

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 12 February 2003

Session 1

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 12 February 2003*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** Our time for reflection leader this morning is Mrs Anne McIntyre, who is the leader of the Prayer for Parliament, Scotland, Intercessors Team.

**Mrs Anne L McIntyre (Leader of the Prayer for Parliament, Scotland, Intercessors Team):** Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the privilege of being here today. Some of the prayer team are with you every week—albeit from afar—in the public gallery. It is a real joy to come down to the floor of the chamber and speak to members face to face, eye to eye, and heart to heart.

St John's gospel opens with the words:

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth."

It also records numerous accounts of Jesus meeting individuals and groups. One meeting was with an MRC—a member of the ruling council. Nicodemus was determined to meet this powerful man face to face. On greeting Jesus, he declared him, eye to eye, to be a man from God. Jesus gave an immediate and incisive reply to Nicodemus's heart—he said that you need to be born of the Spirit. Jesus went on to explain that God is a Spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. He gave Nicodemus, and gives us, the key to a possible living relationship with God, making effective prayer a reality.

This week, you have sacrificed your mid-term recess to complete as much of the outstanding work as possible in the remaining 32 working days of the session. You will then immediately take part in a gruelling 31-day election campaign. So, let us hear the word of the Lord, for you, from Isaiah, chapter 40:

"The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary and His understanding is inscrutable.  
Those who choose to wait for the Lord will gain new strength.  
They will mount up with wings as eagles  
They will run and not grow weary  
They will walk and not faint."

"New strength"—for a mountain of amendments and legislation; a parliamentary election; and new paths of life.

St Paul exhorted us to pray for all those in authority, so let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we pray that all MSPs, administration and security staff will, today, sense your presence and the refreshing touch of your Spirit.

God of all wisdom and might, we pray for those involved in the present world crisis. May the Holy Spirit so direct their counsels and actions that justice and mercy may prevail, evil be averted and harmony restored.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Amen.

## Education

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The first debate this morning is on motion S1M-3879, in the name of Michael Russell, on education. I invite all those who want to take part in the debate to indicate that now.

09:34

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Two weeks ago in the chamber, the Minister for Education and Young People launched a glossy document called "Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity"—I have a copy of it in my hand. I am sorry that the Minister for Education and Young People is not here today. Most people in Scottish education looked forward to the document. We are talking not about the great debate, but about the response to the great debate. Our motion finds the Executive's response to that debate wanting.

We should consider what the great debate brought forward and what those who were encouraged to respond to the debate said. People had to be encouraged to respond, because many were obviously confused by the process. The team that was established to analyse the results of the great debate—Professor Pamela Munn and her colleagues at the University of Edinburgh—identified four key areas that required improved funding and support. The first area was more pupil choice. In the document, there is repetition in respect of further initiatives, further interventions and an overcrowded curriculum, but there is no indication that anything in the document will produce more pupil choice.

People wanted smaller class sizes. There is a vague commitment to those in the document, but it is not backed up with any details or concrete proposals.

People wanted more professionally qualified teachers, but the document and the minister's statement two weeks ago are heavy on matters such as adult to pupil ratios and light on the key issue of getting additional teachers into classrooms to make a difference. Indeed, the Executive's projections on teacher numbers show that it is intended that numbers will peak in 2007 and fall thereafter.

People wanted better buildings. Many reports, including the Accounts Commission's report, say that the way to get better buildings is not through the current private finance initiative scheme. The Accounts Commission report, which was published in January 2003, showed that it was harder to get better-designed buildings under PFI procurement, particularly buildings with wider

corridors, enough social space, swimming pools and good equipment.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Michael Russell:** No—I have only just started. I will give way shortly.

On the key requirements, there is an obvious mismatch between what people want and the Executive's responses. The most dramatic mismatch relates to a key requirement that came through in virtually every request in the great debate—a move away from performance measurement, tick boxes and meaningless statistics and towards actual achievement in education. The gap between achievement in education and what the Executive has proposed is as dramatic as the gap between the Executive's rhetoric over the past four years and the reality of Scottish education.

**Dr Jackson:** Has the member visited Balfron High School? Many characteristics that he said were not appearing in new schools have appeared there.

**Michael Russell:** I am sure that some buildings are better than others and that, if the member believes that Balfron High School is among the best of those buildings, she will carry that belief, no matter what the evidence is to the contrary. However, the reality is that PFI contracts throughout Scotland are not delivering the buildings that are needed, particularly as they do not allow schools to be built in a way that will reduce class sizes.

The gap between the Scottish Executive's rhetoric and the reality is absolutely stunning. One should consider what the Executive has promised and what it has delivered. To some extent, I am sorry that the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People is here, as he is not responsible for that gap. He did not write the Labour party's manifesto or other documents in the Labour party's name. However, he must take responsibility for them—that is one of the pitfalls of coalition.

The gap between what was promised and what has been achieved is stark. One target in the Labour party's manifesto was for

"80% of children to reach the appropriate standard in reading, writing and arithmetic by the time they leave primary school."

The reality is that, in reading, 28 per cent of pupils, in writing, 41 per cent of pupils, and in maths, 32 per cent of pupils did not reach the basic minimum level expected of them by primary 7. That is a gap between rhetoric and reality.

Another pledge was that there would be

"An e-mail address for every Scottish child and at least 4 modern computers per class."

That has not been achieved. There are 2.2 computers per primary class and only 16 per cent of primary school children have an e-mail address; indeed, not even two-thirds of secondary school children have an e-mail address.

There is a whole list of other examples. The Labour party's manifesto target was for

"13,000 pupils to achieve higher standards at Standard and Higher grades."

The gap in attainment at standard grade is now wider than when the Labour party took office.

Another target was for

"Every child in Scotland to have access to an After School Club."

That process has hardly started.

Another target was to

"Reduce by half the number of 16/17 year olds who do not go on to education, training or a job"

between 1999 and 2002. That gap grew.

Another target was to reduce school exclusions and truancy by a third. Since 1999, unauthorised absence in primary schools has risen by 30 per cent and in secondary schools by 21 per cent. The statistics for violence in schools are off the chart.

Another target was to recruit 5,000 extra classroom assistants by 2002. That is the target that Labour trumpeted most, but it has not been achieved. The target of 1,000 additional teachers by 2002 has not been achieved. Another target was to improve assessment by 2003 so that achievement could be measured effectively; the Executive has given up talking about that, such is the mess that it is in. Another target was the development by 2002 of a comprehensive building strategy. The school estates strategy that was published last week contained none of the promised information. It is empty rhetoric; all that it asks for is information by December 2003.

I could go on with that list, but there is a longer list of the gap between rhetoric and reality in education. It is extremely important that that gap is closed, but "Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity" does not close it. Within hours of the document being published, those who know something about education were complaining about it.

An example is the proposals on inspection, which were very confused last week. Cathy Jamieson talked about stronger inspection and the document mentions "'proportionate' inspection." The following Friday, after the document was published, an article in *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* started:

"Education directors have told Cathy Jamieson there is no need for extra Scottish Executive powers to deal with schools or authorities deemed to be failing pupils."

The directors of education state that there is no need for the extra powers. There is a gap between rhetoric and reality. We must close that gap in the coming Scottish Parliament elections. We must say to people in Scotland, "This is what can be achieved in Scottish education and this is how we are going to achieve it."

I will focus on three issues that need to be addressed; they are listed in the SNP motion. The first of those issues is smaller class sizes. There is a desperate need for that throughout each school, but there is a particular need in primaries 1, 2 and 3, where investment in smaller class sizes produces the biggest results. That can be achieved and it will be achieved by an SNP-led Executive, because it has to be done. Sylvia Jackson finds that amusing; she finds anything that will bring forward real change in Scotland amusing. That is the problem with Labour in Scotland; it can only laugh at the reality of real change, because it is unable to achieve it. It is essential to have smaller class sizes in the early years in Scottish primary schools.

The second issue is simplification of the five-to-14 curriculum, with a new emphasis on core skills. The minister talked two weeks ago about literacy and numeracy being among our most pressing problems, but the document states that the Executive will carry on with the present failed policies. We know that those policies have failed. We must simplify the core curriculum and introduce an emphasis on core skills. In secondary 1 and 2, where the problem is most pressing, we must not play around with ideas of a teacher here or a teacher there; we must refocus on core skills.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife)**  
(Con): Will Michael Russell give way?

**Michael Russell:** No thank you.

It is impossible to have a modern and vibrant economy and a successful Scotland without an emphasis on core skills. We build on those core skills of thinking and learning. If they are not deeply embedded by S1 and S2—and, according to the figures, they are not—the prospects for Scotland and its economy are grim.

**Mr Monteith:** Michael Russell talks about core skills. Will he define what he means by telling the chamber what subjects will be dropped to establish core skills? Will music, art, science or ecology be dropped? What will be removed from the curriculum to establish the remaining subjects as core skills?

**Michael Russell:** That shows about as much understanding of the process of simplifying the five-to-14 curriculum as does Mr Monteith's amendment, which I find baffling.

It is necessary to deconstruct the current curriculum and take it back to the core skills. The curriculum can then be rebuilt on the basis of all the things that we have talked about, which centre on the core skills. Any primary teacher in any classroom in Scotland understands that. It says something about the Conservatives' education spokesperson that he does not understand it.

The start of this Parliament was seen as a time when people in Scotland might establish renewed faith in the delivery of public services in Scotland. They have spent four years looking for an opportunity to re-establish that faith. It is a cruel hoax on the people of Scotland, after a so-called great debate, to produce a document that is as empty of initiative and as empty of solutions as "Educating for Excellence". It is an even crueller hoax to come to the chamber and try to justify the document on the basis that it is what people want. In respect of the document, people have asked for bread and they have been given a stone. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that a quotation from the scriptures makes Karen Gillon laugh.

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Michael Russell:** No.

People are being deceived in Scotland. It is time that we had honest politics that shows that it will deliver. The SNP is pledged to deliver real excellence in Scottish education; what it will not do is deceive the people.

I move,

That the Parliament notes *Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity*, the Scottish Executive's response to the National Debate on Education and the statement by the Minister for Education and Young People on launching the document; further notes that in places the document is contradicted by the Minister's statement; expresses concern that the document contains little new despite the high quality of many responses to the consultation; is particularly concerned that, despite the Minister's admission in her statement that matters of literacy and numeracy "are among our most pressing problems" and that "we will not tolerate underperformance in literacy and numeracy", the document contains no clear and firm commitment to actions that will change the present situation in which the number of pupils failing to meet the required standards of literacy and numeracy by S2 is unacceptably high, and therefore supports the Scottish National Party's radical programme to reduce class sizes in the first three years of primary education to 18 or below and to re-focus teaching effort on core skills throughout the primary school and into the early secondary years.

09:45

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Nicol Stephen):** I welcome the opportunity for the Parliament to consider again the key issues that face education in Scotland. Cathy Jamieson presented the Executive

response to those issues in her statement on the national debate at the end of last month, on the same day that we published the document, "Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity", which was referred to in such glowing terms by Mr Russell.

I remind Mike Russell, in among all his false and feigned anger and his bluff and bluster, that the document is all about creating choice and opportunity. At the core of the document is a move from a one-size-fits-all system to a new curriculum and a new approach to education, which meets the needs of each individual pupil. That is the core of the document.

I will start with our plans on class sizes. The Executive has already delivered smaller class sizes for pupils in primaries 1, 2 and 3. The early years of primary are a critical stage in pupils' education, but we all know that many pupils are not making the progress that they should in the later stages of primary—primaries 5, 6 and 7—and the first two years of secondary school. That is also a critical stage for young people. The Executive is not prepared to let those young people miss out on the opportunities that each and every one of them should have. We are committed to reviewing class sizes at all critical stages—the early stages and the P7 to S1 and S2 transition—and to bringing forward proposals to make reductions, after consultation with the education community, where they will matter most.

**Michael Russell:** The minister is aware of the proposals that I mentioned—my colleagues will talk about specific proposals. Could he tell me the time scale for the reductions that he is talking about, where they will apply and what they will cost?

**Nicol Stephen:** Not yet, because we will establish that in consultation with parents, pupils and education authorities throughout Scotland. That is the right approach. It is the approach that we have taken through the national debate and it is the approach that we will continue to take. We are not going for the single, monolithic SNP policy of reducing class sizes in P1 to P3; it is not as simple as that. To suggest that it is that simple is to deceive pupils and parents throughout Scotland who are looking for improvements to the education system.

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** Will the minister give way?

**Nicol Stephen:** No thank you.

We are particularly keen to reduce class sizes in maths and English as part of our overall strategy to improve literacy and numeracy. Mike Russell is correct that we must raise standards of literacy and numeracy. We must close the unacceptable opportunity gap for many of our children in



Scotland. Doing that means taking action on all fronts.

Teachers are central to everything that we do throughout Scotland's schools. That is why we are reviewing initial teacher education, so that new teachers will have even better skills to improve standards of literacy and numeracy. We will give literacy and numeracy their place at the heart of a fully revised curriculum, emphasising their key importance. Above all, we will not tolerate underperformance in literacy and numeracy. We expect education authorities to play a key role in driving forward the issues to ensure the highest standards in their schools.

Raising standards means that we need good information on the outcomes of education for pupils. I agree that we cannot and should not reduce the outcomes of education to simple tables of exam results for each school, which is why the Executive rejects league tables in Scotland. The key reason for assessment in Scotland should be to support the learning of the individual child. That is why the Executive has put in place a framework based on the national priorities in education and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, which the SNP supported and which was approved by the Parliament.

We want good education authorities and good information for those authorities. We want good teachers with good information and we want pupils and parents to have access to excellent information to assist the education of each child. We want to take into account all the national priorities, not only exam results.

Later this year, we will publish the first baseline report on national priorities, which will draw together reports from all schools and education authorities and give a rounded picture of what we are achieving in education throughout Scotland. That is a huge step forward, but it is only a first step. We will do more to allow parents and pupils to achieve a clear and meaningful understanding of each child's development and the performance of their school. Exam results will be a part, but only a part, of the picture.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson:** Given that it will be difficult to take the league tables out of the public domain, is the minister considering a value-added approach, whereby the improvement of schools, rather than crude raw information, is taken into account?

**Nicol Stephen:** The approach taken through the national priorities is intended to achieve exactly that—a far more rounded picture that takes into account not only exam results but a range of indicators. Our approach will not try to compare one school in one area with a different school in another area in a crude league table.

The Executive has set out its plans for delivering excellence in education in Scotland. We are reducing class sizes and improving literacy and numeracy. We are determined to give parents, pupils and the Scottish community better information and to involve those people more in the education system. We want to implement our plans for excellence for Scottish schools, as outlined in our response to the national debate.

Our plans involve creating a more flexible and relevant curriculum; giving head teachers more local control; allowing teachers to work more flexibly across primary and secondary schools; reforming the assessment system; reducing and simplifying the burden of assessment; improving facilities and the design of school buildings; and involving parents more in their children's education. Those priorities reflect the broad range of concerns that pupils, parents and teachers throughout Scotland raised during the national debate. We are determined to deliver a world-class education for all Scotland's children.

I move amendment S1M-3879.1, to leave out from first "notes" to end and insert:

"welcomes the strategy for the future of education in Scotland published in *Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity* with its focus on raising standards and closing the opportunity gap; supports the plans to reduce class sizes and the measures to improve literacy and numeracy and to ease transitions between key stages, and endorses the strategy's key objectives of an education system centred on the needs of each individual child with a more flexible and relevant curriculum, a streamlined assessment system and greater parental involvement in our schools."

09:53

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife)**

**(Con):** Unlike the SNP, I will not concentrate on the coalition Government's response to its great debate. Why should I? The document is worthy and full of good intentions and it contains much on which members of all parties can agree, but we all know that it is really just an appetiser. It tickles our taste buds, but leaves us unsatisfied.

The main course is still to come: we will not have it at least until the election campaign, or after it, if the coalition parties form the Government. The minister's problem is that he is scared to reveal the real agenda for change. He is scared that the unions, the directors of education and many members sitting behind him will find it unpalatable and throw it back in his face. The minister uses flowery language like that of fancy restaurants to disguise his true intentions. In future, will he intervene in failing schools or failing council education departments? Will he use independent school expertise? There is nothing in the document to reveal that, but there are suggestions that that is the way that the coalition Government will go if it is re-elected.

The minister's boss might be a vegan, but—nudge nudge, wink wink, say no more—the truth is that the document suggests that she will be eating bacon rolls and red-blooded steak tartare.

**Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Is it in the interests of the Parliament to discuss someone who is a vegan and to make such appalling comments?

**The Presiding Officer:** I do not think that it is insulting to describe someone as a vegan if they are one.

**Margaret Jamieson:** My point is about the relevancy of that issue to the debate.

**The Presiding Officer:** If I were to rule on relevancy, that would be a full-time job.

**Mr Monteith:** I assure members that I did not mean the word “vegan” as a term of abuse; I was simply drawing to members’ attention the metaphor that the minister may be forced to eat something that she finds unpalatable.

To some extent, the document is a deceit, but it is nothing compared to the great deceit of the SNP's education policies. The policy of having class sizes of 18 or fewer is well intentioned and laudable, but without the right ingredients, it is a recipe for disaster. The simple truth is that class sizes of 18 or fewer cannot be delivered without abolishing placing requests, tearing up the current catchment areas and, in many cases, building extra classrooms and new schools. As long as the SNP resists admitting the real cost to parental rights and choice, it will be lying to the electorate.

The SNP policy is predicated on using the spare capacity that some schools have and which many more might have in the future because of falling school rolls. However, many schools are in the wrong place and many are half empty because parents choose not to send their children to them.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)**  
*rose—*

**Mr Monteith:** I will take an intervention.

**Michael Russell:** Mr Monteith anticipates my every move.

There is no intention to abolish placing requests, which I support. In those circumstances, I find Mr Monteith's argument bizarre. I find it even more bizarre, although illuminating, that many of the Labour members nodded in agreement with him. Many parents will find it simply disgraceful that members are dancing on the head of a pin to stop smaller class sizes.

**Mr Monteith:** I will move on and give a few examples so that Michael Russell understands why his policy is a deceit. As I said, the policy is

predicated on falling school rolls, but some schools are simply in the wrong place. Some parents choose not to send their children to certain schools, which creates the empty classrooms that Mike Russell wishes to fill up. However, there is a difficulty: if we decide to send children to schools that their parents have not chosen, parental rights and placing requests will, in effect, be abolished. That would create a terrific backlash and a clamour for independent primary schools.

Parents guard jealously their right to placing requests and, though many politicians try to deny it, they often choose schools by choosing houses that are located in a particular catchment area. I will give a recent example with which Sylvia Jackson will be familiar. In Dunblane, there has been outrage from parents in the Barbush area, who found that the area was to be rezoned into a new catchment area, which would mean that new pupils would go not to Newton Primary School, but to Dunblane Primary School. The parents held public meetings and, with some effect, sought to change the situation. Families had located to Dunblane because of its schools; they had bought houses in the Barbush area because it fell within the catchment for Newton Primary School, but they were told that that was going to change.

The problem is that Newton Primary School is full to the gunwales and, from next year, class sizes will reach 30. Dunblane Primary School has just enough spare capacity to accommodate the city's expansion and St Mary's Episcopal Primary School is full. All three primary schools in Dunblane are full, with no spare classrooms and no budget to expand, so catchment areas are having to be redrawn. Placing requests for those schools from outside the catchment areas, such as from Bridge of Allan, will have to be refused in the future.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Monteith:** No, I am running out of time.

**The Presiding Officer:** You are already over time. I have given you injury time.

**Mr Monteith:** To introduce class sizes of 18 or fewer in Dunblane will require seven more classrooms and seven more teachers, but there is no budget available. There is no spare capacity in Dunblane.

Thank you, Presiding Officer, for allowing me to extend, given the interventions that I took. The SNP's policy is nothing more than mutton dressed as lamb. It will ultimately disappoint the electorate, who would be better turning to the Conservative benches; we will strengthen parental rights, because, on these benches, we know our onions.

I move amendment S1M-3879.2, to leave out from “in places” to end and insert:

"the response of the Scottish National Party has been to advocate policies which, whilst well-intentioned, would require placing requests to be abolished, catchment areas to be re-drawn and, therefore, parental choice to be considerably restricted, and calls upon the Scottish Executive to reaffirm its support for the placing request provisions of the Education (Scotland) Act 1981."

10:01

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** It is fashionable for some parties to play down and seek to undermine the Parliament's achievements. There have been many achievements in education. We are improving standards and broadening the curriculum. Devolved school management has enabled schools to develop areas of particular excellence and £14 million has been invested to support that.

We have introduced new national qualifications, bringing together vocational and academic qualifications. We are extending opportunity. We are committed to allowing children with additional support needs to have access to mainstream education.

Higher still offers all young people the opportunity to gain a qualification and provides a better assessment of their abilities. In 2002—for the first time—more than half of school leavers continued their studies in further or higher education.

Some 97 per cent of Scottish secondary schools now provide access to the internet. We are improving the learning environment through better conditions for teachers and better school buildings. More than 4,000 classroom assistants have been employed in primary schools and by 2006 there will be 3,000 more teachers, ensuring a 15:1 adult to child ratio in all local authorities.

We have implemented the new community schools programme in 430 schools and have committed £78 million to roll out the approach to all schools by 2007. We are investing more than £1 billion to rebuild and refurbish schools and have recently announced an additional £110 million for improving school buildings over the next three years. Record investment in education means that, by 2003-04, education spending will top £5 billion for the first time. That represents £1,000 for everyone in Scotland.

I do not plan to dwell too long on what has been done and what is already under way. I want to look forward beyond the posturing of the SNP motion to a more constructive view of where we are going.

Our objectives are clearly supported by the responses in the national debate. We want a review of the school curriculum to ensure greater subject choice and to enable pupils, within a comprehensive system, to opt for academic and

vocational subjects that best match their interests and aspirations. There should be simplified assessments and fewer tests and exams, with more flexibility for schools to address the needs of individual pupils. Do we really need pupils to sit exams every year from S4?

**Michael Russell:** The member makes an interesting point, which the minister raised two weeks ago. Do we need pupils to sit exams every year? What is the Executive's official policy towards the schools that have already abandoned the standard grade? Is there a framework for change or is change happening piecemeal? What are the specific proposals to reduce the examination overload?

**Cathy Peattie:** The member will have to ask the Executive that. I am suggesting that we examine the issue. The member knows from the many inquiries that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee has undertaken that we need to examine the issue of over-assessment. I suggest that he ask the Executive about that.

Smaller class sizes and improved pupil to teacher ratios at the crucial transitional stage between primary and secondary school—P7, S1 and S2—in mathematics and English are clearly the priority.

There should be more involvement for parents and improved information about the child's progress. The suggestion that we review and reform the role of school boards and parent-teacher associations is welcome, but there is a clear need for full consultation with all concerned before there is movement on that.

Head teachers should have more control over budgets, so that those closest to children can decide how best to use resources. There should be greater flexibility for schools and education authorities through agreements for excellence.

We want to improve literacy and numeracy, particularly among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. We must ensure that all children have a good grasp of basic skills. Smaller class sizes are crucial, but we should not focus only on that—having additional adults in the classroom is probably more important. We want better discipline, building on the recommendations of the discipline task group.

The aim of the measures that I have mentioned is to create confident, articulate young people who can realise their potential. The national debate has confirmed many of the ideas that we have been discussing for some time and has thrown up new ideas that deserve serious consideration.

The purposes of education inquiry will add to the important national debate. Although I cannot divulge the contents of the inquiry, I assure

members that it will make a positive and challenging contribution to our consideration of the future of education in Scotland. Taken together, the inquiry and the Executive's document will enable us to achieve clarity of vision.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Cathy Peattie:** No, I am just finishing.

They will ensure that we can deliver education that is fit for citizens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

10:06

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People's opening comments were permeated with phrases such as "we want to", "we will" and "first steps". One is tempted to ask the Executive what on earth it has been doing for the past four years. It seems that it has been doing nothing, which is of course why the great debate is taking place. The Executive is not doing less, better; it is doing much less, worse.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Tricia Marwick:** No. I have just started.

It seems that Brian Monteith was being sponsored for every cooking reference that he made—there was much less reference to education.

I shall concentrate my remarks on school buildings and the need for young people to be educated in facilities that are conducive to learning.

**Johann Lamont:** Will the member give way?

**Tricia Marwick:** All right, then.

**Johann Lamont:** The member asked what the Executive has done in the past four years. I invite her to Pollok to see the new Rosshall Academy, the new St Paul's High School and the refurbished Lourdes Secondary School. We now have an environment to match the talents of the young people in my constituency.

**Tricia Marwick:** I wonder whether Johann Lamont, unlike her colleague Cathy Peattie, is speaking on behalf of the Executive.

As I said, I shall concentrate my remarks on school buildings—the very point that Johann Lamont brought up. At a recent conference in Edinburgh, it was revealed that schools that have an abundance of natural light and ample ventilation significantly outperform more traditional schools in terms of academic results. Professor Brian Edwards of Heriot-Watt University claimed that research from America shows that the more

natural light in schools, the better pupils learn. Too many of our young people are being taught in poor physical conditions. It will cost up to £2 billion to bring Scottish schools up to standard.

Unfortunately, the new PFI schools are generally not being built to a desirable design that will allow pupils to attain. As John Swinney revealed last week, the Amey group made profits of 31 per cent on its schools PFI projects, so £13 million was stuffed into the pockets of Amey and its shareholders—money that should have remained in our schools system. Audit Scotland found that PFI projects will cost taxpayers in Scotland £18 million more every year than they would have paid if all school projects had been funded by normal public procurement methods.

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

**Tricia Marwick:** No, I shall continue.

The PFI projects have been beset with problems, such as small classrooms, poor materials, no swimming pools in any of the Glasgow schools, very little social space—

**Cathy Peattie:** Is the member aware that the five new PFI schools in Falkirk all have swimming pools, all have lights and all have central areas to visit?

**Michael Russell:** Falkirk is not in Glasgow.

**Tricia Marwick:** As my colleague said, Falkirk is not in Glasgow. Moreover, there has been a problem with reduced community access—it is costing communities an extortionate amount to hire the facilities within schools. Even though public money has already bought those facilities, youngsters who play for football teams are being forced to go elsewhere.

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Tricia Marwick:** No. I am running out of time.

For the past six years, the Labour Government has fixed it to ensure that PFI projects are the preferred option. Indeed, they are the only game in town. The National Audit Office referred to the so-called public sector comparator as "pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo".

That is the result of a dogma that permeates all the thinking on the provision of new facilities. The Treasury's drive to get capital projects off the balance sheet has ensured that PFI projects cost more, that profits are squirreled out of the public sector and that the facilities that have been provided are not as good as those that could have been provided if students, teachers and the wider community had had some influence on the design process.

I understand that the Liberal Democrats now favour public sector trusts. I look forward to hearing the Liberal Democrat Deputy Minister for

Education and Young People say that the past four years of PFI have been a wasted opportunity from the point of view of both cost and design. I suspect that it will not suit him to do so.

The SNP will ensure that our young people have decent facilities to learn in and that any profit will be returned to the education system, rather than being put into the pockets of those who seek to profiteer at the expense of our public services.

10:11

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** When I reflect on the education of SNP members, I note that Mike Russell must have done particularly well in his creative writing class and that Tricia Marwick must have sailed through her geography class. The observation that Falkirk is not in Glasgow is most illuminating. It might surprise Tricia Marwick to learn that Scotland is still in Britain.

**Tricia Marwick:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jackie Baillie:** No—I am still in my first minute.

Although everyone knows that education and opportunity are closely linked, the link between ambition and opportunity is talked about less often. Opportunity needs to be courted. Opportunities do not just appear with the milk on the doorstep; they need to be seized. I want the children of Scotland to be educated, to be ambitious and to seize opportunities. I want them to be educated with a can-do attitude. To encourage such an attitude, it is essential to recognise the child as an individual, to address life skills as well as maths and English and to build confidence as well as qualifications.

The Scottish Executive has invested money in education in the traditional sense, through the provision of bricks and mortar, school books, equipment and teachers. Unlike the SNP, it has also shown a clear understanding of education in its broadest sense.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No, I will not.

Through sure start Scotland, we have recognised that a child's early educational background and family environment have an impact on their ability to learn and to fulfil their potential later in life.

