

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 10 December 2003  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 10 December 2003*

*(Afternoon)*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Mrs Janette Baird, vice-convenor of the Priority Areas Committee, Castlemilk, Glasgow.

**Mrs Janette Baird (Vice-convenor of the Priority Areas Committee, Castlemilk, Glasgow):** Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. Each week in my local church, and in churches throughout the country, specific prayers are said for decision makers and members of the Scottish Parliament. Today, it is my privilege to deliver that message personally and I bring greetings from Castlemilk in Glasgow.

When people seek to serve God and join a church, this question from the book of Micah, chapter 6 verse 8, is asked of them:

"What does the lord require of thee? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

It strikes me that there are many similarities when people seek to serve their country in government. Many politicians are driven by the quest for justice and mercy for all our people, and to humbly serve their constituents.

Today, I would like to share a few thoughts about how that vision of justice and mercy in our country, shared by prayers and politicians, affected the decisions of one man. Geoff Shaw was a minister in the Gorbals in Glasgow who became a politician to serve in that way. In the 1960s he was a member of the Gorbals group, a core group of professionals who decided that they would operate as professionals in a different way, so they lived and worked in the Gorbals. The group was made up of ministers, teachers, youth workers and social workers. They worked with young people who faced many difficulties, some of which are the same difficulties that young people face today. Through sharing in the experiences and conditions that were faced by the community, they realised that they could not affect people's lives and circumstances simply by working with individuals; they had to get involved in politics. Geoff Shaw made the decision to become a councillor. As many of you perhaps know, he went on to make his mark as the first convenor of

Strathclyde regional council. He took his search for justice and mercy into politics.

I pray today that you will all be given grace to seek justice, to show mercy and to walk humbly with your God as you serve Scotland.

## Fisheries

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-715, in the name of Ross Finnie, on fisheries 2004, and on three amendments to the motion.

14:34

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** Next week I go to Brussels to attend the annual December fisheries council. We will debate an agenda that has been agreed in advance and that is being presented without expectation of last-minute surprises. Against that background, my aim is to secure a better-balanced outcome: better outcomes for conservation; better outcomes for fishing businesses; and better outcomes for our fishing communities.

There are positive signs of stock recovery. We can build on those and they must be taken into consideration in the final discussions. However, we should not underestimate the real challenges that remain. The scientists still advise that no cod catches should be the norm and the proposal on the table is for further effort reductions in most areas of our interest. Simple, sweeping solutions to those difficult, complex issues may be easy to come by—the Opposition certainly offers them every day—but simple solutions offer only a sense of false hope to most of our fishery-dependent communities. They offer us no prospect of reasonable outcomes in the short or medium term. I believe that our fisheries communities deserve better than that.

I will explore the real issues that we must address next week. This year, the council agenda has two main items: the long-term recovery plans for both cod and hake; and the total allowable catch and quota regulations, which will inevitably include a successor to annex XVII.

Let me begin with the scientific advice that underpins both proposals and what that implies for the TACs. As usual, we have detailed reports from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas. On some key stocks, ICES has not produced the normal catch forecasts on which we base our TAC discussions; that makes the advice a little more difficult to interpret in some cases.

As regards the white-fish sector, the top line given by ICES is again a recommended cod catch of zero. There are tentative signs of improvement in the North sea cod stock—I believe that we are beginning to see the benefits of our effort reductions and our technical measures that contributed to that. However, the stock is still well outside its safe biological limit and cod stocks to the west of Scotland are not showing any sign of

improvement. In contrast, some white-fish stocks—in particular haddock—are now very large and certainly could be fished more freely, were it not for cod. ICES has said that fishing for such stocks should be allowed only if that can be done without catching cod. Nephrops stocks are also in good shape and ICES has said that TACs could be increased, but again only if that can be done without fishing for cod. This year's challenge on white fish and nephrops is to steer between the mixed fishery recommendation that no cod be caught at all and the assessment that shows that several individual stocks could be fished more freely if no cod catches were involved. The Commission has not proposed significant increases in all the associated TACs, but it certainly helps that there is no proposal for a blanket closure of the North sea fishery.

We have been working throughout the year to establish a credible scientific basis for the decoupling of haddock and nephrops from cod. The proposed increase in the nephrops TAC for the North sea reflects that work and we expect to build on that in the next weeks. However, decoupling is not simple and it is not absolute, because the link with cod changes over time as stocks grow or decline at different rates. The current stock dynamics offer us scope to argue for some decoupling without prejudicing the recovery of cod. The link also differs between one part of the sea and another. If we can encourage fishermen to stay away from traditional cod-rich areas—and if we can be sure that management incentives designed to encourage those moves are free from loopholes—there is scope to argue that further decoupling could also be contemplated.

That is what we are doing in the mixed fisheries. We are making the arguments for decoupling, without compromising our commitment to stock conservation and sustainable fisheries. Our fisheries agenda remains centred on the need to secure sustainability. The Scottish industry cannot afford to take a short-term view.

As regards the pelagic sector, the scientific advice is positive. Herring and mackerel stocks are generally healthy, and the TACs for 2004 will reflect that, which will ensure a steady future for that sector of the industry. Some real issues of long-term interest face us in the negotiations, and they are being treated with due priority, but our bottom line is that the pelagic sector continues to enjoy a stable existence.

Let me turn to the cod recovery plan and the possible successor to last year's annex XVII arrangements. For the long term, we agree with the need for multi-annual management and with the merits of flexible effort management at member-state level. The Commission wants to

secure at December's council a broad political agreement on the nature of such a regime, but it could not possibly come into force until January 2005. However, I rather suspect that progress on TAC negotiations may depend on member states' success in reaching that political agreement.

Of course, critical details within that long-term cod recovery plan remain to be discussed and agreed, but the principles must set out the basis on which we can have an equitable and effective regime, and any regime—I stress, any regime—has to take account of all our major decommissioning initiatives. It is clear that even if political agreement can be reached at the coming council, resolving the detail and planning for implementation cannot take place until the early part of next year.

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Can I take it from the minister's comments that he is ruling out a blanket approach to the allocation of days at sea among the fleets—if the European Commission goes down that route—and that the number of days allocated to Scotland should reflect past sacrifices, such as decommissioning?

**Ross Finnie:** Yes. My argument is clear that the baseline, as far as I am concerned, is 2001. Whatever the effort reduction figure is, it has to take into account the decommissioning scheme of 2001-02, the decommissioning of 2002-03, and the fact that the aggregation of licences has been used to satisfy the pipeline cases in the pelagic sector. All of that—whether expressed as days at sea or in kilowatt hours—has to be the baseline against which we judge any figure. Of course, if we can improve that figure and increase those days, we will do so, but I assure Richard Lochhead that the basis of that calculation has to take account of what has been done in Scotland.

If we have to await the detail of the longer-term plan, inevitably we will have to have interim arrangements under some form of annex XVII, therefore we will also negotiate for a more equitable and effective annex XVII. We hope that it can be made less bureaucratic and less ambiguous, so that everyone is clear about their entitlements and the associated control and enforcement arrangements. We also hope that it will take fuller account of the cod caught in other fisheries and in other areas, which are specifically referred to in the ICES advice, and which are just as relevant in conservation terms to the Scottish mixed fishery.

As I said to Richard Lochhead, it is imperative that the effect of previous schemes—which amounts to a reduction in effort of 30 per cent between the two schemes and the aggregation of white-fish licences—is taken into account in

dealing with the pelagic sector. That is crucial in procuring our agreement.

Members will be aware that enforcement proceedings are being taken against the United Kingdom and, in a sense, against Scotland, because of our separate legal system. They are an added and unwelcome complication in the context of the negotiations. Our ability to prosecute the case that I have outlined for more generous allocations of TACs and quotas will be dependent upon our ability to convince the Commission and other member states that we can effectively enforce and control our TAC and effort regimes. My officials and I continue to work closely with officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on presenting our case to the Commission in response to the concerns that it has raised. I do not want in any way to underestimate the importance of effective and consistent enforcement across the European Union. Clearly, we must be seen to play our part. Effective and fair enforcement is vital for the conservation of stocks and the setting of a level playing field. While I appreciate that the fishing industry has been badly affected by the impact of successive quota cuts, that does not mean that we can condone illegal activity in fisheries.

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Does the minister agree that, as part of our enforcement measures, it is important that independent observers are located within the fishing fleet?

**Ross Finnie:** If we are going to have independent observers we are probably talking about substantially increasing the amount of resource. In our examination of the enforcement procedures it will be important for us to put greater emphasis on the weighing of fish, its inspection in port, and the registration of buyers and sellers in the first sale of fish. It will also be important that tamper-proof satellite positioning reporting terminals are installed on all vessels over 15m. I announced yesterday that the Executive will be meeting the full costs of fitting those terminals to Scottish vessels. It is a matter not necessarily of increasing the resource, but of making better use of the technology and the legislation to give us a better handle on how we control and monitor landings. Throughout the discussions I will continue to value highly the engagement of the Executive with the fishing industry.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** First, I thank the minister for the answer to my questions yesterday about satellite monitoring. The minister referred to controls over stock caught that is over quota. How will the minister deal with the discard situation, which seems to many of us to be a major problem, and a major waste that helps no one?

**Ross Finnie:** As Phil Gallie will know, there is, regrettably, no instant solution. It is vital that we maintain relative stability between Scotland, other member states and other nation states, in the management of stocks. Relative stability in the white-fish sector guarantees us a 70 per cent share of those stocks. As soon as we allocate that on a TAC basis, we get into the business of allocating those quotas at a more detailed level, to individual producer organisations and fisheries. The regime is difficult because having too little quota, or over-fishing that quota, gets us into the question of discards. It is a difficult calculation to address discards purely by effort control at any level, from member state downwards. There are discussion papers on the matter, and everyone is agreed that we must tackle it, but there are no instant solutions. However, the member makes a valid point.

I have dwelt on our immediate aims for the council in December, and I have high hopes for the industry beyond that. It is not the end of the matter—the talks do not stop there. One of the small but important steps taken last year was the establishment of shadow regional advisory councils—RACs—and we are consulting on the Commission's proposals providing for their establishment. I am pleased that the shadow RAC for the North sea, including representatives from Scotland, met recently in Brussels. It signalled strong support for developing the Scottish Fishermen's Federation concept of effective spatial management. RACs are the means to effect and embed further real changes in how European Union fisheries policy can, in the short to medium term, become more regionalised on a permanent basis.

**Richard Lochhead:** Many people fear that the regional councils will simply be talking shops. The minister himself refers to the need for further changes in the common fisheries policy. Given that the minister believes that we should stay in the CFP, will he indicate what changes he will pursue and when he will pursue them?

**Ross Finnie:** We should not have some theoretical position that we might have regional management or we might not. Grabbing the opportunity that the RACs give us enables us to work up positive proposals involving the fishermen, the scientists, the communities and so on, and to table that as a worked example of how we could completely refashion the European fisheries policy to deliver the objective that the Executive started out to achieve in 2001.

Because the nature of Scottish fisheries management means that we have to engage with stocks that are jointly managed among the French, the Danes, the Dutch and other countries outside the EU, such a policy is a far better way forward

for Scottish fishermen. *[Interruption.]* I say with all due respect to Richard Lochhead that our policy is a far better way forward than trying to delude people into thinking that all will be well if we come out of the CFP. He kids himself if he believes in such a delusion. Not only has he not thought about the many negotiations that we would have to conduct if that happened, but he has forgotten the important issue of what we have to do next week.

Next week will not be easy and it angers me that people think that there are glib solutions to this matter. There are no such solutions. Those who pretend that the challenges that face parts of the white-fish fleet are simply the fault of the European Union—or any other Government they might care to name—are living in an unreal world. Those who claim that the real problems with cod stocks, the worrying reliance on one year class for the current improvement in haddock, and the complexities of bycatch and biomass can be sorted out by constitutional tinkering are no friends of fishing communities or those whom they seek to represent.

We will work in partnership with each other in the coalition, with the fishing industry and with our European neighbours. Partnership with the industry is vital if we are to construct sensible and persuasive arguments in support of credible and effective measures. Partnership in Europe means that all our interests are covered, no matter whether we are talking about the one boat that heads off from Shetland for Iceland or the entire fleet of small inshore boats in Fife.

I urge the Parliament not to be seduced by the narrow, siren voices of nationalism and to support the motion.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive in its efforts to negotiate the best possible outcome from the EU Fisheries Council in December 2003 that delivers sustainable fisheries management, sustainable fisheries and sustainable fishing businesses based on total allowable catches and effort controls that are both fair and effective.

14:52

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Last year, the CFP reached a new low when, with the blessing of the UK Government, Franz Fischler imposed on Scotland a draconian and unjust deal that is still biting at the hearts of communities all along the country's coastline. The Labour-Liberal coalition also reached a new low by failing to defend our fishing communities or to offer appropriate support to cope with the aftermath.

Indeed, in October 2002, Ross Finnie told the Parliament:

"neither I nor the Scottish Executive has any intention of presiding over the destruction of the Scottish fishing industry."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 2002; c 14707.]

Given the minister's decision to scrap another 66 white-fish vessels on top of the 100 he has already scrapped, the people of Scotland could be forgiven for thinking that he has every

"intention of presiding over the destruction of the Scottish fishing industry".

**Ross Finnie:** Is Richard Lochhead suggesting that the SNP would have totally ignored the scientific advice and the parlous state of the cod stock and would have allowed the industry to fish on willy-nilly without doing anything to address seriously the question of effort control?

**Richard Lochhead:** I have to say that the minister rejected a whole range of conservation measures that were put to him, apart from the option to decommission his own vessels.

Ross Finnie has now secured his place in history as the fisheries minister who butchered his own fleet and left other European fleets laughing all the way to the North sea. Over the past two years, Shetland alone has lost 40 per cent of its white-fish vessels. Despite past sacrifices and the impact of other fleets on our waters, the Scots yet again face an uphill fight for every extra fish that they want to catch. I could not imagine a more immoral way of running Scotland's fishing industry. It is difficult to envisage that next week's talks will be any worse than last year's talks; however, we cannot put anything past Franz Fischler or the UK Government.

Given the European Commission's constant outpourings of doom and gloom, a huge effort is now required to remind consumers that our fish stocks are actually much better than most people think. For example, pelagic stocks are healthy, although the minister will be aware of concerns about our share of North sea herring and of unresolved issues over blue whiting that I hope he will address. Our most valuable fishery—the nephrop fishery—is in good shape. That said, the minister must seek an increase in the North sea quota, given that the scientists themselves recommend an increase of 25 per cent. The Commission, with its usual inconsistency, has called for a much more modest increase.

**Phil Gallie:** When the member says that the nephrop fishery is in good shape, he is correct. However, we now have a problem with the price obtained for nephrops by our fishermen and it seems that some excess stock is being landed. Has Richard Lochhead any answers to that one?

**Richard Lochhead:** We must ensure that there is diversification of catching opportunities in the fishing industry so that the market can benefit from that.

One of the Commission's most worrying proposals is to cut the monkfish quota in Scottish waters despite the fact that all that will happen will be that our fishermen will be forced to discard dead monkfish overboard, when monkfish is one of our most valuable catches. At the same time, in a neighbouring management area, however, the Commission proposes to increase the monkfish quota by 27 per cent. That is of genuine concern to Scotland's fishing industry and the minister must take it to Brussels.

The biggest opportunity for the fleet is the super-abundant, massive haddock stock, which is estimated to be 457,000 tonnes. The North sea is chock-a-block with haddock and access to that massive stock will provide a lifeline for the white-fish fleet. Perversely, the EU proposes a TAC of only 37,000 tonnes—a fraction of what could sustainably be taken from the North sea.

A huge increase in the haddock quota, backed by a well-resourced promotion campaign to boost consumer demand, will help to get the industry back on its feet. However, as in previous years, cod stocks drive the Commission's proposals even though spawning biomass has increased by 60 per cent over the past two years. The minister must persuade the Commission that its draconian policies to boost cod stocks are inappropriate for Scotland's mixed fishery.

**Ross Finnie:** I have to press Richard Lochhead on the business of scientific advice. Does he seriously suggest that, while the biomass for cod is outwith its biologically safe limit, it is not irresponsible to ignore that advice? That is a preposterous statement.

**Richard Lochhead:** If the minister listens to what I say, he will hear that I have not said at any point that we should ignore that scientific advice or avoid taking conservation measures for cod stocks. However, if we do not decouple cod from other stocks, a slow and painful death will continue to be inflicted on the Scottish industry. That is why the decoupling argument will make or break next week's talks. We all agree that we need to reduce fishing effort in cod spawning areas and where clean cod fisheries can be identified, but we must provide viable alternatives for the fleets. We know that the cod bycatch in the nephrop fishery is minimal. The results of trials by Seafish, released this week, now give us conclusive evidence that haddock can be caught selectively with a bycatch of less than 3 per cent. That breakthrough will be crucial to next week's talks in Brussels.

The white-fish fleet has even offered to carry independent observers on board to monitor cod bycatches. Even the scientists accept that, if all cod fishing were ceased, stocks might never return to their previous levels because of factors outwith our control. That is one reason why we

need more fundamental scientific research. When I speak to Government scientists, they tell me that they no longer have the time or resources to carry out fundamental scientific research because they are so busy servicing the common fisheries policy. However, we know that climate change and industrial fishing are huge factors, so let us get to the bottom of those issues rather than always pointing the finger at the fishermen.

