

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 26 February 2004

Session 2

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## CONTENTS

Thursday 26 February 2004

### Debates

Col.

<b>YOUNG PEOPLE</b> .....	6009
<i>Motion moved—[Peter Peacock].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Nicola Sturgeon].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton].</i>	
The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock) .....	6009
Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP) .....	6017
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con) .....	6021
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....	6024
Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green) .....	6027
Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab) .....	6029
Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP) .....	6031
Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP) .....	6033
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab) .....	6035
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	6037
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD) .....	6039
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab) .....	6041
Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP) .....	6043
Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab) .....	6046
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	6048
Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab) .....	6050
Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD) .....	6052
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	6055
Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP) .....	6057
The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran) .....	6059
<b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....	6064
<b>QUESTION TIME</b> .....	6076
<b>NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (WORK FORCE)</b> .....	6093
<i>Motion moved—[Malcolm Chisholm].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Nicola Sturgeon].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Mr David Davidson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Carolyn Leckie].</i>	
The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm) .....	6093
Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP) .....	6098
Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	6100
Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP) .....	6103
Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) .....	6106
Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab) .....	6108
Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP) .....	6110
Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) .....	6112
Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind) .....	6113
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	6114
Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab) .....	6117
Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP) .....	6118
Carolyn Leckie .....	6120
Mike Rumbles .....	6122
Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	6124
Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP) .....	6126
The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe) .....	6128
<b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION</b> .....	6133
<i>Motion moved—[Tavish Scott]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	6134
<b>CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY</b> .....	6149
<i>Motion debated—[Johann Lamont].</i>	

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab) .....	6149
Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP) .....	6152
Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab) .....	6153
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....	6154
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	6156
Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green) .....	6157
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab) .....	6158
John Scott (Ayr) (Con).....	6160
Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab).....	6161
The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald) .....	6163

## **Oral Answers**

**Col.**

<b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....	6064
Affordable Housing (Rural Areas).....	6069
Cabinet (Meetings) .....	6066
Genetically Modified Crops.....	6073
Prime Minister (Meetings).....	6064
Random Drug Testing (Schools) .....	6071
Young Offenders (Rehabilitation) .....	6067
<b>QUESTION TIME</b>	
<b>SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE</b> .....	6076
Area Tourist Boards Review .....	6085
Asthma.....	6076
Council Tax (Glasgow) .....	6087
European Year of Education Through Sport .....	6082
Galleries and Museums (Fife) .....	6079
Mobile Phone Theft .....	6090
National Health Service (Patient Transfer) .....	6088
National Health Service (Prescription Charges).....	6091
Road Traffic (Targets) .....	6086
Schools (Edinburgh) .....	6078
Schools (Sustainable Energy) .....	6083
Skiing .....	6081
Skin Cancer (Surgery) .....	6086

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## Scottish Parliament

*Thursday 26 February 2004*

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

### Young People

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The first item of business this morning is a debate on motion S2M-943, in the name of Peter Peacock, on a better deal for young people, and on two amendments to that motion.

09:30

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock):** I have made clear in the chamber before how much the Executive values the rich contribution that Scotland's young people make to our national life. We value the selfless contributions that they make as carers and volunteers and as active participants in a range of activities, benefiting their own development and enriching local and national life. We must continue to celebrate the contribution that our young people make.

However, many of our young people encounter barriers to their full participation in our society and face many challenges and risks through the early years of their lives. Today, I want to focus on how we can deliver a better deal for those young people. In particular, I want to set out the plans that we are putting in place to review our children's hearings system.

Before moving on, I will deal with the amendments, so that I can give myself space to talk more fully about matters relating to the children's hearings system. We will not accept the Tory amendment, because we think that what it proposes would do more harm than good to our young people.

The Scottish National Party amendment relates to adult justice, which is not the subject of today's debate. The amendment rather presupposes that ministers did not give full and careful consideration to what we knew would be a controversial decision on the Airborne Initiative. Such decisions are never taken lightly; they are only ever taken after careful and detailed consideration of the issues.

Sometimes, difficult decisions have to be taken and in this case the decision has been taken not to continue funding for that project at the end of the current three-year funding period in March. That has been done partly on value-for-money grounds, but also in order to achieve greater throughput of offenders to other appropriate programmes and to strengthen provision for drug-misusing offenders

in particular. Let me make it clear that the money released because of that decision will not be used as a saving to the taxpayer; it will be available for investment in other programmes and projects that will deliver the range of services that we need to help to cope with a particularly challenging group in our society.