New community schools also embody the principle that the potential of all children can be realised only by addressing their needs in the round. In new community schools, teachers, social workers, community education workers, health professionals and others work together in a single team to meet an individual child's needs. Following that route has meant that children in

Dumbarton constituency have access to health development officers, to family and pupil support—to address barriers to achievement at school—and to groundbreaking educational information technology systems. Subsequent evaluations have shown that those investments have paid dividends, particularly in improved literacy, numeracy and good behaviour.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way on that specific point?

**Jackie Baillie:** No. Unlike SNP members, education has come a long way in the past four years. However, I am always the first to agree that more can be done. The national debate revealed the need to make progress in some areas. I am pleased that the minister is addressing those issues.

The sheer scope of the five-to-14 curriculum is one of the most important issues, as teachers in my constituency—most recently, staff at John Logie Baird Primary School—have pointed out. In trying to cover so many areas, teachers cannot give sufficient attention to core areas. A slimming down of the curriculum would lead to the devotion of more class time to core skills and would ensure that everyone attained a level of foundation learning.

I must take issue with the SNP on the important issue of class sizes. Yet again, the SNP conveniently fails to acknowledge what is being done. The Executive has already set targets for primary and key secondary school years. Let us step back to analyse the logic of the SNP's call for smaller classes across the board. How would such a change be paid for? Smaller classes ultimately mean more classrooms and a complete overhaul of the school infrastructure. Although the Executive is committed to improving the school estate and has secured £1 billion to do so, that would not be enough to fund the SNP proposals.

Like most critics, the SNP thinks that it knows the way, but it cannot drive the car. The SNP has no idea how it would deliver any of its proposals. Surely it is much more sensible to increase the teacher to pupil ratio. That is quicker and much more effective than counting the number of classrooms. After all, it is attainment that matters. We know that improving the adult to pupil ratio gives a significant boost to pupil learning.

Anyone who removes the blindfold of bias—I urge Mike Russell and Tricia Marwick to do so—must admit that great steps have been taken. Ninety-seven per cent of secondary schools have access to the internet. Extra educational resources are being targeted at those in most need. For the first time, more than half our young people are going on to university and further education colleges. Those are the foundations for a strong society and a strong economy.

10:16

**Colin Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I recently asked an experienced teacher what single thing he would prioritise to improve schools. He said that he would prioritise getting the bad kids out so that the good kids could be educated. He went on to tell me stories that I will not relate.

However, I will give members a couple of my stories. Discipline has deteriorated since I left teaching. With the minimum amount of force, I have gently neck locked a pupil of my size who continued—in spite of my order to stop—to kick another pupil repeatedly. My actions were aimed at safeguarding the victim, who was lying on the dining hall floor. The victim had hurled school custard at the assailant, although most of it had ended up on my suit. In a disciplinary situation, four adults, each holding a limb, have brought into my office a writhing and screaming child who was parallel to the ground. Things have not got better.

A better teacher to pupil ratio—

**Johann Lamont:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Colin Campbell:** No, because I know exactly what I will get. I have only four minutes, which will probably be my last four minutes on education.

A better teacher to pupil ratio in the early years of school is essential, because that is when the fundamental attitudes to the system and to the way in which it works are established. International evidence backs that up. Better liaison with social work and support services is needed. Teachers should be given systematic training in conflict avoidance and resolution and in how to keep themselves and their charges physically safe. I ask the minister to take that point on board.

On exclusions, there is a predictable tension between teachers and head teachers. I understand that my exclusion rate was average. The price for that was that some teachers thought that I was far too soft. Schools do not need targets for the reduction of exclusions. To demand percentage decreases in exclusions is to increase classroom and inter-staff tension and to demoralise teachers and head teachers. I ask the minister to take that on board, too.

Head teachers manage their institutions. Following a surgery with ex-head teachers who felt that they had been treated unjustly, I wrote to *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*. My letter, which was published in the edition of 13 September 2002, invited any head who

“feels that he or she has been hounded from their post by the actions of staff who have adopted a culture of grievance and orchestrated a campaign against the management of the school”

to contact me in confidence. A number of head teachers did so.

Let me give a composite of their replies. Imagine a head who arrives in a school in which an influential body of staff is set in its ways. The staff are resentful of the head, perhaps seeing themselves as the guardians of the school's traditions. They may have extensive networks through parents associations or social circles, but they are clever enough not to get themselves disciplined. Alternatively, imagine even a well-established head of some years' standing, who is obliged to implement new policies with a staff whom he or she had hitherto been able to woo and persuade.

Indifference to the head's desired new policies changes to open hostility. Grievances are lodged. A succession of grievances may even be planned. The unions are brought in. To whom does the head then turn for support? The head's union may not have the wealth to fight his or her legal case—that is something that those who are thinking about becoming head teachers should investigate—or, if the staff and the head are in the same union, the union may side with the staff against the head. The union may even coach staff in the tactics necessary to beat the head. To whom then does the head turn?

Does the head turn to his or her employers? Good employers will give advice and support and even offer arbitration to solve the problem and make progress, but others may make the calculation that it is easier to move one member of staff than to move several and so side with the majority. The head must then go, even if he or she is innocent of any major wrongdoing. I have evidence that that has happened. I ask the minister to take that on board. I would love to say to the minister, “Come to my office and we will discuss it.” However, I recognise that it is I who may need to invite myself to the minister's office.

10:21

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** At the centre of today's debate is our consideration of the Executive's response to the national debate on education, which the Executive published under the title “Education for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity”. The document must be popular—I was unable to obtain a copy from the Scottish Parliament information centre yesterday, so it must be going down well with the public somewhere.

When the minister introduced the document, I welcomed it as a first step in taking up the ideas and recommendations that flowed from that extensive debate. I acknowledge that the proposals in the document are not revolutionary, but they promise solid progress across a wide range of aspects of the education system. If we can make solid progress in all those aspects, the

educational experience that we offer our children will benefit from a substantial improvement, building on the sound basis that exists within our schools today. We need to build on the pre-school provision and the early-start mechanisms that are currently in place.

I was pleased that the responses to the debate endorsed the comprehensive system, but I am not complacent. I am anxious to see a system that is not monolithic but embodies flexibility and offers opportunities for innovation and fresh approaches at all levels. The document's proposals offer to increase pupil choice by reviewing the school curriculum and by streamlining and simplifying assessment. It proposes to bring forward a reduction in class sizes and to tackle discipline problems. Indeed, I endorse many of Colin Campbell's recommendations about the need to improve things such as initial teacher education.

The document also makes proposals about improving school buildings, giving more control over budgets to head teachers and improving transitional arrangements between primary and secondary schools. There will be more professional co-operation than has previously been the case and parents will be involved more fully. The inspection regime for schools is to be changed, so that it is more closely focused on schools in which there are problems. All those measures are important; cumulatively, they will offer a substantial model for progress.

Let me say a little about class sizes, assessment and the promised review of the school curriculum. As a former teacher, I well know how important class sizes are to our ability to deliver the best in education. I believe that a reduction in class sizes is important and that it should be built into how we think and plan about the future. However, the SNP promise to reduce class sizes to 18 seems to me to be wildly optimistic. As others have pointed out, the SNP policy takes no account of the cost of extra school buildings.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Ian Jenkins:** No, hang on.

Just the other day, I spoke to a teacher who compiled a wee Latin motto that describes the SNP policy:

"Crustum hodie in caelo est, et cras fructus conditus erit."

That translates as: "Today, there is pie in the sky and tomorrow there will be jam."

I am pleased that the Executive is committed to reductions in class sizes, but I would welcome a longer-term commitment to planned and achievable reductions within a time scale over the next few years.

**Michael Russell:** The member has received no such commitment, even from his own minister.

**Ian Jenkins:** But I would welcome it.

The commitment to simplify assessment is vital. We must always consider what assessments are for and whether they are reliable, necessary and practicable. We must also be careful about the use that is made of the results. I am pleased that the exam results league tables are being discredited as the sole benchmark of quality. I endorse every measure that can be taken to reduce the power of the league tables in that regard.

The national tests for reading and writing that were in operation when I left teaching involved a whole battery of tests that had to be applied to individual pupils or to groups of pupils when the teacher thought that the pupils were ready. Not only were the tests difficult to manage and inconvenient to administer, but they simply confirmed what the teacher already knew. They were part of a silly and elaborate bureaucratic system. We need to have a rational look at how we obtain information about standards without such elaborate arrangements. In all those ways, it is vital to reduce the burden of assessment on teachers and pupils.

Like the Executive's document, the SNP motion talks about reviewing the curriculum and focusing on core skills. I support such a review. I welcome the focus on literacy and numeracy, but I am anxious that the core curriculum should not be confined only to numeracy and literacy. It must embrace the wider purposes of education and involve the development of the whole pupil as an individual and as a member of the community. We must be prepared to make informed and sometimes difficult choices about the shape of the curriculum and what may have to be dropped from it. I hope that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's document on the purposes of education will assist that process.

I believe that we now have the basis for real progress. I urge ministers to ensure that the mechanisms are in place to take the proposals off the paper and put them into action in the classrooms. That should be done in partnership with teachers, parents and pupils.

10:26

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

Like Ian Jenkins, I have listened to parents. I will make two points today, both of which arise from representations that parents in the Highlands have made to me.

My first point has been made in particular by school board chairmen in the Highlands. Although the McCrone report was widely welcomed, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities estimated that there would be a shortfall in funding of £150 million. At the time, many of us thought that

COSLA might be exaggerating. However, now that McCrone is being implemented, the actual shortfall is £147 million. For Highland Council, the underfunding for McCrone implementation is £6.6 million, which means that the council can implement the pay settlement but little else. Classroom assistants and continual professional development are now dreams, aspirations or targets—to use the Executive spin.

Given that the McCrone funding formula was based on pupil numbers, it is hardly surprising that there should be a shortfall in an area that has so many small schools. The result is that teachers in urban areas will receive all the support and classroom help that was outlined in McCrone, whereas rural teachers will receive only minimal support. If the minister were job hunting after graduating from teacher training college, where would he choose to go? The Highlands already faces a crisis in recruiting general practitioners and dentists, but the Executive is now creating similar problems in respect of teachers. We will have a two-tier system in Scotland.

How can schools and education authorities be given a legal obligation to pursue continuous improvement when they have no funding to implement it and no staff to cover the resulting teacher absences? Highland Council's education convener said only this week:

"This financial year will not be good for education, culture and sport. £3.58 million was removed in 2002/03 from our service to help balance the council's budget which was not replaced.

That meant a 10% cut in the money schools get per pupil ... and a freeze on recruiting visiting teachers."

Highland teachers also have to deal with the fact that their levels of administrative and support staff are among the three lowest in Scotland.

The second point that I want to make relates to what was said by Colin Campbell, who made his points extremely well. However, my concern is not only with class sizes. A problem that is constantly brought to the surface is discipline and bullying in schools. That could be tackled by joined-up government. It takes far too long to identify vulnerable children and bullying, too long to diagnose and assess education needs and an impossible time to get the necessary psychological support. Young offenders are simply becoming old offenders because there is no help or support for them, so they carry on offending. If addressing offending behaviour were a higher priority than the publication of glossy brochures, that would be of great benefit.

There is a critical lack of residential care for children with psychiatric problems. Without facilities and support near home, young people's problems become more acute. Those with drug

and alcohol problems cannot be treated in adult facilities until they are 16—that wait is just too long for many. In Inverness, fast-track referrals to the department of health and child psychiatry take more than six months and normal referrals take 18 months.

I have raised those points because of the effect that disruptive children can have on other children and because of the demands that they can make on teachers.

10:31

**Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I was going to begin my speech by declaring my registered interest as a member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. However, having heard the earlier speeches, I will concentrate my remarks on school buildings. As we have heard, evidence shows that a pleasant and healthy environment leads to healthy education and good educational attainment.

My colleague Tricia Marwick has already quoted from the Audit Scotland report that told us that under the public-private partnership regime to which this Government seems to be wedded, we are already paying 3 per cent more in additional interest payments on the schools that we are procuring under PPP. Only last week, we heard that Amey—the company that used a PPP to build our schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh—made a 31 per cent profit on that contract.

**Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** Against that background, can we take it that the member will not be urging favourable treatment for the outline business case that was made by East Dunbartonshire Council for funding from the Scottish Executive? Is she content that schools in East Dunbartonshire should wait until funding can be secured from public revenue?

**Fiona McLeod:** I was anticipating that intervention from Mr Fitzpatrick. I remind him of the meeting that we both attended last week with Cathy Jamieson. At that meeting, the parents of pupils who attend Kirkintilloch High School showed their hostility towards the use of private finance initiative contracts in building public schools in East Dunbartonshire. At that meeting, Cathy Jamieson said that it was her responsibility to "spend the money wisely". Given the information we have had from Audit Scotland and the gross profits that Amey has made from the Glasgow schools, how many more schools could we have built from that profit and the interest on that money? Is that a wise use of public money? How many more teachers could we have got and how much smaller could class sizes have become using those grossly inflated profits? Is that responsible use of public money?



**Michael Russell:** I want to add to the very impressive case that my colleague is making by giving one piece of information that I learned on Monday. Dumfries and Galloway Council asked whether it could use a not-for-profit scheme, but that was refused by the Scottish Executive. Despite the Executive's announcements on the issues, it is determined to keep putting 31 per cent profit into private companies.

**Fiona McLeod:** Mike Russell's comments lead me on to say that a procurement process for public buildings should be open, consultative and participative. As Mr Fitzpatrick and I know, those processes should not be shrouded in commercial confidentiality—or secrecy—as was the outline business case to which Mr Fitzpatrick referred. I wonder how the member can support an outline business case for a joint venture from East Dunbartonshire Council, when the council refuses to discuss it in public with members of the public or with parents.

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The member is in her last minute.

**Fiona McLeod:** The other day, I was at another meeting with Brian Fitzpatrick, but because of the commercial confidentiality and secrecy surrounding the issue, a local school where the building is crumbling around the pupils has been offered "tarting up" and maybe—if members will excuse my cod Latin—fructus hodie, or jam tomorrow.

Not-for-profit trusts would ensure that the public, parents and pupils were involved in producing schools, rather than having foisted on them schools that are not fit for purpose—schools whose only purpose is to provide profits for private companies.

10:35

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** By and large, our education system is reasonably successful in getting pupils to learn more, understand more, acquire facts and learn skills. However, we are less good at making pupils into better people and citizens. The problems are very difficult to solve. First, people tend to fulfil the expectations that others have of them, and to respond to peer pressure. In some communities, peer pressure pushes people in the wrong direction—it is assumed that people will fail, get into trouble and not have a job. We have to address that.

Secondly, a minority of pupils have parents who are apathetic about or positively hostile towards education, and who are often extremely hostile to teachers. We have to sort that out. The

suggestions in the Executive's worthy document about improving parent-teacher associations are not relevant because such parents do not come to PTA meetings. We have to get through to them somehow.

Thirdly, a lot of learning is done outwith school, or at school but outwith the mainstream, but there is little mention of that in the Executive's document. I am sure that I am not alone in that my abiding memories are of the things that influenced me most being, for example, performing in concerts, playing in school teams, acting in plays, being involved in clubs during the holidays, and going to scout and cadet camps which, with all their failures, have still done some good work.

We must put much more effort into recreational and informal education activities. That would not require a huge sum from the education budget; however, a little more effort would have a significant effect on pupils. Those who are switched off by school can often be switched on again by a charismatic club leader, for example. Most people are interested in something and if we can get young people interested, that would do a huge amount of good.

I have experienced the good effect that Outward Bound Trust-type activities have on some people. Such activities are not everyone's cup of tea, but they do some people a lot of good. I plead that, in addition to the good things that are mentioned in "Educating for Excellence", we should pay more attention to education outwith school and try to create a better society.

Possibly the greatest contribution that politicians could make to improving education is to start saying what we mean and meaning what we say. I know that most members are well intentioned and honourable, but the public sees us as a shower of dishonest people and we must correct that. If the leaders of the country are seen to be unreliable and dishonest, young people will follow that course. We have to persuade them that society can work better if they become better and do a better job than we have ever done.

10:38

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** There has been a lot of talk today about the gap between rhetoric and reality, but I suppose the SNP has become expert on that in the past few years. "Free by '93" represents one of the gaps between rhetoric and reality that we can all enjoy.

The gap between rhetoric and reality is well illustrated by what the SNP says, which is that the only thing that matters is class sizes. However, parents actively send their children to schools that have larger class sizes because, in reality, there is more to school than the number of pupils in the

class, although class size is important and we need to make progress. Some of the worst discipline problems come from schools that have small classes.

The SNP wants to improve the support that is available to pupils, but dismisses classroom assistants as nose wipers and pencil sharpeners—exactly the kind of educational snobbery that has put us in the current situation. The reality in every school that I have visited is that every person and every teacher welcomes classroom assistants as being valuable and meaningfully supportive of pupils' learning.

I arrived in the middle of Donald Gorrie's speech, in which he spoke about a wide range of issues. One thing that has struck me in some schools that I have visited in Clydesdale is how the whole school team, from the janitor to the lady who provides the school dinners, is part of the learning environment for every child. Whoever they are, they can be a learning model for every pupil. We cannot take away from the valuable role that every member of a school's staff plays.

There has been rhetoric about improving school buildings, but the reality is that the SNP has opposed every case where it has happened. My colleague Johann Lamont talked about Rosshall Academy, St Paul's High School and Lourdes Secondary School. Those examples were dismissed by Tricia Marwick as being irrelevant to the debate, yet there have been real improvements to the learning environments of some of our most disadvantaged children in Scotland, who are learning in places that are fit for learning. The reality is that when the new Larkhall Academy is built, Biggar High School is refurbished, Carluke High School is refurbished and Lanark Grammar School is refurbished, the SNP will oppose those improvements.

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Karen Gillon:** No, Michael Russell has had his turn. Sit down.

**Michael Russell:** Karen Gillon said something that is not true.

**Karen Gillon:** Oh—the member welcomes PFI in Lanarkshire. Well done; that is good. I am glad to hear about that change of heart.

The difference between the rhetoric and the reality is only too real. Mike Russell likes to quote the Bible and the reason why I laugh is that he has done it once too often. The reality is that here in Scotland people see the truth and look for the truth; they know the difference between rhetoric and reality. People in Scotland know that although classes of 18 might sound good, the reality is that they are unachievable. On 1 May they will dismiss the rhetoric of the SNP and support the reality of the Labour party.

10:42

**Mr Monteith:** I enjoyed Karen Gillon's wind-up speech for Labour. There is much in "Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity", and much in what Labour has said over the past five or six years, that represents a sea change for that party. There is much that is highly progressive and that deserves support from the Conservatives. I trace that back to when Helen Liddell became the shadow spokesman on education. I wonder whether much of the change is the result of Karen Gillon's input at that time. Although we will not support the Labour amendment, there is much good in it, and if it becomes the substantive motion it will enjoy our support.

I wish that there were an education debate almost every week. It would be a terrific opportunity for all of us to give examples to Michael Russell of the problems that the SNP policy faces. Every week I could mention yet another school—yet another Newton Primary School—that exemplifies the inability to deliver class sizes of 18 or fewer. *[Interruption.]* Michael Russell laughs as if reality has not dawned on him, so maybe I should give another example to address the obvious lack of knowledge on the SNP benches.

Take the Royal High Primary School, which my sons recently attended. It has three forms—P1, P2 and P3—with 30 pupils in each class, and two classes in each form, which equals 60 pupils in each year. Of course, 18 does not fit nicely into 60, so that school would have to have 54 pupils in each form. The catchment area would have to be reduced to take account of the falling numbers, because we could have only three classes of 18—

**Michael Russell:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Monteith:** I must carry on with this example. The three forms would need to be reduced and we would need to reduce the catchment area to take account of the fact that there could be only 54 pupils in each year. If we had 54 pupils, we would need another classroom for each year: even if the catchment area were reduced, we would still need another classroom for each year.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson:** Does Brian Monteith agree that that policy might result in composite classes? I do not know the SNP's line on that.

**Mr Monteith:** Composite classes might be a way round the problem. I would be interested to hear Michael Russell's point of view on that.

**Michael Russell** *rose*—

**Mr Monteith:** Mike Russell can answer in his own speech—I have less than two minutes left.

The point is clear: a school like the Royal High Primary School would need three new classrooms

and three new teachers and would still need to reduce its catchment area. That school already has placing requests, but those would have to be removed. That would not happen only at the Royal High Primary School, but at the neighbouring Parsons Green Primary School and the neighbouring Duddingston Primary School, because in Edinburgh many schools are full to the gunwales.

Of course, the situation does not apply only to Edinburgh. I quote from a letter from the service manager in charge of education of Perth and Kinross Council, which states:

"In terms of accommodation we currently have classrooms for each class but we have no spare capacity, particularly in Perth City. We do not anticipate that the anticipated reduction in primary pupils nationally will alter that situation in the next few years as this area continues to benefit from a growing population. Obviously any proposal to dramatically reduce class sizes would have serious implications for our accommodation stock—quite apart from the requirement for additional teaching staff."

There we have it; that man is not a Tory, but an official and he is saying that it would be quite difficult, if not impossible, for Perth and Kinross to deliver smaller classes of 18. The truth is that classes of 18 cannot be achieved without additional massive expenditure and, even then, without effectively removing parental choice by removing placing requests. I put it to the Parliament that that policy would be unworkable and undeliverable, and as such it is a deceit. It is a policy that should be removed.

10:47

**Nicol Stephen:** I commented earlier on Mike Russell's speech, and I will return to it in a moment, but first I will comment on Brian Monteith's opening remarks, rather than on the speech that he just gave.

I had a vision of Brian Monteith late at night scripting his words for this morning, desperate for good rhetoric and good analogies, and all that came into his mind—in fact, everything that came into his mind—was food. Brian Monteith is not restrictive in relation to his food; he knows no boundaries. He did not stick with vegan food; there were bacon rolls, there were onions and there were restaurant meals—the lot. Some of what he said, however, was sensible. It is important that we record that fact because it is, as we know, a rare occurrence and another such occurrence might not take place in the lifetime of this Parliament.

It was important that Brian Monteith focused on some of the shortcomings of the SNP policies. He focused on areas on which I would not have chosen to focus; for example, the impact of class sizes on placing requests. In his closing remarks

he focused on the impact on catchment areas. Mike Russell is itching to respond to those points. Brian Monteith probed the SNP policy in a way that the SNP is not used to and is clearly not comfortable with—

**Michael Russell:** Will the minister give way?

**Nicol Stephen:** Before I let Mr Russell in—as I will—I will focus on the key issue in relation to the SNP's class-size commitment. It does not relate to placing requests or catchment areas; it relates simply to the cost and the consequences of having to provide the additional classrooms that Mr Monteith spoke about. It is not a fair policy. It would not mean just one or two extra classrooms for P1; it would mean one or two extra classrooms for each of P1, P2 and P3, which would quickly add up to five, six or seven extra classrooms. Those extra classrooms would be required in many primary schools throughout Scotland. At the moment, that is completely uncoded, but such an uncoded upheaval must be clarified. We have to test the SNP on whether the policy has been properly thought out.

**Michael Russell:** It is rich for the minister to talk about costing when he would not give me an answer about the costing of his class-size proposals. The proposals are in our policy and have been debated in Parliament and I would be happy to give him chapter and verse. The Executive could set a target in its school estate review, but it refuses to do so.

**Nicol Stephen:** What is the figure?

**Michael Russell:** Can I ask the minister one question?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Very quickly.

**Michael Russell:** Why is it that although a class-size reduction programme has been put in place in Tennessee, California, Arkansas and most American states, such a programme is—according to some members—unachievable or impossible, which is nonsense? The Executive shows poverty of ambition.

**Nicol Stephen:** Although—from a sedentary position—I encouraged Michael Russell to give us the figure, members will note that he failed to do so, because his proposals are uncoded. *[Interruption.]* Mr Russell protests too much, so we know that we have struck a raw nerve.

What is important in Scottish education is that we move forwards sensibly, together and in partnership—Ian Jenkins referred to that—with proposals that can be delivered and that will allow us to see progress on class sizes, and on the introduction of additional teachers and additional classroom assistants. That is the approach that the Executive has taken in the past four years. We have worked with teacher organisations, local

authorities, schools, teachers, parents and pupils. I hope that we can build on that consensus and partnership approach in the next four years.

As Ian Jenkins said, what we propose is more about evolution than revolution. We should not be dogmatic about education. We experienced the politically driven agenda for too long during the Conservative years. We want rounded individuals. In "Educating for Excellence", we take a rounded approach to education that does not concentrate only on exam results and attainment, but deals with issues such as citizenship and enterprise. Those matters are important.

"Educating for Excellence" is substantial and I wanted, in my summing-up speech, to review its substance, but time prevents me from doing that. I thank members for an interesting debate.

10:52

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** On Saturday, *The Herald* contained an interesting article that reported on a study that was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, which showed that people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are broadly disappointed with the impact of devolution. However, that emphatically does not mean that they want to lose their legislatures, because that disillusion resulted in a demand for more, not fewer, powers. Of the Scots who were surveyed, 70 per cent wanted the Scottish Parliament to become more important than the Westminster Parliament. That is interesting in itself, but I highlight from the same study the finding that only 27 per cent of those who were surveyed thought that the Scottish Parliament was increasing educational standards. That comment does not originate from the SNP; it is what a random selection of voters in Scotland think and it sets the context for the debate.

The national debate consultation exercise allowed many concerns to be expressed. Relentless target setting, over-assessment, league tables, the examination system and the unnecessary bureaucracy that stifles learning were criticised. However, the Executive's response does nothing to address those criticisms and I have heard nothing today to change my mind about that. The response refers merely to current policy initiatives. The document is weak on substance and it is selective about the topics for action.

What the document calls a "radical" step—a reduction in the exam burden—is merely an announcement of a future review of the system. The response offers no solution to the excess targets issue. Despite concerns about a massive rise in school violence—the number of recorded incidents has risen by 700 per cent since 1999—

the Executive will simply continue with existing policies and take "further action where necessary". What action, and when will it become necessary?

In the past four years, we have heard Labour make numerous vague promises on education, but the document is its vaguest and poorest response yet. It contains nothing that will convince people that it is any more than a public relations exercise at taxpayers' expense.

The minister and the Executive have claimed—it has been much mentioned today—that the starting point is to improve literacy and numeracy, but the document says that the Executive will continue to implement current strategies.

Those current strategies have led to half of the children in S2 failing to achieve minimum levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. That applies in West Dunbartonshire, so although I know that Jackie Baillie is very concerned about attainment, it is difficult to understand how she can justify the Executive's policies, given the statements that I have just made.

**Johann Lamont** *rose—*

**Jackie Baillie** *rose—*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Irene McGugan:** One of the Executive's social justice milestones was an increase in attainment levels in basic core skills, but statistics reveal that more and more pupils are not meeting the minimum levels as they progress through school.

**Johann Lamont:** Will the member give way?

**Irene McGugan:** No, thank you.

The document says nothing about the concern over the long-term decline in modern language learning, although such learning is one of the greatest tools for improving literacy. The number of entrants to French exams has decreased by 50 per cent in 20 years and the figure is now 11 per cent lower than it was when Labour took power.

A reduction in class sizes would improve literacy and numeracy skills and it would allow those skills to be properly developed with a new emphasis on core skills. The SNP's number 1 pledge in education is to reduce class sizes in primaries 1, 2 and 3 to the internationally recognised optimum of 18. The Executive boasts that it has reduced class sizes in primaries 1 to 3 to 30 or fewer, but that is a small drop. It was achieved late and aided by a fall of more than 10,000 in pupil numbers, and it makes little difference to attainment.

"It is often claimed that research results on class sizes are ambiguous. This is not true: small reductions have no measurable effect, but large reductions do. Reducing class sizes in primaries one to three to under 20 would increase attainment, strengthen pupils' self esteem and improve the quality of teachers' interactions with pupils."

If members have difficulty with that, they should take issue with Lindsay Paterson, who is the professor of educational policy at the University of Edinburgh, who wrote that in the *Scottish Educational Journal* in October last year. If there were smaller class sizes, teachers would have more time to teach according to pupils' needs and discipline would improve. Smaller classes would also meet the requests from many pupils for more of teachers' attention.