Last year, the fleet managed to survive on only 15 days a month at sea by being able to fish outwith the restricted areas and with the limited transitional aid that was made available. Any revision of the now infamous annex XVII must mean more days at sea, not fewer, now that the fleet is smaller. That must happen against a backdrop of increased quota, particularly haddock quota. There cannot be any blanket rules that ignore Scotland's disproportionate sacrifice in recent years. We welcome the minister's commitment to take that issue to Brussels and to fight for it. Anything else will leave our industry teetering on the brink for another 12 months.

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

**Richard Lochhead:** I am sorry; I am running out of time.

Ministers must also be prepared to introduce a new aid package and not repeat this year's botched scheme. Ross Finnie and Jack McConnell promised aid to the fleets, the onshore and the processing sectors to get them through this year. Nine months on, however, less than a quarter of the £1.8 million promised for rates relief has been given out and not a penny of that went to the fish processors, who employ 10,000 people in Scotland.

I got a letter from Aberdeen City Council this morning to say that 20 companies in the city that had applied for the money had all been knocked back because of the tight criteria laid down by the minister. We also have an £8 million underspend in the £40 million decommissioning scheme. That money must stay in our fishing communities. It is also estimated that the bulk of the decommissioning cash has gone to the banks and has not helped to pay off the debts of the onshore businesses that have also been neglected by the minister.

Last year, Jack McConnell and Ross Finnie promised that team UK would deliver for Scotland, but all that they delivered was disaster. Elliot Morley sold Scotland down the river and was promoted by Tony Blair for his efforts. Protecting fishing has never been a red line issue for London. Now we are stuck with Ben Bradshaw and, given his lack of experience and the fact that he has paid only one brief visit to Scottish fishing ports

since being appointed to his new post, we cannot afford the risk of allowing him to lead for Scotland next week in Brussels. Ross Finnie should demand the lead role in next week's negotiations to give him the authority to try to win a good deal for Scotland.

We can only hope that, next week, Scotland secures the best deal under the current circumstances. If we want the best deal, we have to stop simply putting sticking plaster on every new wound and get to the root of the illness. The growing consensus in Scotland and in our fishing communities is that we can get back on the full road to recovery only outwith the common fisheries policy. Horse trading and backroom deals involving 25 states in Brussels will always mean that fisheries conservation and our coastal economy will play second fiddle. As ministers helpfully point out time and again, fish do not recognise national boundaries. Even outside the CFP, international agreements will be required, but they will be on Scotland's terms. Politicians have to take more of a back seat to allow the fishermen, the scientists and the others with a direct interest in each fishery to make the final decisions.

Today, Parliament will have the opportunity to support the campaign to bring control over Scotland's fishing grounds back to this country, where it belongs. Previous generations have had to deal with much bigger challenges than replacing the CFP and they rose to those challenges, so surely we can rise to the challenge of scrapping the CFP. Today, we have the opportunity to boost the morale of Scotland's fishing communities and restore their faith in this Parliament. We can also send a powerful message that will concentrate minds in Brussels and let it know that Scotland has had enough of decisions, taken beyond our shores, that are killing one of our most valuable industries. I urge Parliament to back the SNP amendment.

I move amendment S2M-715.4, to insert at end:

"but believes that the Common Fisheries Policy has failed and that it is in the interests of our fishing communities and fisheries conservation that fishing policy is repatriated to Scotland."

15:02

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** At Pittenweem on Sunday morning, the man I predict will be the next Prime Minister of the United Kingdom said something very important. I am not referring to his important pledge to pull Britain out of the CFP—that is already an iron-clad guarantee. I am referring to his promise that a future Conservative Government would ensure that the Scottish fishing industry not only survives but flourishes. In other words, for the first time in a

decade, a senior politician is talking about expansion of the fishing industry rather than its contraction.

**Ross Finnie:** Will Mr Brocklebank confirm that that important politician was Mr Hoeward? I read carefully the Tory press release, which told me that a Mr H-o-e-w-a-r-d was making an important announcement. Is that the gentleman to whom he was referring?

**Mr Brocklebank:** I am not sure that that intervention was worthy of a minister.

What Michael Howard said was in stark contrast to what we have heard from the Scottish Executive over the past five years. All that it has been interested in is how we manage the running down of our fishing industry. It has blindly accepted Franz Fischler's view that the UK industry must contract to allow the fleets of other EU member states to expand. It has accepted the bizarre concept that, while Scotland's state-of-the-art white-fish fleet is being broken up—in Denmark, let me say—European funds for the next two years will continue to be spent on building up the fleets of our competitors.

Every day that the Scottish Executive has been in power another fisherman has lost his job. That represents 1,623 jobs since 1999, and the figure continues to rise remorselessly.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Will Mr Brocklebank give way?

**Mr Brocklebank:** I may give way later, but I would like to make some progress.

For every catching job, it is estimated that there are five to six jobs ashore. Now, for the first time in a decade, a senior politician is actually talking about an expanding industry, not a contracting industry.

**Richard Lochhead:** Given that Michael Howard took the opportunity to apologise for foisting the poll tax on Scotland, will Mr Brocklebank tell us why he did not apologise for taking Scotland into the common fisheries policy?

**Mr Brocklebank:** I seem to have explained this on every occasion on which I have stood up in the Parliament. I make no apologies for what Ted Heath did in 1973, but he gave away 12 miles, which is what Britain controlled at the time. In 1977, Jim Callaghan gave away from 12 miles to 200 miles. That was the real betrayal.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Mr Brocklebank:** No, not at the moment. I want to make progress.

**Mr Swinney:** I have an important point to make.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Perhaps I will give way to the

member later.

The First Minister, Jack McConnell, who makes a speciality of turning figures on their heads, claims that some Scottish fishing communities are thriving—the only problem is that he cannot name any of them. The truth is that all of them, without exception, have seen a huge cutback in fish landings and a resultant loss in local prosperity. The Proclaimers—a duo who were born not far from Pittenweem or where Iain Smith comes from—wrote a song that laments those Scottish communities that lost people to the Americas. Certainly, Scotland's people have always been its greatest export. Most of Scotland's formerly thriving fishing communities can now be added to industrial black spots of the 1960s and 1970s such as Bathgate, Linwood, Methil and the rest. Nowadays, it is Lossie, Burghead, Portsoy, Macduff, Arbroath and Anstruther no more.

**George Lyon:** How will the number of fish that are available for fishermen to fish be increased in the brave new world that the member describes when we withdraw from the CFP? That is the key question, and it is time that the member addressed it.

**Mr Brocklebank:** If Mr Lyon listened more and talked less, he might learn something.

How long will it be until somebody writes a song called "Will the last man to leave Fraserburgh turn out the light"? That is the grim reality of the policies that Tony Blair's UK Government and the Scottish Executive are pursuing. Behind the perfectly valid debate about the sustainability of stocks, there is a total inability to recognise the sustainability of communities. As Ross Finnie grabs the plane for his annual negotiations in Brussels, I am not sure whether his plight was better described by Robert Louis Stevenson or Dr Johnson. Stevenson said that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, which has certainly been the case in respect of Mr Finnie's recent journeys to Brussels. However, perhaps Dr Johnson's description of the man who was about to remarry is more apt. Dr Johnson said that such a man demonstrates

"the triumph of hope over experience".

That is Ross Finnie to a tee.

Nevertheless, I wish Mr Finnie well in the negotiations. We certainly support the delivery of a sustainable fishing industry and, as the CFP is the current framework in which we operate, we shall support the Executive's motion if our amendment is disagreed to.

**George Lyon:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Mr Brocklebank:** No. The member has already intervened.

**Mr Swinney:** I know that Jim Callaghan gave away between 12 and 200 miles, but why did not the Conservative Government rid us of the dreadful common fisheries policy in one of its available moments between 1979 and 1997?

**Mr Brocklebank:** I will ask the member a question. Why did he allegedly support the CFP for years and decide to change his mind only in a Damascene conversion on his road to the polling booth?

Our only certainty about fisheries is that all species bar one are in a much healthier state than they were at this time last year. Prawns and pelagic fish are in good supply. The only exception is cod, but the news is better even for cod, as the minister said. The bottom line for the minister and his UK colleague, Ben Bradshaw, is that they must convince ministers that effort can be diverted from cod. The other objectives that they should stress are allowing unrestricted fishing for haddock in those areas in which it has been demonstrated that cod can be taken or left and allowing at least a 25 per cent increase in prawn quotas. Finally, they should ensure that there is no further decommissioning of our white-fish fleet. As we have heard, the Scottish white-fish fleet has halved in the past two years. The only beneficiaries from further cuts would be our competitors.

Ultimately, we can rebuild a thriving fishing industry around our coasts, but we can do so only by regaining national control of our waters. It is ludicrous that a meeting of fractious ministers in Brussels each December should try to work out a catching regime for the whole of Europe for the next year. Even in the UK, which has some of the richest fishing waters in the northern hemisphere, it would be impossible to secure a blanket catching agreement for all ports between Whalsay and Cornwall. That is why the Conservatives are already instigating meetings with all sectors of the industry to formulate what will come after the common fisheries policy. We accept that withdrawing from the CFP without something to put in its place would be as disastrous as staying in it.

I have a brief word for members who tell us that we cannot come out of the CFP—Iain Smith told fishermen that in his annual meeting with them the other week. The legal position is no longer even contested: no British Government can bind a successor Government and only the UK has sovereignty over national waters. Competence over fisheries was ceded to Brussels under the treaty of Rome, but sovereignty has never been ceded. Political will is required to pull out of the CFP, and Tony Blair and Jack McConnell simply do not have that will. Michael Howard has made it clear that a future Conservative Government, under his premiership, will have it.

Here is my answer to John Swinney: when Britain signed up to the CFP in 1973, that marked a turning point for the Scottish fishing industry, but I believe that Michael Howard's Pittenweem pledge to regain control of our waters and to help to restore a thriving fishing industry in Scotland will ultimately be seen as a far greater turning point.

I move amendment S2M-715.1, to leave out from second "that" to end and insert:

"in contrast to last year's negotiations which saw draconian cutbacks in white fish quotas with accompanying hardship for our coastal communities and urges the Executive to support the view of the vast majority of Scottish fishermen that it is time to end the discredited Common Fisheries Policy and to regain national control of UK waters."

15:11

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** Thirty years of the kind of blind political rhetoric that we have heard from the SNP and the Conservatives have led to the current situation in the North sea. That kind of rhetoric has undermined the Commission's efforts year on year. The Greens support the Executive's motion.

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

**Robin Harper:** No, I will not.

It is impossible to argue with the aim of achieving sustainable fisheries and communities. The Executive motion advisedly uses the term "the best possible outcome". Along with our European neighbours, we must accept that a good outcome in 2003 does not mean increased quotas. We have reached the present situation after wilfully ignoring scientific advice and warnings from precedents such as the Canadian Grand banks. We have had the same discussion year after year. The lesson is brutal but simple: we have all taken far too much for far too long, which is why the people and the economy are now suffering.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Robin Harper:** Not yet.

Economic and social gains will come only if the recovery of fish stocks takes priority over those gains for the moment. I could not believe that Richard Lochhead said that now that the fleet is smaller, it should have more days at sea. He would cancel out the gains of having a smaller fleet by letting the rest of the fleet have more days at sea. That would be absolute lunacy. If the argument is simply for more fish next year, we are wasting our time. That is a destructive response to an environmental crisis.

**Richard Lochhead:** Will the member give way?

**Robin Harper:** No, I will not.

We must think not only about what we might perceive as being our fisheries off the Scottish coast, but about third-party fisheries such as those fished by the EU off the Ivory Coast, which are totally unregulated. A policy of exploiting fisheries to destruction within the European Union and then hoovering up the rest of the world's fisheries is morally repugnant.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member give way now?

**Robin Harper:** I am addressing the Executive's motion—I will take Mr Gallie's intervention in a minute.

The word "sustainable" is used three times in the motion. Sustainable does not mean until the next round of talks in December 2004 or until the next election; it means harvesting the interest from nature's capital. That aim must underline everything that we do in the forthcoming negotiations.

**Phil Gallie:** Robin Harper refers to depleted stocks. Is he aware that nephrops are probably more abundant than ever? Does he accept that fishermen in the west of Scotland have provided their own discipline in helping to improve the nephrops stock, not the scientists, who have been continually wrong?

**Robin Harper:** I am happy to accept that the west coast fishermen have managed their stock well.

On its own, the word "sustainable" will not deliver what fishing communities need. Our amendment aims to specify clear action that the minister should pursue.

My final point on the terminology in the Executive's motion is that I support the suggestion that "effort controls" should be "fair and effective". That does not mean that they should be nice or palatable; nor does it mean more delays. It means that they should be effective and fair.

In the immediate term, the steps that are needed to allow the regeneration of fish stocks are likely to have a further impact on fishing communities. We acknowledge that. However, decisive action now would mean that our fishing industry would have some sort of chance for the future. The impact on the communities is the problem that must be addressed. The real political question that Mr Finnie has to answer is not about how many fish he will come back with—which some members are asking about—but about how much he is prepared to invest to protect and help suffering communities through the necessary job of allowing fish stocks to recover. That question gets lost in the clamour for the best deal for our boys or in the delusional calls for us to leave the CFP.

The Green party believes in the local control of local fisheries and the fisheries around Scotland's coast—within the CFP. Leaving the CFP is not realistic; it is blue-sky thinking. I cannot believe that that is being proposed.

**Richard Lochhead:** Does the member agree with RSPB Scotland and the WWF, which have argued in their briefings for this debate that there is a case for increasing the haddock quota for Scotland if it can be separated from cod? Does he agree with that? If he does, does he not also agree that the fleet will require more days at sea to catch that haddock quota?

**Robin Harper:** There is a difference between saying, "Let's go and catch more haddock," and saying that it is possible to catch more haddock without attacking other stocks. I am perfectly prepared to acknowledge what RSPB Scotland and the WWF are saying; however, if I were Mr Finnie, I would want further time to debate with myself and experts what the effect would be of saying to the fleet, "Right, off you go. Catch as many haddock as you like."

An independent study that was commissioned by the WWF a year ago suggested that the Scottish fishing industry could be landing an extra £100 million of fish if stocks were allowed to recover to mid-1980s levels. We will need to take rigid, strict and serious steps to allow that to happen. Our amendment proposes limits on the tonnage and total fishing capacity of the fleet to match the available fish.

We must also think about what we decommission to ensure that the smaller, operator-owned boats, which employ more people per tonne of fish, are supported. Regeneration also deserves consideration. It is a proven fisheries management tool that is used to ensure that some areas are protected, which can increase catches in adjacent areas. That is important if certain species are to stand a chance of recovering. The waters around New Zealand now contain 27 regeneration areas that are actively promoted by the fishermen and the conservationists together. It works.

We need tighter controls over industrial fisheries, which account for half of all fish that are taken in the North sea and can take more white fish as bycatch than the entire white-fish quota. It is unlikely to be coincidence that young haddock are appearing in the Firth of Forth for the first time following limits' being imposed on the east coast sand eel fisheries. Again, that works. The aim is to continue that regime for at least another three years.

Independent observers are a must. My colleague, Mark Ruskell, asked a question on the subject earlier in the debate. The improvement of

satellite monitoring is welcome; however, having impartial, independent observers on board vessels and in ports can mean real-time monitoring and policing and can provide vital information to inform management programmes that can help with the science. Clearly, that will cost money, but it will create highly skilled jobs and can be part of the investment that we are calling for in a fishing industry for the future. If we look to the other side of the world, again, we can see examples of that. Observers are now integral to fishing in Australia and have won the support of the fishermen after—as one might expect—initial scepticism.

Climate change might well be having an impact on fisheries but, instead of throwing up our hands, we need to be even more careful about what we take. We must argue for a recovery plan for our fisheries and get away from the annual round of bartering. The message from Scotland at the EU negotiations should be that we are prepared to do what it takes to preserve and conserve our fish stocks for the future.

I move amendment S2M-715.3, to insert at end:

“; believes that effort controls need to include limits to the total fishing capacity of the fleet, the establishment of regeneration areas, tighter controls over industrial fisheries and the widespread adoption of independent observers at sea and in ports as part of a European Union-wide recovery plan, and further believes that annual bartering is a fundamentally inappropriate approach to the sustainable management of fisheries and that multi-annual management planning is essential.”

15:20

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** As an urban MSP, I am slightly nervous about intruding into what can sometimes seem to be a private argument. There is always a danger that some of my constituents in Clydebank might think that sustainable fisheries is a question of where the next fish supper is coming from.

An important issue links Clydebank and the fishing communities of the north-east of Scotland and around the northern coast: the fact that we lost a primary industry, which for us was our shipbuilding industry. There is a real risk that some of the fishing communities in north-east Scotland and elsewhere in Scotland could lose a significant part of their livelihood not as a result of Government policy per se but because of persistent overfishing of stocks over many years.