We are already active in finding non-custodial routes to dealing with offenders, both youth and adult. We have made record investment in community disposals and we are investing a further £10 million in diversionary activities in the community through the antisocial behaviour measures. In addition to that, we are investing £3 million to double the restorative justice programmes that we have in place and £13 million in intensive community-based support programmes to support and help people on antisocial behaviour orders and tagging orders to stay out of custody.

In the adult sector, funding will increase by 100 per cent in the five years to 2005-06. We are committed to the national roll-out of drug treatment and testing orders by 2005 and to national coverage of restriction-of-liberty orders. The Executive is extremely active in finding alternatives in the community to custodial sentences. The Airborne Initiative is one project that was doing that, but for the reasons that I have set out we will not be continuing its funding, so we shall not support the SNP amendment.

More than half our young people are going on to further and higher education; youth unemployment in new deal groups has fallen by 63 per cent in the past four years; absolute levels of child poverty have halved in recent years; the number of teenage pregnancies is falling; the number of permanent exclusions from schools are also falling; and exam results and literacy skills are improving. However, there is still much to be done to deliver a better deal for all our young people.

Sometimes young people need extra help to cope with barriers and difficulties in life. Sometimes the behaviour of some young people is challenging and needs managed or is simply unacceptable and needs dealt with. We are determined to ensure that children and young people get the help and protection that they need when they need it. For those who need that support, we are already investing in the provision of a wide range of services. Sure start's support for vulnerable families with young children, the youth justice system, which diverts young people away from crime and tackles the offending behaviours of those who get involved in offending, and support for those with barriers to learning are but a few examples of where we are making a difference for our young people.

However, as I said, we need to do more. That is

why we have established a Cabinet delivery group of senior ministers to look at the delivery of improvements in children's services. That group, which I chair, will identify and tackle issues on which, across the Executive, we need to work together more effectively. We need to link our work to that of the many agencies that are our partners in service delivery in the community.

First, the Cabinet group is in the process of refreshing our vision for children and young people. Secondly, we are working to make our delivery systems more effective, by exploring how we can simplify and make more transparent our systems for funding, planning and decision making. Thirdly, we are working to give greater prominence to the central importance of information sharing. There are clear circumstances in which information needs to be shared with other professionals to ensure that the best possible support or interventions are available for individual children, which is particularly crucial when there are anxieties about a child's safety.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** The minister may be aware of the concerns that have been expressed on a number of occasions about the restrictions that the Data Protection Act 1998 could place on professionals seeking to ensure the very protection that he is talking about. Will he consider the impact of data protection legislation on the professionals he has mentioned?

**Peter Peacock:** Absolutely. We are investing, through the modernising government fund, to enable secure sharing of data among service providers while protecting people's rights under the Data Protection Act 1998. We are also developing guidance to issue to all those involved to make it clear when it is entirely appropriate to share information and not breach the terms of data protection legislation. That work is going on as I speak and we hope to issue the guidance very soon to ensure that nobody is caught out by any doubts or misinterpretations of the situation.

The fourth area that the Cabinet group is working on involves consideration of what more needs to be done to ensure that we have a well-trained work force to work with our young people. We must have a work force with the skills and support that it needs to deliver the range of services that our children require. We have taken several steps to start that process. For example, we have established the Scottish Social Services Council, which has set a minimum qualifications level for people working in child care. We are investing heavily in the recruitment and training of new social workers and, in the past two weeks, Euan Robson has announced a further continuation of our fast-track recruitment of social workers, which is bearing good results and will

continue to do so in years to come.

The fifth area that we are developing is quality assurance and independent inspection of services. We lead the world in the self-evaluation and inspection systems used in our schools, but we do not routinely inspect the quality of front-line social work services or children's services that are provided between agencies. In the past, we have not had clear standards and expectations of what should be provided, so we are developing plans for inspection and quality assurance across children's services. We have focused our initial attention on setting a framework for standards for child protection and I plan to announce details of progress on those matters next month. That is all part of our effort to provide a better deal for young people.

We had a full debate on child protection at the end of last year and I do not intend to repeat the account of all the work that is being undertaken to drive forward essential reform of our child protection services. However, I will say more about one area to which we attach the highest importance: our unique children's hearings system, which makes a significant contribution to our work and that of all other agencies working with children and young people.

The children's hearings system seeks to give all children referred to it a better deal. It seeks to tackle the problems of those who are most vulnerable, those who are offending and those who face hardship, abuse and other risks that blunt their lives. Where the system works—and it frequently does—it offers support and brings about positive change for children. Panel members report no greater satisfaction in their work than seeing a child who has come through the system turn his or her life around as a consequence.

