sadly limited. We must change these attitudes. My own experience was of learning French mainly by rote and written exercises. I had to learn Latin in preference to a second modern language because Latin was at that time a requirement for medicine.

When I was associated with Heriot-Watt University's court about 20 years ago, we established the school of translation, only the second in any British university at that time, which used modern methods of language teaching.

We must keep up with the times. Young children have a great capacity to learn new languages at



an early age and we must provide them with opportunities to acquire those skills. We must prepare Scottish children for a global world that is becoming increasingly accessible and where communication is vital.

I commend the motion.

17:35

**Dr Winnie Ewing (Highlands and Islands)**

**(SNP):** Ik ben heel tevreden dat wij vandaag deze belangrijke discussie over de kwestie van de talen van Europa hebben. Dutch is one of my hidden talents. I was going to marry a Dutchman once, but he told me that in his view a woman's place was in the kitchen. As members can imagine, I said "Tot ziens, meneer," or "Goodbye, sir," and that was that.

I studied Dutch at The Hague and I took German and Spanish at school—I can carry on not too badly in those two languages. I learned a bit of Italian in the free lessons in the European Parliament. As George Reid said, it is a case of total immersion. As Irene Oldfather will know, because she was there a lot, it is a great privilege to be surrounded by languages. It made it easy for us to try.

I was once in a group with Irishmen and Frenchmen. Every morning I was kissed by 15 Frenchmen, including three former Prime Ministers. It took quite a while every morning and, I may say, it did not happen to many other people. They used to try to make me say cheeky things. One of the assistants once made a philosophical statement: "Au bal des pompiers, c'est toujours les mêmes qui dansent"—meaning it is the politicians who always want to speak. That useful phrase keeps coming to mind. I tried my French out on the oldest member, Louise Weiss, a famous lady who was much decorated culturally and a filmmaker of great repute. She said, "Winnie, please do not speak French to me. I am over 80 and I cannot stand it." That was the honest answer about my French, which I did not study at school.

George Reid gave us tips. A good tip in the Gaelic language is a useful phrase that members must all learn: "Càit a bheil a' cheilidh?" which means "Where is the ceilidh?" If members know that they will get invited into the back rooms and all the places where the singing is.

I have been studying Gaelic for 20 years. I can read and write it and I have limited vocabulary. Gaelic speakers are sophisticated people. It is a philosophical language, which creates certain barriers if one approaches it from a knowledge of Europe. I was head of a group to do with minority languages in Europe, of which there are more than 30. They are too many to list but, apart from the famous ones such as Breton and Basque, they

include Sardinian, Corsican, Andalucian and Valencian. Every one of those languages has a valuable literature and a culture with a unique way of expressing ideas. They are all part of our common culture and the loss of any one is a tragedy for us all. Some, like Cornish and Manx, have gone.

Along with John Hume, I was privileged to create a budget line in the European Parliament for minority languages. That has helped many practical things, such as the publication of books for children in the lesser-used languages and a Breton dictionary. A Shetlandic dictionary is even being considered. I introduced Erasmus when I chaired the Education Committee. The original idea of Erasmus was not only study in another university but an immersion course for a period before the student would go. It was watered down, though. It is up to individual partners to find their own solution. Some people get the immersion course before they study.

In the Borders, a roving teacher was employed to teach Scots. Speaking at a Burns supper in Luxembourg, he told a funny tale about teaching Scots officially to children who really spoke Scots. A wee boy put up his hand and said, "Please Sir, does oor real teacher ken whit you're daein?" That shows that some of us who speak Scots have an understanding of the language that is more passive than active. It is a pity that Scots could not be encouraged more.

It was quite wrong for Gaelic grannies such as mine to tell their grandchildren that Gaelic would hold you back. That was the old, stupid thing that was said, but it is now well-known that knowledge of two languages makes it much easier to learn a third and to be philosophical.

17:40

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Lab):** gratias te ago. mulier, quae Scotiam habitat, sum. linguam latinam loquor nec linguam patriae meae. eheu! o tempora! o mores!