One of the problems that SNP members and, to some extent, Ted Brocklebank do not take account of is that a process of denial is going on in some of the fishing communities about the extent of the ecological damage that has been done. If we examine the science—and we can look back over 15 to 20 years—we can compare the kinds of fish and the stock levels that we see today with

those in the early 1980s. The science is overwhelming. There has been a significant depredation of the stocks in the North sea. Political and conservation measures to deal with depredation have not been sufficiently effective. The responsible debate that we should be having in the Parliament is about how to come up with effective conservation measures that leave us with a sustainable fishery.

**Richard Lochhead:** Will the member give way?

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

**Des McNulty:** I will give way to Richard Lochhead. I think that he was first.

**Richard Lochhead:** Can Des McNulty square his comment on the history of the North sea with the fact that the haddock stock today is at a 32-year high?

**Des McNulty:** To be honest, if Richard Lochhead considers the science, I think that he will find that that is not right. Certainly, Alex Salmond's comment last Sunday that we could walk on haddock all the way from Scotland to Norway seemed to me to be an insult to people's intelligence. What happened in Canada is that exactly that kind of unrealistic comment from politicians and fishermen's leaders led to the fishing out of the fish stock.

The SNP often compares the situation in Scotland with the situation in Norway, but what happened in Norway in 1989 was that Norway realised that its cod stocks were in serious decline and made a strategic decision to take out a significant part of its fishing effort and fishing fleet. The measures paid off and were effective, and Norway now has a sustainable stock.

Despite all of its constitutional arguments, the SNP is not prepared to face up to the same realities that Governments have had to face up to over the years. The SNP is irresponsible. It simply wants to blame someone all the time, whether Ross Finnie or another minister—indeed, the SNP thinks that a whole series of ministers have let down Scotland in the negotiations. The fact is that the fish are not there.

Each year, we keep overriding the scientific evidence. We discard it as not quite good enough or we say that our experience is different. The people who examine the biomass issues in relation to fish stocks are serious people. We need to engage in a serious debate with them. We need to have a science-led, conservation-based agenda. That is the only way in which we will have a sustainable fishery.

In that context, we must think about how to protect fishing communities. They will not be protected by the SNP blaming other people and denying the basic biological facts.

**Mr Brocklebank:** My intervention concerns the scientific evidence. I do not in any way want to dismiss the evidence that we have heard from ICES and other scientists, but is Des McNulty aware that, at a recent conference that the Royal Society of Edinburgh organised, it was the scientists who were deploring the lack of real science? They said that the scientific models have not been correctly established to enable them to study the evidence properly. Scientists are saying that something is wrong with the science.

**Des McNulty:** I am in favour of there being more exact science. Our fishing communities require the best science to be made available. However, simply to deny the substance of scientific findings on the state of the white-fish stock, which have been made by scientist after scientist over many years, is not a sustainable position to take either intellectually or politically.

The SNP talks about the failure of the common fisheries policy. There are some genuine failures of the CFP. The perverse incentives of the quota system can lead to fish being dumped over the side of vessels because they do not fit the quota. There are also poor enforcement regulations. The UK Government has just been cited for poor enforcement. We need better enforcement.

The way in which decisions are reached is absurd. Making decisions that will affect entire communities at 5 am on a December morning after discarding commissioned science because of overriding political considerations is not sensible. We have to find a better way. There must be a systematic reform of decision making on the CFP.

The pelagic fishery and the nephrops fishery have reached sustainable levels. There are successful fishing industries in Scotland. We need to ensure that the white-fish stocks are sustainable as well, not for my sake, but for the sake of the people of north-east Scotland, Shetland and other areas that are dependent on that sustainability. Everybody should be interested in that rather than in making cheap political points, trying to blame other people or saying that everything would be sorted out if we had an independent Scotland or abandoned the CFP. That is even more true when we consider that those who argue that we should come out of the CFP know that there is no practical way of achieving our exit from it and that, even if the people of Scotland wanted independence, there would be a long road before we got to that point.

People want meaningful solutions now that are not at the expense of the sustainability of the fishing industry but which will encourage that sustainability. That is the issue that we must address. Science and conservation are important in that regard and the longer-term interests of the people of our fishing communities are crucial. We

should be addressing ourselves to their needs rather than posturing on simple party-political lines.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** I advise members that an amendment has been lodged in the name of Bruce Crawford that seeks to amend the business motion that we will deal with later this afternoon. The amendment has the requisite 10 supporters, which means that, under rule 8.11.4, it must be taken.

The Presiding Officer has made arrangements for the amendment to be published as part of a revised daily list, which will be available at the back of the chamber as soon as possible.

15:27

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** I am always pleased to be able to speak in a debate on fisheries as it enables me to advance the interests of my community in the east neuk of Fife, which has a particular interest in the nephrops fishery.

So far, I have been disappointed with the debate. During First Minister's questions a couple of weeks ago, I raised the point that it is time that politicians got together to work out how we are going to ensure that we get the best deal for Scotland in next week's fisheries council. That is what we should be talking about today. I know that Ross Finnie and his officials are working hard to get that deal, but the carping and posturing of the SNP and the Conservatives is doing nothing to help to promote our case in the European Commission.

**Richard Lochhead:** Is the member accusing Alistair Carmichael, a member of his own party in Westminster, of being guilty of carping and posturing in his campaign against the common fisheries policy?

**Iain Smith:** I will come on to the Liberal Democrats' position on the common fisheries policy—

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Which one?

**Iain Smith:** Our position is clear and I will deal with it in the course of my speech. First, I would like to consider some of the issues that have been raised so far.

Ted Brocklebank talked about the Pittenweem pledge. That pledge has certainly gone down well in Pittenweem. Speaking of Michael Howard's visit, the leading representative of the fishing industry in Pittenweem said:

"I think he came here to hang his hat on a peg for the Conservative Party in Scotland but there was little that he said that offered tangible benefit to this fishing village."

That is what the people of Pittenweem think of the

Pittenweem pledge. Indeed, today, the local newspaper published the headline, "Neuk unimpressed by Howard's way".

**Mr Brocklebank:** Iain Smith might remember that, when he put out his press release the previous week, Billy Hughes was even more scathing in what he thought about what the Liberals were saying. What he is saying in today's paper is in relation to a request for money specifically for Pittenweem. Nobody can go and give a blank cheque to a fishing village. That was the context in which Billy Hughes was speaking.

**Iain Smith:** Ted Brocklebank is admitting that the Conservatives are offering Pittenweem absolutely nothing, which is as expected. That illustrates the Conservatives' position on the common fisheries policy. Ted has let the cat out the bag: the Conservatives want to pull out of the common fisheries policy, but they have nothing to put in its place. That is the problem with such simplistic slogans. It is easy just to say, "Let's pull out of the CFP," but there must be something realistic to put in its place. The Conservatives have offered nothing to put in the CFP's place.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** As Iain Smith is quoting from the press, what is his response to this quotation from *The Press and Journal* of 4 November? I note that his colleague, Tavish Scott, has left the chamber. Mr Scott said that the CFP has

"failed fishermen, fishing communities and fish stocks and must end ... At its core, the Common Fisheries Policy does not work."

**Iain Smith:** I think that Tavish Scott stole those words from a previous speech of mine, in fact. That is the Liberal Democrat position; we do not support the common fisheries policy in its present form.

**Christine Grahame:** That is not what the article says.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Iain Smith:** If Christine Grahame read the whole article, she would find that that is what it said. We believe in reform of the common fisheries policy, and we believe that regional advisory councils are a first step towards that reform. We believe in regional management within a European fisheries policy, not in the present form of the common fisheries policy. We cannot see why people in the Mediterranean should have a say on what happens with fishing in the North sea. That does not make any sense. However, the CFP cannot simply be withdrawn and we cannot just pull out of it. We are part of the policy and we must work within it as it is at present, but we must reform it.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Iain Smith:** Not at the moment. If we pulled out of the CFP, we would have to renegotiate every single one of our fishing deals. We would have to negotiate separately with Norway, Iceland, the Faeroese, the Dutch, the French and the Danes. It has been said that, if it left the CFP, Scotland could put forward its position, but why on earth would any one of those countries have any interest in Scotland's position? They would be interested in protecting their own position, as would the European Union. Scotland would do worse out of such a deal than it does at present. It is nonsense to say that we could withdraw from the existing treaties without there being something sensible to put in their place.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Iain Smith:** If we adopted the SNP's position, we would have to negotiate with England about fishing opportunities as well, for heaven's sake. That is how bad the SNP's position is. The SNP is misleading and lying to fishermen. Let us be honest in this debate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have one minute remaining.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I see that Iain Smith is giving way now. Does he agree with Andrew George, the Liberal Democrat member of Parliament for St Ives? In the past 24 hours, he said in the House of Commons:

"We must move away as quickly as possible from the CFP".—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 December 2003; Vol 415, c 1005.]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Members should not give way in their last minute. You now have half a minute, Mr Smith.

**Iain Smith:** I am sorry; I did not hear that it was my last minute. I say to Stewart Stevenson that I am sorry, but I thought that that is what I just said. He will perhaps find that out when he reads the *Official Report*.

Next week's fisheries council is very important, and we must ensure that we get the right deal for Scotland, which means securing a decoupling. George Lyon, Archy Kirkwood MP, representatives of Scottish Borders Council, Elspeth Attwooll MEP and I met Commission representatives yesterday to discuss some of the issues, and I think that progress is being made. The work that Ross Finnie and his officials have been doing over the past year is beginning to have an effect. On nephrops, for example, the Commission accepts that there is no substantial bycatch from cod fishing. Therefore, we now have an opportunity to get nephrops quotas decoupled.

We must continue to work to get haddock quotas decoupled, too. I want those areas where

there is clearly no significant cod bycatch to be taken out of the cod recovery measures, so that proper, realistic quotas may be given to our fishermen, including the nephrops fishermen working in the Firth of Forth. When that decoupling comes, and if we get the additional quota, I would like my fishermen in Pittenweem to get their fair share, so that they can have the possibility of a viable fishery in the future.

15:34

**Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP):** I say to colleagues who have already spoken in the debate that I can speak with an element of authority, having been the directly elected member for the constituency of Moray since 1987. I know a great deal about the fishing industry—it is very complex and we must deal with it very carefully. I have listened to what other members have said and have been quite appalled by some contributions.

Ted Brocklebank may argue all he wants about the “Pittenweem pledge”, a phrase that I think will come back to haunt him. People regard some of the promises that the Conservative leader is making as extremely hollow. I do not remember him fighting for the fishing industry when I was at Westminster.

I say this to Robin Harper, to Ted Brocklebank and to Des McNulty, now that he has returned to the chamber: throughout the debates that we had in the House of Commons—and the late-night meetings with ministers—all the arguments that SNP members propounded were positive. We reached a decision on those arguments because we were involved in our fishing communities. Some of the best ideas about the fishing industry came from people in those communities and we argued their case. However, not one minister responsible for fisheries from either the Conservative party or the Labour Party paid genuine attention to the fishermen’s recommendations.

**Phil Gallie:** I remember a debate on Scottish fisheries at which the then minister, Raymond Robertson, listened to the arguments that were put and ensured that prawn quotas in the west of Scotland were increased. Margaret Ewing must give some credit to ministers for the small progress that was made at that time.

**Mrs Ewing:** The progress was so tiny that it was sometimes difficult to spot. I take the point that Phil Gallie makes, but I am talking about our ideas for square-mesh panels and increasing mesh size. We had to battle to get through to people about those ideas.

I turn now to the Liberal Democrats. Iain Smith turned so many corners that he met himself coming back. He does not seem able to

understand that many of his colleagues have been arguing exactly the points that we are making in our amendment today. He should think twice when pushing his voting button tonight, because people will be watching—not just in Pittenweem, but in areas such as Lossiemouth and Portsoy. He should think carefully about how he votes.

I will briefly mention other issues. A great deal is made of decommissioning but, as Richard Lochhead pointed out, much of the money for that has gone straight to the banks, rather than to fishermen. I live in a fishing community and know that decommissioning is like a stake that is being driven through the hearts of our coastal communities.

One day during the summer, I returned home from a constituency surgery and parked the car. As I got out, my neighbour Andrew Campbell said, “That’s it, Margaret.” I asked, “What do you mean?” because he looked very depressed. He replied, “I have just posted off that brown envelope for decommissioning. Seven generations of my family are enclosed in that envelope.” I was upset for him and asked where the boat would be sent. He said that it would not go to a yard in the constituency or anywhere else in Scotland. No job has been obtained by yards in Scotland as a result of the decommissioning schemes. Instead, the work goes to Denmark.

The minister knows full well that I have strong feelings about industrial fishing. I thank him very much for the evidence that he gave last week to the European and External Relations Committee. I thoroughly recommend that Des McNulty and one or two other members read the *Official Report* of that meeting, because it was very helpful. The minister said that the issue of industrial fishing would emerge in some way during the council talks. When that happens, what arguments will he, as the Parliament’s representative, and Ben Bradshaw propound?

My final point relates to onshore support. As we have heard, there has been an underspend. It is vital that we consider the situation of small businesses—not just chandlers, net makers and so on, but all the people who supply our boats, including butchers, fruiterers and grocers. I would like more onshore support for our fishing communities.

I wish the minister well, but I really cannot understand why he does not fight harder to lead the delegation to the Council of Ministers and use his vote rather than relying on Ben Bradshaw, whose unit has not even completed its report.

15:40

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** All those involved in recent fisheries

meetings will have noted the absence of Hughie Allen, the secretary of the Mallaig and North West Fishermen's Association, who has a serious illness. Members associated with fisheries will know of the enormous amount of work that he puts in for his members and for the fishing industry. I hope that everyone will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery. *[Applause.]*

It has been difficult to be upbeat about fisheries in the past, but on this occasion the science supports what fishermen have been telling us for ages: stocks of haddock are at their highest point for a long time. The opportunity should be taken to increase the TAC. The fact that for each boat in our diminished Scottish fleet there is now more than 1,000 square miles of fishing space speaks for itself.

The graph on page 3 of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's briefing note shows that cod stocks have risen by 30 per cent since the low point in 2001. The graph was drawn up painstakingly from a 900-page scientific report. Despite all the good news, the scientific press release had nothing to say about the improvement in cod stocks. However, we can be upbeat about that news and about the scientific advice on prawns, which shows that the TAC could be increased by up to 40 per cent. I ask that a push be made for an increase of at least 25 per cent for prawns in the North sea and an increase of 20 per cent for prawns on the west coast, where the 10 per cent that was withdrawn from the fishery some years ago has never been returned.

Prawns are the most valuable stock landed in Scotland and have particular significance on the west coast. Since the original baseline for the prawn TAC was set, the areas fished have increased greatly. Evidence suggests that a far higher TAC would be sustainable. The Commission reduced the TAC to reflect the level of reported catches, but new evidence shows a pressing necessity for a scientific reassessment of the prawn stocks.

Given that the United Kingdom possesses 96 per cent of the TAC for prawns on the west coast and 70 per cent of it in the North sea, it is not as though an increase in the TAC would open the floodgates to foreign fishermen—indeed, I very much hope that there is no intention for that to happen. Given that the prawn stock is virtually a national stock, it should be possible, through consultation with the catching and processing sectors, to work out how an increase in catches would not necessarily lead to a drop in prices.

It is little wonder that there is so much cynicism towards the Commission among Scottish fishermen. The Commission's broad-brush approach takes little notice of, for example, the Clyde fishermen's efforts to restrict cod catches.

The arrogant attitude of a distant Commission is doing little to promote conservation. The Clyde fishermen should at the very least have received a pat on the back for their efforts, instead of a kick in the teeth. The west coast fishermen have a genuine gripe that, although they were affected by the tribulations of the white-fish industry, they have been unable to qualify for decommissioning. A number of prawn vessels could have qualified for decommissioning, but the Executive took a private decision not to spend money on that. What is the excuse for that?

Still on west coast matters, I would like to know whether it is true that the Food Standards Agency has run out of money for testing boxes for amnesic shellfish poisoning. If so, that would leave the boxes permanently closed to scallop fishing.

What is wrong with fisheries management from Brussels is that, despite lauding the principle of subsidiarity and regional advisory councils—European buzzwords—the Commission ignores the concepts and forces its micromanagement policies on to our fishermen, who would be far more capable of producing policies that would keep stocks healthy and sustain livelihoods. That is why most fishermen want us to come out of the common fisheries policy. They do not believe that Brussels cares a jot for Scotland's fishing fleet; rather, they believe that it wants to create a European fishing fleet that is dominated by other nations.

The draft of the new European constitution makes that even plainer. The Labour Government seems happy to give exclusive competence for fisheries to Europe. It is bad enough having shared competence over oil and gas resources, but exclusive competence for fisheries spells the assassination of our fishing industry by our own Government. People in the United Kingdom must be allowed a referendum on issues of such importance. Our fishing fleet has created a culture of pride and passion over the centuries, which we lose at our peril.

Last Sunday in Pittenweem, I heard Carol MacDonald of the Cod Crusaders deliver a clear message to the new Conservative leader, Michael Howard. She said:

"Mr Howard, the fishermen want out of the CFP. Please get us out."

That message comes from the heart of the industry. The main complaints about the CFP are that it seeks to micromanage and that officials do not listen. That leaves it wide open to claims of conspiracy by the fishing industry, whose representatives are locked out of negotiations. The question is: is it conspiracy or is it simply incompetent management?