The balance of cases coming to reporters in the hearings system has changed significantly over the years. Many more children are being referred today on care and welfare grounds. Many of those cases are extremely complex, with an increasing proportion of the children affected by drug abuse in their families.

Too many children are not getting the service that they require. We know that in 22 per cent of a number of cases that we examined no social worker was attached to the family for a period of several months after a disposal from the panel. Quite simply, that is not good enough. Action is already under way across a range of issues to make improvements. I have already touched on the fast-track recruitment and training of social workers. Fast-track hearings are also being piloted; they are showing the impact that co-ordinated and targeted resources can have on the more persistent young offenders. Youth justice teams have been established in each local

authority area and specific programmes to address offending behaviour are being put in place. National standards for youth justice will be in place by 2006, but we recognise that we must examine all our approaches and do so without any fear.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** Although between 2001-02 and 2002-03 the number of children who were referred for offences seems to have dropped, there was an increase of more than 10 per cent in the number of those who have 10-plus offences—the most serious cases with which the children's panels deal. In view of the substantial rise in that group, how does the minister intend to address the needs of those who are particularly at risk of repeat offending?

**Peter Peacock:** There are many things that we seek to do for those young people, through the work of Margaret Curran and others. One reason why we introduced the fast-track pilots in the children's hearings system was to try to ensure that we made a bigger impact on that group. The early evidence shows that fast-track hearings can indeed have an impact on reducing offending among those young people. We want to examine seriously the outcomes of the pilots and see how we roll forward that work over the coming period of time.

Our hearings system was established more than 30 years ago, following work completed by Lord Kilbrandon 40 years ago this year. Since Lord Kilbrandon reported, much has changed. The challenges that we face and the patterns of behaviour in the community have changed, yet the system has never been reviewed. We need to look constructively and critically at how the system is operating and where and how it might be made more effective.

The partnership agreement states that we will hold on to the "fundamental principles" of the system and this we will do. However, we should also take the opportunity at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to look at how those principles fit with today's society. We will formally launch the review of the hearings system next month and we are keen for all sectors of Scottish society to participate. Clearly, people in the system will have many ideas to contribute, which we will welcome, but we also need to ensure that the wider public understand the system and endorse its approach to improving the lives of children and communities. We will therefore be starting the review process with a wide and open discussion across Scotland.

The review will concern the main principles of the system and what we need it to do for Scotland in the future. Ministers will hold consultation events the length and breadth of Scotland in early summer to facilitate public discussion. We will

highlight the issues facing the hearings system and provide opportunities for the system's principles and what the review seeks to achieve to be explained. We will help others to arrange local events across the country to engage as many people as possible in the process.

The purpose of that first phase is to seek reaffirmation of the core principles of our system and to invite suggested changes and improvements. The process will help to inform the kind of hearings system that we need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the autumn of this year, we will conduct a more detailed consultation on the specific changes and improvements that we need to deliver that system. We will then develop plans to implement those changes as quickly as possible. If necessary, we will seek to legislate later in this session of Parliament.

Looked-after children are a group in our community who require particular attention and support. There are more than 11,000 looked-after children in Scotland. We know who the children in the group are—we know each and every one of them. We know that they are disproportionately likely to do less well at school. We know that they are more likely to become homeless, to be unemployed, to get into drug and alcohol misuse and to spend time in prison.

That is why we have invested £10 million to begin the process of improving the educational attainment of looked-after children as a basis for enhancing their life prospects. Every school will have a designated teacher to champion the needs of the looked-after children in that school. It is crucial that we have ambition for that group of young people. We have set a target that each young person leaving care should have at least a standard grade in English and mathematics. Currently, only around a quarter of our care leavers achieve that, which is simply not good enough.

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Will the minister give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)** *rose—*

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

**Peter Peacock:** As I have already given way to Fiona Hyslop, I will give way to Lord James.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Fiona Hyslop.

**Peter Peacock:** No, I am giving way to Lord James.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am happy to allow Fiona Hyslop to intervene.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Thank you very much, gentlemen.

I appreciate what the Executive is saying about looked-after children. However, we seem to be setting lower standards for looked-after children than for other children. We need to look beyond that. The other serious concern about looked-after children is the lack of co-ordination between different departments and services. Looked-after children are being failed. We have promises from the minister, but we need firm action instead of visions and expectations.

**Peter Peacock:** I take the rare opportunity to agree with Fiona Hyslop, at least on her first point. We are saying clearly that we are not doing enough for those young people. That is why we are investing in resources, particularly in learning resources, to try to ensure that we give those young people the foundations that will help them to thrive throughout the rest of their lives. There is much more that we need to do, which is why we are also investing in packages for care leavers to help them in the transition from care to adult life. As I said, we are committed to doing much more and I am grateful for the Parliament's support for all our efforts in that regard.