I hope that there are no native Latin speakers listening, because I do not know what my case endings or pronunciation were like. I think that there was a Vice-President of America who was sending undercover agents to Latin America and asked whether any of them spoke Latin. Unfortunately, few people speak Latin, the language that I probably learned best at school, which gives members some idea of what education was like in my day. I do not speak my own native language, which, as a Highlander, would have been Gaelic, because it was thought to have been no use to me. However, I had Latin coming out of my ears, although it has not come out of my mouth for a long time. I wonder what

John MacLean, my old headmaster, would think of my standing up in the Scottish Parliament and speaking in Latin.

I am embarrassed about what is on my MSP web page, because it says that I am fluent in French. It says that because, when I got the form that asked what languages I spoke, I ticked French because I had done it at school. Now everybody expects me to speak French very fluently indeed, whereas in fact, much like Chaucer's prioress who spoke French after the school of Stratford-atte-Bow, I speak it after the fashion of Oban and Argyll—not terribly well at all. That is a great embarrassment to me.

I was interested in what Irene Oldfather said about bilingualism in education and about French-medium education. The way to get children interested in foreign languages is to start them very young. In Scotland, we have been trying to do that for a long time with Gaelic-medium education. I have lodged a motion for a debate on Gaelic-medium education and the problems that it has, so I do not want to go into that in great detail now. Teaching through the medium of Gaelic obviously expands the language part of the brain, just as teaching through the medium of French does. Being bilingual is of tremendous use if one wants to learn a third or fourth language.

Of course, Gaelic is our other native culture. Scots and Gaelic are twins in Scotland, are of equal validity and should have support. Particularly in the Highland area, children who have Gaelic as a first language have to be supported through Gaelic-medium education.

Everybody ought to learn at least one Gaelic phrase in this year of European languages, because Gaelic is, after all, a European language too—a minority language, but a very important one for Scotland. So to finish off, I shall say something in French. Et bien, merci beaucoup pour entendre ces petits mots—thank you very much for listening to these wee words. Agus feasgar math, a h-uile duine—good evening, everybody, in Gaelic.

17:44

**Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** Eskerrik asko lehendakaria. Irene Oldfather-i nire esker beroenak eman nahi nizkioke eztabaida hau ziurtatzeko. Kontuz ibili zer Euskara ez dela Espainera, Gaelikoa ez dela Ingelesera eta Galegoera Espainera ere ez dela.

Thank you, Presiding Officer. I thank Irene Oldfather for securing this debate. "Kontuz" means beware. Beware, that Basque is not Spanish, that Gaelic is not English, and that Gallego is also not Spanish.

During the summer, I had a remarkable

experience when I moved through what I thought was a single language zone. I discovered that I had moved through four language zones and the secondary language in those four zones was not the language that I expected it to be.

I am glad that we are having this debate and I hope that we can have a larger debate during the next year and a half or two years. The key point to remember is that there are many languages in Europe, but they are not necessarily the languages of the names of the states. Let us be careful. Kontuz.

17:45

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I congratulate Irene Oldfather on securing the debate and on her excellent contribution—especially the part in French. I will not try to copy her efforts.

Language development is crucial to the success and achievement of our children and young people. As a young person, I learned three languages. My only memory of Latin is: "In pictura est Flavia. Flavia est puella parva." I think that means: "In the picture is Flavia. Flavia is a small girl." However, the second sentence could mean: "Flavia is a big girl." I am not sure—my memory does not stretch that far back.

In French, I can manage: "Bonjour. Je m'appelle Karen. J'ai 34 ans et j'habite à Carlisle en Ecosse." Too often, that is all the French that those of us who have been taught the language can remember. I can also stretch to: "Une tasse de vin rouge, s'il vous plaît," which has come in handy on a number of occasions.

I also learned English. Some members would argue that I speak English as well as I speak French and Latin. [Laughter.] People from Jedburgh sometimes speak Jeddart rather than English.

I have just returned from Hareleeshill primary school in Larkhall in my constituency. There, I joined the pupils who were celebrating European languages day. I was embarrassed that I could not understand everything that primary 6 and primary 7 pupils were saying in French, which I studied to higher level. Their enthusiasm for the many songs and dances was tremendous. They even performed the tale of Goldilocks and the three bears in French—I know that because I recognised the three bears in the three beds. The children were excellent and seeing them was brilliant. They had no inhibitions about learning another language—they simply spoke it and enjoyed it. They were part of it.