The consensus for change is almost universal among parents and teachers. At the beginning of the year, the Educational Institute of Scotland—the largest teaching union in Scotland—launched its campaign to reduce class sizes significantly. It has recognised—as all international experience shows—that such a reduction would be the most important improvement and investment that the Government could make in education. However, in the past four years, the Government has made no significant progress. The Executive's complacent attitude and its lack of ambition for our schools and children have meant that Scotland has slipped down the international class-size league tables to sit below Poland and many other European countries.

We have said that it would cost an additional £105 million a year over several years to build up the number of extra teachers that would be needed for class-size cuts in the early years. We have costed the expansion in teacher training provision over seven years. There is no doubt that changes to school accommodation would add to that cost.

**Nicol Stephen:** Will the member give way?

**Irene McGugan:** I am closing.

We want new and refurbished schools—we take issue simply with the funding method. All the figures and our costings have been and will continue to be disputed, but the question is: can we afford not to offer our children the best possible education? The SNP will deliver class sizes that will allow teachers to teach effectively and that will allow children to reach their potential. I ask members to support our motion.

## Economic Growth

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3880, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on Scottish economic growth.

10:59

**Andrew Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** After reading the weekend's press, all of us could be forgiven for thinking that we would see Angus MacKay, Tom McCabe and Wendy Alexander on the front bench today for this debate on the economy. Unfortunately, that was not to be—with all good grace to Lewis Macdonald—as those members are nowhere to be seen. Were those press reports a chimera? Was the briefing a briefing too far from Jack McConnell? Is Labour still as split as we all thought that it has been for so long?

Despite opening on a bum note, I want to broker some agreement in the debate as well as make some challenges about the economy. At the core of what I will say is a fundamental desire for a shift in the conduct of the political debate in Scotland. I will contend that all the political parties have been guilty since devolution of failing to place the economy centre stage.

All the parties, bar none, have been guilty of focusing to an extent on the symptoms of economic underperformance rather than acting on its root cause. I want that to change. The SNP has worked hard to change that attitude internally and within the wider political, economic and media agenda in Scotland. Throughout, we have been honest in accepting where we need to change our conduct and we hope that that approach has helped to open some minds in other parties and in the wider public. It is an approach that we mean to continue.

The SNP motion is an attempt to secure consensus in the Parliament. I guess that it was too much to hope that all sides would support the motion so close to an election. The motion is simple: it says that we have a problem. After four years of complacency, I am glad that the Government now accepts that. That said, the Government still has a tendency for self-congratulation and complacency at times.

Everyone agrees that the problem is getting worse. All of us who lead in whatever field we work in have a national duty to find unity of purpose in our dealings with the issue. We have to do so for the sake of the future of our country. We recognise that good people can disagree on how to tackle the problem, but we call for no more than open minds on the issue of the policy powers that we need to tackle the problem. We want and need to work with other parties on the issue.

All that I am asking for from my political opponents this morning is active thinking on some of the points that I am seeking to make. There is nothing sacred in the reserved powers that are codified in the Scotland Act 1998. All that that act did was to codify the existing powers of administrative devolution. In a host of areas, political devolution has made the financial centralism that is inherent in all of it unsustainable. Nowhere is the imperative for reform seen more starkly than in the need for reform of the economy.

There is a need for much greater competitiveness in Scotland and in the regions of the United Kingdom. I am asking today for some reasoned arguments and open minds. I am also asking for any criticisms of our case to be based on what we say rather than on demeaning and fatuous misrepresentations, which have been all too common to date.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** Andrew Wilson talks of competitiveness. What will the imminent increase in national insurance contributions do for competitiveness in Scotland and in the wider UK?

**Andrew Wilson:** We can have arguments about the overall levels of taxation, but the key point that I want to make this morning to Phil Gallie and other members is that we need to keep a close eye on our relative competitiveness within the United Kingdom, as well as on the overall competitiveness of the UK—I will move on to address that point.

At least national insurance is a tax that is applied across the board, which means that it does not reduce Scotland's relative competitiveness in the UK. We need to ensure that we undercut the growth regions in respect of the taxes that count on growth. That is a point to which I will return later in my speech.

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Andrew Wilson:** I want to move on, but I will take the member's intervention shortly.

As part of its contribution to a better debate on the subject, the SNP set out its support last week for much of what the Government is doing in this field. We might have expected an SNP press release that was headed "SNP back Labour" to have generated some coverage but, as Alf Young commented, the lack of coverage pointed to the need for both partners in the symbiotic relationship between politicians and the press to look to their conduct. Where there is agreement, perhaps there is scope to broadcast it so that we can build on the consensus and leave the arguments where they count.

Anyone who analyses the world economy knows that the broad thrust of the Government's strategy

is correct, as far as it goes. We cannot compete on cheap labour and subsidies, so we must go up the value chain. The whole thrust of "A Smart, Successful Scotland" is correct and we will back it. The idea behind Scottish Development International is good. The technology institutes are a huge risk for the Government, but they are a risk that is worth taking and we will back them. Science, training and skills are all key issues. We will examine the detail of what the Government is doing—that is, of course, the job for the members of a democratic Opposition over the next few weeks before the Government replaces us in that role.

We will bring forward our own reform ideas about what more we have to do with the powers of the Parliament. The Government's approach to date has not, is not and will not be enough. In the words of an editorial in *The Scotsman* this week, the Government is using

"a pea-shooter firing into a hurricane".

Whichever view is taken of the Government, the evidence is clear and compelling that Scotland is not achieving its potential.

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** Mr Wilson is five minutes into his speech. Is the peashooter going to produce something positive by way of the Scottish National Party's proposals for the economy?

**Andrew Wilson:** I am surprised at Miss Goldie. First, I have to outline the areas on which I agree with the Government. In an election era, I cannot get more positive than to stand up and say that I agree. I try my best. I will examine my conscience tonight, but I make every effort to be positive.

If we examine the output of the Scottish economy, we will all agree that we have had a problem over the past 30 years and that the problem is getting worse. What we have to do to win the consensus across the political spectrum is to make the case that resources for investment in our public services come out of growth and wealth creation. We cannot increase the tax on a diminishing economic base and hope to succeed—that has been the record over the past 15 years. Over the past 12 months, as the economy shrank, the picture has become particularly grave for Scotland. Our economy grew at one thirteenth of the UK rate—the wealth gap is widening.

Recently, the Government pointed out that if electronics is stripped out, the economy is fine. I suggest to the Government with the greatest of respect that that sort of spin is wholly inappropriate. Energy, water, manufacturing, engineering, textiles, chemicals and petroleum products are all still in recession. Sectors producing less than they were one year ago

include financial services, metal products, food, drink and tobacco, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining and quarrying. All of them are major sectors and all of them have deep problems.

**George Lyon:** Andrew Wilson highlights the problems that face the Scottish economy. Does he not agree that many other small, independent nations throughout Europe face exactly the same challenges?

**Andrew Wilson:** Mr Lyon makes a very reasonable point. It is true that European and world economies are under pressure. My response is that Scotland is under the greatest pressure. We seem to be exposed more than any other country. In the period since Labour and the Liberal Democrats came to power, Scotland's growth record has been the poorest of any European Union member state. Even the economy of Germany, which has been under massive pressures since reunification, has grown 25 per cent faster than that of Scotland and the economy of Ireland has done so by a factor of seven.

I agree that we are under pressure, but I repeat that the UK economy grew 13 times faster than the Scottish economy over the past year. We are living in a tough world, but our economic performance is much worse than it should be.

I also point to the fact that, although all the evidence is clear and compelling, what we do not know about Scotland should also worry us. We will not know until next week the detail of the monetary policy committee thinking behind its interest rate cut last week. Although we welcome that cut in interest rates, I would be surprised if its thinking were not based on the collapse in business and other investment in the UK over the past year. The situation is very grave as it affects future productivity.

We know nothing about the figures for investment in the Scottish economy, because the analysis is not available to us. However, all the anecdotal evidence suggests that the investment that is taking place is going into rationalisation and downsizing and that capital accumulation is taking place abroad.

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Andrew Wilson:** No, thanks. I must move on.

We have very deep-seated problems. I suggest that the long-term picture, which has got worse over the past five years, is set to get much worse in the future.

If we look at what we are doing right, we can see that, in our educational performance in many fields in further and higher education, we are making a lot of investment and producing a lot of outputs. That does not suggest that the problem is

qualifications in certain segments of the labour force. Although investment in that area is critical, it is not the whole answer.

We have to overcome the gravitational and magnetic pull of the economy of the south-east of the UK. We cannot continue to have a growth model in which there is one high-growth area and Scotland and the regions of England are placated with higher public spending. That is to treat the symptoms and not the root cause. It is a model that does not work. The UK is the 19<sup>th</sup> most successful economy in the world and its ranking is falling. We need to make a change: we need to tilt the playing field in our direction and overcome the gravitational pull.

Taxes on growth are not the silver bullet, but the SNP's argument is that they are a key part of the whole. We have to encourage corporate headquarters to register in Scotland, to declare profits here and to bring their top staff here.

The bottom line is that we have to out-compete the rest of the UK. To do so, we need to get the same competitive powers that our competitors have. We have to change the culture and the way in which we conduct the debate inside the Parliament, inside Scottish politics and in general. We need to make that change because politicians need to lead the truth that no one owes Scotland its lunch and that we have to earn it by being more competitive.

Why is it that we have a Chancellor of the Exchequer who opposes tax harmonisation in Europe yet argues for tax harmonisation in the UK? Why do we have a chancellor who is in favour of tax competition across Europe yet imposes a centrist model on the UK economy? As promotion of the economy is somewhere approaching fifth in the Labour party's pecking order, the minister will have to answer the contention that, of the six key areas for improving British competitiveness that the chancellor gave in his speech to the Social Market Foundation this week, only one is presently within the ambit of the minister. The chancellor knows that he needs the full range of powers with which to sort Britain's problems. We need the same powers to sort Scotland's problems.

I recognise that much work has still to be done to broker consensus among the parties. We have made our contribution by saying on which points we will agree with other parties, and I look to the Liberals Democrats, the Conservatives and Labour for open minds to what we have to say. There are issues at stake and the situation is grave. We need open minds and a change of approach if we are to deliver. That is how we will conduct the election and ourselves in the chamber. I call on all members to back the SNP motion.

I move,

That the Parliament notes with concern the long-term underperformance of the Scottish economy and the growing gap in wealth created per head between Scotland and the rest of the UK and the south east of England in particular; recognises that the symptoms of economic underperformance cannot be dealt with on a sustainable basis until the root cause of economic underperformance is addressed directly; calls for all leaders in Scottish public life to work towards a national consensus around the drive to bridge the gap between Scotland's economic performance and economic potential, and, in working towards that consensus, further recognises that differences of opinion on policy prescriptions are a healthy part of the democratic debate but calls for an open mind on all sides in respect of the range of policy options that are, and should be, available to the Scottish Executive in working towards making Scotland as competitive as its competitors.

11:10

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald):** I should like to begin in the spirit of Mr Wilson's welcome press release, rather than in that of his opening remarks today, because I want to begin with some agreement. Clearly, there are significant areas of agreement.

For example, we are agreed on the need for sustainable long-term growth in the Scottish economy. We are agreed that increased productivity is the key to such growth, and that only by generating more wealth can we pay for the public services that we want, create opportunities for all and lay the basis for sustainable development in the years ahead. A consensus within Scotland on how to achieve that growth, and sustain higher productivity, is certainly desirable. I welcome the SNP's recognition in its press release, which backs Labour, that—and I think I use its words, not mine—an enterprise strategy focused on science and skills, on global connectivity and on growing Scottish businesses provides a basis on which such a consensus can be built.

"A Smart, Successful Scotland" is that strategy for growth, but it does not stand in isolation from the wider economic and political context any more than Scotland's economy can grow in isolation from the wider world.

The political context of our enterprise strategy is the devolution settlement, which the SNP does not accept but which we see as critical to the successful delivery of our aims for sustainable future growth. The economic context is critical too, specifically the stable macroeconomic environment delivered by sound management of the UK economy.

**Andrew Wilson:** Can the minister refer the chamber to a single power that devolution has given us that we did not have previously under the

Secretary of State for Scotland that can make a difference to the growth rate of the economy?

**Lewis Macdonald:** Devolution gives us the opportunity to concentrate on growth and skills, which is precisely what we need to do. We are able to address sustainable growth precisely because we are operating in a stable macroeconomic environment, which has delivered record low levels of inflation, record low interest rates and the lowest level of unemployment in a generation. Those indicators are significant in setting the context for growth and should not be taken for granted.

The debate is not just about the relationship with the rest of the UK, as important as that is. It is also about what kind of competitive advantage we should seek and where we should position ourselves in the global economy. We are clear about how we want Scotland to compete, which is as a high-skill, high-knowledge economy. That is why "A Smart, Successful Scotland" places such emphasis on investing in people and on the links between enterprise and lifelong learning. That is also why we do not want to depend in future on inward investment alone, or to make our pitch to overseas investors as a cheaper place to do business, be that on labour costs or tax rates on business profits.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am sure that we all agree that key to stimulating growth is investment in lifelong learning and education. Does the minister accept that even after the increases that have been announced in the past two years, our investment in higher and further education in Scotland is a third less than that per head of our European competitors? If we are to grow, that gap must be closed.

**Lewis Macdonald:** "Life Through Learning Through Life: The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland", which was launched yesterday, points us in the direction of how we should be growing that sector of the economy and ensuring that it makes a contribution to the wider economic benefit.

I shall touch briefly on corporation tax rates, because the SNP has raised the issue in the past, although I was struck by the lack of direct reference to it in Andrew Wilson's introductory remarks this morning. Perhaps more light will be shed on that in due course. It is worth noting that the UK already has lower corporation tax rates than the United States and Japan, and the level is below the European Union average. The rates are competitive on the world stage and at the same time provide the revenues that we need to sustain investment in the wider economy.

**Andrew Wilson:** Will the minister give way?

**Lewis Macdonald:** Yes.



**Andrew Wilson:** The minister is being very generous with his time. I agree with his comments on corporation tax, but it is one part of the whole. The point that we are making today is that our corporation tax rate is the same as the rate in the south-east of England. However the rate of growth in that part of the country is increasing exponentially faster than the growth rate in Scotland. We need to undercut our competitor regions.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I do not agree. In fact, that is precisely the flaw at the heart of SNP policy. Instead, we need to sell Scotland as a high-quality, high-value, highly productive and enterprising economy. Seeking to undercut our competitors on labour or tax costs is the wrong direction to go in.

That argument is not abstract. After all, a penny on corporation tax means £90 million in tax take for the Scottish economy. We do not need to take many pennies off that tax to remove the budgets for training and skills, research and development and business start-up and growth that Alex Neil mentioned. Some might think that that is a price worth paying for a few big inward investors—we do not agree.

The same argument applies to business rates. Although business rate poundage in Scotland is higher, many comparable rateable values are lower. One could make a legitimate argument about the balance of burdens on individual businesses. However, complaining about differential tax rates in Scotland and England while in the same breath demanding full fiscal independence makes very little sense.

We will freeze business rates from 1 April, and will be delighted if that change results in increased business investment this year, next year and beyond. However, we do not concede the point that we should never diverge from England in devolved areas, and we recognise that there are opportunity costs in every measure we take that reduces public revenues.

It is self-evident that cutting business rates, as others intend to do, will impact on public spending. To meet its pledge, the SNP will have to take £150 million out of the enterprise budget; the Tories will require to take even more. Those are legitimate choices to place before the electorate, as no doubt will be done in the next few weeks. However, no one should pretend that it is possible to reduce public revenues while increasing public investment. That simply cannot be done.

Targeted public investment is part of our strategy for growth. For example, we are seeking to support business through the intermediary technology institutes that the First Minister announced a few weeks ago. With an energy

institute in Aberdeen, a life sciences institute in Dundee and an information technology institute in Glasgow, we are focusing on the real strengths of Scotland's knowledge economy. The ITIs will focus work on those issues through the investment of public money. Such an approach is jeopardised by reducing the revenues that are available to the enterprise network.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I am afraid not.

Of course, we are also investing our tax revenues in the electronic infrastructure and the transport infrastructure to give Scottish companies a competitive edge. All those investments are part and parcel of our strategy for growth, which is designed to overcome the gap between where we are and where we want to be. We welcome support from all sides for that strategic approach.

I move amendment S1M-3880.2, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"supports the Scottish Executive's aim of increasing sustainable economic growth over the long term; recognises that increasing Scotland's prosperity is essential to the fulfilment of the Executive's objectives of closing the opportunity gap, building first-class public services and ensuring sustainable development; calls for all leaders in Scottish public life to work towards a national consensus around the drive to bridge the gap between Scotland's economic performance and economic potential, and endorses the work being undertaken by the Executive to use the powers of the Parliament to help business grow and to secure a smart, successful Scotland by developing the science and skills base, improving global connections and investing in transport and communications infrastructure."

11:18

**Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** Although I do not impugn the sincerity of Mr Andrew Wilson, it is difficult to take seriously an SNP motion on the economy. I say that for three reasons. First, enterprise and the economy do not seem to be political priorities for the SNP. In almost four years of the Parliament, it has managed to call only two debates on those matters—Mr MacAskill secured a debate in 2001 and Mr Wilson called one in 2002. That is hardly indicative of a pulsating interest in those topics. In contrast, the Conservatives have secured five debates on the economy.

Secondly, in so far as the SNP takes a passing glance at these issues—no doubt fuelled by some imminent boardroom visit—its understanding of the acute problems that currently confront Scottish business seems remote. The motion has all the urgency of watching paint dry. Indeed, it is akin to looking at a haemorrhaging patient and resolving to take immediate action by forming a committee to discuss coagulation.

What is happening to Scottish business at the moment is grim and menacing. Growth was stunted in 2002. The second quarter showed a rise of 0.2 per cent, and the third a rise of 0.6 per cent, and that after the first recession in 20 years. Furthermore, according to figures released today for the three months up to December 2002, we have higher unemployment than the rest of the UK. In 2002, we lost more than 7,000 jobs in manufacturing and, to date in 2003, total job losses are running at more than 2,400.

In the third quarter of 2002, the number of business start-ups showed a decrease of 22.6 per cent from the previous quarter. In 2002, the number of company insolvencies increased by 23.6 per cent. Business rates are almost 9 per cent higher than in England because of the higher Scottish business rate poundage. New regulations are piling on cost to business. According to the Institute of Directors, between 1997 and 2002, the annual cost to British business was £6 billion. Compared with when it came to power in 1997, Labour now takes nearly £2,000 a year more in tax for every man, woman and child in Britain.

That is a chronicle of economic epitaphs—a chilling thumbnail sketch of how not to create a competitive, vibrant economy.

What is the Scottish National Party's dynamic and practical response to that situation? Its response is a motion that—although it might aspire to be a record for verbosity—in 151 words offers not one specific remedy or solution to the beleaguered Scottish business community. For SNP, read, “Sorry, no proposals”.

**Andrew Wilson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Miss Goldie:** And sorry, no intervention. In Mr Wilson's speech of nine minutes and 18 seconds, we had diagnosis. For one minute and 35 seconds we had two specific proposals—more corporate headquarters should come to Scotland and we need to be more competitive. Well, that is a ringing aspiration for the business community—I bet that it derives small comfort from the modesty of that proposition.

**Andrew Wilson:** From political leaders of all parties, the business community needs some unity of purpose on an issue that is too grave for bickering of that nature. We must focus on increasing growth and we have to give credit where it is due and find some agreement. Miss Goldie's approach is not good enough.

**Miss Goldie:** Those words could be spoken only by somebody who has never run a business. I will tell Mr Wilson what the business community needs now: it needs genuine solutions that can be delivered under the devolved settlement.

Even the most intrepid motion reader, persevering to the end of the SNP motion, would have cause for question because, remarkably, Mr Wilson never mentions the word independence, yet that is the Scottish National Party's fundamental credo.

Is Mr Wilson, recognising that independence finds little resonance with Scottish business, a duck-and-diver devolutionist? If he is, has he told the rest of his party? However, if he is, where are his specific proposals for improving the lot of Scottish business now, under the devolution settlement?

Mr Wilson is, of course, a devolution man, except he dare not speak the name—he has to pretend the cause of independence. He knows that that is a difficult product to market.

**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Miss Goldie:** I do not have time. Mr Wilson's economic case is not helped by the Business Strategies forecast that, under devolution this year, growth in gross domestic product, if delivered, will be higher in Scotland than in the UK. So, there is no intrinsic devolution bar to higher Scottish GDP.

The third reason why it is difficult to take the motion seriously is what the Scottish National Party represents as a political entity. It is a party that has brought to debates on public expenditure all the infinite elasticity of bungee jumping. It is a party to which profit is repugnant. That is why the business community can expect no comfort from the Scottish National Party. That is why the amendment in my name excises the linguistic froth of the nationalists and offers Scottish business what it is crying out for now—specific solutions to restore competitiveness and to get business moving again, solutions deliverable now, solutions costed by the Conservatives and solutions that would help to address the very problems about which Mr Wilson purports to be so concerned.

I have pleasure in moving amendment S1M-3880.1, to leave out from “long-term” to end and insert:

“competitive disadvantage at which Scottish business is being placed as a consequence of an onerous taxation and regulatory regime aggravated by inadequate investment in transport infrastructure and calls on the Scottish Executive to reduce the business rate poundage to the same level that exists in England thereby re-establishing a uniform business rate and to pledge an additional £100 million per annum for investment in our transport infrastructure.”

11:24

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** I apologise to colleagues for having to leave before the end of the debate because of another engagement today.

In contemplating Miss Goldie's speech, I am struck by the fact that she spends longer on her soundbites than she does on analysis of the current position of the Scottish economy. How can the Tories say what Scottish business needs? We all recall their record—one business went bust every three minutes of every working day under the Tories and they had the worst-ever record for business start-ups. By 1997, investment in manufacturing was lower than when the Tories came to power. During 18 years, they presided over the two worst recessions since 1945. In Shetland, we all remember Lord Lamont—

**Miss Goldie** *rose—*

**Tavish Scott:** I have not finished yet. We all remember Lord Lamont of Lerwick spending £10 billion in the worst economic crisis caused by incompetence that the country can recall. I am very happy to give way to Miss Goldie so that she may defend that record.

**Miss Goldie:** I ask Mr Scott to confirm whether the Scottish Executive was happy to inherit the Tory creation of a prosperous economy upon which it frequently founds so many of its arguments for expenditure? Will Mr Scott confirm which party in government introduced uniform business rates to respond to the overwhelming plea of Scottish business?

**Tavish Scott:** Miss Goldie forgets that the Tories lost the election and that Scottish business—like everyone else in Scotland—voted no to the Tories, which is why they did not have one seat after the 1997 election. Their record was shown up by the electorate.

I take up Andrew Wilson's point about analysing the current position of the Scottish economy. It is entirely right to do that and the minister was right to illustrate what the Executive is doing in that regard. I share serious concern about the current situation, not just of Scotland, but of Europe and the world at this time, which is where I might differ from Mr Wilson. Any analysis of the figures that are currently available in the UK and international context is worrying, including the fact that one in five families is struggling to meet debt repayments at a time of high employment and when interest rates are at their lowest level since 1956. There is worrying financial frailty in the UK economy.

On the day when Alan Greenspan of the Federal Reserve in the United States cast doubt on the American Administration's strategy of vast tax cuts for the richest in US society, what indeed will fuel worldwide economic growth?

Therefore, it is right to consider these issues, but we should concentrate on the matters that come under the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and what the Parliament and Government can do to promote those matters. That is where the SNP

and the Liberal Democrats differ. Andrew Wilson would argue for further powers in that context. Those of us who believe in a federal United Kingdom would argue for the development of powers in that way.

**Andrew Wilson:** I am grateful to the member for giving way with perfect timing. Given what Mr Scott has just said about the development of Liberal thinking on greater powers, we know that the Liberal Democrats have open minds. I suggest they introduce some urgency to that thinking and present some specific proposals for growth because the powers as they stand have not worked, are not working and will not work. We need to find consensus on how we grow from here.

**Tavish Scott:** I am always thinking urgently, but I will introduce our proposals at the time when all parties introduce theirs in the coming election campaign.

I will pick up on two areas of competitiveness, as that is the focus of the debate. The first relates to the slow business take-up of broadband connections, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises. A study from the Federation of Small Businesses last year illustrated that 54 per cent of small businesses had modem connections, only 14 per cent were using ISDN links, only 4 per cent used broadband and 15 per cent of surveyed businesses did not even have connection to a computer.

There is a challenge to take up the advantages of e-business. That is why the Scottish Executive strategy in that area is right. That is why the enterprise network must be at the heart of that. Incidentally, I noticed that neither the SNP nor the Tories were forthcoming on their proposals for the enterprise network. I understand that the Tories plan to abolish Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and that the SNP plans to regionalise the current structure. Those are important issues when there are others among us who believe that the enterprise network is at the heart of delivering skills. The Tories do not agree, obviously, because they plan to abolish the very body that concentrates on skills.

**Miss Goldie:** I place on record the fact that the Scottish Conservatives will not abolish the enterprise network.

**Tavish Scott:** Oh well, their policy has just changed. We look forward to discussing that further.

I was disappointed by the evidence given to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee last week that a business park in Aberdeen, fully wired for broadband telecommunications access, had been unplugged because there was not enough business interest. That is one of the challenges

that the Parliament, the Executive and the Government face.

I will finish with a couple of points on renewables. It is important to pull together the commercialisation of research in our universities and the engineering skills that we have throughout Scotland. That is a particular challenge for Aberdeen and the north-east in the context of the changes that are happening in the oil and gas sector. There are considerable opportunities for Scotland as a whole.

This is an important debate. It is an opportunity to discuss such matters properly. I promise that my party will give full vent to our thoughts on the matters in the coming weeks and months. I implore Parliament today to support the Executive amendment, which is the only reasonable amendment before it.

11:30

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** Annabel Goldie denigrates my colleague, Andrew Wilson, for his lack of business experience. Given that her experience as a city-centre senior partner in a law firm reflects mine, and I have never considered myself a business guru, I think that that is rather rich.

I want to make two specific points about the debate. We must recognise two matters: first, that there is a fundamental need for economic growth; and, secondly, that there is a need for political consensus around that. As other members have said, it is quite clear that nobody owes us a living. We are a small nation on the periphery of Europe and we need to punch our weight. We have not been doing so, and we have lagged behind as a consequence. As a result, we are paying the price in lowered living standards. We owe it not just to ourselves but to future generations to resolve that problem.

That leads me to my second point, on the creation of a cross-party consensus. There are historical lessons. Ireland and Finland have been referred to, not just by me but by other members. We must recognise that their structural difficulties, which were substantial and, arguably, far greater than the ones that we face, were addressed on the basis of national consensus built on political consensus. We must recognise that the matter will not be dealt with by one political party or in one term of Government. It needs longer-term action and it needs consensus across the board. We cannot continue to reflect the UK stop-start attitude, which got us into such difficulties and gave us the problems that we had in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A Labour Government came in to change what had been done by a Tory Government, and being replaced by another Government fundamentally undermined us.

We must recognise that economic growth will be delivered by members of the Scottish business community, large and small. It is for politicians to allow them to get on with running their businesses, not to lecture them or tell them how to run them. However, Government must provide the framework to allow those businesses to prosper and to achieve their full potential.

That leads me to the role of the state and the Government, whose remit falls in key areas. Education and infrastructure are two examples. I have made it clear in previous debates that it is not an employer's responsibility to ensure that their employees can read and write—sadly we have those difficulties in the present day. It is the Government's job to ensure that the work force is job ready—employers can give specific training, but addressing that problem is a state responsibility.

The points that Tavish Scott made about telecoms are also true. The difficulty is that we must have a national strategy. An attempt to leave market forces to deal with telecoms will not work. We must ensure that, in areas of Scotland, there is state intervention—

**Tavish Scott:** Will Mr MacAskill give way?

**Mr MacAskill:** I am sorry, but I am now into the final minute of my speech. I do not think that I would disagree with Tavish Scott in any way, but we must have intervention by the state in telecoms.

We must recognise that transport is important.

**David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** Nationalisation!

**Mr MacAskill:** It is a matter of getting our work force to their jobs and our goods to their markets. David McLetchie may shout, "Nationalisation!" but the fact is that privatisation of the railways was a failure that everyone in this country is paying for. It was brought about by a Tory Government and has brought misery to commuters, freight and the Scottish business sector in its entirety.