I have a vision of Scottish fishermen packing

their suitcases this weekend for a trip to Brussels—a trip that they would not need to make if they had confidence in their political representatives. Who can blame those men for wanting out of a CFP that has ruined their livelihood? Let us face it—national control will not happen today. Until it does, it is up to Mr Finnie and Mr Bradshaw to use the upbeat science to extract a more upbeat future for our fishing fleet. I genuinely hope that they will do that.

15:46

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome what the minister said in his opening remarks and the fact that he sees the Commission's proposals for TACs as a starting point in the forthcoming negotiations. I welcome the fact that the Commission has not followed the most cautious scientific advice. However, we need to push for the best possible deal in the negotiations. There should be a shared view that we need to balance the conservation and recovery of stocks with the maintenance of a viable industry following the reduction in effort that it has already had to undergo.

For the north-east of Scotland, it is vital that the industry's future is secured. Aberdeenshire Council's report on the economic impact of fishing on the north-east showed that some 1,300 people were employed in the fleet alone and that there was a turnover of around £120 million. It also showed that nine of the 10 areas with the most deprivation in Aberdeenshire are places that are dependent on fisheries. Those factors must be taken into consideration when the negotiations move on from the starting point of the Commission's TAC proposals.

Although the Commission has not followed the most cautious scientific advice, the proposed 13.6 per cent cut in quota for monkfish is severe. There is surely also room for higher quotas for other species. I am pleased that the minister has said that he will continue to argue for a better deal for the haddock, monkfish and nephrops fisheries. There has to be a balance in securing the long-term future of the industry and preserving the fishing fleet.

**Robin Harper:** Does the member agree that Mr Lochhead was being misleading when he suggested that the RSPB and the WWF said that we could fish for more haddock? The WWF has said that, if cod could be fished separately from other stocks, a precautionary quota should be set. The RSPB has been quite clear that it is not safe to rely on the increase in the size of the haddock stock, as that refers only to one year class.

**Richard Baker:** We would obviously like there to be more effort in decoupling. However, I will

come on to another issue to do with haddock, if Robin Harper will bear with me.

There is no room for complacency when we consider the science. It is not reasonable to say that the sea is teeming with fish. At the last meeting of the North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership, we heard that, although stocks of haddock are relatively good now, that view is based on one good year class from 1999. There is a continued need for vigilance. There is still room for progress in the talks on quotas, but we have to ensure a long-term future for the industry. It is because we want to secure a future for the industry that the industry has had to accept restriction of fishing effort.

Understandably, the debate has focused on the offshore aspect of the industry. However, I agree with Margaret Ewing that we must also consider the onshore industries that have been affected—for example, the businesses that supply gear, men and boats or that process catches. I have pressed the minister before to urge him to ensure that the processing sector is assisted. We should encourage a higher number of applications from processors for financial instrument for fisheries guidance aid.

I endorse the Executive's position on the overall strategy. I do not believe that withdrawal from the CFP is a realistic option or that it would provide a workable solution to the problems that Scotland's fishing industry faces. We require reform of the CFP, not its abolition and a free-for-all in the North sea.

There is general agreement that the CFP needs to change and that there should be more regional management. Progress on that is being made through the establishment of regional advisory councils. The CFP must be fair and the pain of conserving fish stocks must be shared—other nations must take their share of the responsibility. Scotland should get credit for the considerable efforts that have been made in decommissioning the Scottish fleet, even as other countries built up their fleets with EU money, so I welcome the minister's statement that 2001 will be taken as the baseline in the negotiations.

The principle of relative stability, the Hague preference and the Shetland box are all viable aspects of the CFP. The UK delegation secured those aspects last December and they should not be given up.

Of course, the Tories advocate withdrawal from the CFP, even though they took us into it. The Scottish National Party—and Alex Salmond in particular—has suggested that it would be possible to withdraw from the CFP without withdrawing from the EU. Ted Brocklebank, who is not in the chamber to respond, said the same

thing today. However, both the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Commission have confirmed that that is not the case.

I suspect that, even in its current Eurosceptic mood, the SNP does not advocate withdrawal from the EU. However, to suggest that withdrawal from the CFP is a panacea for the industry's problems is to visit a cruel deceit on our fishing industry.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Tony Blair said immediately before the 1997 general election:

"We certainly have not ruled out holding up IGC business in order to get the right changes to fishing policy in the British interest".

Does the member agree with that? Does he support the red-lining of exclusive competence of the EU over fishing, which is proposed in article 12 of the "Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe"?

**Richard Baker:** The minister has made it clear that the position on EU competence has already been established in law, so some of the current debate is frankly—not to make a poor pun—a red herring.

I do not believe that we can strike a better deal by negotiating unilateral agreements with other nations from a much weaker position. We should continue to press for reform of the CFP, because there are few issues on which international co-operation is more essential than marine conservation. If we pursue that realistic, achievable policy, we offer the best chance to our fishing industry of a better future in the long term.

15:52

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** The crisis in the fishing industry must be addressed as a priority. We must have the political will to change the status quo in order to maintain the industry in a sustainable manner that allows a fair catch but does not jeopardise fish stocks for future generations of fishermen.

The Scottish fishing industry generates approximately £360 million for the Scottish economy, but the figure rises to £1.6 billion when industries such as processing are included in the equation. The fishing industry is the principal employer in Scotland's coastal communities; there are some 7,000 fishermen and a further 20,000 people are employed in processing, marketing and transporting the catch. Recent events in Europe threaten the entire industry and conservative estimates suggest that 9,000 jobs are at risk. Scotland has some of the most productive inshore fishing waters in the world, which cover some 35,000 square miles and support almost three quarters of the Scottish fishing fleet.

The Scottish Socialist Party's proposals to safeguard fish stocks and our fishing communities include a total ban on industrial fishing, which endangers the small fish that are the feedstock for other species of fish as well as for seabirds and mammals such as whales and dolphins. Industrial fishing destroys the ecosystem of the sea; it jeopardises future fish stocks and is completely unsustainable. We can achieve a sustainable fishing policy by banning industrial fishing in Scottish territorial waters and beyond.

We must also have a new management system for the fisheries in the North sea and off the west coast of Scotland, whereby the scientists and the fishermen work with other stakeholders from those areas to come up with sensible management plans that ensure sustainability. That is the only way in which we can ensure that the fisheries are managed by the local people—who know what they are doing—for the local communities that they serve. Fishermen's knowledge is an important and currently underused asset. We must ensure that their knowledge is fully integrated into the production of management advice.

It makes sense to have national control over our territorial waters. That must be regained if we are to achieve a sustainable fishery. We must examine good examples of well-managed, sustainable fish stocks from nations such as Iceland and the Faeroes, which have sole control of up to 200 miles of their national waters. We can no longer have a situation in which several European nations, some of which are landlocked, can participate in decisions that affect Scottish territorial waters. National control allows national interests to take priority; that is of paramount importance for the future development of the Scottish fishing industry.

The safety of our fishermen and our fishing communities has not been mentioned so far, but safety remains an important issue. Unlike in other industries, in which safety is encouraged, no grants are available in the fishing industry for safety measures that a skipper may wish to implement to improve crew safety. In addition, the European Union measures mean that boats often put out in weather that would previously have kept them in harbour. That increases the risk of accidents, as does working long hours when the boats are out. Crews who work long hours become tired, so accidents are more likely to occur. Our fishing crews must be protected.

**Alex Johnstone:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Ms Byrne:** Give me a minute.

We must recognise and support the work of those in the processing and marketing sector of the fishing industry. The fishing industry does not

only consist of those who catch the fish; the processing and marketing sectors are equally important. Catchers and processors have worked together over the years to build a community industry. We must build on that relationship to help to strengthen the industry and we must raise awareness of the roles of all sectors of the industry. An advanced landing system should be developed so that processors know when fish is about to be landed and fishermen know when fish is needed by processors. Scotland produces quality fish, which must be recognised as such and protected. Just as Scotch beef and lamb are recognised in the marketplace as quality produce, so too must the Scottish fish catch be recognised as a quality product.

We condemn outright the situation that saw our deepwater fleet, which fished off the west coast of Scotland, left with no fishing opportunities. In recent years, fish stocks in the deep water to the west of Scotland have been coming under severe pressure from all the nations that were fishing in that area. The fish species are vulnerable. Scientists and fishermen must work together to find solutions to reduce the amount of stress on the stocks. Our fishermen have only 2 per cent of the allocation of deepwater stocks. That decision must be reversed. Our deepwater fleet fishermen must be given back their full fishing rights.

Much has been said about scientific research. Fisheries management must be predicated on good science. Currently, the management of demersal stocks—mainly cod and haddock—has been tied to that of the cod stock alone. The cod stock is currently deemed to be in crisis, so all demersal species are treated in the same way. That results in an inflexible management system that does little for the cod stocks and still less for the other important commercial species. The regime must be changed in order to maintain sustainable fish stocks and thriving fishing communities. Fishermen's knowledge must be employed in the revision of survey assessments.

15:59

**George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD):** It is vital that we focus today's debate on the immediate task that lies in front of our minister next week in Brussels. It is surely the case—I hope that there is cross-party support for this view—that securing a good deal for Scottish fishermen at next week's council is what is most important. That is what we should concentrate on today.

The outcome of those discussions on TACs, effort control, enforcement and long-term recovery plans will determine whether our fishermen are able to earn a viable living next year, how much product our fish processors can process next year, how much pain there might be for our fishing

communities and how much they must endure for the year ahead. None of those questions will be answered by the constitutional navel gazing that we have heard from the Opposition parties today.

Yesterday, along with my Liberal Democrat colleagues Iain Smith, Archy Kirkwood and Michael Cook, who is the deputy leader of Scottish Borders Council, I met the director general, Mr Holmquist, to discuss those matters and to impress upon him our concerns about the Commission's proposals for 2004. The points that we raised with him have been articulated during the debate, but they are worth going over again. The scientific evidence points to an abundance of haddock in the North sea this year, albeit—and we must qualify this every time—that that evidence is based on a single year group, which is the 1999 year group. A question lies behind that: why have we not seen greater increases in biomass in subsequent year groups? There is a worry that we are basing all our calculations for the coming year on a single year group. We have to watch the situation closely.

Prawn stocks are in very good condition, especially on the west coast and in the North sea, where the Commission is proposing an increase in the quota, although the scientific evidence suggests that the increase could be substantially greater than that which the Commission has on the table. We are also beginning to see stabilisation of the cod stock and a recovery in stock biomass, which is a sign that, at long last, the cod stocks are starting to turn the corner. I hope that that signals that we will see cod stocks recover over the next two to three years.

Based on those facts, we argued—as did the minister, as he outlined in his speech—for cod to be decoupled from prawn and haddock, and for an increase in TACs for the coming year. From a west coast perspective, I pointed out that the scientific evidence surely justified a restoration of the 10 per cent cut of three years ago, as it is now widely accepted—and it was accepted by the Commission in our meeting yesterday—that bycatch in prawn fisheries is negligible throughout most of Scotland, and certainly on the west coast.

The Commission responded positively to the arguments that were put forward for decoupling, but it was clear that while the Commission recognised that it was possible to decouple cod from prawn and haddock, the key to delivering that objective and to securing increases in the forthcoming talks was control and enforcement. That was the message that came back to us. It is disappointing that we have seen newspaper articles that say that control and enforcement measures are not doing the job.

**Robin Harper:** Does George Lyon agree that it will be essential to have monitors or observers on

board boats if we are to go for decoupling and to carry on fishing for haddock?

**George Lyon:** The fundamental challenge is to ensure that we can identify where boats are at any time. If we are going to set up haddock boxes or dedicated areas where haddock can be fished—and in which it is recognised that there is no bycatch—the Commission's view is that we need to be 100 per cent sure that the boats are there and that they can be tracked. If we are going to have any credibility in arguing for decoupling, control and enforcement must be part of the argument. I hope that that is accepted by everyone in the chamber. The minister's announcement that he is to fund satellite tracking systems for the Scottish fleet is a strong signal of the Executive's intent and commitment to strengthening control measures in Scotland. That must be recognised in the talks that are to come.

In contrast to our meeting with directorate-general officials at the same time last year, I left the meeting yesterday with some optimism that this time round there is room to negotiate a much better outcome than that which is currently on the table, and certainly a much better outcome than last year. I hope that all members will support that objective on a cross-party basis. We want a better outcome to the talks next week.

I will discuss the Conservative and SNP amendments. We have the Pittenweem pledge from the misty-eyed Ted Brocklebank, or separation from the UK and isolation from Europe from our friend Mr Lochhead. The fundamental question that both those gentlemen must answer is how constitutional change would deliver one extra cod, haddock or prawn in the seas that surround Scotland. If we want a more sustainable and successful fishing industry, we must all answer that fundamental question. Of course, the answer is that constitutional change would have no impact.

The last question for Mr Blockhead—I mean Lochhead—

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

**George Lyon:** I am sorry; I am in my last minute.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** You are not in your last minute, Mr Lyon—you have passed it.

**George Lyon:** I understand that Mr Lochhead will be in Brussels next week, as he was at the same time last year. Will he be there to undermine the minister and to stab the minister in the back in his capacity as convener of the European and External Relations Committee or as SNP spokesman on fishing?

16:06

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I have participated in several fisheries debates in the chamber. I am holding up just file 1 of my Eyemouth fisheries files, which shows members how serious the situation is for people in that area. I have listened intently to speeches about other small communities; probably the most articulate and informed speech was made by Margaret Ewing, who has a long history of understanding the soul of the fishing industry.

There is no doubt that the common fisheries policy is a continuing disaster for the fishing industry in Scotland. For several years, it has destabilised one of Scotland's major industries. The CFP is a clumsy tool for a complex subject.

I will take up what the minister said about scientific evidence, which is not watertight—if I may use that awful pun—because scientific evidence never is. My colleague Richard Lochhead asked in parliamentary question S2W-3651

"what scientific progress has been made in the last 12 months in support of decoupling the management of cod from other white fish stocks in the North Sea."

The answer to his question provides a trail of European lethargy, which starts when work was presented to the European Commission from 28 April to 7 May 2003 and runs through other committees to the position now:

"Officials continue to discuss these issues with the Commission."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 19 November 2003; p 1148.]

Where is the urgency for Scotland's fishing communities? I would like to know the time scale for the investigations that are going through all the systems in Europe. When will those investigations reach a conclusion, if not result in proposals?

I know and understand that the fishermen have a case to argue, but they have evidence, to which Robin Harper and others referred, about the effect of global warming. We agree that cod are temperature sensitive. Fishermen also say that strange fish, such as red mullet, squid and other fish that come from warmer climates, are appearing in areas of Scottish seas where they have never been seen before. We must address that. The problem is not a simple matter of the fishermen being bad and overfishing; other elements are involved.

**Robin Harper:** Does the member concede that global warming is not driving the cod away and that the cod stock has increased slightly, although that increase is not enough for fishermen to start to fish for cod again? It is clear that some measures may be kicking in at last.

**Christine Grahame:** I concede that cod stocks need to be protected, but that is not the issue. The

question is: why are stocks failing so much? Is the cause as simple as overfishing or do other elements require to be addressed? Those points emerge from fishermen anecdotally and from some scientific quarters.

**Ross Finnie:** I take the point that Christine Grahame makes, but does she accept, as the SNP spokesperson Richard Lochhead has, that the Fisheries Research Services has addressed the matter? The FRS has not ignored climate change. The clamour from the fishing community means that the FRS has also taken the trouble to discuss such matters with fishing scientists in the northern European states. There is no evidence that cod stocks are moving north.

**Christine Grahame:** Perhaps we are waiting for an answer on that. The Commission is examining all the scientific evidence and is taking a long time to reach a conclusion. Perhaps we can analyse what the Commission has to say.

We must consider the attack on communities. Eyemouth has a population of some 5,000. I note that Euan Robson, who is supposed to represent Eyemouth, is not even present. In Eyemouth, 240 front-line fishermen are employed. However, for each of those fishermen there is one person who works onshore, which means that 500 people rely on nephrops and other fishing in that area. That substantial percentage of the Eyemouth population is at risk. The major catch is nephrops; however, as Phil Gallie—who has left the chamber—pointed out, there might be displacement fishing and overfishing, which might cause the price to fall and make communities even more vulnerable. Indeed, in a speech that I made about six months ago, I highlighted the substantial impact of measures on ice plants that the fishermen have bought and on packing jobs in the area. I should point out that the fishing port is also essential to tourism in Eyemouth. People visit the town to see the fleet and a living, working harbour. If that shuts down, we will have yet another of those industrial museums that seem to be proliferating in Scotland.

I have a great deal of respect for Ross Finnie, who has held his brief for a long time and is well informed. His heart is in the right place; he listens and talks to people. However, he has huge problems, one of which is the CFP. No matter what they might say, the Liberal Democrats at Westminster and Tavish Scott want to get rid of it. As usual, the Liberal Democrats are Janus faced; they go one way in Scotland and another in England. Well, they will be caught out when they vote tonight, as I am going to send their speeches and voting records to the fishermen of Eyemouth.

**Iain Smith:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have one minute.

**Christine Grahame:** I have only one minute left. I would have taken Mr Smith's intervention, because I am sure that his comment was worth listening to. That is irony, by the way.