Too often, people's inhibitions set in if they do not learn languages until they are 13 years old. Adolescents are a wee bit shy about what they are

saying. They are comfortable writing things down, but they are not always confident speaking languages. That we have begun to teach languages in primary schools is important. The earlier that children learn other languages apart from their own the better.

I have enjoyed myself today. The debate has taught me much about how languages can be taught and about how children can enjoy learning them. We are progressing significantly and we need to continue with that progress. I hope that my wee boy has more success with modern languages than I did.

17:48

**Colin Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** Wie geht's? Ça va? ¡Hola! ¿Qué tal? Ciamar a tha thu? Hali sha ma shatori? How do you do? How's it gaun?

In those few words, members have experienced my full knowledge of Spanish and Farsi—or Iranian. Ich habe zwei Semester Deutsch am Goethe-Institut in Glasgow studiert, aber ich war kein guter Student. I think that all members understand that—I was rubbish at German.

J'ai aussi étudié le français au lycée pendant six ans, et pendant un an à l'université. Malheureusement, en temps anciens, on ne parlait français ni au lycée, ni à l'université—which must be patently obvious to everyone listening. We did not speak it; we just read it.

As Ian Jenkins said, language is developing all the time. Sometimes we regret intrusions from other languages. I can appreciate the Académie française's concerns of some years ago, when it felt that Americanisms were taking over. It was possible to speak almost no French in a sentence such as, "Je m'habille—I dress—avec mes jockeys, mon t-shirt, mon pullover, mon jean et mes sneakers." Academics fussed over that, but lost.

Why should they have bothered? The big plate with Scots roast beef on it is an ashet, from the French "assiette". Our little fingers are pinkies, which comes from the Dutch "pink" and the rain stotting on the roof is from the Dutch "stotten". The kirk assembly hall that we are in is from the Dutch or German for church. Some members will go home to bungalows, which is Hindustani, and have a cup of char, which is also Hindustani.

If we are happy to take elements of other languages on board, we should give equal respect to the languages and cultures from which they come. However, respect is not enough—some languages dominate the world and others are at risk, but we must not acquiesce to linguistic imperialism or let minority languages languish and

die through neglect.

Respect must be reinforced with resources to enable a variety of languages and cultures to flourish in Scotland—that means Scots in varying forms, Gaelic, English and the languages that have become well established by immigration. If we respect our languages, we respect the diverse cultures that compose the citizenry of Scotland. We in these islands are massively guilty of linguistic isolationism, which is exacerbated by the fact that English is an international tongue. We owe it to ourselves to master foreign languages.

Learning a language is vital. Last week I spoke to Ernest Benach, who was part of a Catalan delegation to the Scottish Parliament. I do not speak Catalan or Spanish and he did not speak English. I spoke to him in Paisley French and he replied in Catalan French—we understood each other.

More than anything, the world needs to be able to communicate effectively to improve understanding. The European day of languages is a celebration of human diversity and points the way ahead to effective international communication. As Winnie Ewing said in Dutch, tot ziens.

17:51

**The Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs (Mr Jack McConnell):** Madame la Présidente, je suis très heureux que la journée des langues européennes, une initiative de l'année des langues européennes, se marque par ce débat sur l'enseignement des langues en Ecosse, et avec une telle diversité de langues—une première pour le Parlement écossais.

Personnellement, j'ai fait de grands efforts pour améliorer mon français et j'en ai retiré beaucoup de satisfaction. Je deviens de plus en plus conscient de mon manque de compétence dans les langues, mais je fais de grands efforts pour y remédier. Donc, j'ai choisi de vous parler en français aujourd'hui.

Je suis heureux que d'autres personnes ont choisi d'utiliser une autre langue aujourd'hui. Nous habitons dans un monde où la communication devient de plus en plus rapide entre les citoyens de différents pays. Nous visitons les pays étrangers régulièrement, et les jeunes d'aujourd'hui travailleront dans les pays étrangers même plus souvent que nous. Pour eux, parler une langue étrangère, c'est plus qu'important—c'est essentiel. Je suis convaincu que l'apprentissage de langues étrangères est un élément essentiel dans l'expérience de chaque élève et que la maîtrise d'une langue étrangère est une compétence nécessaire pour la vie.