We must recognise that it is the job of the state to deal with those matters. That means that we must be proactive. We need transport authorities that can regulate the buses to ensure that we do not have the idiocy that we had in the City of Edinburgh, which resulted in the company that Mr McLetchie's firm supported losing £4.2 million. That is hardly a raving business success. We must ensure that we can get access to the markets, which means having influence and control over our rail network. Today, we have even found out that the Strategic Rail Authority is trying to instruct ScotRail to cut its services. It is time to take charge of our own railways.

I support the motion.

11:34

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** I welcome the recent SNP conversion to our policy for a smart, successful Scotland. It has taken nearly four years, but at last the SNP has admitted that its economic policies have been based on false, out-of-date premises that simply do not work in the kind of world that we now find ourselves in. We must acknowledge that conversion.

The Irish economy used to be the holy grail for the nationalists, but suddenly they have realised—apart from Kenny MacAskill—that exporting the Irish economy to Scotland is not the way forward. We could all have told them that a few years ago. Here are a few facts about the Irish economy that the SNP does not tell people. According to figures released on 31 January, national economic output has fallen in Ireland for the first time in 16 years. With growth falling in the third quartile of 2002, it is looking doubtful whether the increase in growth will top 2 per cent. The growth rate is plummeting compared with the 10 per cent growth rate of two years ago. Profit repatriation by multinational companies has soared to 41 per cent, while incomes available to Irish people have fallen.

**Andrew Wilson:** The troubles in the Irish economy are interesting, but I think that Rhona Brankin should focus on the troubles in the Scottish economy, which are exponentially worse than those in Ireland. We cannot import everything from Ireland, but I would really like to have had the problems that the Irish have had over the past 10 years, when their economy has grown at eight times the rate of the Scottish economy. Should not we be learning from their successes rather than demeaning them in times of trouble?

**Rhona Brankin:** I thank Andrew Wilson for that speech, but it is important to recognise that the difficulties that are being experienced by many small nations in the global recession are not peculiar to Scotland. In fact, they are being experienced by many other small nations in the world, such as Ireland.

I want to highlight the difference between us and the Irish. Their January unemployment figures are the highest that they have been for three years. Inflation in Ireland is now twice the European average and, in recent months, €3 million of savings and cuts have been made in education, health and other areas. Let us contrast that with the management of the economy in the UK and in Scotland. With a UK Labour Government, interest rates in Scotland are 4 per cent, inflation is under 2 per cent and unemployment is at its lowest for a generation.

I began by welcoming the SNP conversion to our strategy for a smart, successful Scotland, but it is not a real conversion. At the heart of the SNP

economic strategy there is a huge black hole, and that hole is skills training. To finance their business tax cuts, the nationalists have come up with the election gimmick of taking £150 million out of the Scottish Enterprise skills and training budget, at a time of emerging skill shortages in Scotland.

That is the fundamental difference. Our strategy for a smart, successful Scotland puts lifelong learning at the heart of our competitiveness. If we are to compete in a global marketplace against other advanced nations, we simply must invest in our infrastructure and, most important, in our people. It is simply not good enough to build a whole economic policy on business tax cuts. If different rates of business taxation made such a difference, why has not Northern Ireland been denuded of business? It is because running a successful business is about a lot more than cuts in business taxes.

What have we learned from the SNP's new economic policy? Lesson 1 is that independence is no defence against global recession. Lesson 2 is that cutting business rates is no defence against global recession. Lesson 3 is that the best defence at a time of global recession is to be part of a larger economy, as Scotland is part of the UK economy. Interest rates are at 4 per cent, inflation is under 2 per cent and unemployment is at its lowest for a generation.

We face serious challenges to our economy here in Scotland, as do many other nations in the world. The SNP's new economic policy has a huge black hole in it, and the SNP has now joined forces with the Tory party. It is a policy for a stupid, unsuccessful Scotland. How does Andrew Wilson think that we can build a consensus around that? I ask members to support the Executive amendment.

11:39

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** After listening to that speech, I shall try to raise the tone of the debate. First, I suggest that Rhona Brankin reads the SNP manifesto from 1999, where we envisaged the establishment of Scottish Development International and promised the establishment of what we called "Come to Scotland", which the Executive has called VisitScotland. We also said that we wanted to make Scotland the science capital of Europe and that we wanted to use the powers of this Parliament to maximum effect for the Scottish economy. It is not a case of us being converted to Labour policy. Labour has simply stolen our policy. Let us rise above that.

An unemployed worker in Ayrshire, or one of the Boots workers who faces the prospect of

redundancy in the next couple of years, listening to this debate will want to know what the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive will do for them. We are all signed up to the long-term strategy. We recognise the need to invest in science and skills as a way forward for Scotland. However, we also recognise the fact that we face short-term difficulty. One of the questions that the Parliament should address this morning is what we can do in the short term—until we realise the benefits of the long-term strategy—to improve job prospects for people in Scotland. I shall make several suggestions, which I hope the Executive will consider seriously.

First, there is an enormous latent demand in the building sector that is not being met either because of a lack of proper skills or because of a lack of appropriate land availability. One of the immediate things that the Executive can do to remove the barriers to growth in construction is to address the problem of the vested interests that run the Construction Industry Training Board in the UK and to ensure that we can go beyond the expansion of modern apprenticeships in construction skills. I would like the minister to address the fact that the expansion of modern apprenticeships in construction skills is not driven by employment-based traineeships, which is a problem. If that situation can be addressed, we will go a long way towards creating new jobs in the short term in the construction industry.

Secondly, there are problems with land availability and planning. I am currently dealing with a case in Ayrshire. The situation is nonsensical. A small, isolated piece of land that had planning permission for five houses no longer has planning permission because some bureaucrat in the council has decided that it has been rezoned. The land cannot be rezoned for anything other than housing, as it is too small for agriculture and is cut off by roads on each side. That is typical of what is happening the length and breadth of Scotland. Our planning laws are being implemented so restrictively that they are acting as a definite barrier to growth. We need to do something about that urgently.

Andrew Wilson has covered the issue of reducing business rates. That urgent measure is desperately needed to create a more even playing field between ourselves and the south of England.

Thirdly, there is an issue in relation to commercialisation. There is an underlying assumption that we need to wait for five or 10 years for that policy to work. Last week, I spoke to a company that specialises in, and has a successful track record in, the commercialisation of science throughout the United Kingdom. It told me that it has identified 60 projects that it could get up and running in the next two years, but that it

cannot do so because of the slowness of decision making in our universities. I say to the Executive: for God's sake, do not just lie back and wait for Gordon Brown's budget—get some action today, so that we can be seen to be doing something about the Scottish economy pending the achievement of our independence in the period ahead.

11:43

**David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con):** The problem with the SNP's approach to improving the performance of the Scottish economy is that it talks constantly about extending the powers of the Parliament as if that, in itself, would magically increase our prosperity. What it does not address is the much more important and difficult question of what the SNP would do with those new powers if it had them. That is the question that the Scottish National Party is desperate to avoid, as that is where the theory falls down.

That is perhaps why Andrew Wilson was so vague on his policy prescriptions beyond telling us how much he agreed with the Scottish Executive. That admission—which was underlined by Alex Neil, whose only quibble with Executive policy was who thought of it first—exposes the fact that the Scottish National Party offers a change of country but not a genuine change of policy. It offers only a more extreme version of the tax-and-waste strategy that is currently being pursued by Gordon Brown, and which is enthusiastically backed by the Labour-Liberal Executive in Scotland.

**Andrew Wilson:** The motion seeks to broker agreement across the chamber about where the country needs to be. We will bring our election ideas to the election, not to the Parliament. Why does not the Conservative party have the grace to back a strategy that can unify people rather than leave people disillusioned by politicians' failure to take a lead in this country?

**David McLetchie:** Andrew Wilson's approach is an admission of defeat and of a poverty of ideas. It is interesting to hear of the SNP's latest strategy to reduce business rates. The SNP thought of that a month ago, but the Conservatives have been advocating that in the Parliament for the best part of two years. That is the fundamental difference between the two parties.

Reference has been made to Ireland and the need to match the level of economic growth there, which has long been a favourite topic of the SNP. However, the truth is that the SNP has no wish to emulate the Irish approach, which is based on charging lower taxes and constraining growth in Government spending. For SNP members to talk about adopting such a strategy is political deception of the worst kind.

Members of all parties want a dynamic economy combined with generous provision for public services. However, that is a policy circle that the Scottish National Party simply cannot square. Its answer to every problem in Scotland is to blame the Treasury and to call for ever-higher public expenditure, and to disparage—week after week, month after month—the contribution that the private sector can make to our overall prosperity and to partnership working and the development of our public services. No clear explanation is ever given of how all the SNP's spending commitments are to be met.

What is clear is the fact that an independent Scotland, run by the SNP, would be a high-tax country similar to one of the party's favourite Scandinavian models, Sweden—a country in which public spending accounted for 56 per cent of the gross domestic product in 2000 and which has one of the highest levels of taxation in the world. That is not much of a model. Despite what Mr Gordon Brown and the SNP might imagine, there is a real growth penalty in increasing public spending above the rate of growth in the economy as a whole. Recent research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—with which Andrew Wilson will be familiar—has shown that a 1 per cent increase in the tax take is associated with a growth penalty of around a 0.6 per cent to 0.7 per cent reduction in GDP. No wonder that is the outcome of such a failed strategy.

There is no policy prescription in the motion beyond the vague wish that we should all get together to improve Scotland's economic performance. The Conservatives are not ashamed to say where we differ from other parties, and we will not be ashamed to say that in the coming weeks. We believe that a reduction in business rates, a reduction in regulation and a switch of resources from the present distribution of the enterprise budget to the improvement of Scotland's transport infrastructure are significant contributions that the Parliament and the Executive could make to the prosperity of Scotland. We will have no hesitation in continuing boldly to advocate those much-needed prescriptions.

11:48

**Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab):** We are all coming from a common view, in that we all want the Scottish economic growth rate to rise. We also recognise the fact that, over the past 20 or 30 years, that growth rate has not been as healthy as we would have wished it to be. The issue, then, is about what prescriptions the Government can or should make to influence the growth rate and to contribute to its rise. I will

address some of the approaches that are advocated by members of other parties later, and will begin by considering the approach that has been taken by the Scottish Executive.

Back in September, the First Minister made it clear that the stimulation of economic growth would be central to the policies of the Scottish Executive. There are three planks to that: to accelerate Scotland's rate of economic growth; to provide opportunities to all and close the opportunity gap; and to ensure that economic development is sustainable in the medium to longer term. In driving towards those goals, we need to recognise—as Rhona Brankin recognised—the stability of economic growth that the UK Government has provided for us. We have had low interest rates, low inflation levels, high employment levels and low unemployment levels—the lowest levels of unemployment that we have seen for a whole generation.

**Alex Neil:** On the issue of low unemployment, research from the University of Sheffield and the University of Warwick shows that the real level of unemployment is well over 300,000, not the figure of 100,000 that is given in official statistics.

**Bristow Muldoon:** Without referring to those specific figures, I acknowledge the fact that even the International Labour Organisation figures are well below the levels that we inherited from the previous Conservative Government. They are also well below the levels that we have seen in Scotland for a considerable time.

In the UK and in Scotland, our stable economic base provides us with the opportunity to resist some of the international challenges that our economy faces. Alex Neil raised the potential job losses that people face. I can give an example from my own constituency of Government policies that have helped to see people through economic difficulties. Major closures at Motorola and NEC resulted in thousands of job losses. Two years later, with the intervention of the Government and the strength of the Scottish economy, unemployment in my constituency currently stands at 3.1 per cent, which is exactly the same level at which it stood before the closures to which I referred.

**Andrew Wilson:** Mr Muldoon is generous with his time. He referred to the stability of our economic context. Will he reflect on the fact that, since Labour came to power in 1999, our growth rate has been one third of our long-term trend rate, which is dreadful? Is he aware of Calgacus's statement to his troops about the Romans in Scotland, which was that they made a desert and called it peace? What the Executive calls stability is actually contraction.

**Bristow Muldoon:** A higher number of people are in employment now than we have seen for a generation and interest rates are low.

I have another example of success—let us talk about successes in Scotland. At the weekend, I read in the *Sunday Herald* that the second highest concentration of banking in Europe at the moment is not in Denmark, Ireland, or Sweden but in Scotland. Scotland comes ahead of France, Switzerland, Spain, Germany and many other large countries. Let us examine some of the successes as well as some of the problems that the Scottish economy has.

Undoubtedly the Scottish economy needs to diversify and we need to improve our growth rate. I welcome Mr Wilson's acknowledgement that the smart, successful Scotland strategy is the correct one for us to follow.

I will concentrate on one aspect of that strategy. I welcome in particular the Executive's investment in our transport infrastructure. The Conservatives' position on that matter is ludicrous because their party presided over economic decline in Scotland for 18 years and presided over the decline of our transport infrastructure for many years.

**Phil Gallie:** Will Mr Muldoon give way?

**Bristow Muldoon:** No. I am over my time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Muldoon is over his time.

**Bristow Muldoon:** Because of the interventions I have taken, I have not had the opportunity to comment in detail on the SNP's contribution to the debate. I would welcome a mature debate about our economic future and how we use our powers to enhance the Scottish growth rate, but let us have a debate about using those powers to enhance Scotland's prosperity rather than another arid constitutional debate.

11:53

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** Economic growth is not just an abstract that allows economic or financial gurus to trade statistics; fundamentally, it is about what drives the agenda for investment in building a better nation for people. We should escape the arid arguments of the past and build a consensus for the future. We cannot tackle poverty unless we grow a high-wage, high-skill economy in which we can all share.

It is obvious that the size and growth of the economy affects Governments' ability to raise revenue, which in turn affects the amount that is available for public services. However, to acknowledge that truism simply at British state level is to fail to acknowledge the responsibilities that we have in Scotland to grow the economy to

fund the future that I am sure we all desperately want for our children. Those who fail to address the issue of the powers that are needed for economic growth in Scotland are the ones who are wearing the constitutional blinkers.

I listened carefully to what the minister said. He concentrated on competition from the perspective of quality. For those of us who have worked in the private sector—and not in legal practice, I might add—quality is one aspect of competition, but to base a competition strategy purely and simply on quality is to ignore the other factors. Cost most definitely is another aspect of competition. We all know that we do not want to compete on a low-wage, low-skills basis, because that is not the future for Scotland. If competition is not based on the cost aspect, on what other aspect is it based? We must ensure that we can drive down the costs for businesses, but we can do that only if we have real economic powers for the Scottish Parliament.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I take Ms Hyslop's point, but her party has described certain parliamentary powers. In what way and to what degree does the SNP propose to drive down the tax burden on business with powers other than those that the Scottish Parliament already has?

**Fiona Hyslop:** We must consider business rates under devolution—my colleague Andrew Wilson spelled that out—but we must also acknowledge that 70 per cent of the Scottish people want financial independence for the Scottish Parliament. It is not a crazy economic analysis, but one that is sensible and has public support.

I would like to take on David McLetchie's point. He gave a narrow-minded, doom-laden analysis of public investment, which was that public investment inhibits economic growth. However, we must remember that economic growth supports greater public investment. For every £1 billion in the economy, the Government can raise an extra £400 million in revenue. To me, one of the starkest statistics in the whole debate is that if Scotland had matched the modest growth of the UK since Labour came to power, there would have been £2 billion more to invest in the public purse. Had we copied the Irish growth rates, there would have been £30 billion more.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)** rose—

**Fiona Hyslop:** Does Mr Monteith know what that means? It means that we would have invested in child care to allow women to get back to work and get better-paid employment; and it would have meant that in West Lothian, instead of waiting for a start date for the Bathgate to Airdrie line, such a line would be being built and would be opening up Scotland's infrastructure. We would be ensuring that we had a growth consensus.



Under devolution, there is a disincentive to taking on the growth agenda because, even if the smart, successful Scotland strategy was successful, the profits and benefits would not come directly to the Scottish Parliament, because they would go to Westminster in a greater tax take. If we were relying on performance-related pay, the Scottish Government would be giving money back to the public.

I say to Rhona Brankin that it is no good saying that, in a global downturn, we are better shielded by a greater union with England. That is counterproductive for the Executive. It reinforces how bad successive Tory and Labour Governments have been for the economy and means that the Scottish Government is not facing up to its responsibilities.

I detect in the minister's amendment some movement towards an open mind, to allow the factors and powers that we need to control to be identified. What business wants is not just political will from one party but political will and leadership from all parties. If we learn anything from any of our European competitors, it is that they succeed when they have a national consensus on growth. We have the opportunity to do that—please grasp it and support our motion.

11:57

**Brian Fitzpatrick (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** I never thought that it would be appropriate to do so, but given recent interventions, perhaps I should declare my membership of the Faculty of Advocates, and intimate that I do not particularly want to intrude in a fight between Standard Life and the Law Society of Scotland. I suspect that that might be dangerous territory.

I have always been a self-propelling business. If I worked, I ate and could spend; if I did not work, I did not earn. I suspect that most country solicitors have a keen awareness of their clients' needs and demands. Sometimes I think that being a constituency MSP is a bit like being a country solicitor.

I hoped that we might have seen in the debate some of what Andrew Wilson promised in part of his motion. Given that May is on the horizon, I suspect that that was probably too ambitious; it could not be sustained in what I think were supposed to be the helpful and supportive contributions from those sitting behind Mr Wilson.

We should try to focus on where we disagree and where we agree—if not now or in the run-up to May, then thereafter. Therefore, I emphasise that I welcome what Andrew Wilson said in support of the smart, successful Scotland strategy. To be honest, I do not care where good ideas come from as long as they are moved on and put

into practice. That should be the watchword for all of us, because the challenge of what we do under devolution is whether we add value or subtract value. Both are possible, and no one should argue otherwise. I suggest that we can do that through the policy drivers that are available to us. Andrew Wilson said that we can do only one thing. I hope that we all agree that we can do many things around the key policy drivers in the areas of health, skills, training, and higher and further education.

I suggest that there is unlikely to be much agreement about the figures on employment, unemployment and the like. I say to Alex Neil that I welcome the fact that, in my constituency, unemployment is currently at 2.5 per cent. People used to say that such a rate was impossible to sustain and that there was a natural rate of unemployment. I agree with Alex Neil that the low unemployment figures can mask other problems. I am conscious of the fact that, in some parts of my constituency, there are high-value-added, high-income, graduate jobs. The percentage of graduates in my constituency is higher than in any other part of the United Kingdom. However, there are people who are carrying out jobs that do not challenge them enough and do not pay them enough. At the same time, employers tell me that there are people whom they cannot employ because to call them employable is a bit of a joke. Some people show up for interviews with six gold earrings and a shell suit and think that, somehow, they are going to be given a job. That is because no one has ever taken the time to support them, to assist them into an understanding of what they need to do to get a job and to tell them what training is available. We can address those problems.

The real problem with the SNP's motion lies in the mystical, magical section in the middle. To understand what the SNP thinks the underlying problem is, we have to stop listening to Andrew Wilson, who wants to be nicey-nicey in the chamber, and start listening to Mr MacAskill, who preaches the SNP's gospel truth, which is, of course, the love that dare not speak its name, not even in the motion. I could have subscribed wholly to the aims of the motion if Andrew Wilson had had the courage to say what it is that he wants to speak about. I thought that SNP members would speak about independence today, because it is quite clear that that is what the middle part of the motion is about. However, for some odd reason Andrew Wilson did not mention it. Could it be because the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Scottish Trades Union Congress are listening that he would rather whisper about it then tiptoe off quietly?

**Andrew Wilson:** Rubbish.

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** Mr Wilson says from a sedentary position that I am speaking rubbish. Let us have an open debate, but let us also have some honesty. Because that is lacking, I cannot support the motion, although I support some of the warm words and prescriptions that it contains.

12:01

**Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** After Brian Fitzpatrick's comments, I wondered whether I should remove my earrings before speaking. However, I will not do so, as I quite like them.

I do not often agree with Brian Fitzpatrick, but I agreed with him when he said that it does not matter where good ideas come from—what matters is that they are developed. That is absolutely correct. The problem is that good ideas that relate to dealing with symptoms will do nothing to address the core problem of the Scottish economy, which is low growth. As Andrew Wilson said, we have a shrinking economy—even according to the Executive's figures, the economy grew by only a miserable 0.1 per cent in the past year.

Of course, that has a direct impact on our ability to invest in our services and in the communities where we live and work. I will relate that to the city of Dundee. Every £1 billion that we could raise in the economy would give us another £400 million in revenues to invest. A sluggish economy means higher unemployment—in parts of Dundee, more than 7 per cent of males are unemployed. It also means low wages—the Dundee weekly average wage is even lower than the Scottish average.

A debate on the economy is not an abstract or arid constitutional debate. The issue impacts directly on the fortunes of cities such as Dundee. Dundee's traditionally large manufacturing base has been hit hard by inappropriate monetary policy. Dundee has huge potential in new industries such as the digital media and biosciences. It has a higher output per capita than Scotland and the UK. However, it also has a declining population, numerous factory closures and large areas of deprivation with poor health records and a life expectancy that is lower than the Scottish average.

I believe that only by tackling the underlying cause of our economic malaise—low growth—will we be able to tackle the problems that the Dundee economy and the Scottish economy face. Low growth is bad for Scottish living standards. Of course, in order to tackle that problem, we need the powers to do so, which we do not have. This Parliament has only 8 per cent control over the economic levers. Compare that with other devolved institutions: the Parliament in Catalonia

has 33 per cent control and the one in Quebec has 80 per cent control. We need to be able to tackle the problems in the Scottish economy with home-grown solutions, not solutions designed for someone else's problems.

Higher growth delivers a higher tax take and less dependency, which is the SNP's objective. We know that that will be good for the people of Dundee and for the people of Scotland.

12:05

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** We would all agree that Andrew Wilson's call for a debate on Scotland's economic performance is legitimate and that we all need to work towards a consensus on what the solutions might be. A good number of members have made suggestions in that regard. Unfortunately, Andrew Wilson undermined his position when he declared that giving more powers to the Scottish Parliament was the only solution to all Scotland's economic ills. That destroyed any prospect of consensus about his motion. He provided no evidence to show why what he suggests would work in Scotland. It would be interesting to see whether giving more powers to the Scottish Parliament would solve the many well-documented problems that the Scottish economy faces.

**Andrew Wilson:** Notwithstanding what Mr Lyon has just said, the Liberal Democrats' position seems to be—from what Tavish Scott said—that, in the election, they will suggest greater powers for the Scottish Parliament, which is in line with what I am saying. When specifically will we get those commitments and what might they be?

**George Lyon:** Like everyone else, Mr Wilson will just have to wait and see what we will say in the election campaign. I am sure that he will not be disappointed. It would be interesting to hear what the SNP would do with the extra powers, which is the fundamental question.

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** I am sure that, as some of us do, George Lyon speaks to Charles Kennedy. Would George Lyon like to share with Andrew Wilson details of the work that the Liberal Democrats at Westminster do in their shadow budget each and every time a budget is announced? Perhaps George Lyon could discuss with Mr Kennedy the paucity of such work from the Conservatives and the SNP—four years and no work.

**George Lyon:** I agree with that point. On many occasions, I have said to Andrew Wilson that we are still awaiting his first shadow budget. I expect that we will wait in vain for one in the next four years, which he will also spend in opposition.

As I said, it would be interesting to see whether giving more powers to the Scottish Parliament

would solve the many well-documented problems that the Scottish economy faces. Currently, the downturn in the world economic situation is causing weak demand in virtually every country. That is hitting the Scottish economy hard. Would more powers insulate us from that? I think not.

It is surprising that no one has mentioned the fact that our strong currency is one of the reasons why our exports are uncompetitive. A strong currency hits hard at our manufacturing and primary sectors. Would more powers solve that problem? No. Indeed, if Andrew Wilson had his way and we were separated from the rest of the UK, the problem would be even worse—as a small oil-based economy, Scotland would have a strong currency, which would cause major problems for the rest of our industries. Tavish Scott and I were in Norway earlier in the year and saw that that was one of their fundamental concerns.

Our narrow economic base and our over-reliance on the electronics sector are further problems that would not be solved by our having more powers. We need to upskill our work force and to become more entrepreneurial. We must ensure that Scotland's industry moves up the value chain through the commercialisation of research in our universities. That is imperative. Do we need more powers to deliver those objectives? No. We have the powers to do so. If we examine the notion that all small independent countries must be doing better than Scotland, what do we find?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Will the member give way?

**George Lyon:** We find, according to the Eurostat figures, that euro zone growth in the third quarter was 0.3 per cent while Scotland's was 0.6 per cent, Belgium's was 0.4 per cent, Denmark's was minus 0.7 per cent, Finland's was 0.5 per cent and Norway's was minus 0.2 per cent. The notion that a small independent county automatically enjoys growth is utter nonsense.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Has Mr Lyon sat down because he has finished speaking or because he is giving way?

**George Lyon:** I was giving way, but Fiona Hyslop can sit down again if she likes.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That was probably just wishful thinking on my part. [MEMBERS: "Aw."] I am sorry, that was unkind.

Would George Lyon acknowledge that, in the past 30 years, small European economies have significantly outgrown larger European economies? The larger economies have grown at only 2.6 per cent a year while the smaller ones have grown at 3.2 per cent a year. In Europe, in many ways, small is beautiful.

**George Lyon:** The example of Ireland from independence in 1921 through to 1986 can be

considered. The figures would not support the member's proposition at all.

I want to make some headway. The Scottish economy faces huge challenges, but the constitutional argument is a complete distraction from the serious issues that businesses in Scotland face. Andrew Wilson's glib soundbites that more tools in the box are the answer to our economic woes find little support from company boardrooms in Scotland. Businesses' priorities are clear. They want more investment in our transport infrastructure, better connectivity in Scotland and more investment in our skills base. They support the commercialisation of research in our universities; they want Scotland to move away from its over-reliance on screwdriver jobs and to move up the value chain. Most important, they want to widen our economic base, the narrowness of which is one of Scotland's fundamental problems.

It is clear that the biggest challenge lies in encouraging Scots to become more enterprising, more willing to take risks and more willing to set up their own businesses. Business recognises that challenge, which is huge. Even Andrew Wilson would acknowledge that there are no easy answers in that respect.

I have talked about the priorities of business and the coalition. There are huge challenges that cannot be solved overnight. There are no easy and glib answers to our fundamental economic problems. We will turn around our economy and ensure success only by sticking with the coalition's long-term strategy, as outlined in "A Smart, Successful Scotland".

12:11

**Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland)**

**(Con):** Today, there has been a wonderful SNP, Labour and Liberal love-in, which I never thought that I would live to see. I cannot understand why the SNP proposed the debate. It seems to have totally given up on the idea that it is in opposition. Oppositions are about testing what Governments do, but I have never seen Lewis Macdonald having such an easy ride. Despite the fact that Andrew Wilson was on his feet for so long, we are still waiting to find out on what policy basis the debate was proposed.

We all agree that there are major problems in the Scottish economy. Fiona Hyslop said that more public spending is needed. Does she not understand that that has nothing to do with growth rates? There is already almost 20 per cent more public spending per head in Scotland. Kenny MacAskill nicely highlighted a difference. State intervention was his one contribution to the economy debate. That is where the SNP seems to come from. It fails to realise that, although the

state has a role in the economy—we all agree that it does—that role is to provide highly skilled people for employment and to deal with the infrastructure for which it is responsible.

Everything comes down to one word that the SNP has not mentioned: profit. Profit is not a dirty word. I accept that taxation was mentioned.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Davidson:** Not yet.

If profits are taxed, there is a choice about what that money will be spent on. The money must benefit many things, but it cannot be spent before it is made, as my colleague David McLetchie said. Growth and profit are needed, so that there can be taxes and public services, but those things cannot be out of kilter. There is a fine balance, but that has not been recognised today.

**Bristow Muldoon:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Davidson:** Not yet.

Andrew Wilson asked whether we would agree with him, but we have not been told what he wants us to agree to. We want to hear the policy lines. Alex Neil, who is no longer in the chamber and has been remarkably subdued today, echoed what Andrew Wilson said about rates relief. Will Mr Wilson tell us exactly what the rates relief package would be, how much the SNP would be prepared to put into it and where the money would come from? All I can hear is a long silence.