The minister's other huge problem is that he is not on the front line. He does not have the status with which to argue Scotland's case. I wish that he would argue our case, because he certainly has the power to do so. After all, under article 203 of the treaty of Rome, it is for the member state to decide who is a member of the delegation. The trouble is that there are Labour ministers at Westminster, and the minister up here is a Liberal Democrat. That is why he is not getting to speak up for 70 per cent of the UK's fishing industry.

Finally, as far as the Liberal Democrat position is concerned, fishermen recognise hypocrisy when they see it, in the same way that they recognise cod.

16:12

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** Although I was not in the Parliament in the run-up to Christmas last year, I well remember the palpable gloom in the north-east following the disastrous outcome of the December meeting of the European Council of Ministers. This January brought the promised, if somewhat disappointing, package of aid for fishing communities, the bulk of which was to be used to fund a decommissioning scheme. The residual £10 million was to be targeted at the wider fishing community including fish processors.

In March, we had promises of rates relief for harbours and other businesses that were experiencing hardship as a result of the reduction in white-fish catches. Those promises of help—as far as they went—were welcome news for many communities around Scotland's coastline, such as Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Buckie, Mallaig, Stornoway and even Aberdeen, that are dependent on the white-fish industry.

Many small businesses within those towns and villages either supply and back up the fishing industry or depend for their prosperity and survival on the fish that are brought to port. Given that there are five jobs onshore for every one at sea, the loss of nearly 2,500 fishermen from the Scottish industry since 1997 has had a major impact on the sustainability of those communities.

The fish processing industry has had major problems in recent years and still faces an uncertain future as it awaits the outcome of this winter's negotiations in Brussels. Pelagic and shellfish processing businesses are reasonably secure, as are the bigger white-fish processors that have been resilient enough to augment their supplies with foreign imports, even though those imports are not sufficient for their needs.

However, the small fish processing businesses that depend entirely on home catches have had—and still face—serious difficulties and are competing against very cheap imports of already processed fish that are being sold for as low as £11 a box of fillets. Many businesses have gone to the wall and more in Aberdeen are expected to go the same way before the end of the year.

The processing sector is the cinderella of the fishing industry. The people who work in it are very skilled at what they do. Indeed, anyone who has watched an experienced fish-filleter at work cannot fail to have been impressed by the speed and dexterity of the operation. However, those jobs are entirely dependent on a steady supply of fish. If those people are lost to the industry because of a lack of fish, they are unlikely to return to it in future and their jobs will not be replaced.

**Robin Harper:** The Conservatives believe in market economics. Would taking more fish out of the North sea drive up the price?

**Mrs Milne:** I need to give thought to that question and will answer Robin Harper later.

There are genuine worries that the processing sector is reaching crisis point. Members who have spoken to Robert Milne of the Scottish Fish Merchants Federation will know that, despite making several applications, the sector has not seen the transitional relief that it expected, as the available resources have all gone to the catching sector. That will mean that, when fishing boats tie up over Christmas, their operators will receive transitional relief, but the processors, who will have to close at the same time because of a lack of supplies, will not receive any financial support.

Processors are also being hit by new legislation. For example, the animal by-products legislation stops discarded shells going to landfill sites, and that is proving to be a real headache for prawn processors. Pollution prevention control legislation is leading to heavy taxation of all factories capable of processing up to 75 tonnes of fish a day, even if their production is far below that weight.

Moreover, the processing sector is the only part of the industry that has to contribute to the upkeep of Seafish, the UK governing body for the whole industry. There is resentment among Scottish processors that they have to give 50p per box for that purpose, given that Seafish is not permitted to advertise that its product is Scottish.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mrs Milne:** I will not take any more interventions.

**Mike Rumbles:** The member has taken only one intervention.

**Mrs Milne:** Mr Rumbles has been trying to intervene from his seat all afternoon, so I will continue with my speech.

**Mike Rumbles:** Is she feart?

**Mrs Milne:** I am not feart.

Is it any wonder that, in these uncertain times, processors see themselves as the poor relations of the fishing industry? Still, they are the backbone that sustains many fishing communities around the country.

One factory in Fraserburgh employs nearly 1,000 people in the processing industry—just think of the economic impact on the town if those jobs were not there.

At a time when the health benefits of fish are being trumpeted around the world and when increasing numbers of new added-value fish products are coming on to the market—many from Norway, the Faeroes and other northern European countries—it would be a tragedy if our processing industry did not thrive, too.

I urge the minister to do his utmost to get a good deal for Scotland in his forthcoming negotiations in Brussels. I also ask him to pay heed to people such as Robert Milne and to assist the revival of a prosperous and sustainable fish processing industry because many of our coastal communities depend on it for their survival.

16:18

**Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab):** Before I mention the importance of the forthcoming negotiations to my constituency and other west coast communities, I bring to the attention of the chamber something that was said a week ago during a members' business debate by the foremost authority in the ranks of the Scottish National Party—Richard Lochhead. During a good debate, he said—if members can believe it—that we should all strive to depoliticise fishing. That incredible statement is only seven days old—I have had a week to reflect on its profundity and am now in a position to offer Mr Lochhead and his fellow nationalists some advice.

I urge Mr Lochhead to desanitise his rhetoric and to rid it of the torrents of hypocrisy and delusional language as his party goes round the country extolling the virtues of its new-found theology—withdrawal from the common fisheries policy. Mr Lochhead—and most reasonable members—would agree that that is the worst type of simplistic sloganising and it certainly debases politics.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Morrison:** No—not at the moment.

I notice that, in a temperate contribution, Mrs Margaret Ewing never mentioned the delusional policy that is now being espoused with such vigour by the nationalists.

Mr Finnie will not be surprised that I will focus on the total allowable catch for the prawn fishery on the west coast of Scotland. I will set out the case briefly on behalf of the fishermen of the Western Isles and other west coast fishermen. The matter was outlined clearly by the Western Isles Fishermen's Association last Friday when it met Allan Wilson during his visit to Stornoway. I know that he has relayed that case to the Minister for Environment and Rural Development.

It is worth noting that recent prawn catches have been the best for 40 years, with relatively little white-fish bycatch. Vessels are now operating within a ridiculously low monthly prawn quota allocation, which bears no resemblance to the state of the stocks. The allocation is now preventing both the catching and the processing sectors from gaining maximum benefit from what is quite clearly a healthy fishery that has proven sustainable over 40 years at present levels of effort. Few fisheries in the United Kingdom can point to a record of sustainability either on such a scale or over so many years.

The total allowable catch in 2001, last year and this year was subject to a further reduction of 10 per cent, as other members have mentioned. That has compounded the situation, solely because there is a perceived link between the prawn fishery and cod bycatch. Despite virtually all west coast prawn landings coming from the north and south Minch and Clyde inshore grounds, with landings showing that there is an almost negligible level of cod being landed by prawn trawlers, that important 10 per cent figure has never been reinstated on the west coast of Scotland.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Does Alasdair Morrison agree that the regional advisory councils that are being proposed in the overall policy would have to be considerably beefed up to deal with the specific conditions in the north-west Atlantic so that we could make arrangements for separating the prawns and the cod?

**Mr Morrison:** If we were to espouse the policies that Rob Gibson and Alex Salmond outline, the regional advisory councils would be highly irrelevant, given the SNP's hokey-cokey approach to European politics and fishing policy. To answer Mr Gibson's question, of course regional advisory councils are important. They will be a forum for debate and discussion for our fishermen and for processors, scientists and others.

Returning to the 10 per cent figure, I am sure that the negotiating team going to Brussels will be

able to make a strong case for the reinstatement of the 10 per cent prawn quota. The 10 per cent codling linkage has already been reinstated in the North sea, despite there having been a larger cod bycatch in the North sea prawn fishery than on the west coast. I also hope that our team will fight for an increase in the current precautionary TAC level to a more realistic 16,000 tonnes. If that can be achieved, both fishermen and processors could benefit, and we could all witness the continuation of one of the most sustainable fisheries in the United Kingdom.

In the final minute of my speech, I turn once again to the cynical deceptions and fraudulent claims of the Scottish National Party, particularly the theology that was first outlined by Alex Salmond, using the most simplistic sloganising, in relation to withdrawal from the common fisheries policy. With the assistance of the House of Commons library, my colleague Calum MacDonald quickly established a fact that has been referred to by Richard Baker, people from the European Commission and secretaries of state in the UK Government. I quote from a letter from the House of Commons library, which says:

"If the Salmond Bill were passed, it would not result in the UK withdrawing from the Common Fisheries Policy."

What is so shabby about the nationalists' rhetoric is that they sloganise and claim that withdrawal from the CFP is the only answer to the challenges facing fishing communities on the east coast of Scotland. They insist on telling hard-working men and women that the SNP is the only hope for their communities. That is a disgraceful deception, and it is a deception that Alex Salmond and other nationalists should apologise for. We have a duty to expose the fantasy policies of the SNP, particularly when they take the form of such a blatant and short-term con.

I hope that the Executive and colleagues in the UK Government will not opt for—and I am sure that they will not—short-term, populist strategies. We must put the long-term environmental and economic sustainability of our fishing communities before any perceived political gain. If we do that, we will protect the interests of the people who sent us to this chamber. I wish Mr Finnie and Ben Bradshaw the very best next week.

16:24

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** In some ways, this afternoon's debate has been a bit disappointing, because so many of the contributions have been about sustaining fishing effort rather than about sustainability. Let us look at the original definition of sustainability. In 1989, the Brundtland commission said that sustainability is about ensuring that our actions today do not compromise the ability of future

generations to meet their needs. That is highly relevant to today's debate. It is not a jobs-versus-the-environment issue. The two issues are completely and utterly intertwined and interlinked.

We should not forget that the seas cover three quarters of the planet and that overfishing is the biggest environmental threat to the seas. By its very nature, the issue that we are discussing is an international issue and therefore requires international action. Withdrawing from the CFP would be the most ridiculous case of a bad workman blaming his tools. We should argue for reform of the CFP. Withdrawal is not a realistic option at all, although the SNP seems to think that it is.

**Mr McGrigor:** It is envisaged that national control would involve national management and that such management might not be by TACs and quotas, but might be by a different tool that might have a different and far better result for our stocks.

**Mr Ruskell:** This is an international issue that needs an overarching framework encompassing all the states in the European Union. If we are considering having more regional policies, we must focus on regional advisory councils, which are a part of CFP reform.

I want to focus on some more problems. The minister outlined the state of some stocks—in particular, he outlined the state of cod stocks on the west coast, which are not improving. The SNP highlighted the fact that the haddock stock is recovering, but we should not forget—as Richard Baker and George Lyon pointed out—that that is the result of recruitment in one year: 1999. There was no sustained recruitment to haddock stocks in the following years.

Des McNulty mentioned the political short-term horse trading that happens year on year in the European Union, which is the biggest problem. Such horse trading happens in the fisheries council and in the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries, where narrow interests at a national level are argued for.

**Mr Brocklebank rose—**

**Mr Ruskell:** I say to Ted Brocklebank that the Green party has been the only consistent voice for regeneration of our communities and our seas on that committee, which I believe is chaired by a Conservative member of the European Parliament.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Does Mark Ruskell accept that everybody would like to see the kind of regional management that he describes in principle, but that regional advisory councils will be absolutely toothless? They would report to ministers in Brussels and we will be in exactly the same situation 10 years down the road. The hard

facts are that the councils would not want to renegotiate, and that doing so would not be in their interests.

**Mr Ruskell:** What the member says relates to reform of the CFP and supports arguing in Europe—that is, by withdrawing from the CFP, his case could not be put across.

I turn to industrial fisheries. Mr Brocklebank is an MSP for an area that includes the east coast fisheries in the east neuk of Fife. I am disappointed that he has not mentioned industrial fishing, which Margaret Ewing and Rosemary Byrne said was an extremely important issue. One million tonne quotas are issued to industrial fisheries every year. Industrial fisheries Hoover up sand eels so that they can be made into Kitekat, farmed salmon and—ridiculously—fuel for power stations in Denmark. Affirmative action must be taken in that area. I am disappointed that the Tories have not discussed affirmative action in respect of industrial fisheries.

I want to deal with solutions and say something to the minister before his talks in Europe. We need a strong cod recovery plan that focuses on meeting scientific recovery targets. There should not be year-on-year bartering between member states. A multiyear approach is needed. We need multi-annual management planning, which is important and is specified in the Greens' amendment. We also need to push for maximum compensation funding for our communities. We need to regenerate our communities at the same time as we regenerate the seas. That is an issue for taxpayers and chancellors in all EU states, who must dig deep into their pockets to enable the transition of European fisheries to a more sustainable level. There needs to be a slashing of that 1 million tonne quota for industrial fisheries and continued closure of the east coast sand eel fisheries.

I have already mentioned that regional advisory councils are an important step forward. We must also consider regulations to limit the cetacean bycatch and I would like to see the UK taking a lead on supporting such regulations.

I return to the point that I made when I intervened on the minister. I say to the minister that, for several reasons, it is worth resourcing independent observers on boats and in ports. Doing so would give us better scientific information and would enable scientists to learn from the fishermen and fisherwomen themselves, which Margaret Ewing mentioned, I think. It would also ensure enforcement, which we require because our fishing boats may be tied up if we cannot prove that we are not breaching the quotas. Finally, we must focus firmly on regeneration or no-catch zones to allow stocks to recover.

The Greens support the broad thrust of the Executive's motion, but the Green amendment fleshes out key aspects of the argument that must be won in the European Union if we are to deliver sustainability. I urge members to support our amendment.

16:30

**Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** We seem to be taking part in two separate debates. The first is about the real world, where certain fish stocks, particularly cod, are at serious risk of annihilation and where responsible fishermen, scientists, Governments and international organisations have a duty to take steps to protect those important fish species. The other, very different debate from the Opposition parties involves ridiculous constitutional posturing from people who pose as friends of fishing communities and the fishing industry, when in fact they are simply small-time politicians who cannot see past what they perceive to be their short-term interests for the next general election. We have had a lot of that today—Christine Grahame and Richard Lochhead seldom fail to disappoint. I will exclude Margaret Ewing from that.

**Mrs Ewing:** John Home Robertson might want to conduct a surgery in a fishing community in the north-east of Scotland, which would allow him to understand exactly what fishermen are talking about.

**Mr Home Robertson:** As I represent a coastal constituency and hold regular surgeries in the fishing communities there, I know the concerns that have been expressed.

Ted Brocklebank, Jamie McGrigor and others suggested that we should increase the size of the fleet, regardless of the threat that that would pose to stocks, based on a preposterous pledge given by Michael Howard, of all people. I will resist the temptation to dwell on the rather complicated positions that different members of the Liberal Democrat party have expressed, but I strongly agree with the line taken by George Lyon and by the minister, Ross Finnie. I pay tribute to my colleagues Alasdair Morrison and Richard Baker for the thoughtful and effective way in which they represented their fishing communities. They proposed real solutions for a proper future for fishing communities.

We have been reminded that a Conservative Government took Britain into the common fisheries policy. On balance, the Conservatives were right then and they are wrong now. If I were forced to choose between Edward Heath and Michael Howard, I would choose Edward Heath any day. Members might expect me to say that. As for the nationalists, whatever happened to the idea of

independence in Europe? We have now moved on to the idea of independence in cloud-cuckoo-land. Alex Salmond suggests that he can take Britain out of the common fisheries policy by means of a 10-minute bill in the House of Commons, which is a bit like suggesting that we could amend the treaty of Rome by lodging a motion for a members' business debate in this Parliament. Life is not quite like that.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Does the minister—sorry, former minister—agree with the Minister for Europe, his Labour colleague down south? The minister of state said:

"The UK will honour its international treaty obligations until such time as Parliament decides to repeal the Acts that give effect to them."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 30 October 2003; Vol 412, c 360W.]?

Of course, the context was coming out of the CFP.

**Mr Home Robertson:** Get real. When did a 10-minute bill ever become an act of Parliament? I think that there may have been one example since the war. We should have a serious debate on the issues.

Surely even Richard Lochhead can grasp the fact that the fisheries in the North sea and western waters cannot be managed properly by Scotland alone. Scottish waters form part of major fishing zones where fish species move around. There is more than enough scientific evidence that those fisheries require responsible and effective zonal management and protection. That is what is being called for throughout the Parliament, but that is not what the SNP advocates. Rather like the child who wants to have his cake and eat it, the SNP wants to kill the fish today without any thought for where future generations of fish will come from.

That is an absurd position for any party to take in this Parliament or anywhere else. The SNP's suggestion that the whole thing is down to wicked foreigners, Eurocrats and Westminster ministers is equally absurd. Is it Franz Fischler who is discarding dead fish at sea? Is it Ben Bradshaw who is landing over-quota fish in his constituency in Devon? Is Ross Finnie the Renfrewshire poacher? I do not think so. There is no escaping the fact that the big players in the depletion of fish stocks are our own fishing industry and the fishing industries of other European countries.

Most responsible fishermen, including the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, know that we must have fair and effective international and zonal conservation measures if we are to sustain fish stocks. That means scientifically sustainable TACs, fair quotas and—crucially—effective and credible monitoring and enforcement. I know from my time as a minister that the fishery officers of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency have a very difficult job to do with limited resources. I see

that the Commission has expressed concern about our ability to fulfil those duties. That is important, and we will look to the Executive to ensure that the agency can do its job properly.