Je suis persuadé que tous nos jeunes écossais devraient avoir le droit d'apprendre une deuxième langue. C'est essentiel pour eux, pour nous et pour l'Ecosse. Ensemble, nous pouvons développer un système efficace d'apprentissage de langues pour nos jeunes, ce qui leur permettra de devenir, en effet, des citoyens d'un monde multilingue.

I have been waiting for that for nine months.

I am pleased that European languages day, which is a European year of languages initiative, is being marked by a debate on languages education in Scotland in such a linguistically diverse way—a first for the Scottish Parliament.

I have worked hard to improve my French and have enjoyed the experience very much. I am more and more aware of my lack of foreign language skills, but I am trying to improve, so I chose to speak in French today.

I am glad that others have also chosen to use another language today, because we live in a world where communication between citizens of different countries is becoming faster and faster. We visit foreign countries regularly. Today's youngsters will work in foreign countries more often. For them, speaking another language is more than important—it is vital. I am convinced that language learning is an essential element of a pupil's educational experience and that language ability is a valuable life skill. I believe that all our young people should have the right to learn a second language. That is essential for them, for us and for Scotland.

I thank Irene Oldfather for lodging the motion that we are debating today. I also thank those members who have contributed to the debate. I do not attend many members' business debates, but it has been fascinating to learn that Karen Gillon was once shy, that Ian Jenkins has a French mistress and that Winnie Ewing put a new interpretation on "The Flying Dutchman". It has been great to have this opportunity and I thank the Presiding Officer for agreeing to mark the European day of languages by allowing a choice of languages in the chamber.

If my old French teacher, Wilma Pirrie, could see me now she would probably die of shock. I would especially like to thank Jessica Princeton, who is in the gallery today. She has been tutoring me all year to get me to this stage and I am grateful to her for that. I took up the language challenge and I do not regret it. In the gallery, we also have John Mulgrew, who chaired the action group on languages. He is director of education at East Ayrshire Council and is with many pupils from that area. He and the action group did first-class work in putting together the report, "Citizens of a Multilingual World". I am grateful to them for their

work and for being here today.

I believe that language skills open doors—they widen horizons and develop individuals. I want our record in Scotland's schools to improve. The Executive has today responded to the key elements of the action group report. We have backed the idea of an entitlement to experience a progressive, coherent and successful language education. We endorse that model and are determined to make it work. We will develop an information leaflet for parents and pupils, which will draw on the excellent rationale for language that was produced by the action group and will help to inform them about the new entitlement.

In recent years, funding for language education has been focused—I have to say successfully—on additional training for primary teachers, with little facility to fund innovative approaches to language learning and teaching. As of now, we are going to change the funding package to provide resources to local authorities.

Over the next three years, we will provide an additional £2.5 million to let local authorities be the innovators along with those who direct improved language education at a local level. That funding should be used to support the learning of all languages other than English; it should not be restricted to modern European languages. It should be used for Gaelic, Urdu and other languages for which there is a demand in Scotland's schools.

We have also responded to the report in saying that our review of initial teacher education will examine thoroughly ITE for language teachers and language training for primary teachers. Our work on continuing professional development will ensure that those elements—especially professional development for language teachers—are recognised and progressed.

A number of excellent examples of language education currently exist in Scotland's schools. I will highlight four of them. First, there is the work at the Shawlands Academy international language school. Secondly, there is the excellent, innovative partnership involving East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council and Argyll and Bute Council—some of the pupils and teachers that are involved in that are here today. Thirdly, there is the French partial immersion project in Aberdeen—that was one of the most fascinating classrooms I have been in anywhere in Scotland. Five-year olds were learning French almost as a first language, never mind as a second one. Fourthly, there is the teacher support project in Clackmannanshire, which I am sure Richard Simpson would endorse.

Those are all great initiatives and there are many more. Language learning in Scotland is entering a new era. It will be contemporary,

responsive and appropriate for the needs of our young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Together we can develop an effective system of language education for our children, which will ensure that they can indeed become effective citizens of a multilingual world.

In other words, Presiding Officer, ensemble nous pouvons développer un système efficace d'apprentissage de langues pour nos jeunes, ce qui leur permettra de devenir, en effet, des citoyens d'un monde multilingue.

*Meeting closed at 17:58.*



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