**Andrew Wilson:** The member has given way—I love it when interventions are invited rather than given. The SNP's policies are clear. We want business rates below the prevailing United Kingdom level. The motion shows that we seek to put the economy at the heart of the debate. Perhaps finding agreement was too much to hope for. The question deserves to be put back to David Davidson. As far as I can tell from the Conservatives' amendment, their proposal to reduce business rates will cost in excess of a quarter of a billion pounds. Where will that money come from?

**Mr Davidson:** We have made our policy clear. We heard lies from the Liberals today about our policy on Scottish Enterprise. We have said clearly and publicly over the past two weeks that £260 million from the enterprise budget should go into rates relief for business and infrastructure spending. That is what business wants.

**George Lyon:** Will Mr Davidson take an intervention?

**Mr Davidson:** Not at the moment. We have stated our policy clearly. It is nonsensical for members to take odd comments for discussion by odd individual members—

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Odd individual members?

**Mr Davidson:** However, that is what SNP members have done this morning.

The debate should have involved the SNP stating honestly what it thinks we should address and how we should address it—perhaps the SNP could have asked us to join in. Brian Fitzpatrick made a good speech—it was honest and open—and I commend him for it. He is right. What is the point of members being asked to come to the chamber to debate the subject at the SNP's request—it called the debate in its time—if we have to listen to nothing? The SNP must spell out what it wants support for so that we can decide whether we agree with it and so that the public can have some faith in what is going on.

I look forward to hearing what Lewis Macdonald will come up with in his response. I suspect that we will hear much of what I heard on Monday morning at the Confederation of British Industry breakfast that we did together.

The fact of life is that the Government does not produce wealth. Government has a role in releasing business potential and creating an environment that encourages wealth and entrepreneurial activity. We have not heard from the SNP whether it wants a state-run economy or a marketplace, or whether it believes that there should be a mix. Will there be partnership between the public and private sectors? That is decidedly unclear from what the SNP has been saying over the past few weeks. To the SNP, it is always somebody else's fault; it is always nicer somewhere else. However, now that Ireland is perhaps dropping off and Sweden is dropping off, which country will be the SNP's next victim to use as evidence?

The debate has been a missed opportunity to spell out matters on which the parties might be able to agree. We agree that we need to improve the skills base in Scotland and we agree where the skills shortages are. We also agree that improvements must be made to the infrastructure, even though we might not have exactly the same priorities. We must spell out for the Scottish people the different means of delivering the successful economy that the Conservatives certainly believe in.

12:18

**Lewis Macdonald:** From the Executive's point of view, the objective is clear: an economy that is based on competitive advantages. The advantages will be a highly skilled and flexible work force, a culture of enterprise and support for innovation. Those are the only ways in which to bring our productivity levels up to and beyond those that obtain elsewhere and to achieve

sustained economic growth. I hope that we can build a consensus around our strategy for a smart, successful Scotland, although it is clear from the debate that that will be easier in some aspects of policy than in others.

We are rolling out our strategy for the medium to long term, while delivering the things that matter to business now. Our strategy is not based on promoting Scotland as a cheaper place in which to do business, although we certainly compete already on those terms; it is based on science and skills. Driving down costs is fine—any business will seek to do that—but undercutting the competition is not the primary basis on which Scotland will compete in the wider world.

I recognise the difficulties that sectors of the Scottish economy have faced in the recent past and the impact of global economic conditions on many of our exporters. We were hit particularly hard in the last reported quarter by the restructuring of the electronics sector, which has become so important to the wider economy in recent years.

Of course, I regret last week's announcement by Boots of its intention to close its manufacturing plant in Airdrie over the next two years. Our immediate priority in that case is to ensure that everything possible is done to assist the people who are likely to lose their jobs. Job losses are always regrettable, but, compared with a few short years ago, the Lanarkshire economy and labour market is now buoyant. As Bristow Muldoon said in reference to West Lothian, those who are affected can, with the right support, move quickly into other jobs or training.

Alex Neil raised some important points, but I disagree profoundly with his attempt to talk down the importance to the Scottish economy of increased employment. Today's labour market figures show that the number of jobs increased by 47,000 in the last quarter of 2002. Not just on the claimant count, but on the International Labour Organisation count, unemployment is down to just above 150,000, which means that unemployment in Scotland is lower than unemployment in London. I would not suggest for a moment that the gain in jobs is a ground for complacency, but I reject the suggestion that employment, interest rate and inflation levels are irrelevant to economic growth.

**Andrew Wilson:** I was born and brought up in Lanarkshire and I have lived there for most of my life—I love that part of the world—but the description of its economy as buoyant underlines the complacency that is at the heart of the Government's approach. The reality for many people in Lanarkshire and throughout Scotland is unemployment, underemployment and low incomes, on which measures Lanarkshire is well

behind its competitor regions. Unless the Executive acknowledges that reality, we have no chance of finding a solution.

**Lewis Macdonald:** The reality is that levels of employment are much higher than they were in the recent past and that levels of unemployment are much lower. We are not complacent. If Mr Wilson were serious about building a consensus, he would recognise, acknowledge and support the achievements that have been made in those areas in recent years.

Annabel Goldie and other members have accused Andrew Wilson of underachievement, but he is to be congratulated on the conversion of Mr MacAskill—consensus Kenny is a new experience for the Parliament and a significant achievement. Part of Mr MacAskill's consensual approach is his enthusiasm for a Government strategy to extend the electronic infrastructure. Such a strategy is already in place and is designed precisely to address the inability of the market to deliver full coverage to rural areas. We have invested £200 million in rolling out broadband and an additional £24 million for the pathfinder projects, as was announced in December.

**Mr Swinney:** I am fascinated by the minister's statement about the expansion of connectivity into rural areas. At meetings in my constituency, I encounter enormous frustration about the difficulties of access in rural areas. The Government has not put together a cohesive strategy that will link the disparate elements and provide an all-Scotland solution.

**Lewis Macdonald:** On the contrary, as I just said, we have put in place a strategy and, in the past few weeks, we have extended that strategy through the provision of a further £24 million of investment. We are making similar investments in transport.

David McLetchie conceded that his party would cut the Scottish Enterprise network's budget and Andrew Wilson appeared to cast doubt on his party's plans in that regard. Perhaps Adam Ingram will tell us what his plans on business rates would cost the network and what he would cut to pay for them. Would it be Careers Scotland, Futureskills Scotland, the intermediary technology institutes, the proof-of-concept fund, Scottish Development International, the Scottish co-investment fund, the new business growth fund or the modern apprenticeships that we have heard so much about? The business community is entitled to know which of those measures the other parties intend to sacrifice. No doubt we will find out, if not today, at least in the next few weeks.

We welcome the debate and the drive for consensus, which we have led. We have no interest in arguing about the source of good ideas;

we want good ideas and we will apply them with whatever support we can obtain. Our focus is on implementing our policies and strategies and on the effectiveness of those policies in boosting the Scottish economy.

We are also focused on using our present powers. We do not see any purpose in being distracted by arguments about powers that the Parliament does not possess. We are not prepared to jeopardise any part of our strategy in pursuit of quick headlines, but we are keen to ensure that our strategy is applied fully. We have a coherent, focused and balanced set of policies for achieving economic growth in Scotland in the years ahead. We will work to increase our policies' impact in partnership with business and any political party that chooses to support us in our objectives.

12:24

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Occasional observers of these debates and even some of the participants would be forgiven for experiencing a certain amount of déjà vu today. From the SNP benches, the case for the expansion of the Parliament's economic and financial powers to stimulate economic growth and to release our potential as a nation has again been presented with vigour and clarity, despite the cloth ears of the Tories. From the not-so-serried ranks of the unionists, we have had the usual sneering, scornful rejection of anything other than the status quo—witness the contributions from Annabel Goldie, Rhona Brankin and others.

To be fair, other members have raised the tenor of the debate, so I shall deal with some of the points that were raised. The Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning claims that cutting business taxes will have a negative impact on public revenues. Cutting taxes stimulates economic activity, expanding the tax base and increasing revenues. That has been the experience of a host of small European countries over the past 10 years. Greece, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Portugal and Sweden have cut corporation taxes by half, but corporation tax take has increased by 87 per cent in those countries.

**David McLetchie:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Ingram:** No, I will not give way.

Tavish Scott, who I am sorry is no longer in the chamber, indicated that the development of Liberal Democrat thinking on transferring powers to the Parliament related to a federal future, although George Lyon directly contradicted that. Perhaps the Liberals will tell us whether they will be pushing for such powers as part of their negotiating position with future coalition partners. The Scottish public are entitled to know the Liberals' position before the elections.

**Brian Fitzpatrick:** I wonder whether the member can help with a genuine point of information. Andrew Wilson said that the SNP recognises that the symptoms of economic underperformance cannot be dealt with until the root cause is addressed directly. Is he referring to independence? If so, the consensus that he calls for is based on a false premise. If we are to have open, honest and perhaps on-our-feet debate, we should not seek to build it on a false consensus. We should recognise that there are differences, which are part of democratic politics, and we should have the debate.

**Mr Ingram:** We are arguing for more powers for the Scottish Parliament. Different parties might take different positions on the powers that are required. I reiterate that the SNP is in favour of independence and of assuming all the independent powers that Chancellor Brown currently exercises.

More seasoned and discerning observers of these debates will notice that areas of agreement and even consensus are emerging in our analysis and in policy prescription. We can all agree on measures designed to develop the skills base of our work force, to internationalise our business and to increase research and development and innovation, especially in the knowledge economy. All those measures are necessary to improve productivity and to increase competitiveness. However, we should also be aware that they will not be sufficient to achieve the step change in competitiveness that we need to boost our long-term growth rate to the UK level, never mind to the level of other small European countries.

It is a step forward that the minister is now prepared to accept publicly that low growth is the fundamental problem, even if he and his colleagues remain in denial about the fact that the only way in which to effect the necessary changes involves the Parliament's assumption of the fiscal powers that the Chancellor of the Exchequer currently exercises.

**George Lyon:** The member has made it clear where he is coming from—he wants more powers. I ask him to name all the powers that he wants. What is it that the member is campaigning for?

**Mr Ingram:** We want the Scottish Parliament to have all the fiscal powers that the Chancellor of the Exchequer exercises.

I want to move on. Contrary to what Labour propaganda would have us believe, Gordon Brown has not turned round the Scottish economy, which is neither strong nor stable in comparison with the economies of our competitors. We have consistently had lower growth and higher unemployment than the British average. We have also had much lower population growth than

England has had. That low population growth has turned into absolute decline. Those are hard, incontrovertible facts.

The Scottish economy is not stable; it is not in a state of equilibrium. That has been the case for decades and the fact that it continues to be the case is evidenced by the constant drain of capital and labour out of this country, mostly as a result of the huge pulling power of London and the south-east of England. We can educate and train our people as much as we like but, if we fail to generate our own economic magnetism by exercising the full fiscal powers of an independent Parliament, the self-perpetuating spiral of decline will remain unchecked and our best and brightest people will continue to leave us. At the moment, 10 per cent of Scottish graduates from Scottish universities get their first job outside Scotland. That is where our entrepreneurs go. We still produce entrepreneurs, but they have to go elsewhere to fulfil their ambitions.

There are few policy levers that can give us the step change in competitiveness that we need to break out of our decline. Winning the power to set and change our tax rates across the whole economy is the key to turning round our historic underperformance under Westminster rule. The sooner we all sign up to that goal, the sooner we will be able to get on with the job.

## Theatre in Scotland

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S1M-3715, in the name of Robin Harper, on theatre in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to contribute to the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament regrets the lack of sufficient funding for Scottish theatre; notes the cutbacks at Brunton Theatre; notes the contribution made over the years by groups such as the TAG Theatre Company, 7:84, Borderline, Theatre in Education and TWE Edinburgh; further notes the looming funding crisis for repertory theatre, especially the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh; notes that unless funding equivalent to the funding available to theatre in England and Wales is made available, there will be a drift of talent southwards that will result in the ability of professional theatre to survive in Scotland being undermined in the near future.

12:33

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** I must first declare my interests as a member of Equity, a patron of Forth Children's Theatre and Sounds of Progress and a member of the board of the Traverse Theatre. I also hope to join the board of the Communicado Theatre Company in the near future.

The support of public institutions for the arts, which until recently was characterised by relative apathy, is now characterised by relative complacency. The gap between those two attitudes has not been filled by anything that could justify the optimistic view that the Executive and local government in Scotland appear to take. The Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport no doubt has a prepared response that reflects such complacency. If nothing else, I hope to disabuse her of the idea that that position is tenable or justified.

Since I lodged my motion, Scottish theatre funding has hardly been out of the headlines. The theatre community in Scotland has no argument with the Scottish Arts Council—nor do I. Indeed, I pay tribute to the outspoken energy of James Boyle, who is the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council.

I want to clarify a few points. Funding for mainstream theatre has still not increased. In fact, core funding has more or less been at a standstill for the past two years. As this is a members' business debate, I make no apology for drawing the Executive's attention to problems that are faced by two theatres in the area that I represent—the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company and the Traverse Theatre.

The SAC has told the Executive that per-head funding for theatre in Scotland is roughly equivalent to that in England and Wales. That might or might not be so. I am sure that the minister has the relevant figure to hand. Equity has three yardsticks for testing whether the new Arts Council of England money is being put to proper use: larger casts, longer rehearsals and more new productions. I have no news from any Scottish theatre that it will be able to afford any of those.

Equity hopes that the boost will produce those advances, but the position in Scotland is causing great concern. This year, average funding for a grade 1 theatre will rise to £1,358,000 in England and to £1,346,000 in Wales. We can see how big the difference is between the two funding positions when we consider that each of Scotland's two grade 1 theatres currently receives approximately £0.5 million per annum less than that.

Let me move on to deal with local authority funding. The Traverse Theatre, which is Scotland's leading new writers' theatre, received a paltry £43,000 from the City of Edinburgh Council for 2002-03. That places it right at the bottom of the funding list. By comparison, the Tron Theatre Company and the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow received £103,000 and £475,000 respectively, whereas the Eden Court Theatre in Inverness received £0.5 million or more from local authority funds. It is clear that both the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company and the Traverse Theatre are facing genuine financial hardship.

Theatres throughout Scotland have been calling for funds to help deal with the creeping crisis that has developed as a result of recent years of standstill funding and effective cutbacks. In some cases, the problems date back to the unfortunate results of local authority reorganisation. Only last year, there was a united call for extra funding to help resolve entrenched on-going problems and to fund a national theatre organisation. We are pleased that the Executive has at last recognised the crisis and has diverted money that was originally destined to set up a national theatre organisation to support existing theatres, such as Dundee Rep and the Byre Theatre in St Andrews.

This year, following a £25 million investment in England and Wales, Equity and the Theatrical Management Association have agreed a 17 per cent increase in the previously appallingly low wages of Equity members. The agreement covers the whole of the UK, so Scottish theatres will also be required to foot the extra bill. The Scottish theatres have no alternative and, anyway, the deal has met with unanimous approval. The money has been found temporarily by raiding the funds that were set aside for a national theatre and by the Scottish Arts Council's juggling some of its core

and lottery funding. However, it is important to recognise that that is not a long-term solution but an emergency measure to shore things up for the immediate future.

The reason for having a national theatre organisation in the first place was to stop the drift southwards of writers, producers and actors and to deliver top-quality work throughout Scotland that would link into schools and communities. The national theatre organisation was also to mount ambitious main-stage productions. The health of all of Scottish theatre depends very much on supporting the top of the tree to the fullest extent.

The theatre community takes extremely seriously its role in education outreach, particularly in poor and geographically remote communities. It is unfortunate that that vital work is under most threat when money is tight. There are very little box office returns from outreach and educational work. As a consequence, such work relies heavily on cross-subsidies.

Let me give the Executive a couple of reasonable comparisons. If we include national museums, libraries and Historic Scotland, we give 0.7 per cent of our budget to culture. Finland, which has a similar population, gives 0.9 per cent of the state budget, whereas Denmark gives 1 per cent of its national budget. The raw figures work out at £161 million for Scotland, £175 million for Finland and £350 million for Denmark. In all three countries, local authorities also make a huge contribution, but it is absolutely clear that, however one juggles the figures, Scotland comes out poorly when one compares the state, local and absolute levels of support for the arts in general and for the theatre in particular. Sweden is another country that puts enormous value on supporting culture and the theatre.

We must recognise that Scotland has three poverty problems: straightforward financial poverty; environmental poverty, particularly in our worst urban areas; and a poverty of mind and spirit, which extends into all levels of national and local government. We must recognise that the third of those failings can, and must, be addressed within the term of the next Scottish Parliament. Let us have no more talk about cities of culture until we put more of our national money where our mouth is. There are cities in Europe that have bigger budgets than does the Scottish Arts Council. We should be ashamed of ourselves.

If we ask whether we can afford to treble the subsidy to the arts, I suggest that we are already asking the wrong question. We should be saying that there must be a way to find those vital funds. It is a trifling sum of money compared with what we spend on other budgets. *[Interruption.]*



**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** May I say—gently—to the people applauding in the galleries that this is not a public meeting. We do not allow applause in the Parliament because it might lead to boos on other occasions.

12:40

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Robin Harper on achieving the debate. I declare an interest as a director of the board of the 2000 & 3 Estaites Ltd theatre company.

Robin Harper has expressed well, eloquently and accurately some of the problems facing Scottish theatre and Scottish culture. Most disturbing is the Scottish Executive's response to all those questions. Time and again, the Scottish Executive attempts to make a virtue out of having created a crisis. The problems within Scottish theatre, as within Scottish culture, arise from that long-term failure to support Scottish culture, by the Executive and its predecessor Westminster Governments.

The situation with Scottish theatre is particularly stark. I was struck by the Scottish Arts Council briefing, which I find somewhat disingenuous. We can juggle the figures, but any increases that are going into Scottish theatre, no matter how small, are going there only by sacrificing part of the whole.

I do not regard the national theatre as an idea that has still to be achieved. I regard it as something to which there is an overwhelming commitment agreed by every party in the chamber, and endorsed by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. The national theatre exists; it simply has to be funded. The Executive made proposals to fund the national theatre. Each year between 2003 and 2006, it would get £1 million. However, the Executive knew that the steering group for the national theatre in Scotland—tremendously well chaired by Donald Smith—had proposed a different set of figures. Those figures are for the minimal requirement.

However, the Executive made a financial commitment. It walked away from that commitment time after time. Any increases that are available to Scottish theatre next year—and they are minimal—are coming from money that should be used for the national theatre. It is not an either/or situation.

The Executive has also forced good people from the theatre community to make that choice by putting them on either side of the debate. It is a choice between existing with the jobs that they have, and doing less, and welcoming something that would top out the provision of theatre in Scotland, which would deepen and enrich and

which would feed back new work and new activity. That is something that everyone in Scotland wants.

It is particularly tragic that after the long debate leading up to publication of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's report, we managed to get a consensus among the members of the Scottish theatre community for the first time ever. The national theatre should be funded as part of that complete and complex package. Having got that agreement, the Executive has sought to divide and rule ever since. It has told people that they cannot have money because it would not leave any money for the core work.

I notice that Robin Harper is agreeing with me and the minister is disagreeing. I know what the members of the theatre community and the arts community are saying. Robin Harper will confirm it. The Executive has a policy of divide and rule and it is damaging in the short, medium and long term for theatre in Scotland.

We need to make a commitment. After the mess that the Executive has made of cultural funding in the past four years, and of the ludicrous national cultural strategy, we need a fresh start. We need to make amends for the mistakes that have been made.

We can do that quite easily. We can have an urgent baseline review of the arts in Scotland after 1 May. We can consider our nation's cultural requirements. We can debate the figures that Robin Harper has brought to the chamber and we can set our cultural priorities. Then we can plan properly for the future.

A core part of those plans will be the national theatre with national companies being funded directly by the Government. We now need that national debate. After years of cutting, sparing and pinching pennies, after years of confusion from the Executive and its predecessors, the time is right for a fresh start in Scottish culture.

Robin Harper's motion is correct, and although it will not be voted on, it should be supported by the chamber. We should no longer listen to the excuses and evasions of the Executive because, frankly, it has failed Scotland in these matters and in so many more.

12:45

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** I am always delighted to be able to speak in a debate about Scottish theatre. We all agree that Scottish theatre makes a huge contribution to Scottish life, whether it is through excellent companies such as Dundee Rep, the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company or Glasgow's Citizens Theatre, or through smaller spaces such as the Traverse Theatre, which gives

young aspiring playwrights an opportunity to showcase new work. I have had the privilege as an MSP to work alongside Tag Theatre Company in its work with children through its Parliament project. That was a great project. Many other MSPs also had that opportunity.

We have great playwrights in Scotland, be they established writers such as John Clifford, increasingly recognised playwrights such as David Greig, or new young playwrights such as Isabel Wright, whose most recent work I saw last night at the Traverse.

While I am happy to speak about Scottish theatre all day, I must disagree with Robin Harper's motion. Come on, Robin. Let us be fair about this. One would think from his motion that we were seeing a complete meltdown in Scottish theatre. We are not seeing that. Let us set out the facts on the table. Let us get the facts right. On a per capita basis, the increase in funding for drama in Scotland compares favourably with that in England. That is a fact.

That is not to say that there are no problems in the sector. Robin Harper mentioned some of them. The trend in the number of productions performed by each theatre has declined. That has been compounded by significant increases in the wages of actors and stage management—quite rightly, and I agree with that. However, there are significant increases in funding. The Scottish Arts Council has achieved a total increase of 42 per cent for the theatre sector for the next two years, although I recognise that that will take some time to impact on the sector.

We have to remain firmly committed to the concept of a national theatre. There is a consensus on that. However, I recognise that the Scottish Arts Council's decision to ensure that regional theatre is put on a sure footing before we fund a national theatre is sensible. I ask the minister to restate the commitment to a national theatre. It is a centrepiece of our national cultural strategy. A huge amount of work has been done by the Scottish theatre community on the plan for a Scottish national theatre. Let us get on with it. Let us do it.

12:48

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I should also declare my interest as a board member of 2000 & 3 Estates.

I congratulate Robin Harper on securing the debate. It is a necessary debate, because the arts in Scotland face a real predicament. We have not had a statement on which we could question the minister. We have not had a debate so far. Questions that have been asked have received evasive answers, so I welcome the debate.

The debate is necessary because over the past few years—since 2001-02—we have seen a real-terms cut in Scottish Arts Council funding, from £37.7 million to £35.5 million next year. That is in real terms, using 2001 prices that are published and available. Of course the result, as we saw at the recent Scottish Arts Council meeting, is to freeze national company income and cut Scottish Opera income, and then to raid yet again the money that was earmarked for a national theatre company. Fundamentally, that is a flawed approach. The reality is that the delivery of a national theatre company has been substantially undermined, to the point where I believe that it is difficult to foresee it being delivered by the Executive, even if it is re-elected at the forthcoming elections.

The credibility of the Executive with regard to a national theatre company is shot to pieces. The ministers' reputations are in tatters, for they alone of all the culture ministers we have had in the Executive have presided over a real-terms cut in their department's budget. That information comes from official figures.

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mike Watson):** The member is not very good at counting.

**Mr Monteith:** I happen to have the figures with me.

Having won the debate on the need for a national theatre and obtained the cross-party support that Mike Russell talked about, we are in danger of having to revisit that debate. Every time that funding for a national theatre is cut, we must revisit the idea behind a national theatre and justify expenditure again.

The case for a national theatre company is clear. It is built on commissioning work from existing theatre companies, investing more in them, helping them to achieve perfection and driving up the quality of their work. A national theatre company would use work such as Theatre Babel's "Medea" and the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company's recent success with "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" and take it internationally. People who have made themselves known are willing to provide money for a national theatre company, but not for regional theatres.

As the national theatre company's budget has been raided twice, we must revisit the argument. What can be done? In the short term, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport could review his budget and find the money. That remains possible, even at this late stage. The minister must also argue for additional funding from the Executive's budgets. Recently, a saving of £3 million from the advertising budget was announced. Such savings could be reallocated to a national theatre and the

Scottish Arts Council. I would close the Scotland Office and remove Helen Liddell from her job. I would rather have more thespians than politicians, but that is not for this Parliament to deliver.

We must ensure that we need not debate theatre funding next year. In the longer term, we must find solutions that leverage more money from the private sector into theatre and arts generally. We cannot rely on state funding, because it cannot always be delivered. That puts Scotland's culture at peril. We must change our ways. I look forward to hearing how the minister will change his ways.

12:52

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I congratulate Robin Harper on securing the debate and on his speech, which was the best that I have heard him give.

The ministers who are responsible for the arts are not to blame—Scotland has traditionally undervalued the arts. We have a huge backlog of investment to clear. We need more investment. Ministers, who I am sure are committed to the arts, could persuade the Government machine, which is less committed, that investment in the arts is helpful.

Other members have made some of the points that I will make. Quality of life affects everything. If people are happier, they will work harder and make more money, which is what people seem to be interested in. If we had good national dramas and good national companies were scattered about Scotland, that would increase national self-confidence. At the local level, community drama and learning about drama in schools would increase self-confidence. Drama is good for self-confidence, which it is regrettable that many Scots lack.

A good arts facility attracts entrepreneurs: Japanese businessmen might set up in Edinburgh because they like golf, opera and theatre. Investment in the arts has a good cash value and educational value. Many people learn much more from acting in a play than they do in a classroom, and they can continue to learn as adults. Such investment would mean savings in police budgets and a reduction in crime, for example.

We must invest more. An issue in theatre is the pay increase in the English regional companies, which are roughly equivalent to our large city companies. The English companies have an advantage and will be able to pay wages that we cannot.

We must pursue the national theatre idea. I accept the line that the minister and the Scottish Arts Council advance: that if we are setting out to build the Parthenon and have designed some

lovely pillars, we must have a foundation or the whole thing will fall down. There is also not much value in having a nice site like the Acropolis, building the foundations and not building the pillars. We have to have the foundations, but we also have to have the pillars—to do otherwise is to waste our time.

As others have said, the idea of the national theatre is to build on the existing companies and invest in them so that they can provide bigger, better-rehearsed productions and tour them around the country. In the years that I was involved in the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company, I could never understand why really good projects that the Lyceum and the other big theatre companies produced could not be toured around the country for the benefit of all.

We know what the national theatre is aiming at: somehow, we have to find the money for it. I urge ministers to fight their corner even harder than I am sure they have fought already to get the money and direct it towards the overall improvement of the quality of life in Scotland through the theatre.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move on to three-minute speeches. I call Lloyd Quinan.

12:55

**Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I need to declare an interest. I was a member of Equity for 20 years. I am the ex-associate director of the Scottish Theatre Company, which was one of the attempts to create a national company in this country. I was also associate director of the Traverse Theatre and the artistic director of United Artists Scotland. I am one of the people who had to leave the theatre because of underfunding. To some degree, this is groundhog day for me, as I have been having this debate since I left college in 1978.

I want to talk about theatre workers, which is an issue that should be of concern to members of the Labour party. It is theatre workers who subsidise theatre: not the Scottish Arts Council and not the Scottish Executive. It is the theatre workers, their families and children who subsidise theatre through the low levels of theatre workers' salaries and wages. They also suffer the insecurity of short-term contracts, which can prevent them from being able to get mortgages or credit of any kind. We are happy to go and watch them, but we will not pay them properly.

In Scotland, many actors were able to work in the theatre in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s because of the existence of a fairly lively television drama production scene, which we no longer have. Today, actors may be asked to go and work in an ensemble piece that is being produced by

the BBC on the banks of the river Clyde at £500 per episode. If they are on housing benefit and do that one episode in one week of their life, they risk losing their benefit. There are actors right across this country who cannot afford to take work in the theatre because they have families.

I have not even mentioned the many hundreds of writers, designers and lighting designers who also live in that same world of insecurity—in fact, writers probably have it worst of all. We have a canon of writing in this country that is seldom treated with the same respect that the canon of writing in any other European country is given.

Iceland, which has a population of less than 400,000, has a national theatre that is open 51 weeks of the year. It is an ensemble company of 35 actors with a supporting directorial, music and production staff and a canon of work that has been developed practically since 1901 or 1902.

Why is it that we cannot have in Scotland what an island on the edge of the Arctic is capable of giving to the world? The National Theatre of Iceland tours the world on a regular basis. It is recognised and respected while Scotland continues to have the same debate that we were having in 1978 when I left college.