Every member of the Parliament understands that the fishing industry is very important. It is important in the north-east and is a key part of the coastal economy all round Scotland. I want to conclude on a positive point. There are encouraging signs of success in the regeneration of certain stocks, so we urge the minister to do everything possible to enable our fishermen to increase their catches of haddock, prawns and pelagic fish in line with scientific advice. I know, from having had the interesting experience of representing Scotland at one December fisheries council, that there are less stressful ways of spending a December night. I urge the Parliament to support Ross Finnie in his efforts to get the best possible deal for the Scottish fishing industry with proper regard to the long-term need to maintain properly sustainable fisheries in the waters round our coast.

16:37

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Debates in the chamber are often described as boring and uninteresting, but that description could not be applied to the debate that has taken place today. There have been some of the most passionate speeches that I have heard in the chamber over the past four years, devoted to the key industry of fisheries.

People are so passionate because the industry has been let down year after year by the European negotiations, with deals being brought back that simply have not reflected the views of the industry or the politicians in Scotland. Therefore, it is right that we should be passionate about it. Members have made speeches that their opponents have described as politically motivated; however, I would describe them as showing the level of passion that exists on the subject rather than attempting to score political points.

**Robin Harper** *rose*—

**Alex Johnstone:** An opportune intervention by Robin Harper.

**Robin Harper:** Does the member not agree that the fact that, over the years, the Commission has regularly granted quotas and TACs that have been 20 to 30 per cent above its own recommendations suggests that the Commission has perhaps responded a little bit too much to the pressure that has been put on it?

**Alex Johnstone:** I continue to argue that part of the reason why we have this problem is that there is inconsistency in the interpretation of the

science, if not inconsistency in the science itself. It is that lack of continuity that has caused the passion to grow.

**Mike Rumbles:** The Tory Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, William Waldegrave, stated:

“the destruction of the common fisheries policy ... is not a plausible thing to offer people. What it is plausible to offer to people is a better CFP”.—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 10 January 1995; Vol 252; c 27-28.]

Is what Tory members are saying in opposition not simply inconsistent and implausible?

**Alex Johnstone:** I hope that if I can make some progress, I will come to the point that will answer Mike Rumbles's question.

I will briefly go through the speeches that have been made. Ross Finnie started by setting out, once again, the laudable aims and objectives that he has set out in similar debates in each of the previous four years. He set the scene by saying that the pelagic sector is enjoying a stable existence. Perhaps we have not said enough about the pelagic sector because, when the figures are analysed, it becomes clear that there is no apparent reason for the reduction in the mackerel TAC that is being imposed this year. There are also serious questions—raised by Richard Lochhead—about the way in which the TACs for herring are being distributed in the North sea. We deserve some explanation from the minister of the reasoning that may lie behind that.

Decommissioning was raised repeatedly by members and also by the minister. That issue must be reflected in the allocation of TACs and in the consequential allocation of quotas and days at sea for Scottish boats. As we have said time and again, we cannot be the ones who bear the brunt of the struggle to reduce capacity in the North sea if each year we find that we are no longer credited with the work that has been done in previous years.

The minister also spoke about the opportunities that are afforded to us by the regional advisory councils. However, as has been said by many in the chamber, the councils are toothless organisations. Had they been set up along the lines of the proposals that were contained in the European green paper, they would have been more able to deliver the kind of local management structure that all of us want to see. If that had been done, certain parties might not now be campaigning for the removal of the CFP.

The minister finished by saying that we had to talk today about partnership and about how the CFP promotes partnership. I understand what he means by that but, unless he can return to the chamber at the end of next week and tell us that the partnership has finally delivered something that meets all our expectations, the days for

partnership must now be short indeed.

Richard Lochhead made a detailed and wide-ranging speech about the regional nature of the cod fishery. Different pieces of evidence were cited in the debate. It is clear, however, that, although cod have become rare in the North sea, they are not a rare fish in the north-east Atlantic area. We have to take seriously the fact that local redistribution might be happening within that area. Before we make rash decisions about how we fish in the North sea, we must have scientific knowledge about that possible local redistribution.

Robin Harper raised the experience of the Grand banks off the north-east of the United States of America and Canada, where, in a desperate measure to protect cod stocks, fishing was stopped entirely. Unfortunately, although nephrops and other species thrived in that environment, we did not see a recovery of the cod stock. That is why we will always argue that a constructive, positive and interventionist fishery is the right means to correct the balance of stock in the North sea. To simply cut capacity year on year will result in imbalances. Quite often, those imbalances are reflected in peaks in population. We saw that in the 1999 year class of haddock. Again, in my view, that is evidence of imbalance and not recovery.

The Conservatives want to see the minister succeed. We will vote for the Executive motion. We wish the minister the best of luck and we wish more power to his elbow—we have done that for the past four years. We also need to see policies return from Europe that contain a degree of vision for the future, for our fishing communities and for how the industry will survive in the long term. If he does not deliver that—he failed to do so last year—there is no alternative but to withdraw from the common fisheries policy, take control of the management of our own fisheries and put the measures in place that Europe will not put in place for us.

16:43

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):**

"One of the most difficult things that I have ever had to do was to stand up ... on 19 December last year, six days before Christmas, and face more than 100 skippers and crew members. I had to try and explain the bad, corrupt and downright deceitful deal foisted on them by people in Brussels. It was a vicious deal, and they were its victims. They were staring ruin in the face—that is the human cost of the decisions taken last year. I do not believe for one second that Franz Fischler could have been a party to that deal if he had had to stand where I had to stand on that day. That is why I say that the remoteness of Brussels in respect of fishing cannot be overstated."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 December 2003; Vol 415, c 1024.]

Those were not my words but the words that Mr

Alistair Carmichael used in the debate at Westminster last night. He was speaking about the speech that he made in the Lerwick mission hall, but every member in this chamber who has any connection with the fishing industry could have articulated well the angst, difficulty and pain that they experience when faced with the impossible task of explaining to fishermen why they are treated as they are.

The minister said that there are signs of stock recovery and quoted ICES as stating that fishing for white fish other than cod would be okay if—and only if—there were negligible or zero cod bycatch. The good news is that John Rutherford, the chief executive of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, told the Westminster cross-party fisheries group that haddock can be caught with under 3 per cent bycatch. In the past week, Eric Crockart, of BBC Aberdeen, braved the elements and went out on a trawler and filmed precisely that happening. The nets were cast and drawn: nae cod, plenty of haddock.

**Ross Finnie:** Does Stewart Stevenson agree that, at the pre-debate briefing, John Rutherford told MPs that the process was still very much in the preliminary stages?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I entirely agree that that is the case. However, when Napoleon said to his generals as he marched through Europe that he needed trees to shade his soldiers from the sun and was told that it would take 30 years before the trees were high enough, he said, "There is no time to waste." I say to the minister that there is no time to waste in this regard, either. It is a matter of urgency that we proceed with matters relating to cod.

The industrial fisheries, which are essentially untouched in their operation by the proposals, have a bycatch of cod of 5 per cent—nearly double the bycatch that we are now seeing in the experiments in relation to haddock.

In the debate in Westminster yesterday, Mr Bradshaw was generous enough to say:

"I shall be happy to take with me that extremely useful piece of information from the all-party fisheries group".—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 December 2003; Vol 415, c 984.]

He was, of course, referring to that piece of information from John Rutherford that I mentioned earlier. I hope that Mr Bradshaw will have Mr Finnie's full and unequivocal support as he pursues the interests of the haddock fishery in Scotland.

Phil Gallie said that he was worried about the falling price of nephrops and I have to say that his colleague Nanette Milne was somewhat foxed by a timely and useful intervention from the leader of the Green party. The issue is that we are landing

more nephrops and, because the market does not have the capacity to absorb them, prices have fallen. We warned that that sort of thing could happen. The diversion of effort away from certain fisheries has inevitable consequences, of which the falling price of nephrops is one.

Referring to today's debate and previous debates on this matter, Robin Harper said that this kind of politics is what harms our interests. I say to him that the pork-barrel politics that allow Austria and other non-fishing nations to trade their fishing votes against their other interests are why those nations that have a direct interest in fishing have to regain control of fishing.

**Des McNulty:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I do not have time, but I will speak about Des McNulty so that he does not feel left out. He made the quite proper link between the devastation in Clydebank from industrial closures and what can happen in areas that are dependent on fishing. However, he seemed not to have read what ICES had to say about the state of haddock stocks. Its graphs and other information show that there has been a steady rise over a number of years. His suggestion that people should not buy Scottish haddock was quite disgraceful.

Out of courtesy, I shall confirm for Jamie McGrigor that the SNP—along with everyone in the chamber—sends its best wishes to Hugh Allen.

Richard Baker equated withdrawing from the CFP with a North sea free-for-all. On the contrary, it would put the North sea nations on their mettle to negotiate and work together.

We welcome the minister's confirmation that 2001 will be the baseline for future negotiations. He should stick to that, as it is vital to the Scottish interest. We can support the motion, although we believe that it would be improved by adding our amendment.

I want colleagues to beware. The Tories are using their policy as a stalking horse for their broader anti-European agenda, and we should not forget that. *[Interruption.]* All right, minister—a stalking cart-horse. For our part, we oppose the CFP as a means to restore EU credibility and remove fishing as an area of contention and as something that does down the reputation of the EU. I am happy to support our amendment.

16:51

**Ross Finnie:** We have heard what almost amounts to two separate debates this afternoon. One was on the motion, which is about what we are going to do at the very important talks later this

month. The second has been an interesting spat. While two parties negotiate, a new SNP-Conservative anti-Europe coalition has been formed. I was absolutely fascinated to hear Stewart Stevenson talk about the Tories' Trojan horse. He omitted to mention that SNP members were already inside it. I rather fear that the next eight months will be rather tricky for all of us, as extremely difficult negotiations will be conducted between those two parties to see who can be the more Eurosceptic, anti-European and narrow in their views. We look forward to the outcome.

**Rob Gibson:** Will the minister give way?

**Ross Finnie:** Ah, I see a narrow view in front of me.

**Rob Gibson:** Why did the Liberal Democrat member of Parliament for Orkney and Shetland, Alistair Carmichael, join Alex Salmond, the Tories and others in the House of Commons in support of the Fisheries Jurisdiction Bill? Is that a narrow view?

**Ross Finnie:** I think that that is a very singular view, and it certainly does not represent Liberal Democrat policy, nor the policy of the Executive.

At least the Tories have the benefit of being entirely consistent: everyone knows that total withdrawal from the EU is their goal. Presumably, that is why Tory MEPs were seen recently in Estonia, campaigning on the no side of the accession referendum—with conspicuous lack of success. Either SNP members are being disingenuous or they are confused. After 14 years of Euro-friendly rhetoric, they appear to have found a new friend in the Conservative party and its anti-European stance.

Before turning to the substance of the debate, I take exception to the tone that has been set, with all due respect to Christine Grahame. It seems extraordinary. I met Eyemouth fishermen and representatives of the industry last week. Of course they have had a difficult time. However, the people who run the ice plant have a far more positive view about their community. They have taken steps over the past few months to deal with ports to the north and ports to the south, and they now have a positive plan to deal with the future of their plant. Euan Robson, who represents the constituency—he was absent from the chamber earlier because of ministerial business—certainly does not go about talking down his constituency in the way that Christine Grahame consistently seems to think is her need to do.

**Christine Grahame:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Ross Finnie:** As long as it is positive.

**Christine Grahame:** I am always positively trying to help the Liberal Democrats find out which

face they have on for the day. The minister should take solace from the fact that the speeches made by Liberal Democrat members today will be sent to the Anglo-Scottish Fishermen's Association. I will let the minister know what the association says about them. It will not be positive.

**Ross Finnie:** I have met more representatives of fishing organisations in the past three months than I suspect Christine Grahame has, and I have had some very positive engagements with them.

The main substance of the debate was what we would do in December—what issues would face us and how we would tackle them. Interesting, constructive speeches were made by Des McNulty, Iain Smith, Richard Baker, George Lyon, Alasdair Morrison and John Home Robertson. We also heard a consistent line from the Green party, which made it absolutely clear from a green perspective that we cannot duck the question of total conservation. I accept that, in the final analysis, Green members are unhappy about some of the measures that we are proposing, but I was gratified that, having taken the trouble to set out their agenda, they were able in the circumstances to accept the general thrust of the Executive proposition that we are clearly embarked on a path that will lead to sustainability.

There are issues that are causing concern. I repeat that I find it disingenuous for members to say that they will take considerable scientific advice but do little to act on it. That was Ted Brocklebank's position. The Pittenweem phantom—or was it a pledge—did not seem to amount to very much. Ted Brocklebank talked about having the best science, but said that he would ignore it if that suited his political path.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Does the minister accept that, although he was not present at the recent meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a number of members were and heard scientists say that we could not trust the scientific evidence because the necessary models simply do not exist? Although we are very aware of what ICES says and would like to take it at its word, scientists themselves are not doing that.

**Ross Finnie:** I have seen records of the meeting to which Mr Brocklebank refers. If we are to have that kind of debate, it would be better for the member to go to the marine laboratory in Aberdeen to question the probity and integrity of the scientists there. That would be braver than making a similar allegation in the chamber this afternoon.

The key issue is how we balance the scientific evidence and construct a policy that allows us to recognise that there is still a real danger to our cod stock. I repeat: although recent recoveries are to be welcomed, the stock is still outwith its biological

safe limit. We cannot ignore that fact. The Executive has been pursuing the matter with due diligence. I say to Christine Grahame that we are in no way delaying. This is a very complex argument. Richard Lochhead cited a trial that suggests that selective fishing of haddock is possible, but it is not easy to find the ways and means of proving to a reasonable degree of satisfaction that one can fish for haddock alone and not pick up a significant cod bycatch. There is evidence that off different parts of our coastline, and at different depths, the cod bycatch is up to 10 or 15 per cent of the total. Once bycatches reach that level, there is a serious danger that cod stocks will be damaged.

Many people have accepted the argument for decoupling and for removing the one-to-one relationship for which the Commission has previously argued with some vigour. We believe that we are winning that argument and we must prosecute it with even more vigour in the next few days and with the Commission next week.

Alasdair Morrison, George Lyon and Iain Smith have raised the issue of the nephrops fishery with me.

**Robin Harper:** Will the minister give way?

**Ross Finnie:** No—I must make progress.

Although the overall advice from ICES—that there are opportunities for us to increase effort in the nephrops fishery—is quite clear, we must also be clear that that advice is more powerful in areas such as Fladden, where there is a much larger biomass of nephrops stock. It is not easy to prosecute a policy of decoupling in some of the narrower inshore waters. We must be careful about suggesting that ICES is recommending an overall increase in effort in the nephrops fishery, because that is not the case. However, the points that Alasdair Morrison and Iain Smith made about how we should focus our attention on those issues were very pertinent.

In my opening speech, I made it clear without any shadow of a doubt that we must have an effort control regime. That is infinitely preferable as a conservation measure to using TACs and quotas. However, we must be careful that the provisions that replace annex XVII do not become overly bureaucratic and do not have unintended consequences for our fishing communities.

I will conclude with the fishing communities, because they are part of the balanced package. The balanced package is about sustainability for our fisheries, our fishermen and our fishing communities. That is the argument that we are trying to prosecute. We are not picking up selected pieces to try to make an anti-Europe statement. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Mr Fischler is out to get rid of the Scottish fishing

fleet; that is a preposterous statement for which not a shred of evidence can be advanced.

The third side of next week's triangle is the question of having a longer-term plan that would allow us a multiannual settlement, which would allow us to give our fishermen and their communities greater certainty. I hope that members will accept that the proposition that the Executive is putting forward is a balanced package that offers better fishing opportunities for our communities and fishermen and for our having sustainable fish stocks.

## Business Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-720, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a revised business programme, and an amendment to that motion.

It is somewhat unusual for there to be an amendment to a business motion, so I will explain how the procedure will work. The standing orders state that there can be only one speaker for and one speaker against a business motion and any amendment to that motion. Today there will be two speakers; no one else may contribute to the debate. In accordance with rule 8.11.3 of the standing orders, each speaker will be permitted to speak for a maximum of five minutes.

I call Patricia Ferguson to move motion S2M-720.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 17 December 2003

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Ministerial Statement
<i>followed by</i>	Finance Committee Debate on Stage 2 of the 2004-05 Budget Process
<i>followed by</i>	Financial Resolution in respect of Stirling-Alloa-Kinross Railway and Linked Improvements Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Thursday 18 December 2003

9.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Stage 3 of the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill
12 noon	First Minister's Question Time
2.30 pm	Question Time
3.10 pm	Conclusion of Stage 3 of the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Wednesday 7 January 2004

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 1 Debate on the Nature  
Conservation (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 8 January 2004

9.30 am Executive Business  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.30 pm Question Time  
 3.10 pm Executive Business  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions.—  
[Patricia Ferguson.]

17:02

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** In the past couple of weeks, members have been denied the opportunity to hear a ministerial statement on the impact of Blunkett's proposed changes to asylum legislation and to debate the intergovernmental conference and the proposed new European constitution. However, a 30-minute period for a ministerial statement has been built into next week's business programme. It will be interesting to discover whether the Executive is intent on using that time to make a statement of significance to the people of Scotland. I hope that that is the case and if it is, we will be the first to say, "Well done, but about time too."