I accept what Donald Gorrie said. It is not the fault of these particular ministers, but if they do not do something it will be their fault. To paraphrase Irvine Welsh, to be a Scottish actor is shite.

12:59

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I, too, am a director of the 3 Estates. As others have done, I congratulate Robin Harper on bringing the debate to the chamber. I agree broadly with the drift of the contributions that we have had so far.

I do not want to become overly involved in the detail and the figures involved in funding and funding deficits or to indulge in attacks on ministers. Mike Watson has a strong and commendable personal track record in supporting the Scottish Youth Theatre. He has promoted its cause with vigour and zeal. I also know that the deputy minister's work in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is well regarded.

It is clear to everybody that the theatre in Scotland needs to be funded on a more secure and sustainable basis. Nobody would disagree with that.

I am convinced that, across Executive ministries, parties and the Parliament, we must make more effort to recognise the importance of the arts in general in the life of Scotland at local, regional, national and international level. Especially today in this debate, we recognise the potential of the

theatre to enrich the lives of the individuals who fall under its spell. To me, the theatre is a special place where we have a multiplicity of talent; there, we can share experiences with others and wonderful, memorable things take place before our very eyes. The theatre brings together the talents of writers, directors, actors, designers and musicians. It can surprise and excite us and, at best, it promises enchantment, enrichment and enhancement of our lives.

As politicians, we can talk sincerely and with real justification about social inclusion—I have spoken before about the work of Dundee repertory theatre in that regard. We can argue for the theatre on the basis of its importance for tourism and economics; there are times when that argument is needed. However, we should always have in our minds the ways in which theatre can bring inspiration, vision and insight into our lives. As policy makers, we must have a vision of the ethos that we wish to create in Scotland, to foster creativity in the arts. We need the kind of vision that brought us the Edinburgh festival and saw the possibility of staging “Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites” and other wonderful acting performances in this very arena.

My theatre visits began with the entertainers in Rothesay, where I saw comedians such as Chic Murray. I later saw Shakespeare productions in Stratford, great Scottish theatrical events such as 7:84's production of “The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil”, and Bill Bryden's “Willie Rough” and his portrayals of the first world war and of the shipyard workers of Greenock.

I have a list of individual cases that I would have liked to mention. Indeed, I have spent time on this subject because my life has been enriched by the theatre. We cannot measure such experiences in pounds, shillings and pence or treat the arts as tick-box, readily measurable commodities. As a nation, we must recognise and acknowledge the value of the kind of vision, inspiration and social commentary that the theatre can offer us.

I conclude by quoting from James Boyle's article in *The Scotsman* on Monday:

“Above all, encourage great ideas and great writing that will break through theatre walls and create excitement with performance in new spaces and in the open air. Archive all the performances and give them to schools. Bring great stars to Scotland. Go for broke: create glamour, romance, thrills...”

Let's have the national theatre and let's have the full funding stream. The arts will repay the country in full measure.”

I agree with that final comment.

13:02

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I thank Robin Harper for securing this debate. I am not a member of any theatre board and I certainly do not have Lloyd Quinan's experience, but I am very fortunate to come from a family that talked about the theatre a lot and, from the age of two, I was taken to theatres such as the Panopticon, the Alhambra, the Pavilion and the Kings. I am greatly interested in the theatre: it has certainly brought great joy and I have taken my own children along to it.

The country needs alternative, satirical and thought-provoking theatre that is properly funded. For example, last Friday, I attended a performance of 7:84's excellent production of Dario Fo's "Can't Pay? Won't Pay!" More people should be able to get out and about and see such productions.

Robin Harper touched on the important issue of community theatre. On Rhona Brankin's point about funding, I should tell her that, at Christmas, I attended a performance of Team Pinewood's excellent pantomime in Drumchapel, which involved all the kids, parents, teachers and so on from five to 55 years old. David Bell must be thanked for his work on that production. However, the company is about to fold due to lack of funding.

As for other theatre companies, I must congratulate David Wallace for starting up PACE Theatre Company—indeed, I was involved in that myself through Renfrewshire Council. However, although the company has become one of the biggest wee theatre companies in the whole of Scotland, it is also desperately short of funds.

Lloyd Quinan mentioned theatre hands and their families and the fact that they have to work for very little money. I should remind Rhona Brankin that, not so long ago, the Citizens Theatre had to close down between September and November because it could not pay anyone in the company. There is a shortfall in funding for the theatre and the arts in Scotland.

It would be very sad if the Parliament let great theatre companies such as TAG, Borderline, 7:84 and other community theatres such as I have already mentioned go to the wall for lack not so much of funding as of support from the Scottish Parliament and the Executive.

I call on the Parliament and Executive to consider the figures already quoted and to please support the local arts. They bring a great joy to people and they help to give us our Scottish identity and culture.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Dr Elaine Murray will respond to the debate on behalf of the Executive. You have seven minutes, minister.

13:05

**The Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Dr Elaine Murray):** I congratulate Robin Harper on securing the debate and on giving us an opportunity to respond to members' concerns on a number of issues and not only the text of the motion.

In view of his rather snide comment about prepared speeches, I reassure Robin Harper that I prepare my own notes from various bits of advice that I get from officials, so he can blame me if he does not like my speech.

It is unfortunate that there seems to be a tendency to concentrate only on the negative at the moment. Contrary to the impression given by some sections of Scotland's media, Scotland's theatre is very strong. That is not to say that it is without its problems, but Scotland's theatre is successful. We should spend more time thinking about those successes and being proud of them and not just talk about the problems of funding.

Rhona Brankin was correct to draw attention to some of the fine playwrights we have at the moment. There were eight nominations of Scottish companies at the Barclay Awards and three of the successful four were theatre companies. As Brian Monteith mentioned, there have been sell-out runs of "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" at the Royal Lyceum Theatre. There is also the Traverse Theatre's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary programme. The fact that companies south of the border are looking to recruit some of our top directors is a demonstration of how successful some of those people have been rather than a cause for complaint and dissent.

Much has been made of comparisons between theatre funding in Scotland and in England. Rhona Brankin is correct—the levels of funding per head of population are similar.

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

**Dr Murray:** No, I would like to continue.

There has been a 33 per cent increase in theatre funding from 2002 to 2004—16 per cent last year and 17 per cent this year. Twenty-three core funded organisations received almost £7 million from the Scottish Arts Council. The Arts Council of England is bringing up its support to £70 million a year. Given that England has 10 times the population of Scotland, similar amounts of money are being invested in theatre.

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

**Dr Murray:** No, I am not giving way. I have only seven minutes and I want to get on.

The Arts Council of England supports 209 core funded organisations, which is a similar number, per head of population, to the number supported

by the Scottish Arts Council. If we consider the figures—as I have—we find a much wider divergence in the amount of funding. Some theatres in England receive very small amounts—perhaps £10,000 or £20,000—whereas—*[Interruption]*. Will Mr Quinan please not shout from a seated position: it is quite unnecessary.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order, Mr Quinan.

**Dr Murray:** Let us be honest: some theatres are also getting large sums of money. In Scotland, the smallest awards are around £50,000 or £60,000. We have a narrower range of funding.

Robin Harper rightly said that there has been a problem concerning local authority supported funding—particularly to building-based core funded organisations, which has fallen since 1994-95. There is now a shortfall of some £405,000. We discovered last year that additional funding provided through the Executive and the Scottish Arts Council to some of our core funded organisations resulted in a reduction in support from local authorities. The unfortunate result was that those CFOs did not get the benefit we hoped they would get from the reallocation.

I do not have time to go through the settlements for individual theatres, but they go up by as much as 30 per cent for Borderline Theatre Company. Admittedly the increase has been made through the reallocation of £1 million, but there have been significant increases for a number of CFOs.

Much has been made of the total funding of the Scottish Arts Council. Brian Monteith is wrong: I do not know where he got his figures. The figures I have show that in real terms the Scottish Arts Council is faring slightly better than the Scottish Executive, because the Scottish Executive budget will fall in real terms from £18.428 billion in 2000-01 to £18.286 billion in 2003-04, or by 0.77 per cent. Over the same period, the Scottish Arts Council budget will increase from £35 million to £37.2 million, or by 6.6 per cent.

For those who want Mike Watson and me to vire other parts of the tourism, culture and sport budget over to the Scottish Arts Council—

**Mr Monteith:** Will Elaine Murray give way?

**Dr Murray:** I do not have time. I ask those people to explain what parts of our budget they would cut. Would they cut—

**Mr Quinan:** I will explain if she will give way.

**Dr Murray:** Mr Quinan should sit down. I have told him that I will not take an intervention from him.

**Mr Quinan:** She should not ask rhetorical questions, then.

**Dr Murray:** Do they want to take money from VisitScotland, from sports programmes in schools, from support for our historic environment or from support for Gaelic? They have to answer some of those questions before they make such allegations.

There has been significant debate about the national theatre. I want to take the opportunity to restate the Executive's position. The national theatre remains an Executive commitment. However, we consider that without a secure package of funding for the full project, it would be inadvisable to proceed with detailed implementation at this stage. We believe that the theatre infrastructure needs to be secured in advance—Donald Gorrie made some good points about that.

We recognise that the Equity and Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union settlement places additional burdens on theatres. As a trade unionist, I would not agree to the funding of the national theatre on the back of not paying union rates to theatre workers.

**Michael Russell:** Will Elaine Murray give way?

**Dr Murray:** No, I will not.

There have been many calls for a review of arts funding. We would be happy to consider that. We have not yet heard any formal proposals from the Scottish Arts Council but, as Mike Watson said in his recent interview with *The Scotsman*, it would have to be a root-and-branch review and it would have to include the role and structure of the Scottish Arts Council. I remind people who call for a McCrone of the arts that the McCrone settlement was based on modernisation to release funds.

All I want to say in summing up is that—as Mike Watson and I do personally—the Scottish Executive does and will continue to value and support, and wishes to fund more fully, the Scottish theatre.

13:12

*Meeting suspended until 14:30.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Business Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The first item of business this afternoon is consideration of motion S1M-3892, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a revised business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) as a revision to the programme of business agreed on 6 February 2003—

Wednesday 12 February 2003

after—

*“followed by*                      Stage 3 of Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill”

delete—

*“followed by*                      Executive Debate on Fisheries

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7:00 pm                      Decision Time”

and insert—

*“followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm                      Decision Time

*followed by*                      Members’ Business – debate on the subject of S1M-3840 Tom McCabe: Young People in Sport”

(b) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 19 February 2003

9:30 am                      Time for Reflection

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*                      Executive Debate on Fisheries

11:30 am                      Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Members’ Business - debate on the subject of S1M-3864 Brian Monteith: Location of a New Hospital for Forth Valley

2:00 pm                      Continuation of Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7:00 pm                      Decision Time

Thursday 20 February 2003

9:30 am                      Business Motion

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*                      Continuation of Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*                      Stage 3 of Building (Scotland) Bill

2:30 pm

Question Time

3:10 pm

First Minister’s Question Time

3:30 pm

Continuation of Stage 3 of Building (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

*followed by*

Members’ Business – debate on the subject of S1M-3860 Mr Andrew Welsh: Arbroath CAFE Project

Wednesday 26 February 2003

9:30 am

Time for Reflection

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

11:00 am

Stage 3 of Title Conditions (Scotland) Bill

2:30 pm

Continuation of Stage 3 of Title Conditions (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

*followed by*

Members’ Business

Thursday 27 February 2003

9:30 am

Stage 1 Debate on National Galleries of Scotland Bill

*followed by*

Stage 1 Debate on Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Business Motion

2:30 pm

Question Time

3:10 pm

First Minister’s Question Time

3:30 pm

Executive Business

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

*followed by*

Members’ Business

and (c) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 17 February 2003 on the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Human Intelligence Sources – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003, the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Surveillance – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Prescription of Offices, Ranks and Positions) (Scotland) Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/50) and the draft Members of the Parole Board (Removal Tribunal) Regulations 2003.—[*Euan Robson.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** I have a request from Fiona Hyslop to speak against the motion.

14:30

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** With great regret, I stand before the Parliament—[*Interruption.*] If Labour and Liberal Democrat members have no regrets about what is happening to the fishing industry in Scotland, shame on them.

Members might remember that we last had a debate on fishing on 12 December last year, in advance of the European Union negotiations. During the Christmas recess, I asked—the request was probably unpopular—for the Parliament to be recalled so that we could have a debate on fishing. I was told that there would be no debate, because the Minister for Environment and Rural Development would give a statement to the Parliament in January and that that would give more opportunity for members to get more information.

The minister did that. During that statement, the minister said in answer to my question that there would be a debate in a few weeks. A few weeks from then would have been the end of January. The Scottish National Party did not use its time in January or its time in February to debate fishing because the Executive promised, not only in December but in January, to have a debate.

The substance—the biggest crisis that faces any community in Scotland—concerns me. The only thing that we have been able to do in the Parliament is to ask questions. While everybody else is asked their opinion in debate and discussion, the Parliament has never had the opportunity to have a debate, discussion or vote.

**Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con):** I make it clear that, on this issue, the Conservative party supports the opposition that Fiona Hyslop has expressed towards the business motion. I invite her to express my view that the Liberals have a choice today, in that they can be on the winning side of the argument whichever way they decide to vote.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I remind members that the first time that the Government was defeated in the Parliament was on a fishing vote. Perhaps the minister is frightened to come to the Parliament and to have a vote because he knows that, last time, he was defeated.

The minister has said that the reason that he wants to move—or cancel—the debate from today's business programme and have it next week is that the Executive wants more time to consider the results of the consultation. If that is the case, why did the Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Business, who is sitting behind him, agree two days before the minister issued the consultation that it was right to have a debate? There is a bit of inconsistency in that, which is no big deal, because we recognise inconsistency in the minister's track record on the subject.

The issue is one of substance. We must have the chance to debate what happened in Europe. We have not even had the chance to do that, and the minister now wants to change the goalposts and have us debate a consultation on a

redundancy deal—it is not even a recovery package. The Parliament has to wait as the minister changes the terms of the debate as he goes along.

Will the minister assure us that, next week, he will not say, "Oh, I'm sorry—we've not had enough time to see the consultation results. Let's have the debate at another opportunity"? The consultation was issued on—I think—Friday; the deadline for responses is 2 o'clock tomorrow. Why had one of the people on the circulation list for that consultation not received the documents by yesterday? Members of the Rural Development Committee had to give that person the consultation documents. The minister cannot come back next week bleating that we will have to have another debate at another time.

Perhaps the more serious point from the Parliament's point of view is the process, which is important. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. I want to hear.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I ask members, even if they are not interested in the substance of the fishing issue—as many obviously are not—to acknowledge the fact that there is an issue over the process. Until we vote in two minutes' time, this Parliament's wishes, on which it voted, are to hold a debate this afternoon. The Executive now wants to cancel that debate. There is now a minute to go—until then, the situation is that the Parliament has democratically agreed that there should be a debate on fishing this afternoon.

The Presiding Officer may wish to reflect on whether it is appropriate that, last night, the Executive issued a press notice, which said that the fisheries debate

"has been postponed until next week."

What authority did the Executive have to make that announcement? It was not made with the Parliament's authority.

I ask the Minister for Parliamentary Business to reflect on some of the comments that she has made to me at the Parliamentary Bureau. I have serious concerns that the processes of the Parliament are being abused. If for no other reason than to defend the Parliament's integrity, when the Parliament decides to hold a debate, it must follow through with that debate. Any decision on whether to postpone that debate must be made in the chamber not by ministers, and must not be sneaked out late at night because it suits the minister in question.

There has been inconsistency and incompetence, not only in the substance of the matter, but in the process. I ask members to vote against the business motion and to return us to holding the fisheries debate this afternoon.



14:36

**The Deputy Minister for Parliamentary Business (Euan Robson):** The Executive regrets that the time of the fisheries debate has had to be altered, but the decision was not taken lightly. It was taken with the interests of Parliament in mind. It has always been the Executive's intention to allow a full and proper debate on fisheries, and that has not changed. In fact, by changing the time of the debate to next week, we are adding half an hour to it.

The Executive considered it very important for members to have as much information as possible available to them before the debate, including the finalised Scottish statutory instruments. With that in mind, Ross Finnie sought agreement from business managers to postpone the debate until next week, so that Parliament will have the fullest possible information available to it when the debate takes place. By the time of next week's debate, consultation with the industry will be complete and the full SSI package will have been laid before Parliament.

It is important to note that the Executive has been quite open about the process, and has ensured that the non-Executive party spokespeople on the Rural Development Committee have been kept fully in the picture. Indeed, they were copied into the consultation exercise. This is simply a deferment of the debate for one week, which will make available more information for members.

I am afraid that we have witnessed some rather vacuous posturing on the part of the Opposition. I wonder, Presiding Officer, whether you recall the point of order that you raised, when Mr Reid was in the chair, at 5.01 on 24 January 2001. Mr Reid announced:

"There is a point of order and, strangely, it comes from the Presiding Officer."

Sir David Steel said:

"It is unusual for me to raise a point of order, but members should be made aware that one of the parties gave me notice, a very short time ago, of a change of the motion for the second debate tomorrow. I am not obliged to tell members of that change, but I think it is only courteous to do so, as otherwise members will see the change for the first time in tomorrow's business bulletin."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 2001; Vol 10, c 547.]

That was, of course, when the Scottish National Party altered its business to debate the Sutherland report. According to the SNP, therefore, it is not acceptable for the Executive to give two days' notice of a week's delay on a known subject, while the SNP was prepared to give members three or four hours' notice of a change in its business.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that motion S1M-3892, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 MacKay, Angus (Edinburgh South) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

# **AGAINST**

Adam, Brian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
McGugan, Irene (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Robison, Shona (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
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)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Wilson, Andrew (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on the revised business programme is: For 65, Against 49, Abstentions 0.

## *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) as a revision to the programme of business agreed on 6 February 2003—

Wednesday 12 February 2003

after—

*“followed by*

Stage 3 of Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill”

*delete—*

*“followed by*

Executive Debate on Fisheries

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7:00 pm

Decision Time”

*and insert—*

*“followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm

Decision Time

*followed by*

Members’ Business – debate on the subject of S1M-3840 Tom McCabe: Young People in Sport”

(b) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 19 February 2003

9:30 am

Time for Reflection

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*

Executive Debate on Fisheries

11:30 am

Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Members’ Business - debate on the subject of S1M-3864 Brian Monteith: Location of a New Hospital for Forth Valley

2:00 pm

Continuation of Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7:00 pm

Decision Time

Thursday 20 February 2003

9:30 am

Business Motion

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*

Continuation of Stage 3 of Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Stage 3 of Building (Scotland) Bill

2:30 pm

Question Time

3:10 pm

First Minister’s Question Time

3:30 pm

Continuation of Stage 3 of Building (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*

Members’ Business – debate on the subject of S1M-3860 Mr Andrew Welsh: Arbroath CAFE Project

Wednesday 26 February 2003

9:30 am

Time for Reflection

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

11:00 am

Stage 3 of Title Conditions (Scotland) Bill

2:30 pm

Continuation of Stage 3 of Title Conditions (Scotland) Bill

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5:00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 Thursday 27 February 2003  
 9:30 am Stage 1 Debate on National  
 Galleries of Scotland Bill  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate on Prostitution  
 Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motion  
 2:30 pm Question Time  
 3:10 pm First Minister's Question Time  
 3:30 pm Executive Business  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5:00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

and (c) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 17 February 2003 on the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Human Intelligence Sources – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003, the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Surveillance – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Prescription of Offices, Ranks and Positions) (Scotland) Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/50) and the draft Members of the Parole Board (Removal Tribunal) Regulations 2003.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):**  
 Motion S1M-3894, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, sets out the timetable for stage 3 consideration of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, during Stage 3 of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill, debate on each part of the Stage 3 proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion by the time-limits indicated (each time-limit being calculated from when the Stage begins and excluding any periods when those proceedings are suspended)—

Groups 1 and 2 – no later than 45 minutes

Groups 3 to 5 – no later than 1 hour and 30 minutes

Motion to pass the Bill – 2 hours—[*Euan Robson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

14:40

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** We now come to stage 3 proceedings on the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill. Members will need copies of the bill, the marshalled list and the groupings. Two minutes will be allowed for the first division following the debate on the first group of amendments. One minute will be allowed for divisions on the lead amendment in subsequent groups, should they be necessary.

### Section 3—Reference by employment agency etc

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The first group of amendments relates to the duty to make a referral. Amendment 1 is grouped with amendment 2.

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Cathy Jamieson):** Amendments 1 and 2 will extend the duty to make referrals to employment businesses. That duty will be backed up by the offence that all organisations will commit if they fail to comply.

It is worth reminding members why we are lodging the amendments at this stage. Employment businesses employ staff who are deployed to work in other organisations. Employment agencies that operate simply as an introductory service will not be covered by the duty, because there are already provisions in the bill that will allow them to make referrals in appropriate circumstances.

An amendment that was lodged at stage 2 would have extended the duty to refer to all organisations. There is no reason to distinguish between employment businesses and other organisations that directly employ staff in child care positions. They have the same employment relationships with their staff and have responsibilities for disciplinary and dismissal action. It is therefore reasonable that the duty to make referrals should also apply to them. We must ensure consistency and close all potential loopholes.

I did not consider it appropriate at stage 2 to extend the duty to make referrals to employment businesses as there had been no opportunity to consult them. We have now contacted and consulted a range of employment businesses, and they do not object to the proposal.

We intend to produce comprehensive guidance during implementation to ensure that all organisations understand their new duties.

I move amendment 1.

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

I am not rising to speak against amendment 1. In fact, the SNP will not oppose any of the amendments that have been lodged at stage 3.

The stage 2 amendment to which the minister referred would have extended the duty to make a referral beyond registered child care agencies to all organisations. That provision was widely welcomed. However, the minister will recall that concern was expressed that it would increase the already heavy administrative and financial burden on voluntary organisations. It was reassuring to hear the commitment that the minister gave to putting in place support, guidance and training to ensure that the voluntary sector can fulfil its duties and responsibilities under the bill.

I seek further clarification from the minister on the level and nature of that training, support and guidance. When the minister is assessing what is required, will she take into account fully the practical and resourcing issues that many voluntary organisations will face, both when implementing part V of the Police Act 1997 and when dealing with the additional administrative and financial burdens that are imposed by the bill? I am sure that the minister will agree that it is very important that sufficient resources are made available to the voluntary sector to enable it to implement the legislation effectively.

14:45

**Cathy Jamieson:** I welcome Irene McGugan's commitment that the SNP will support the amendments that have been lodged. I hope that that is an example of good practice, because we discussed a lot of the issues fully at stage 2.

I state for the record the same information that I gave at stage 2. It is important to recognise that the voluntary sector comprises organisations of a range of types, sizes and natures. Some voluntary organisations have well-developed employment practices and disciplinary procedures and will be ready to pick up the small amount of additional work that might be required in relation to the bill. I am aware that many other organisations, particularly those that rely on volunteers rather than on paid staff, will need time to gear up and will need to be supported in the process.

I intend to work with representatives of a range of voluntary sector organisations in developing the appropriate guidance so that we can consider the nature of support that the organisations will need. I am happy to restate that commitment today.

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

*Amendment 2 moved—[Cathy Jamieson]—and agreed to.*

### Section 7—Provisional inclusion in list

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The second group of amendments is on the extension of provisional listing. Amendment 3 is in a group on its own.

**Cathy Jamieson:** Amendment 3 will allow ministers to apply to the sheriff for an extension to the six-month limit on provisional listing. The sheriff would be able to grant an extension of no more than one period of up to six months if they were satisfied that there was a good reason for doing so.

We believe that provisional listing is an essential part of the safeguards for preventing unsuitable people from moving undetected from one post to another. We recognise the need to keep provisional listing to an absolute minimum to avoid any undue distress to the individual concerned. That is why we have said that a determination will be reached within six months. However, we must provide for cases where that will simply not be possible. There could be a case where an individual was in hospital and could not submit observations on the evidence submitted with the referral. It would not be appropriate to move to a determination without giving the individual the opportunity to comment, but nor would it be appropriate in all instances simply to remove the individual from the provisional list.

A non-Executive amendment at stage 2 removed the provision for any extension because of concerns about the scope for provisional listing running indefinitely. We have addressed those concerns in amendment 3. The provision will be used in exceptional circumstances once only and for a maximum period of six months. The amendment is essentially for practical purposes and I believe that it addresses the concern that was expressed by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

I move amendment 3.

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I am grateful to the minister for moving amendment 3. I moved a large number of amendments at stage 2 and the amendment to which she referred is the only one that was successful. I am glad that the minister has come back with a sensible wording. There was considerable concern—and concern remains in many quarters—about the scope of provisional listing and the fact that, in essence, it makes people provisionally guilty, a concept that is unknown in law.

Even in the circumstances in which provisional listing might be justified, there needed to be a limit on an extended period. If there were no limit on the extended period, somebody could be in legal limbo indefinitely. As Irene McGugan said, we will support all the Executive amendments.

Amendment 3 will ensure that the committee's views are honoured in the bill.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** We, too, support amendment 3. We supported Mike Russell's amendment at stage 2 to remove provisional listing, but we are content that limiting it to one period of six months is the right step. It gives a degree of protection but also allows the Executive to keep provisional listing. The reasons that the minister outlined, both in the committee and today, to keep provisional listing with that qualification make sense.

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I endorse the comments of the two previous speakers and I thank the minister for taking note of the committee's feelings. As the minister knows, I am hesitant about the whole idea of provisional listing. However, amendment 3 represents a sensible compromise that will help to protect children without infringing human rights to the extent that the original provision threatened to do.

**Cathy Jamieson:** I thank members for their support for amendment 3. I acknowledge the concerns about provisional listing that were expressed during stage 1 and stage 2. We must recognise that there is a fine balance between protecting children and highly vulnerable young people who might have no one to speak up for them and protecting the rights of individuals who could be subject to listing. Amendment 3 is the result of a commonsense compromise approach and I am glad to have members' support.

*Amendment 3 agreed to.*

### After section 8

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The third group of amendments deals with protection from defamation. Amendment 9 is in a group on its own.

**Cathy Jamieson:** Amendment 9 seeks to clarify the laws on defamation as they apply to the bill. Any information that is submitted with a reference for inclusion in the list of people who are unsuitable to work with children will attract qualified privilege. Observations that are made on the information that is submitted with such a reference will also be covered by qualified privilege. As a consequence, those who provide information in connection with the list will have a defence against defamation, unless they were motivated by malice.

During earlier stages, I listened carefully to the arguments for protecting people from being sued for damages as a result of referring individuals to the list. It is important that any obstacles are removed and that people can confidently pass on the information that we need to strengthen

procedures for the protection of children. However, it would certainly not be appropriate to protect referrals that were made maliciously.

Amendment 9 puts it beyond doubt that qualified privilege will attach to communications relating to inclusion in the list and removes any doubt about whether the existing laws of qualified privilege would apply. Therefore, those who make statements in good faith will be protected. We have taken account of the concerns that have been raised and adopted a commonsense approach. Our compromise proposal seeks to clarify the existing legislation in the context of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill. Amendment 9 sets out the right level of protection.

I move amendment 9.

**Michael Russell:** During stage 2, in response to my moving of an amendment, the minister made a commitment to reconsider the issue. I am grateful that she has returned with a solution.

The issue is particularly important in the context of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill. As the bill is based not on legal convictions, but on tribunals and decisions by employing authorities, it is possible that an allegation that is made might result in legal action against the person who makes the allegation. Amendment 9 moves us forward.

I hope that amendment 9 also sets a legislative precedent for tackling the difficulties that have arisen in the case in Dumfries of Michael MacKinnon, whose appeal in relation to a complaint that he had made on a teaching matter failed yesterday. I do not want to go into the merits or otherwise of that case, which many people still believe in strongly. It is vital to ensure that young people and their parents who come forward do not become the subjects of legal action on the ground of malicious allegation if the accusations that they have made are believed by the organisation that goes on to take proceedings. That is the key issue.

Malicious allegations should always be acted against but, if a body—in the case of Michael MacKinnon, a local authority—accepts certain allegations and, on the basis of those allegations, takes action, the individual who made the allegations should not find themselves in a difficult position.