During the week after the recess, there is time in the morning and afternoon of Thursday 8 January that has not been allocated. The SNP wants to see the Parliament debate the cumulative effect of the many changes that are taking place in the national health service in Scotland, their impact on services and whether the Executive has adopted and put in place an appropriate strategic overview. The changes include the new deal for junior doctors, new consultants' contracts, new general practitioners' contracts, the European working time directive, acute service reviews and a framework for maternity services. All those changes will have an impact on staffing levels and, in particular, on the amount of time that doctors can spend with patients.

There are real fears about potential rationing of services, with health care professionals making decisions on what they can do with the increasingly limited services at their disposal, rather than doing what is best for the patient. Those fears are compounded by concerns over

the impact of additional drugs costs. There are also worries that centralisation, driven by recruitment needs, will lead to black holes in the provision of health services, with patients having to travel further and further to access services, leading inevitably to a postcode lottery of care services.

Equality of access to services was supposed to be a central plank of the Executive's ethos on the health service. That ethos is in severe danger of being undermined because no obvious strategic overview is being undertaken to deal with it.

We had a motionless debate in September on rising to the challenge of improving Scotland's health, but we need a serious national debate, led by the Parliament, on where our health service is going.

In *The Herald* on Monday, the first paragraph said:

"Patients in almost every region of Scotland are facing longer journeys for treatment as new laws on doctors and consultants' working hours shut hospital services."

A Labour MSP said:

"We are creating a crisis all over Scotland."

Duncan McNeil, who is a member of the Health Committee, said:

"We are not dealing with a series of local difficulties here. It is crisis management right across Scotland and we really need to get beyond that."

We agree with him—we need to get beyond that and have a national debate. The space for that debate is available in the week after we come back from recess.

Is the Executive brave enough to initiate a serious national debate and to have its management of Scotland's health service scrutinised? Or will Labour, and its Liberal poodles, continue to hide behind the skirts of the mundane and avoid debating the real issues that affect the people of Scotland? I ask the Parliament to support my amendment to the business motion so that we can begin that national debate in Scotland on the future of our health service.

I move amendment S2M-720.1, to leave out "Executive Business"—under "Thursday 8 January 2004" and after "9.30 am"—and insert:

"Debate on Future of Health Service in Scotland."

17:06

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Patricia Ferguson):** From the Labour Party's perspective—I feel free to speak on behalf of my colleagues in the Liberal Democrats, too—it is a bit rich for the SNP to try to lecture us about our commitment to health. The two Executive parties

are committed to improving health—not only the health of the health service itself, but the health of our people in Scotland. That is why I hope that we will soon pass the first of two NHS bills that have been introduced in this session of the Parliament. In their own way, those two bills will make a difference to the overall performance of the health service and to its capacity to deliver to the people we represent.

Mr Crawford referred to one debate on the NHS that the Executive had initiated since May. In fact, we have had four Executive debates on health since May. I took the opportunity to find out how many debates the SNP has had on health since May. Members will be surprised to learn that, of the four debates that the SNP has had since May, not one has been on the health service. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Patricia Ferguson:** It gets worse. Of those four debates, not one was even about things that the Executive has responsibility for. Every one of those debates was on issues that are reserved to Westminster. For the SNP to say that we are not representing the people of Scotland, and that we are not discussing the issues that matter to the people of Scotland, is really a bit of a cheek.

Like many members in the chamber this afternoon, I was interested to see the emerging coalition of the Conservatives and the SNP. Perhaps the SNP can take a leaf out of the Tories' book. In their time tomorrow, the Tories have scheduled a debate on issues that matter in Scotland. They have scheduled a debate on issues concerning health and public services. That is what an Opposition should do. Perhaps the SNP needs to learn that. However, I urge the Conservatives not to think that my enthusiasm for their debates is prevalent.

It is important to recognise—and I think that Parliament recognises—the right of each party in the chamber to determine its own business, even when we think that that choice of business is misguided. We would not attempt to interfere in the business programme of the SNP, the Conservatives or any other party. If a party wishes to discuss reserved matters in its own time, that is up to that party.

I do not think that lodging an amendment without giving notice—as has been done this afternoon—is the way in which a serious Opposition should conduct itself. The SNP has never done that in the past, and I wonder what has changed.

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I might be mistaken, but I do not seem to have a copy of the amendment on which we will be asked to vote.

**The Presiding Officer:** It was announced from the chair earlier this afternoon that the amendment was available in the Scottish Parliament information centre. I do not think that there is much that I can do about it at this point, I am afraid.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Given the precedent that has been set by the SNP today, would it be in order for me to lodge an amendment to amend the Opposition's choice of debate on its days? If it is in order to lodge such amendments, does that not contravene the consultative steering group principles, which allocate time across the parties and allow the Opposition to decide for itself what it wants to debate?

**The Presiding Officer:** It is a matter for the Parliamentary Bureau to propose a business programme to the Parliament. Any member can oppose a business motion.

The question is, that amendment S2M-720.1, in the name of Bruce Crawford, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)

Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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 (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (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)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 30, Against 81, Abstentions 8.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that motion S2M-720, 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)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)

Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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 (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (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)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)

Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

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, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

*followed by*

Parliamentary Bureau Motions.

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 90, Against 25, Abstentions 4.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 17 December 2003

2.30 pm                      Time for Reflection  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by*                Ministerial Statement  
*followed by*                Finance Committee Debate on Stage 2 of the 2004-05 Budget Process  
*followed by*                Financial Resolution in respect of Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill  
*followed by*                Business Motion  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
5.00 pm                      Decision Time  
*followed by*                Members' Business

Thursday 18 December 2003

9.30 am                      Parliamentary Bureau Motion  
*followed by*                Stage 3 of the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill  
12 noon                      First Minister's Question Time  
2.30 pm                      Question Time  
3.10 pm                      Conclusion of Stage 3 of the Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
5.00 pm                      Decision Time  
*followed by*                Members' Business

Wednesday 7 January 2004

2.30 pm                      Time for Reflection  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by*                Stage 1 Debate on the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by*                Business Motion  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
5.00 pm                      Decision Time  
*followed by*                Members' Business

Thursday 8 January 2004

9.30 am                      Executive Business  
12 noon                      First Minister's Question Time  
2.30 pm                      Question Time  
3.10 pm                      Executive Business  
*followed by*                Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
5.00 pm                      Decision Time  
*followed by*                Members' Business

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of a parliamentary bureau motion. I ask Patricia Ferguson to move motion S2M-717, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/561) be approved.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Brocklebank wishes to speak; please be brief.

17:13

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** It should come as no surprise to members that the Conservatives believe that banning scallop fishing on health grounds that are spurious, to say the least, has had a hugely damaging effect on the economies of our coastal communities. However, as the various orders have been rolled out, closing yet further scallop fishing areas, we have chosen not to oppose them unilaterally. The SSIs are technical in nature and, in any case, we had hoped that the Executive might eventually be persuaded that end-product testing of scallops was the way ahead rather than blanket bans.

It has become apparent that certain individuals or groups have sought to misconstrue or misrepresent our technical acquiescence on the matter in the chamber. For the record, we remain totally opposed to blanket bans on scallop fishing and, henceforward, we will vote against SSIs on amnesic shellfish poisoning as and when they come before the chamber.

17:14

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** The arguments for such orders have been well rehearsed in the chamber and members are well versed in the issues that surround them. The orders are predicated on consumer safety and public health and the issues are no different today from what they have been in the past.

We are taking a responsible approach, which avoids the laissez-faire attitude that has destroyed proud and successful industries too often in the past. Our beef industry was destroyed by a similar approach to the one that the Conservatives advocate and we are determined to avoid that in this situation. The scallop industry is successful

and enjoys worldwide recognition and the measures are designed to protect it.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

17:15

### The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-715.4, in the name of Richard Lochhead, which seeks to amend motion S2M-715, in the name of Ross Finnie, on fisheries 2004, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### FOR

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)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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 (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)

Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 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)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 29, Against 89, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S2M-715.1, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S2M-715, in the name of Ross Finnie, on fisheries 2004, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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 (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**AGAINST**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)

Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (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)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 43, Against 75, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that amendment S2M-715.3, in the name of Robin Harper, which seeks to amend motion S2M-715, in the name of Ross Finnie, on fisheries 2004, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

**AGAINST**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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 (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (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)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (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)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**ABSTENTIONS**

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, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 13, Against 82, Abstentions 24.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that motion S2M-715, in the name of Ross Finnie, on fisheries 2004, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive in its efforts to negotiate the best possible outcome from the EU Fisheries Council in December 2003 that delivers sustainable fisheries management, sustainable fisheries and sustainable fishing businesses based on total allowable catches and effort controls that are both fair and effective.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S2M-717, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, 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)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 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)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**AGAINST**

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**ABSTENTIONS**

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, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 73, Against 22, Abstentions 24.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) (Scotland) Order 2003 (SSI 2003/561) be approved.

## Laurencekirk Railway Station

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S2M-600, in the name of Mike Rumbles, on Laurencekirk railway station. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the recent announcement made by Aberdeenshire Council and Scotrail on the possibility of reopening Laurencekirk Station; recognises the support in Laurencekirk and the north east as a whole for the station's reopening; notes the Scottish Executive's commitment to encouraging the increased use of rail transport as an alternative to the car, and encourages Aberdeenshire Council, Scotrail and the Scottish Executive to continue to make progress towards the station's reopening.

17:21

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** First, I will say how pleased I am that more than 20 colleagues from all six recognised political parties in Parliament have signalled their support for the reopening of Laurencekirk station by signing my motion. I know that widespread all-party support is important on issues such as this, and I know that it is much appreciated by the people of Laurencekirk.

The campaign to reopen Laurencekirk station has a long history. I am especially pleased, as the constituency MSP for the area, to be highlighting the development of the campaign to the Minister for Transport, Nicol Stephen. I do not need to remind the minister of the case for reopening the station—he will recall a campaign on the matter back in 1991, in which he was at the forefront. As the member of Parliament for Kincardine and Deeside, the minister may have been convinced of the need to reopen the station back then. Indeed, the campaign since has gone from strength to strength, and as Laurencekirk itself has grown in size, so too has the case for reopening the station.

I got involved in calling for the reopening of the station five years ago, back in 1998, when I was first adopted as the prospective candidate for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine in the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. At this point I must draw members' attention to local people such as Norman Banski, who has been involved for many more years than I have. Indeed, Norman Banski came to Edinburgh just a few weeks ago to speak to a petition on the issue in Parliament, which was well received. I was there, as was David Davidson, who is a regional list member for North East Scotland, to support the petition.

The case that is presented to Parliament for reopening the station is strong. Earlier this year, ScotRail sponsored a study by Scott Wilson Ltd, which developed the previous demand estimation work into a Scottish transport appraisal guidance level 1 cost-benefit assessment for reopening the station. That assessment has been submitted to the Executive and considered by Aberdeenshire Council.

Before any funding bid for the project can be made to the Executive, it is necessary to undertake a more detailed assessment of the costs and other implications of the project, and to produce a STAG level 2 assessment. I am delighted to say that, as a result of a meeting on 27 November, Aberdeenshire Council has allocated the bulk of the funding that is necessary to proceed with the work. There is no doubt in my mind that Aberdeenshire Council, the Scottish Executive and ScotRail are all making positive noises. The project fits neatly into the Scottish Executive's policy of getting cars off our roads and getting people to use public transport, it fits into the Scottish Executive's policy of helping to end social exclusion, and it fits into the Scottish Executive's rural development policy.

I will say a little more about helping to end social exclusion. Last Saturday, I was in Laurencekirk and I was given a copy of the video "Friday Night, we're goin' nowhere", which was directed and produced by the youth of Laurencekirk. Its aim is to improve facilities in Laurencekirk and to raise the profile of young people in the area. If members watch the video—I can lend it to them—they will see the old railway station and hear the comments of the youth of Laurencekirk on what reopening the station could do to help them. Sue Briggs, the local community development officer, says on the video that the number 1 clear priority for everyone in Laurencekirk is better transport links. Reopening the station is at the top of the list: it would bring not only economic benefits to the area, although many such benefits would accrue, but social benefits. If members have any doubts about that, they should just watch the video.

I welcome the opportunity that the debate presents to keep the reopening of Laurencekirk station to the fore. I know that when the STAG 2 work is completed and Aberdeenshire Council makes its application to the Executive—as I hope it will—the minister will give the application a fair hearing. That is all that we ask for.

Iain Gabriel, who is Aberdeenshire Council's director of transportation, has said:

"The Scottish Executive has made it clear to us that they will consider a proposal for Laurencekirk Station and, as for any transport project, an agreed robust business case in line with the STAG appraisal criteria will be required before they can make any decision on funding."

That is exactly as it should be. I am confident that a robust business case exists to meet the expectations of this rapidly developing and expanding area of the Mearns. I know too that the need and demand to use the station are terrific, not only for business and commuting, but to meet that rural community's social needs, as I said.

I am proud that we in Scotland are considering expanding our rail network, building new railways, opening new stations—did not the First Minister do just that earlier this week?—and regenerating our communities. I am also proud that after many years of campaigning, we seem to be nearer to the end than we are to the beginning. Laurencekirk and the people of the Mearns have the prospect of good news in 2004.

17:27

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to be here with Mike Rumbles tonight to support the movement towards reopening Laurencekirk station; that campaign has lasted a long time. As Mike Rumbles said, Norman Banski's name appeared on a petition that I had the privilege of presenting to the former Public Petitions Committee convener—it was the third petition on the subject.

Apart from supporting the campaign—as I think everybody in the north-east does—I played a little part in it by holding a public meeting in the Dickson Hall in Laurencekirk, at which the number of people present might have broken fire regulations. That evening, the plea from the community was for all local politicians—MSPs and councillors—to work together for the common good. That plea must have been heeded, because the Executive and committees of Parliament have paid attention to the subject.

Plans, of which I have copies, have existed for a long time. I have seen the video that Mike Rumbles mentioned—I received a copy of it at my surgery a week before he received his copy—and it is excellent. Perhaps Mike Rumbles and I could start a lending library, as we now have two copies.

In general, the pleas from all communities in rural areas are for access to public services, to recreation and to work and for public transport access to visit people in hospitals, because not everybody has a car. Young people, many elderly people and many people who are not well-off—Parliament does not always appreciate the extent of poverty and deprivation in rural Scotland—do not have cars.

It is only right to recognise that reopening the station has been a burning ambition for a hard core of people in the village for a long time. The north-east is not well served by railway networks—people who do not live in one of three or four large

towns do not have trains. Peterhead and Banff no longer have trains, either. We have the opportunity to tack Laurencekirk station on to the bottom of the crossrail project for Aberdeen, which will provide many more train stops throughout the city and will allow people to go to education establishments, for example. Indeed, people will have a chance not just to go to Aberdeen but to go south to Dundee, Montrose and Arbroath. Many business people have said that they would use the service.

After the meeting at which I launched the petition in the name of Norman Banski, I received signatures from people who lived 20 miles away who would use the station. The evidence shows that the station could serve an area with a population of 40,000, which should guarantee support for the project that Mike Rumbles has already described.

As the video that Mike Rumbles mentioned shows, young people have been most vociferous about the lack of public transport. After all, the A90 lies adjacent to Laurencekirk and I have been very disappointed by the Executive's response to improving safety on that road and its dangerous junctions. Opening the station would take many vehicles off that road, which has seen far too many accidents. Although the southbound journey is not quite so bad, the road all the way up to Aberdeen is becoming a bottleneck, but allowing trains to stop in Laurencekirk would provide safe and reliable all-weather transport and would help to alleviate that problem.

The station is there; it simply needs to be renovated. Furthermore, the points and signals are in place. Indeed, probably most of us who have travelled up and down the line have stopped alongside the platform in Laurencekirk station because of some delay or other. Commercial businesses use the railway sidings for goods. We have an ideal chance to build on what already exists. The only fly in the ointment is that if the council does not retain the old mart site for car-parking facilities, a recycling plant might be built on it.

As I said to the minister in a debate last year, we have a car park—now we want a station to go with it.

17:31

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Mike Rumbles on securing a debate on an issue that is relevant not only to his constituency but to the North East Scotland region that David Davidson and I represent.

The station closed in 1967, but I hope that we can get it reopened by 2007. After all, the campaign to do that has been going on for nearly 30 years. I acknowledge colleagues' comments

that we should pay tribute to the small group of people who have pursued the matter. I, too, know Norman Banski—we all seem to be discussing a mutual friend this evening—but many other people have been involved down the years. To some extent, the members in the chamber are Johnnys-come-lately to the campaign.

I know that the minister, who was formerly MP for the area, will be familiar with the Laurencekirk station issue, although I take it that it played no part in his departure from his seat. Perhaps that is why Mike Rumbles was so keen to secure the debate and to get the matter to the top of all of our agendas.

The issue has been raised time and again in the four and a half years of Parliament's existence. Looking back at some parliamentary questions on the matter, I found that one of the first was lodged by my former SNP colleague Irene McGugan in October 1999. It is now December 2003, and we are discussing the same issue. Thankfully, things seem to have moved forward quite a bit and I hope that the matter will soon reach a positive conclusion.