I am grateful that amendment 9 represents a small initial step on that general issue. I hope that the minister will consider returning to the issue. We will return to the issue of providing additional privilege in those very special cases. Although we do not want to protect people who make malicious allegations from the consequences of their actions, if allegations are believed by a body that goes on to take action, the responsibility for those

actions should devolve on that body, not on the individual who made the allegations. Amendment 9 takes us a step forward. In the context of the bill, it does exactly the right thing. I am grateful to the minister for lodging the amendment.

**Ian Jenkins:** I support Michael Russell's position. The situation to which he referred is a difficult one. The arguments that Michael Russell has made are worthy of consideration. Although amendment 9 takes us forward in the context of the bill, there are wider issues that it would be worth while revisiting.

**Cathy Jamieson:** It would not be appropriate for me to comment at this point in time on the case that Michael Russell mentioned.

During stage 2 consideration of the bill, I gave a commitment that I would look at how we could strengthen the position in the bill and that is why I have moved amendment 9 today. I believe that the amendment is the right course of action. It would simply not be appropriate if the bill were to cover anyone who made any statement at all, whether maliciously or otherwise. It is important to get the balance of protection right, and I believe that the amendment achieves that. Once again, I am glad to have the support of the committee members and of the wider Parliament.

*Amendment 9 agreed to.*

### **Section 11—Searches of lists: amendment of Police Act 1997**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Amendment 4 is grouped with amendments 7 and 8.

**Cathy Jamieson:** Amendments 4, 7 and 8 are technical amendments, which are consequential on the Education Act 2002.

Amendment 4 is a minor amendment, which would make it clear that amendments made by the Education Act 2002 to part V of the Police Act 1997 extend to Scotland. Amendment 4 will mean that information from the list and from equivalent lists kept for England and Wales will be released as part of a disclosure check under part V of the Police Act 1997 for a specified range of positions. It is essential that we provide for consistency across the UK.

It is also important to ensure that a person who has been banned from working in one part of the UK cannot obtain work with children in another part of the UK simply by crossing a border. Section 15 will mean that, if people are banned from working with children in other jurisdictions, the ban will extend to Scotland. The legislation that allowed the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and the National Assembly for Wales to keep lists of people who are barred from teaching and from other work that involves regular contact

with children in a local education authority, a school or further education institution has been repealed and has been replaced by the Education Act 2002. Sections 15(1)(c) and 15(1)(e) are therefore obsolete and need to be deleted. Amendments 7 and 8 will do that. The new powers for maintaining the education lists are referred to at section 15(1)(d).

I move amendment 4.

*Amendment 4 agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Amendment 5 is grouped with amendment 6.

**Cathy Jamieson:** Amendment 5 is a minor drafting adjustment, which will correct an error that has been noted in the amendments made to the Police Act 1997.

Amendment 6 will remove an unnecessary provision. Section 11(3) would have allowed Scottish ministers to lay regulations relating to part V of the Police Act 1997, but those powers already exist by virtue of the Scotland Act 1998.

I move amendment 5.

*Amendment 5 agreed to.*

*Amendment 6 moved—[Cathy Jamieson]—and agreed to.*

### **Section 15—Meaning of “disqualified from working with children”**

*Amendments 7 and 8 moved—[Cathy Jamieson]—and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That ends our consideration of amendments.

## **Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-3705, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, that the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill be passed.

I call on Cathy Jamieson to speak to and move the motion. In the circumstances, I think that I can be fairly flexible about the timing of speeches.

14:59

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Cathy Jamieson):** I am sure that the Presiding Officer does not want me to be so flexible that I take up the next two hours.

I begin by thanking everyone who was involved in the bill, from the policy development and consultation stages through to the preparation of the draft bill and the detailed scrutiny of the bill. In particular, I thank the bill team for steering the legislation through, and the Education, Culture and Sport Committee for engaging so fully in the process by scrutinising the bill in detail with the Justice 1 Committee. Once again, we have seen an example of how the Executive and committee members can work to improve legislation at each stage and ensure that we have a bill that is fit for its purpose.

The stage 1 debate demonstrated that there was unanimous support for the general principles of the bill. We have worked hard since then to resolve concerns about specific provisions. I am certain that members will want to comment on those issues during the afternoon's debate.

It is important to stress again why the bill is so important. Those of us who have worked in child care and who have followed the course of some recent inquiries, or those of us who have taken an interest since becoming members of the Scottish Parliament, will be all too aware of shocking cases of child abuse in which the perpetrators have been free to move on to other child care posts. We simply had to find a way of stopping that.

Despite other measures that have been put in place to improve safeguards for children—such as increased access to criminal record checks and the establishment of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and the Scottish Social Services Council—there was still a loophole that allowed some unscrupulous people to move freely from post to post. The bill will plug that loophole.

The protection of children is our top priority. However, during the stage 1 debate we acknowledged the need to achieve a careful

balance of protecting children from abuse and protecting adults from inappropriate referrals. That is a difficult balance to strike and I hope and believe that the bill has done that. As I said in an earlier debate, it is a balance that many people who work in the front line of child protection must strike daily.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** The minister is talking about striking a balance between children's rights and employment rights, but is she aware of the Scottish Trades Union Congress's concerns? Will the minister ensure that the STUC and other stakeholders are involved in drawing up guidance for the implementation of the bill?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am happy to give Cathy Peattie that assurance and I will come on to that issue in a moment or two.

We have been careful to ensure that there is no scope for malicious referrals. Any referral that is not properly made will be weeded out early in the process. An organisation that makes a referral will have to back it up with evidence that it has followed the appropriate dismissal or disciplinary procedures in reaching its decision to sack or move a person away from working with children. We will not entertain referrals that are not backed up with such robust evidence and we will certainly not entertain referrals to the list from individuals who merely have suspicions or concerns about a person. The legislation does not provide for that. Such concerns should be dealt with through each organisation's procedures and investigated where that is necessary and appropriate.

There are concerns that not all employers will have in place the necessary mechanisms to enable them to provide the required information in support of a referral to the list. Cathy Peattie, the deputy convener of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, referred to the STUC. I had a very helpful meeting with representatives of the STUC to discuss those issues and we agreed that those matters should be covered in the implementation guidance. I will involve the STUC and, of course, other interested organisations at an early stage in the development of that guidance. The STUC has made it very clear that it wants to help in the process and I will be glad to take up its offer.

We must also consider how best to ensure that voluntary organisations have the support, training and guidance that they will need to help them meet the new requirements of the bill. I know that they are keen to play their part in strengthening child protection and we will work with them to help equip them for that role. I can give an assurance that, in bringing the new legislation into force, we will take account of the time that organisations will need to gear up for implementation.

I would like to reinforce the importance of referrals from the courts. Those provisions have attracted little debate during the passage of the bill but, nonetheless, will play an important part in strengthening the protection of children. It is worth spelling out again that those who are convicted of the most serious offences against children—which are listed in schedule 1 to the bill—will be referred to the list and included on it automatically.

For other offences involving children, the court will refer a person to the list unless it is satisfied that the individual is unlikely to commit more offences against children. I expect that those measures will act as a strong deterrent, because those who are included on the list will commit an offence if they try to obtain work with children, or if they continue to work with children. Any organisation that employs a person on the list to work with children will also be guilty of an offence. That sends a very clear message about responsibilities.

I am keen to see the measures in the bill take effect as soon as possible, so although I recognise that it will take some time for organisations to be equipped for their new duty to make referrals to the list, I intend to press ahead as quickly as possible with the processes that are required for referrals from the courts. We will, as a priority, establish the required links and the databases that will be needed.

Throughout the preparation of the bill, we were careful to ensure that the rights of the individual are respected and protected. I am confident that the listing process, together with the extensive appeals procedure, will protect those rights adequately.

Finally, I stress—as others and I have stressed during the debates on the bill—that the new safeguards are not a panacea for every situation. The bill on its own cannot and will not safeguard every child in every situation anywhere, but it will complement the other measures that are in place. There is no substitute for rigorous recruitment practices, including thorough interviews, checking of references, supervision during probationary periods and regular supervision and support of staff and volunteers. Most of all, as the recent report of the child protection review—so aptly called “It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright”—says, we all have a responsibility to ensure that children can grow up safe from harm in all areas of their lives. That puts the onus on everyone in society—everyone in communities—to take child protection seriously.

Parliament has a good record in its support of children and young people. Today marks another historic step in ensuring that all our children get the best possible start in life. I am therefore pleased to move,



That the Parliament agrees that the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:07

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** No one is in any doubt that we in Parliament need to do all that we can to increase the protection that we afford our children. The bill, as the minister said, is another tool to assist us in that, but it certainly comes none too soon; Lord Cullen's inquiry following the Dunblane tragedy and his report, which addressed the vetting and supervision of adults working with children, was published some years ago.

Central to the bill has been the need to balance carefully the rights of children with those of individuals. Concerns were expressed about the extent to which incidents will be thoroughly investigated, and about the mechanisms by which individuals will have the opportunity to defend their actions during any disciplinary or dismissal process. However, reassurance was sought and was given that referral to the list will be properly made, appropriate and backed up by robust evidence and relevant procedures.

That brings me to the need for information and guidance for all employers. The Education, Culture and Sport Committee noted in its stage 1 report that it is vital that training and guidance are provided to organisations to enable them to make consistent and fair decisions. Guidance on what constitutes harm was also recommended. I am pleased that the minister took all of that on board, and I am also pleased to hear that she intends to involve the STUC and others in the development of the guidance. I hope that "others" includes voluntary sector interests—I am sure it will—because some voluntary organisations are concerned about the impact of implementation.

It is vital that everyone view the bill's proposals as fair and transparent, because at the end of the day the main point is that the legislation will introduce further safeguards that will help minimise the risk of unsuitable individuals' being able to work with children. As such, it is a welcome initiative, and by implementing it Parliament can take credit for improving the situation of some of Scotland's most vulnerable children.

15:09

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I, too, am pleased to lend my support to the bill. I congratulate the minister and her team on their success in taking the bill through Parliament; I also congratulate the minister on the speed with which she has done that. I am aware that her interest stems from her professional background and I am sure that she is pleased that the bill

gathered cross-party support as it underwent the various stages of legislative scrutiny.

The bill had to deal with particular problems and it was important that we were concerned about the movement of employees who work with children, whether between employers or across jurisdictions. The bill goes a long way towards allaying concerns about those matters.

At stage 2, many concerns were tackled about the balance between the rights of children and the rights of the employees who work with them. Thanks to many amendments that Michael Russell lodged, questions about tribunals, provisional listing and hearings were aired. With the support of Ian Jenkins—a Liberal—we changed the bill, which allowed the Executive to think again. That represents a message to the Parliament. Voting need not be whipped on non-partisan bills on which agreement exists, because if a committee agrees to some amendments to a bill, the Executive thinks again and proposes an improved bill. That happened with the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill.

Many of us are familiar with the costs to voluntary organisations, particularly those in the youth sector, of Scottish Criminal Record Office checks. Voluntary organisations will incur some costs that are not yet apparent, in particular from the administrative work load that some might face. I appeal to the minister to have an open mind—once the bill has bedded down and practices begin to be understood—about whether support for voluntary organisations will be required, if some organisations find that the administrative demands are onerous and make a call on their finances. It would be regrettable if any organisation tried to cut corners because it had to make savings.

I congratulate the minister on succeeding with the bill and I thank her team and the clerks to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, who helped us to amend the bill.

15:12

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I, too, thank everyone who was involved in the bill's production, including the witnesses who spoke to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, our clerks and the bill team, which was headed by the minister. I also thank the minister for the way in which engagement between the committee and the Executive was handled. The other day, I attended as a substitute member a Health and Community Care Committee meeting at which the complicated Mental Health (Scotland) Bill was being dealt with. I am impressed by the way in which committees work together with ministers to improve bills at stage 2. That is to the Parliament's credit.

At stage 1, I said that the bill spoke of a loss of innocence. I accepted that the bill's central provisions were necessary and, although I did not like the idea, I accepted with regret the argument that provisional listing was probably a necessary evil. I expressed reservations about the looseness of the definitions of harm and of putting children at risk of harm. I highlighted the gravity of labelling, without absolute proof, someone as being unfit to work with children, because such a label would impose on that individual an indelible stigma that would probably deprive them of their career and lead to their becoming a pariah.

Even now, all those reservations remain to a degree, but I have been considerably reassured by the minister's comments to the committee and during today's debate, by her letter to the committee and by the stage 2 and stage 3 amendments to safeguard against malicious or ill-founded accusations leading to permanent or even provisional listing.

I speak of my hesitation, but since the stage 1 debate, we have read in the papers of, and seen on television, incidents that show the need for care and protection of children and the dilemmas that we face in deciding who is fit for, and capable of, looking after children. We have read of abductions, desperate cruelty and malicious and reckless mistreatment of children. I fear that much of that has been inflicted by close family members and other relatives, who are not the subject of the bill. However, we have also read about the workings of internet networks involving chatrooms and pornographic materials.

In normal life, we would expect a parent to sacrifice a great deal to protect his or her children. In our society, we too must be prepared to sacrifice something to protect the children who are, as Cathy Jamieson said, everyone's responsibility. When a child's human rights are threatened, and there is a conflict of interest between the rights of a child and those of an adult, it is right that we should move in favour of the rights of the more vulnerable child who cannot so readily defend him or herself. However, we must also do what we can to preserve the rights of the adult and ensure that injustice is avoided by enabling individuals to get a fair hearing and a right of appeal against potential injustice. I am satisfied that we have tried to do that and that we have managed to do it reasonably effectively in the bill.

If we are to stand back a little from the detailed provisions of the bill, we will see that we have to guard against the pervasive tendency to engender fear in the way in which we regard the safety and protection of children. I do not wish to see a society in which, out of fear, we reduce the kind of life experiences and opportunities that we offer our

children and, indeed, that we offer ourselves as parents and carers of children.

I do not want a society in which parents feel unable to photograph their children at school events that are held in public. When a child is hurt before one's very eyes, I do not wish to be constrained by fear of misinterpretation from putting my arm around the child who is hurt to offer comfort. I do not want a society in which teachers and voluntary workers do not feel confident enough to take youngsters on school trips and outdoor activities because they fear blame and prosecution if things go wrong in some form of accident or incident over which they could not reasonably be expected to have total control, any more than a parent could be expected to do so.

In earlier discussions, I spoke about the position of social workers who face serious dilemmas and have to make difficult moral judgments day in and day out. Although it might be possible with 20:20 hindsight to say that their judgments are wrong, I believe that social workers deserve our protection in the situations that they face.

The Liberal Democrats support the bill. It contains substantial and important safeguards. Let us protect our children from danger wherever we can, but let us not live our lives, or expect them to live theirs, in an unnecessarily overprotected and cosseted manner that limits their life experiences in a negative way.

15:17

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I welcome the bill and look forward to its becoming an act. For many of us, it has been difficult to come to terms with some of the detail of the bill, but the passage of the bill has shown the close working relationship that can be formed between a minister and a parliamentary committee. The few amendments that were before the Parliament today show that the changes that were made were significant and worth while. The minister has provided the reassurances that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee sought to enable us to work with her and to see the bill reach fruition today.

The process has not been easy: none of us likes to believe or accept that our children are in danger from people who are in positions of care or responsibility, but the sharp reality is that some dangerous people will be and are in such positions. The bill is not a panacea for everything: it will neither stop child abuse nor will it stop children being hurt by adults. It will, however, go some way towards closing existing loopholes.

I remember the contributions that members of other parties made to the stage 1 debate, most

notably Kay Ullrich, who told of her experience as a social worker in Ayrshire. It was a valuable contribution, which helped the committee to understand that people were being moved on because of the perceived threat that they posed to children. The cause of the threat was not dealt with adequately, but was swept under the carpet.

The bill is not an excuse for bad employment practices. Many of the concerns that were expressed in the evidence to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee showed that people felt that proper practices would not be followed. However, those practices must be followed if the bill is to be a success; the passage of the bill cannot be stopped because people do not have in place proper and adequate employment practices.

We need to ensure that protection is given to the work force, but also to the most vulnerable members of our society—children and young people. They deserve nothing less than what is being given to them today. I hope that the bill will move the debate forward, and allow us to close one of the loopholes that exist. However, I hope that it does not engender more fear in our children and young people that there is somebody out there waiting to get them—the bill is about a small number of people. We need to take action, but we must not allow that to be blown out of proportion or to create among children and young people fear of something that simply does not exist.

15:20

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It shows what a varied life the members of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee have that this morning we were all engaged in a battle of ideas and wills, and this afternoon we are agreeing—essentially—on a piece of legislation. The *Official Report* shows that during stage 2 of the bill, Brian Monteith noted that we voted in a variety of different ways. Column 3910 is the only recorded instance of Irene McGugan and me voting on different sides, but as I was supported only by Brian Monteith, I suspect that Irene was right in the circumstances—it is always wise to change one's mind.

The bill is essentially the last brick in the wall, and results from the Cullen inquiry into the shootings in Dunblane. It has taken so long to put that brick into the wall because of the difficult issue at the heart of the bill. The difficulty is balancing the undoubted need to protect our children against the obvious need for natural justice for those who are accused. That has been the central difficulty for every member of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee during the passage of the bill. It was a difficulty during stage 1 and it became an acute difficulty during stage 2, because we listened carefully to a variety of organisations that

had genuine fears about the balance being struck. In particular, I mention the STUC, which was concerned about some of the bill's implications for employment practices. A variety of others, such as the NHS Confederation, gave evidence to the committee, but we were most struck by the evidence from children's charities and parents.

It has taken some time for me to be persuaded that the balance is right—I am not totally persuaded as yet. It is clearly the will of the committee and the chamber that the bill should pass, and do so without opposition. However, we should maintain concern about some of the key aspects of the bill. Ian Jenkins indicated that well in his speech.

There is, for example, the issue of tribunals. The bill itself does not establish any independent tribunals; instead, it establishes a procedure for which the minister is responsible. She has said on more than one occasion that she will devolve responsibility for that to another group, which will presumably be made up of senior civil servants. I concur with the Justice 1 Committee, which said in its report on the bill that it would have been better to establish an independent tribunal system. However, that was not the will of the committee when it finally came to a vote. That said, we should bear the issue in mind, because in time it might be necessary to consider it.

I am very glad that we have dealt with defamation and with one of the issues in connection with provisional listing, but we have not dealt with other issues in that regard. I return to the point that the bill might create a unique concept that might be known as being provisionally guilty. I accept the reason for doing so and that there is a need to protect our children. I also accept that, in the light of the Cullen inquiry into Dunblane, there might be a need to recognise that some people are guilty although they cannot be totally found out at a crucial time because of the nature of their actions. That said, I am still uncomfortable with some of the bill's detail—I see Ian Jenkins indicating his assent to that remark. We will have to move forward with the bill and examine carefully how it is implemented.

Finally, I want to thank not only the individual committee members, the minister and others with whom we have worked, but the clerks to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, who bore the brunt of the work on the 81 amendments—a record total—that I lodged at stage 2. It is appropriate that one of those clerks is sitting in one of the hot seats today to watch what happens at the very end of the process.

15:24

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** The bill is very much about recognising children's vulnerability and the importance of choosing the right people to work with them. We must remember that the vast majority of adults who work with children are driven by a commitment to child development and welfare. However, we must acknowledge that some adults—albeit a small minority—might want to harm children. We need not dwell on particular examples, but even here in Scotland, we know that abuse happens.

Child abuse is not just about scenes in gritty dramas; we cannot just switch off the television. Real life demands real action, and the proposed new list of adults who are unsuitable to work with children is a considerable improvement to our child protection system. However, as others have said, it is important to remember that the bill does not substitute for robust child protection policies, nor does it tackle the problem of child abuse that occurs behind closed doors in family homes. Nevertheless, the bill is a positive step that seeks to minimise opportunities for people who are intent on harming children.

Up until now, organisations in Scotland that work with children have used criminal records to check the suitability of future employees. Experience shows us that some of the worst incidences of child abuse have been by people with no previous convictions. Although Thomas Hamilton had no convictions, there was information on the files of a number of organisations to suggest that he was a risk. However, that information was not available to potential employers, nor was it collated or able to be shared.

The bill will enable the collation of so-called soft information on those people suspected of child abuse, including details of dismissals or resignations where child welfare was an issue, which will form the basis of a list of people banned from working with children. As members know, an equivalent list already exists in England and Wales. Scotland is clearly no less committed to protecting its children.

The bill has teeth. It will become a requirement for relevant organisations to consult the list. Organisations that employ a named individual will be committing a criminal offence. Organisations will also be obliged to contribute information so that the list is kept up to date. Why? It is because we want a system of child protection that works, not one that simply looks good.

I welcome the amendment lodged by the minister at stage 2 to encompass all child care organisations. We could not leave a potentially dangerous loophole through which adults who wish to abuse children could simply leave the

statutory sector and move into employment in the voluntary sector. That loophole would have created a two-tier system that is not in the interests of children. Indeed, the consultation process showed that voluntary organisations agree. Some of them have said that even if they were not legally required to check and report to the list, they would feel morally obliged to do so. Good laws reflect sound moral reasoning and the bill is no exception. However, we must ensure that voluntary organisations have the means to comply with the requirements. I know that the minister will ensure that consulting the list and referring individuals are as easy as possible. If necessary, additional support will be made available, in particular to small voluntary organisations.

As the minister has said, the bill acknowledges the careful balance needed to respect the rights and interests of individuals as well as the special rights of the child. I believe that, between the efforts of the committee and the considerable efforts of the minister, we have got that balance right.

Like others, I commend the minister for the bill. I thank all those involved in getting it to this stage—the bill team, the clerks to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee and all those people who gave evidence. The bill has been strengthened by their input.

I remind the chamber that, under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are required to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse. To accept the bill is to accept our obligations.

15:29

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I welcome the minister's assurance about giving support, guidance and training—or words to that effect—to the voluntary sector, which has to deal with its side of the bill. However, I would like to press the minister on the issue of money. The voluntary organisations face a triple whammy of more expense: first, there is their part in administering the police checks under part V of the Police Act 1997; secondly, there will be duties imposed on them under the bill; and thirdly, there will be insurance costs arising from the bill and from related issues.

The police checks are very complicated. One large youth organisation says that 66 per cent of its people have not yet gone through the checks, and the minister could help by reducing the bureaucracy involved. Although individual checks are paid for by the Executive, which is most welcome, the considerable administrative costs

sometimes go well into five figures for national youth organisations, and into smaller thousands for smaller organisations. That is big money for them. The cost of implementing the bill, which involves training and recruiting staff who know about the process and who can train others, and of the legal and other expenses is also estimated in five figures for some of the large organisations.

Insurance costs will also arise. We are an increasingly litigious society, and organisations could be sued by people who have been recommended to be put on the list and who see that as a slur on their character. There could also be suits from parents whose children have had bad experiences and who feel that the organisation did not check adequately. Both ways, the cost will be significant, and again some of the organisations quote estimates well into five figures.

I urge the minister to give an assurance that there will be money to help those organisations, as well as guidance. For them, tens of thousands of pounds is very big money, but it is quite small money for the minister's budget. The bill is an important measure and a good one, but it is only fair that those who have to co-operate with it and who do not have the money should get that money, and are paid to administer the provisions correctly.

15:32

**Cathy Jamieson:** I will deal with the points that Donald Gorrie has just raised before commenting on the rest of the debate.

I am aware that YouthLink Scotland has circulated information to MSPs highlighting some of the concerns of the voluntary sector. Indeed, many organisations highlighted those concerns during the course of our debates on the bill. I have given an assurance today that we will continue to work with the voluntary sector, and particularly with the youth organisations that have expressed concern, to get more information about the kind of support, training, advice and guidance that they will need.

However, I want to keep the matter in perspective, and Ian Jenkins outlined the situation clearly. I do not want a situation in which voluntary and youth organisations begin to see their core business as dealing with bureaucracy rather than providing services for young people. If there is a way of making the process simpler, by providing support, we want to do that. I am also concerned to ensure that smaller organisations have access to advice on issues that they are concerned about, on when they need to make decisions on whether to make a referral and on appropriate employment and disciplinary procedures. That is important. We

need to have a clearer indication of exactly what the responsibilities will be in such organisations, and we must get a clearer fix on any financial implications. We want to make progress on that during the implementation stage.

It is perhaps worth reflecting on some of the comments that have been made by members in the debate. Mike Russell commented on the fact that, throughout our debates, a difficult central issue has been balancing children's right to protection and the rights of adults. Anybody who has ever been involved in child protection work will be acutely aware that that is constantly the difficult central issue. Of course, there was a time when child abuse, or the possibility that children would be abused, either by people in their own families or by people in the wider community, simply was not talked about. It was not allowed to be talked about. People pretended that it did not happen, kept it behind closed doors, swept it under the carpet or simply would not face up to it.

Thankfully, things have changed to the extent that young people now are much more able to talk about such issues and to come forward and report difficulties. Legislation and the support that is provided to children and young people have also moved on. The bill takes another step forward in closing loopholes that have been around for quite a long time. The Cullen report on the Dunblane tragedy crystallised people's concerns. People who have worked with children over many years will know that previous reports highlighted the same issues and went some way towards addressing the issues, but did not plug all the gaps.

Brian Monteith referred to the fact that it has taken only a relatively short time to draft the bill. That is of interest to me, given my professional background. A relatively short period in parliamentary time can seem like a lifetime for children and young people who are at risk. We must ensure that such young people do not feel vulnerable or at risk of abuse. They must have confidence that people will act on their concerns. Inquiries such as the Edinburgh child abuse inquiry and the Kent report highlighted circumstances that could perhaps have been avoided if this kind of legislation had been in place years ago.

Members have commented on whether we have got the balance right, and I will make a couple of points about the suggestion that was made at stage 2 that there should be a tribunal system rather than ministers' having responsibility. Last week, I laid out clearly in a letter to Karen Gillon, the convener of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, why we continue to believe that the situation that we have developed is the right one, whereby delegated powers will be given to a

senior member of the civil service, someone from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and someone from the social work services inspectorate to consider all the evidence and, if necessary, to seek the back-up of legal opinion on employment practices. I hope and trust that that deals with that issue. It is important that people have the opportunity to make appeals to the court, and we have taken account of the comments that committee members made at various stages.

Several members referred to the fact that we do not want our children's lives to be so over-regulated that their innocence is lost or that they cannot have the experiences that we want them to have. I agree with those sentiments. As a parent, I know—and many others will share this view—that one of the worst fears that a parent can have is that something will happen to their child. When people put their children in the care of professionals, whether for a short period during the day or for an extended period, such as when young people have to be looked after by the state, they must be confident that those people genuinely care about children and young people and will not abuse the trust that has been placed in them. That is why the bill is so important.

Karen Gillon and Jackie Baillie referred to the fact that the soft information that has been held on individuals has perhaps gone around the system without anyone being able to collate it or take action. Jackie Baillie said that real life demands real action. The bill gives us an opportunity to take real action and to ensure that young people are protected in real-life difficult situations.

Karen Gillon also highlighted the important fact that the bill is not an excuse for bad employment practices. I state that fact clearly for the record. I expect organisations to take the bill seriously. If there are concerns or suspicions about people, organisations should investigate them thoroughly and properly. It is not the case that rumour or malicious comment will allow people to be listed. The processes will be scrutinised thoroughly, and the whole reason for bringing such cases before ministers will be to ensure that the investigation has been done properly.

I could continue to speak for a considerable length of time, but I will resist the temptation to do so. I record my thanks to everyone who has been involved in the bill at all stages, including the Education, Culture and Sport Committee and officials. The Parliament has a good record of trying to improve the lives of vulnerable children. The bill is another example of the Executive and the committee recognising the action that needed to be taken to deal with the real situations that young people out there in the real world face and putting in place legislation that will make a difference to their lives.

I put on record again my thanks to everybody who was involved in the process. I trust that we will be able to pass the bill without opposition and to send a clear message to the children and young people of Scotland that we are on their side.

## Point of Order

15:40

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. We are now in an unfortunate position—parliamentary business could finish at about a quarter to 4 and we had expected to be here until 7 o'clock, which means that we are facing a void for the next couple of hours, although there is, of course, Tom McCabe's important members' business debate, which I hope members will stay to hear.

Will the Presiding Officer give guidance on whether there is anything in our procedures—a motion without notice or another mechanism—that would allow us to instate business at this late stage? What has happened this afternoon is that Parliament, on the Executive's initiative, has not replaced an Executive debate on fishing with something else but has cancelled business—unlike the suggestion made by Euan Robson earlier. Is there any mechanism that could instate other business now? If not, what guidance can the Presiding Officer give business managers to ensure that this does not happen again? It was made clear that the stage 3 debate on the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill would take only an hour and a half. It is important that we use the Parliament's time valuably.