In May 2000, local authorities expressed concern at Railtrack's suggestion on cutting journey times between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, which would have meant fewer stops between those stations. I hope that the debate has now moved on. In any case, Railtrack itself is no longer with us.

That said, we still face a general capacity issue in north-east Scotland: only one single line runs through Aberdeen and there are only seven stations in the area. In fact, only 12 per cent of the population in the whole area live within 1 km of a station. I hope that opening Laurencekirk and other stations in the area will address that problem.

Moreover, a study that was carried out in 2001 calculated that opening the station would generate 25,000 journeys to and from the town. As Mike Rumbles and others have pointed out, those 25,000 journeys currently take place on local roads. Given that the Executive and Parliament are committed to sustainability and sustainable transport, shifting 25,000 trips off the roads on to local trains would do a great deal to help the environment and the local economy in Laurencekirk and the Mearns.

At a council meeting in November, we heard that it would cost £3 million to open Laurencekirk station. That is not a huge amount of money, so I hope that the minister will look kindly upon that plea. A positive case was presented on transportation, economic and environmental grounds. The local council is addressing some more issues to progress the situation further.

I have two final comments to make, the first of which relates to freight. If Laurencekirk station reopens, we should consider opportunities for getting more freight on to rail in the area. Throughout Europe, the amount of freight that goes by rail has declined. We want to buck that trend in Scotland by getting more freight traffic on to rail and off the roads.

Secondly, we need to ensure that trains will stop at Laurencekirk. It is all very well talking about having a station at Laurencekirk, but we will need to try to get some trains to stop there, because there ain't any point in having a station if trains do not stop at it; I hope that the minister will address that in his summing up. As members know, there are on-going issues to do with getting more local routes up and running in the Aberdeen area and between Dundee and Aberdeen. We want a station at Laurencekirk, but we also want trains to stop there and we want them to do that at appropriate times, when people want to use them. That will give them the incentive to get off the roads and on to the train. I invite the minister to address that issue.

17:36

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome the debate. My remarks will be brief, as I have already spoken today and will be speaking again tomorrow; I am sure that members would not want to have too much of a good thing.

I congratulate Mike Rumbles on securing the debate and I endorse fully his motion on reopening the station at Laurencekirk, which was closed in 1967. The motion is right to mention support for the measure; that support exists not only in Laurencekirk, but in the rest of the north-east. I am aware that the proposal is the culmination of on-going discussions between Aberdeenshire Council, the rail industry, the local community, local Labour Party members and, of course, Mike Rumbles.

I welcome the assessments that are taking place and the fact that the Executive and ScotRail are providing investment to assess the costs and benefits of reopening the station. I believe that ScotRail has already carried out a study, which has estimated the costs of a basic two-platform station with a footbridge, passenger shelters and up to 20 parking spaces. That study has apparently already indicated that there is a positive business case for the project on the ground that there will be transportation, economic and environmental benefits. Therefore, I am sure that we can be confident that any new studies would find that a station at Laurencekirk would improve public transport accessibility in the area, as well as support the wider economy.

The argument for improvements in transport infrastructure has been well made throughout the north-east. The western peripheral route was argued for successfully and the Executive is supporting the feasibility study for the Aberdeen crossrail project, the case for which I hope will be made successfully. That would open up more possibilities for a reopened station at Laurencekirk which, as members have mentioned, could be linked to the new crossrail service.

I have heard the minister say that it is sometimes hard to make a best-value case for new rail routes and services, but I hope that the Laurencekirk proposal meets that case. It would fit in well with the Executive's stated aim of extending rail services and would improve access to transport in rural areas. I hope that the Executive will look favourably on the proposal. I reiterate my support for Mike Rumbles's motion.

17:38

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** I join other speakers in welcoming the news that Aberdeenshire Council and ScotRail are investigating the reopening of Laurencekirk station. The degree of support from the people of Laurencekirk is particularly pleasing, not only because such initiatives are dependent on local support, but because it sends the right message to the Executive to encourage the continuing demand for the reopening of other stations.

I have been asked to mention the possibility of the reopening of the station at Altens industrial estate, which would encourage many more people to take the train to work. That is just one of the many stations that need to be reopened if we are to encourage a large enough number of people out of their cars and to give those without cars more choice in how they travel.

If the Executive is really committed to encouraging increased use of rail transport as a realistic alternative to the car, the cost of rail travel has to be renegotiated. How can there be a serious commitment to rail transport when rail fares are set to rise by at least four times the rate of inflation on a service that can be described only as adequate—that is, if one is lucky enough to get a seat on a train out of Edinburgh? How many people are prepared to pay Virgin Cross Country's new rate of £523 for a first-class open return ticket from Penzance to Aberdeen? Not many, especially when the heavily subsidised, heavily polluting airlines offer ridiculously cheap flights. Critics of the rail ticket rises have accused the rail industry of trying to ease congestion on the railways by pricing customers off the trains. What business survives by deterring its customers? That is beyond belief.

There is no real commitment to rail travel—not yet, anyway—and there is no point putting the blame on Westminster and the Strategic Rail Authority, because the Scottish Executive has not shown much commitment, either. In the period from 1999 to 2003, the Executive committed £1 billion to new pollution-producing, traffic-generating trunk road building, with just £235 million going to the now-defunct public transport fund over the same period, and very little of that going on railways. In fact, the only railway opening delivered in the Executive's first term was the 0.9 mile Edinburgh crossrail service. With less than one mile of new services serving new locations opened in four years, the Scottish Executive's aspirations for reopening about 60 miles of railways would take 240 years at the current rate of progress.

The Scottish Executive has pledged in the partnership agreement that spending on transport will reach £1 billion per year, of which 70 per cent will be targeted on public transport. Below that high-level commitment are targets to deliver rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, to reopen the Airdrie to Bathgate railway, to reopen the Kincardine-Alloa-Stirling rail link, to construct the Larkhall to Milngavie line, to redevelop Waverley station, to support construction of the Borders rail line and to continue to support feasibility studies into the Glasgow crossrail project, other public transport initiatives in Glasgow and the Aberdeen crossrail link. All that is in addition to £500 million for the M74 extension and £120 million for the Aberdeen western peripheral route. I must be having one of those senior moments, because I cannot see the figures adding up.

Reopening small stations is going to take some radical rethinking for the rail companies. There will be a degree of conflict between the need to provide local services and the desire of the national rail companies to provide faster services to cut travel times on longer journeys. That issue was raised in *The Press and Journal* just the other week by Great North Eastern Railway. It is an important issue because one of the big selling points of rail travel is the fact that trains can deliver passengers right into cities. Faster rail travel will have an important impact when compared with overall journey times for air travel.

**Mike Rumbles:** There is a subtle difference between what Shiona Baird is talking about and the matter that we are debating this evening. We would not expect the GNER intercity service to stop at a station such as Laurencekirk, but ScotRail, which holds the current franchise, has already indicated that it could stop trains there once an hour.

**Shiona Baird:** I was going to come on to that. That is one of the issues that we need to look at,

because that is where the need for smaller commuter trains will come in. Local services will encourage people out of their cars, but we need imaginative solutions to arrive at that situation. Other countries have done it, but we seem to be struggling. There are many issues that need to be resolved, and quickly, if we are to have any impact on slowing down climate change.

I know that I have been a bit negative, but we welcome any positive steps that encourage greater use of the railways, and we would support real action that results in fast-tracking the reopening of stations such as Laurencekirk. We give no premature pat on the back to the Scottish Executive. A pat on the back will be justified only when we have a network of efficient, punctual, affordable trains that truly serve the needs of the people of Scotland, including the people of Laurencekirk.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call the next speaker, I ought to say that I have been a bit lenient, as Shiona Baird strayed away from the subject of the motion—members should really read the motion.

17:44

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** I, too, welcome the fact that we are having this debate, and I congratulate Mike Rumbles, not only on bringing the debate to the chamber but on participating in all the co-operative work that has gone on over many years, with local people and with the local council, to move the project forward and get the station reopened. There is a history of co-operation in the north-east. An exemplar of such co-operation is the integrated modern transport plan that the north-east Scotland transport partnership has produced, which mentioned the Laurencekirk project as one of the projects that it would like to be advanced.

However, we have wider ambitions for rail services in the north-east. The opening of Laurencekirk station would be welcome, but it is only the first step towards rail improvements with much wider implications. A number of members have mentioned the Aberdeen crossrail project, which is the major project that we want to be carried out in the north-east. It has been envisaged that that project would supply commuter services from Stonehaven to Inverurie through Aberdeen, with a phased development of other stations. If Laurencekirk station is opened, we hope that the project will reach from Laurencekirk to Inverurie and perhaps to Insch as more stations are developed.

Development of the crossrail project depends on the Aberdeen to Inverness line being upgraded. We are looking for at least two passing loops

between Keith and Inverness to enable an hourly service to be developed, which will enable through trains to run and the crossrail service to be developed. Such work has been recognised as of strategic importance for Scotland, as has dealing with the single-track section at Montrose, which is a pinch point in the east coast main line.

I emphasise that the east coast main line runs from London to Aberdeen through Laurencekirk and in doing so bring myself back to the motion. We accept that changes in the parameters of the matters that Network Rail and the Strategic Rail Authority must deal with have knocked back projects, but projects are still on the books and are still seen to have strategic importance, and we still want them to happen.

I am delighted that progress is being made in respect of opening Laurencekirk station and we hope that the crossrail project and the Newtonhill, Altens, Kittybrewster and Kintore projects are brought to pass reasonably speedily. The Laurencekirk project will be a good start.

17:47

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I congratulate Mike Rumbles on securing the debate. The prospect of another railway station opening on the Scottish railway network is welcome.

I first became aware of the benefits of reopening railway stations as long ago as 1970. A station was opened specifically for the duration of the Commonwealth games to allow people to catch a train from Waverley to the games stadium. That made the journey to that mass-attendance event much more comfortable.

Benefits to Laurencekirk will be rather different. David Davidson suggested that the reopening of the station will allow the people of Laurencekirk to leave their town, but I hope that there will be benefits in allowing many other people to discover the delights of that fine town on the east coast. I see that Mr Rumbles is agreeing with me.

I congratulate the body that has been responsible for building most of the new railway track in Scotland over the past 20 years—I refer, of course, to the Scottish Railway Preservation Society and in particular to its link to Bo'ness from the Edinburgh to Glasgow line.

There is a paradox. A few new stations have been opened, which is great. However, the process started with Bathgate station, which proved the validity of the model that came with it. In a short time, the station exceeded by a factor of four the passenger load predictions that had justified its reopening after at least a 20-year campaign. In a small way, I was part of that campaign and welcomed the reopening.

Like Nora Radcliffe, I hope that Laurencekirk station will be just one of many stations that will be reopened. David Davidson referred to Banff. Like Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead no longer have railway stations. I was in Peterhead Academy on Monday when, lo and behold, Liam Geraghty asked me how we can get a railway station for Peterhead. The question illustrates the value that people who have been disconnected by several generations from real rail travel opportunities still see in rail travel; it shows that those people wish to have the benefits of rail travel. I hope that the people of Laurencekirk are on the cusp of experiencing that.

The focus of new stations and railway projects has largely been in the central belt, although there has been one project west of Inverness, the name of which escapes me.

We must focus on the administrative and financial difficulties that arise because various bodies are involved in opening a new station. It took five years to open Edinburgh Park station and, even when it was ready, it took another four or five weeks before the first passengers were dropped off and picked up. We need to work on the way in which the system is organised. I welcome the fact that the Scottish Council for Development and Industry has joined the growing campaign to bring power over railways in Scotland to one point by making the Executive responsible for them. Before anyone says that we could not co-operate with the rest of Great Britain, I should point out that, in Ireland, two countries seem to be able to co-operate across borders. That argument is spurious.

I welcome the fact that Laurencekirk may soon have a railway station; I might even use the station when I travel up and down simply to find out more about the town, which I have passed around 200 times since I was elected, but so far without stopping.

17:51

**The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):** As Mike Rumbles said, I have had a long association with the Laurencekirk station campaign. I congratulate him on the further debate that we are having on Laurencekirk station and on the considerable progress that the campaign has made as a result of his involvement in and commitment to the issue.

I will depart entirely from my speaking notes and speak—as I should on this subject—straight from the heart. I remember on train journeys south from Aberdeen looking out of the window and seeing the stations on the stretch from Carnoustie through Monifieth and Broughty Ferry and into Dundee. We did not always stop at those stations,

but I knew that a commuter service existed. No doubt it is not perfect and could be developed, but it is of huge benefit to the city of Dundee and the neighbouring communities. I wondered why we had such a long gap between Stonehaven and Montrose. We now have an opportunity to provide a service for around 40,000 people. The issue is not only about Laurencekirk, which is a thriving and developing community, but about the many communities around Laurencekirk that would benefit from having access to a station.

The issue is not only about people going to work in Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Montrose, Arbroath or Dundee, but about encouraging new businesses and economic development in Laurencekirk. If one walks along the High Street there, one sees real opportunities to kick-start the community and to establish new businesses to get the economy moving. As Mike Rumbles said, there is also a need to try to help young people to access training and jobs and to provide recreational and other social opportunities.

The project's time has come. I am determined to do all that I can as the Minister for Transport to help to make it happen, but it will happen only if there is a partnership. That has been the approach that has been taken so far to the Aberdeen crossrail project, to which I am committed. I would like to see the new stations that Nora Radcliffe mentioned at Newtonhill and Altens in my constituency and at Kittybrewster and Kintore. Any new project of this kind is valuable. The project is not the highest-value project and does not compare to £0.5 billion projects, but it would be wrong if I focused only on big, prestige, high-capital-value projects. We must keep other projects going.

The time scale is tight, and it is not always easy—particularly when there are large projects—to schedule in the small to medium-sized projects; however, I am determined to do that. We will do that only if we move the projects along, and that is what we are trying to do with Laurencekirk station. We are trying to create a sense of momentum and progress, and we are trying to keep the project on track. We all believe that, within our political lifetimes and perhaps within the lifetime of this Parliament, we can make the Laurencekirk station reopening project a reality.

We are doing that with other projects—Edinburgh Park station was mentioned. I would have liked Edinburgh Park station to have been created sooner. It is also one of the great frustrations, in relation to rail projects, that the Larkhall to Milngavie project—which we have announced, and on which work will start in February—has had planning permission for 10 years, which runs out in March 2003. What does that say about our ability to deliver such projects?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The deadline is March 2004.

**Nicol Stephen:** Sorry, March 2004. I thank Stewart Stevenson for that correction. We are going to beat that deadline, but it has been a frustrating 10 years for those who have been involved with the project.

I am determined to make other projects happen. Tomorrow, we will discuss the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line. We are determined to create several new railway lines—the airport links in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the Borders rail link, the Airdrie to Bathgate line and others.

**Mr Davidson:** I am sorry to bring the minister's attention back to Laurencekirk—it is interesting to hear of the other projects—but he will be aware that Aberdeenshire Council is running a fair share campaign, seeking to get a fairer local government settlement that is comparable to those for other councils. That would have a huge influence on the council's ability to fund the project in Laurencekirk as a partner. Does the minister have any views on that?

**Nicol Stephen:** Absolutely. That brings me back to the issue. I have little time left, and in my closing remarks I shall focus on where we are with the Laurencekirk situation. I have been fighting all my political life for a fair share for the north-east in terms of the politics of Scotland. During my early days in politics, it was frustrating to see most of the campaigns that have been touched on this evening—indeed, most of the campaigns that David Davidson has spoken about—being knocked back predominantly by a Conservative Government. It is great to see some of those projects now beginning and it is great that David Davidson is supporting them. I do not belittle that support in any way, shape or form.

We are starting to make things happen. Meetings on the Laurencekirk project will take place with officials from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department soon to discuss not only the Laurencekirk station proposal, but the modern public transport system that the north-east Scotland transport partnership is supporting in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and the whole of the north-east. We need to go through a process in relation to the Laurencekirk station proposal. We have had the preliminary study, in which ScotRail was involved, and that has allowed us to make an excellent start. We now need Aberdeenshire Council to act. It is appropriate that the local council is involved in deciding priorities in relation to these smaller-scale but nevertheless vital transport projects, and Aberdeenshire Council has agreed to take the project forward to the next stage. I have had discussions not only with Mike Rumbles but with Aberdeenshire Council about how we can move things along.

**Richard Lochhead:** Will the minister give way?

*Meeting closed at 17:58.*

**Nicol Stephen:** I am almost out of time, but I will give way briefly.

**Richard Lochhead:** I thank the minister for giving way. Will he comment on the timetable for getting Laurencekirk station reopened? Mike Rumbles mentioned 2004. Is that estimate accurate?

**Nicol Stephen:** I was mentioning the process. The proposal currently lies with the council to develop the STAG 2 appraisal and to approach the Scottish Executive for support if it wishes. I understand that that will happen, and I give my support to that. We need to consider all the economic, social, safety and environmental benefits that I believe the project will bring. I am committed to doing that as quickly as possible, and I would like to deliver the project soon. Debates such as this help to achieve that, and that is why I am pleased to have been involved in the debate this evening.

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