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I think that the only point of order for me in that was whether there is a mechanism whereby other parliamentary business can be brought forward. The answer is no. The only way that that can be done is by a business motion, which must come from the Parliamentary Bureau. We debated the issue earlier and the Parliament was well aware when we took the vote this afternoon that business was being removed, and the only addition was the extra members' business debate. The matter is entirely in the hands of the Parliament.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

15:42

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** The next item is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions S1M-3887, S1M-3888, S1M-3889 and S1M-3890. They all involve the designation of lead committees, so I ask Euan Robson to move them en bloc.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Prescription of Offices, Ranks and Positions) (Scotland) Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/50).

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Human Surveillance – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Human Intelligence Sources – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Members of the Parole Board (Removal Tribunal) Regulations 2003.—[*Euan Robson.*]

## Motion without Notice

15:42

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** I am minded to accept a motion without notice from Euan Robson to bring forward decision time. Is it agreed that we take such a motion?

**Members indicated agreement.**

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees under rule 11.2.4 of Standing Orders that Decision Time on Wednesday 12 February 2003 be taken at 3.42 pm.—[*Euan Robson.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

15:42

**The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel):** We have 11 questions as a result of today's business. The first question is that amendment S1M-3879.1, in the name of Nicol Stephen, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3879, in the name of Michael Russell, on education, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 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)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 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)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 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)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 47, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** Amendment S1M-3879.2, in the name of Brian Monteith, is pre-empted. Therefore, the next question is that motion S1M-3879, in the name of Michael Russell, on education, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Ben (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 84, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament welcomes the strategy for the future of education in Scotland published in *Educating for Excellence: Choice and Opportunity* with its focus on raising standards and closing the opportunity gap; supports the plans to reduce class sizes and the measures to

improve literacy and numeracy and to ease transitions between key stages, and endorses the strategy's key objectives of an education system centred on the needs of each individual child with a more flexible and relevant curriculum, a streamlined assessment system and greater parental involvement in our schools.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S1M-3880.2, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion S1M-3880, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on Scottish economic growth, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 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)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 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)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Campbell, Colin (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 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)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 66, Against 48, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** As Annabel Goldie's amendment is pre-empted, the next question is that motion S1M-3880, in the name of Andrew Wilson, on Scottish economic growth, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 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)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fitzpatrick, Brian (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 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)  
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McLeish, Henry (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 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, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Ochil) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Mrs Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Hamilton, Mr Duncan (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Grn)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (SNP)  
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Reid, Mr George (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 67, Against 29, Abstentions 18.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's aim of increasing sustainable economic growth over the long term; recognises that increasing Scotland's prosperity is essential to the fulfilment of the Executive's objectives of

closing the opportunity gap, building first-class public services and ensuring sustainable development; calls for all leaders in Scottish public life to work towards a national consensus around the drive to bridge the gap between Scotland's economic performance and economic potential, and endorses the work being undertaken by the Executive to use the powers of the Parliament to help business grow and to secure a smart, successful Scotland by developing the science and skills base, improving global connections and investing in transport and communications infrastructure.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S1M-3705, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, that the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill be passed, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Protection of Children (Scotland) Bill be passed.

**The Presiding Officer:** I will put the next four questions together. The question is, that motions S1M-3887, S1M-3888, S1M-3889 and S1M-3890, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of lead committees, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Prescription of Offices, Ranks and Positions) (Scotland) Amendment (No.2) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/50).

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Surveillance – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Covert Human Intelligence Sources – Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Members of the Parole Board (Removal Tribunal) Regulations 2003.

## Young People in Sport

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S1M-3840, in the name of Tom McCabe, on young people in sport.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament commends Hamilton International Sports Trust, which seeks to aid young amateur sports people in competition at the highest levels, for their support given to young people in South Lanarkshire; congratulates the young people supported by the trust on the success they have achieved; notes the work of sportScotland in this area, working to ensure that sport is more widely available to all with investment of £8.1 million per year; believes that such initiatives and investment promote confidence and community spirit among our young people; further believes that this type of community-based support from the local community would benefit other communities across Scotland, and believes that such initiatives, promoting access to sport and promotion of sporting excellence among young people, are worthy of suitable support from the Scottish Executive.

15:46

**Mr Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab):** It would be a great honour to represent one's country in one's chosen sport and a great challenge to compete at the highest level. I am sure that many in the chamber have harboured dreams of scoring a goal or being the first at the finish line for Scotland or Britain. While, for most of us, that is only a dream, others have the aptitude, the ability and the determination to make their dreams a reality. They have managed to get near or even to the top of their chosen sport.

However, some sports do not have enough resources to fund all the costs of their athletes. In some sports in Scotland, it is even mandatory for international athletes to purchase squad tracksuits or other equipment from their own funds. That can be an expensive business, especially for those from low-income backgrounds.

That is one area in which the Hamilton International Sports Trust comes into its own. I pay tribute to the work that the trust has done and continues to do to promote sport and assist athletes to achieve the best that they can. I pay tribute also to the athletes from Hamilton and Blantyre—and indeed from a wider area—who have achieved recognition.

As members will realise, it is not all about recognition. I am sure that members will agree on the important broader benefits of sport—health and fitness, personal confidence and community spirit.

The *Hamilton Advertiser* is one of the best-known local papers in Scotland. It is currently campaigning against the anti-social behaviour that

blights so many people's lives. Headlines such as "Call halt to neighbours from hell"

appear all too often in that campaign. The *Hamilton Advertiser* would rather spend its time highlighting more of the successes that organisations such as the Hamilton International Sports Trust can inspire. I have no doubt that the same could be said in a great many communities throughout Scotland.

The Hamilton International Sports Trust was established in 1986 for local amateur athletes who are of, or are potentially of, international standard in their chosen sport. The trust provides up to 75 per cent of the expenses that are incurred in representing Scotland or Great Britain. It also provides a £250 grant towards general training costs which, in some sports, can be a considerable burden.

The trust has gone from strength to strength over the years since 1986 and has increased the aid that it provides by a factor of around 20. The trust's main fundraising efforts—an annual gala dinner and a professional-amateur golf tournament—are a big hit locally. Prominent local individuals, businesses and other groups contribute to the events' success. That a very high percentage of the businesses that supported the idea 16 years ago are still sponsors is a testament to the commitment of some of the long-standing trustees, such as Hugh Waters, Ronnie Smith, Jim Raeburn and Alastair Murning. The partnership between the local council, local business and trustees to give freely of their time is a model that could be repeated throughout Scotland.

I acknowledge sportscotland's work in encouraging and promoting athletic involvement. A recent award of £10,000 to the Blantyre and north Hamilton social inclusion partnership was most welcome. However, the Hamilton International Sports Trust received a start-up grant of just £1,000 16 years ago and has received nothing since. I believe that the template that it has established could be a model for the rest of Scotland, with adjustments to suit local circumstances. There is also a case for start-up grants that are meaningful in today's terms—for example, £10,000 per trust—and for some form of match funding to act as an incentive to any trust when it sets its targets for each year.

The Hamilton International Sports Trust's expenditure last year was around £30,000. That is not bad for a locally based group. However, that figure is meaningless until we know how that money is put to good use. The trust has given aid in the form of nearly 1,000 grants and scholarships. Aid has been given to many different sports, from aquatics to athletics, and in particular to minority sports.

There have been many success stories. The trust has supported Pamela Pretzwell, a young tennis star. She is now number 1 in Scotland and number 2 in Britain in her age group. The trust also builds long-term relationships. It has supported a young badminton player named Jamie Neil for seven years, starting when he was in the under-12 age group. He is now in the under-19 group, number 1 in Scotland and challenging hard for the top in the United Kingdom and beyond. Such examples demonstrate the opportunities that exist for young people whom the trust and the local public support.

The impact of sport and physical activity on young people is enormously positive. Sport provides an opportunity for personal and social development, as well as a positive alternative to crime, drugs and alcohol abuse. Sport channels young people's energies constructively. With essential assistance from family members and a local community, it can be a means of bringing and area together.

There is nothing like people getting together and supporting their local school team or children's sports squad. Sport has so much to offer young people. It improves health and fitness and it can boost confidence and self-esteem. It teaches leadership, teamwork and social skills that can be used in all aspects of life. Sport also offers worthwhile lessons on the value of both winning and losing, and teaches the benefits of hard work and how to treat others with respect.

Television, video, computers and increasing concerns over children's safety have led to a decrease in the activity levels of children and young people. Although most children take part in some form of sport or physical activity in the course of an average week, there are worrying trends with regard to the level and frequency of that experience.

Local sports trusts can offer real benefit to communities such as mine in Hamilton. Too many communities are blighted by the results of poor diet and dangerous lifestyle choices, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. If we start with people at a young age and provide positive role models, we can change behaviour and improve our communities. That is why initiatives such as the Hamilton International Sports Trust and investment in sport, particularly in disadvantaged areas, are important if we are to combat those trends.

The Hamilton International Sports Trust is unique. It assists excellence in sport and encourages others to strive towards it. It is an example to other communities, with the local community collectively backing its own people. I commend the Hamilton International Sports Trust for its work. I believe that it and local projects like it

are worthy of suitable support from the Scottish Executive, and I look forward to the Executive's response today.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now come to open debate. I will allow four minutes for the first three speeches and three minutes per speech thereafter.

15:56

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Tom McCabe on bringing forward the matter for debate. I was unfamiliar with Hamilton International Sports Trust, but I have enjoyed hearing about its work and achievements. I commend the trust for its efforts.

My comments on young people in sport will be more general. Most people have their first experience of sport at school. Despite widespread agreement that we need to improve the participation of young people in sport when they are at school because of the major role that sport plays in improving health, motivation and achievement among young people across the social spectrum, there are difficulties and concerns about, for example, the shortage of trained physical education teachers and there are difficulties in accessing swimming pools and playing fields. We cannot ignore such issues. A lack of facilities and infrastructure at an early stage in life will seriously impact on the potential of our young high achievers.

If we really want to nurture young people towards competing at the highest levels, we need to establish an unbroken chain of sporting opportunity from school to club. We must also develop links between schools and universities and colleges; up to 60 per cent of young people now go straight from school into further or higher education. We also need links from those establishments to clubs. We lose talented athletes at all those stages, so there should be better co-operation between local authorities, sports clubs, sports councils and sport's governing bodies. They all have pivotal roles to play, and have specific obligations to promote sport and excellence in young people.

Nutrition is an aspect of sporting performance that I think is grossly neglected. Everybody would acknowledge that sporting youngsters need a healthy and nutritious diet. Some major sporting agencies, including Sport England and the English national football team, are sponsored by multinational confectionery companies and their products, including Jaffa Cakes and Mars bars. Most recently, we have heard that McDonald's has become sponsor of the Scottish Football Association. Such a level of sponsorship certainly brings in much-needed revenue to sport—I do not

decry that—but for youngsters without an adequate knowledge of the proper nutritional fuel that is needed for sporting excellence, that sponsorship perhaps sends out the wrong kind of message.

It is accepted that, to excel at any sport, athletes need strength. If athletes do not know how to fuel their bodies properly for training and sport, they will lack the strength to achieve their full potential. We in Scotland are notorious for our very poor diet. For athletes at the elite end of the spectrum it is imperative that they get adequate nutritional and dietary guidance and support. In reality, however, very few do. There seemed to be a shortage of such advice even for our athletes at last year's Commonwealth games in Manchester.

Many athletes receive tuition and supplement their training regime privately. However, they are required to seek out that tuition and to fund it at their own expense. The new regulations in the food supplements directive might make that more difficult. Some people are not madly enthusiastic about any pills, even vitamin and mineral pills, but elite athletes cannot get all that they need from food and so must rely on supplements for optimum performance.

I would like nutrition to be given priority. There should be a programme of awareness raising and there should be much more discussion, involving everyone from children through to the sporting agencies and governing bodies. Knowing how to build a healthy body correctly is everyone's responsibility. Only in that way can we meaningfully support sporting excellence.

16:01

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am very pleased to take part in the debate and I congratulate Tom McCabe on having his motion selected. I did not know about the debate until this morning, but I am delighted to participate, because I am particularly interested in sport for young people—as a parent, I am involved in it most weekends.

I did not know a great deal about the Hamilton International Sports Trust, but I made an effort to find out about it. Needless to say, all the details that I found have already been relayed to the Parliament by Tom McCabe. For that reason, I will not focus my remarks on the trust. However, the extent of the trust's involvement is admirable and highly impressive, given that it received only a small amount of seedcorn funding. The trust has succeeded in attracting and channelling funds, with the aim not just of involving people in sport but of encouraging sporting excellence. As Tom McCabe said, it is a tremendous template. We should promote that template and encourage other

bodies to take on board what the trust has done. They should see what they can learn from it and follow its example.

In the time that is allotted to me, I would like to mention a similar organisation—Leith Athletic Football Club. Leith Athletic was set up in the mid-1990s, essentially by local parents in Leith, to encourage children to play football on Leith links and—as the parents put it—to get them off the streets. It was felt that not enough was being done for young people. Although they liked to kick a ball, nothing was being organised for them. Soccer sevens were organised, and teams were set up and entered in the local juvenile leagues. The idea was to play not so much to win as for the fun of the game and for the coaching, which enabled people to pass on skills and help others to learn, and which took children away from the boredom of standing on street corners.

The club started to grow. It is now not just one of the biggest in Edinburgh, but in recent years the most successful. Last year Leith Athletic won the Scottish cup for under-12s. Its under-13 team, which the previous year had won the same trophy, took part in the tournament for its age group, where it lost to a team from Fife. The club now attracts players not just from Leith, but from Portobello and other neighbouring areas of Edinburgh. Leith Athletic has also established a successful girls football team. The club recognised that football is not just for boys and that there is a wider audience for it—many girls want to become involved.

However, Leith Athletic has to put up with fairly poor facilities. I have accompanied the club to tournaments in other countries, where the facilities were considerably better. Leith Athletic is not sitting back—it wants to improve its facilities and to work with other organisations such as sportscotland and the local authority. For some time, Leith Athletic has been waiting to develop the local tennis courts.

Just this week, we found that the local authority, which is planning to plant some trees on Leith links, had decided to plant one on the goal line, next to the corner flag, thereby obstructing play. The tree had to be relocated. The relationship with clubs and organising bodies is not good enough and more work has to be done on that. We have to take the template that Tom McCabe outlined, make it work throughout Scotland, learn from clubs such as Leith Athletic and show that with the voluntary spirit, in partnership with the authorities, we can raise funds and improve excellence.

16:05

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** It is helpful that Tom McCabe lodged the motion. He

has certainly explained about the Hamilton International Sports Trust, which I did not know about and which could be copied elsewhere. I am the honorary president of a couple of athletics clubs and the people who run those clubs have to waste a huge amount of their time trying to get low-grade sponsorship for their activities. If we got local business communities to co-ordinate and set up a fund that would help clubs and individuals, that would avoid there being a huge amount of wasted time.

I will talk about clubs, which other members have covered aspects of well. Local clubs are the basis of most of our sport, but we do not give them enough attention or financial support. In Denmark, instead of having one organisation, like our sportscotland, there are two separate organisations. One supports higher-level, professional or international sport and the other supports amateur and local sport. We could copy that structure. Too much effort goes into projects such as building Hampden park rather than supporting local sports clubs.

We could support clubs more—very small sums can help. Even £1,000 for a small athletic club to help pay for the buses to go to away tournaments in different parts of the country would be a huge benefit. We are not talking about big money, because well-directed small amounts would do a great deal of good.

We could do more to encourage people to qualify as coaches, because quite often there is considerable expense involved in attending residential courses. Coaches and officials are the key to many activities, but football officials get so much flak that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find referees and linesmen. We want to encourage people and ease the path for them to become coaches, club organisers or officials.

Brian Monteith referred to the relationship with local authorities. In my view some local authorities charge far too much for their facilities, which is a drain on clubs' resources. Councils are obviously under pressure to make as much money as possible, but we could do more to help the clubs by meeting those charges.

I urge the Executive to talk to sportscotland and local authorities to find ways of channelling money directly to clubs in order to add to whatever the local authority is doing and to offer recognition of the importance of clubs to the community. I am sure that a little bit of money could be taken from social inclusion budgets or other budgets of that sort.

Without the clubs, many of which are really struggling, we will not progress. We need to have a really strong foundation that will produce excellent athletes and sportsmen at the highest

level. It is better that 1,000 people play sport than that one person plays it well.

16:09

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I congratulate Tom McCabe on securing the debate and on the role that he played when he was leader of South Lanarkshire Council in developing the Hamilton International Sports Trust. I have a particular interest in the debate because the trust covers part of my constituency. Talented sportspeople from Larkhall, Stonehouse, Ashgill and Netherburn are able to access, and have accessed, support from the trust. They have certainly benefited from that support and have welcomed it. Traditionally, incomes in those communities have not been high and parents are not able to provide some of the finances that are required to perform at the elite level. The trust has been able to step in and help.

As Tom McCabe said, many of us dream of being a superstar. Scots up and down the country will dream of scoring the winning goal at Hampden tonight, or of running the length of the pitch and scoring between the posts at Murrayfield on Saturday. Although it is a dream, history has shown us that some will make it.

It is important to get right the balance between elite and grass-roots sports development. I fully buy into the idea that we must invest in the grass roots because, if we do not, we will never have elite performers. We must encourage far more physical activity in our schools. That is why I support the idea of prescribing minimum weekly levels of physical activity in primary schools and of physical education in secondary schools. I welcome the Executive's commitment to considering how it can make it easier for PE teachers to move into primary schools to engage in such activity.

Sport is our most undersold resource. It can increase educational achievement and can promote self-esteem and motivation. That is why I welcome North Lanarkshire Council's development of sports comprehensives. I want sport in Scotland to be used much more effectively and positively.

As I have said, dreams are important, too, but without the inspiration of elite athletes and role models, for many young people sport will be nothing but a dream. Many young people who live in our most deprived communities aspire to become like those role models. Following in their footsteps offers a way out—it represents a vehicle to a different world. Some young people will make it, but some will do so only with the support of organisations such as the Hamilton International Sports Trust. That is why my local sports council is considering the development of a sports trust. I



hope that the Executive will look positively at how it can support the development of such sports trusts and at how it can encourage greater grass roots and elite sport in Scotland.

16:12

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I will take Irene McGugan's reference to infrastructure as my main point. During the rush to local government reform in 1995, there was a rush to spend and to put up facilities in many parts of Scotland. That was true of Ross and Cromarty District Council and of Inverness District Council. A series of fine sports centres were built in much of Ross-shire and Inverness. A stop was put to that in 1995.

Although we still have those centres, at present there are virtually no facilities for the bigger towns north of my home town of Tain. In the most remote areas, village halls are quite well catered for, as there has been a good building programme, but Wick, Thurso, Tain and the villages of east Sutherland are very short of sports facilities.

Highland Council's capital allocation means that it will never be realistic to build such centres, which typically cost between £2 million and £2.5 million. The days of the old district councils, when we could do things in the far north, have gone. My young constituents, who are the seedcorn of the future, do not have the facilities that are necessary to get people into sport at that key early age. I have made that point before.

In rolling out its schemes, the Scottish Executive should remember that some areas of Scotland are behind in their facilities. Therefore, my concluding point is to urge the minister, when she undertakes her good work in the future, to remember that the far north—Wick, Thurso, Tain and east Sutherland—are badly provided for. I make no apologies for saying so. There will be ways of establishing the necessary centres.

I compliment Tom McCabe for securing the debate and for offering us a methodology that could be developed. I will ask bodies in my area to consider what Tom McCabe has outlined to identify whether it represents a suitable model. I ask the minister to remember some of the poorer areas such as those that I represent.

16:14

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** In congratulating Tom McCabe on securing this evening's debate, I recognise the important work that is being done both in his area and in my constituency. Across Glasgow, there are excellent examples of efforts to encourage young people to be active and involved in sports. One important example is the free swimming and free swimming

lessons that Glasgow now offers to all its young people. We now need to consider who is taking up that opportunity to see whether more needs to be done.

Two voices can be heard when we talk about a sports strategy. One discussion concerns how we promote excellence and how we get our young athletes to represent Scotland and the UK on the international stage. In that regard, I am sure that many members would share my regret that some young sportspeople, who would have done Scotland proud on the international stage, have been denied the right to participate in the paralympics because of the bizarre decision to exclude people with learning disabilities. That is a matter of regret.

Achieving excellence and representing one's country is important, but I will concentrate my remarks on the importance of sport in encouraging the involvement in and take up of activities. Our health statistics clearly underpin the importance of exercise and of being involved in sport. We know that tackling ill health is not just about buildings, no matter how important they may be, but about addressing lifestyle issues.

As the motion says, sport can also offer an important lesson about community spirit and involvement. I have a friend whose son is a young footballer, whose talents are, I am happy to say, currently being used in the east end of Glasgow. In discussing that with his parents, I made the point that they must be very proud of him. His mother, as wise as ever, said, "Yes, I am proud of him and, if he doesn't make it, I will at least know that, for the next five or six years, he will be doing something positive with his life rather than perhaps taking some of the dead-end options that might be open to him in the city of Glasgow." If for no other reason, I am sure that that is why many people welcome the importance of sport.

We need to consider how we support activity locally, particularly in disadvantaged communities. We need to consider the groups that are more reluctant to be involved in sport. We also need to consider how people get access to sporting facilities. Not every young person has a mum and dad who can run around in a car to take them from one place to another. We need to consider that issue imaginatively.

Before mentioning Euro 2008, let me say that we perhaps need to recognise that, sometimes, when we talk about sport, we talk too much about sports that encourage only the passive spectator in us all. In my view, football can be particularly troubling, given the fact that the closest that people get to activity is not even to go to the game but to sit and watch it in the pub. Here I make a plug for participation in sports such as running, in which the elites run with the poorest and lamest,

such as myself. That is perhaps an important egalitarian principle that we should consider.

I want to ask the minister where the moneys that have been released from the Euro 2008 bid are going. A number of local initiatives in my constituency would benefit from that money. For example, Hillwood boys club and Mossbank boys club—which run teams for boys and girls—serve an important community need, but their only resources are the people who run them, so their means are extremely limited.

It is important that we consider initiatives to support young girls in sport. Again, we should consider the models that have been developed in Glasgow through initiatives such as the women's 10K and the Glasgow women's jogging network, which recognise that girls are less likely to take up sport than boys.

Finally, I ask the minister to address the lack of access to funding for organisations such as local sports clubs. Sometimes, as in the case of Mossbank boys club in my constituency, such organisations are encircled by social inclusion partnership areas but still cannot get access to funds, despite the fact that they are meeting the same needs as are being met by other groups in the SIPs.

I welcome the debate. I urge the Executive to examine the anomalies in funding and to address not only the delivery of sports initiatives but the factors that will improve access to those sports initiatives for youngsters in my constituency and elsewhere.

16:19

**The Deputy Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Dr Elaine Murray):** I, too, congratulate Tom McCabe on securing tonight's debate. It was only yesterday afternoon that I learned that the debate was to take place, so I was only slightly in advance of Brian Monteith on that. I congratulate all the members who have managed to contribute so well to the debate at such short notice. My only regret is that, in order to get my notes together last night, I had to forgo the first night of "Rigoletto".

**Mr Stone:** Aw.

**Dr Murray:** I am glad that someone is sorry for me.

**Mr Monteith:** The minister missed herself.

**Dr Murray:** I know that I did. I was most disappointed, but it was perhaps worth it to hear about and celebrate the good work of Hamilton International Sports Trust. It is also important to have the opportunity to talk about the importance of youth sports.

I believe that seven competitors from the Hamilton area competed at the Commonwealth

games in Manchester, including the judo bronze medal winner, Fiona Robertson, who I had the pleasure of meeting when I was in Manchester. That demonstrates the success that the trust has had in bringing on young athletes. The trust is an excellent example of a number of agencies working together.

I find it refreshing to hear about an organisation that received £1,000 16 years ago and has not come back for more since then. That bears testament to the organisation's tremendous fundraising record.

I am also pleased that the Hamilton International Sports Trust is promoting minority sports. Promotion of excellence and community involvement are important and we cannot have one without the other. As other members have said, we need grass-roots involvement and youth involvement to produce the elite athletes of the future. At the same time, elite athletes should be able to inspire the young people who are coming on.

As many members have said, sport is central to the promotion of social justice. It is also essential to the delivery of national priorities in education and health improvement. The Executive's physical activities strategy will be published tomorrow.

There is a desperate need to address the low level of physical activity in our population. We must foster habits of physical activity in young people. That will enable them not only to live longer—medical intervention can enable people to live longer—but to live healthier.

As we have heard, sport has the potential to regenerate communities. It empowers citizens and contributes to crime prevention by providing alternatives to anti-social behaviour. I agree with Tom McCabe that, unfortunately, the local and national media tend to prefer to concentrate on the bad things that young people do rather than the great successes that many young people achieve. It is a pity that we do not see better reporting of young people's successes in the field of sport.

Donald Gorrie is quite correct to say that the clubs are the cornerstone of sport in Scotland. We acknowledge that and are in discussions with sportscotland. One of sport 21's original aims was to foster more coaches and to provide better training for them. Unfortunately, we have not been able to deliver on that as well as we wanted to and we will return to that issue in the review of sport 21.

Johann Lamont made an important point about girls and young women. Unfortunately, girls' level of physical activity declines much faster than that of boys. By the age of 14, the majority of young girls are not taking sufficient physical exercise and we must address that in a number of ways. The

same is true of older women, and I say that as someone who does not take enough exercise.

We have a number of programmes aimed at young people. I will not use up all my time by going through them, but examples include the New Opportunities Fund, the quality of life funding and end-year flexibility money. School sports development officers have been around for almost four years but that programme will be extended and we hope that it will be taken up in all schools, so that we can introduce young people to as many different sports as possible and give them choices, so that they can find a sport that they like and which they will continue to do in later life.

A scheme that is being worked up at the moment is the sports ambassador scheme. In that, we are aiming to use top sportspeople, such as the Commonwealth games medal winners, to work with young people and to provide good role models for them, and to promote healthy lifestyles and activities. I hope that we will be making an announcement on that soon.

A number of members mentioned sports facilities. The 2002 spending review includes a commitment to a national indoor facility. Certainly, part of the Euro 2008 bid legacy will focus on community and youth sports. Unfortunately, I cannot yet give Johann Lamont details, but I am sure that someone will be making an announcement in the future. We have been engaged in recent discussions with sportscotland and others about future requirements for indoor training facilities. We have also had discussions with the Scottish Football Association about its review of youth football and about the sort of training facilities that are required to improve our football chances.

Jamie Stone mentioned the problems of rural and remote areas. I recognise those problems because I come from a rural area. I know that access can be more difficult in more geographically remote areas. Access will be part of the review strategy.

While I am on that subject, members might be aware of the sportscotland consultation document "Time to Speak Up". The final review document will be launched at the end of March, and I hope that members of all parties will come to the launch. The document is not party political; it is about Scotland's sports strategy, and I hope that we will all be able to sign up to it.

On support for young athletes and their kit, which Tom McCabe has raised with me, the governing bodies are responsible for sending out representative teams that are properly prepared. The talented athletes programme includes some contributions towards kit. The junior groups funding can also provide some funding towards kit, but that would go through the governing bodies.

On start-up grants for trusts, I am happy to discuss that with sportscotland. Off the top of my head, I wonder whether some of them might qualify for awards from the Community Fund. I am taking a stab in saying that, but I am happy to look into the matter.

Irene McGugan made the point that people do not know about diets and supplements. The Scottish Institute of Sport at elite level provides a sports medicine department and advice on diet and appropriate exercise. That advice is also available through the six area institutes, so mechanisms and structures are in place to provide that sort of advice to young people.

There is not much more for me to say, because my seven minutes are up. I think that we are all agreed, irrespective of political difference, on the importance of physical activity and sport to the health of our nation and to the health and well-being of our upcoming generations. I am pleased that Tom McCabe secured the debate, and that we have had an opportunity to hear contributions from different sides of the chamber on how the issue can be furthered in future years.

*Meeting closed at 16:26.*



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