I see that the Presiding Officer is looking at me menacingly.

**The Presiding Officer:** Not in the least this morning. We have time.

**Peter Peacock:** In that case, I am happy to give way to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Before the minister finishes his speech, will he state his position on the mandatory drug testing of young children in schools?

**Peter Peacock:** We take extremely seriously the issues of drug use and drug supply in schools. We want those issues to be tackled in the most effective ways possible. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton might not be aware of this, but earlier this week I wrote to the head teachers' associations in Scotland asking them whether they thought that there were any powers that they did not have. If, in due course, they respond by telling me that they would like further powers at school level, that is something that we will consider. I want to pursue the matter in a considered way, having consulted the head teachers—the key people who have to make decisions about those matters.

I think that Keith Raffan also sought to intervene. I will take his intervention now.

**Mr Raffan:** I wanted to ask about truancy. There are some excellent anti-truancy projects, not least the one in Alloa, of which the minister might be aware. Will he say how those projects could be broadened out? Truancy is a particular problem in relation to looked-after children. Intervention in the

school environment is needed in order to prevent a continuation of the cycle of reoffending.

**Peter Peacock:** I take this opportunity to agree with Keith Raffan. One thing that we are seeking to address much more effectively in schools is the whole business of truancy. We are doing so partly through the development of a better school curriculum that has more flexibility, choice and vocational options so that young people can increasingly choose a path in the education system that suits their attributes and aspirations while ensuring that they have the core skills that will carry them throughout their lives.

Beyond that, a range of measures is being put in place in schools across Scotland to deal with young people who are beginning to show signs of truancy. Home-school link workers are one example, as is the project to which Keith Raffan referred. In Scottish education, we have not traditionally been good at taking examples of good practice where they occur—indeed, excellent practice is to be found in many, many schools—and rolling it out effectively. That is one of the roles that we seek to ensure that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education undertakes. We want to do much more to ensure that good practice is shared generally throughout the education system so that the good lessons that have been learned in tackling truancy, for example, can be applied more widely.

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** The minister might be aware that there are some difficulties in accessing child psychological services. That has become an on-going problem for a number of young people in a number of areas. Will he undertake to consult all his ministerial colleagues and discuss with them how improvements and connections can be made?

**Peter Peacock:** Karen Gillon raises an important point. As part of the overall system, child psychologists are crucial at certain periods. A lack of child psychologists in the system can lead to delays in making appropriate interventions to support young people. We are clear about that. We are not just looking at the issue, but taking action to improve the supply of child psychologists in the system—we are determined that we will do that and optimistic that we can achieve it. It takes some time to train the necessary staff and to give them the professional skills that they require in our schools, but we are well on the way to addressing the problem.

We are clear about our commitment to get a better deal for our young people in Scotland. We have put in place sound policies and an ambitious programme of modernisation to tackle areas in which we think further progress is required. We will not flinch from the difficult decisions that are required to modernise and better support and



protect our young people. We have great young people in Scotland. Every day we are making progress to secure the better deal for our young people to which I hope all members aspire. I commend the motion to the Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament values the very positive contribution made by Scotland's young people and is committed to ensuring that they have the opportunities and support that they need to develop their skills and talents and participate fully and actively; supports the Scottish Executive's commitment to working with young people, their families and communities, with the newly appointed Children's Commissioner, and with those responsible for service delivery, to provide high quality universal services and targeted support for the most vulnerable; welcomes the Executive's commitment to helping looked after children make the transition to successful, independent adulthood, to ensuring that all children are safe from abuse and neglect, to addressing offending behaviour and to reviewing the Children's Hearings system to develop and improve the current service; recognises that young people are often predominantly the victims of anti-social behaviour, and welcomes the Executive's commitment to tackling it more effectively.

09:49

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** The debate is welcome. It is important that we focus on the positive contribution that the overwhelming majority of young people make to society as well as on the trouble that is caused by a minority. I commend the Executive for so doing.

It is worth reminding ourselves that for every young offender in Scotland there are many more young people who are vulnerable and neglected, who need support and not chastisement and whose needs we as a society continue to fail to meet as effectively as we should. If we supported vulnerable children better, I think that we would do much more to tackle youth crime than we will ever achieve through punitive measures alone.

To improve support for young people, we have to face up to the challenges that confront us, which include the fact that vacancies for qualified social workers and other posts in children's services are high and continue to rise. Local authorities estimate that there is a £150 million shortfall in funding for children's services. Although the number of looked-after children in Scotland represents around 1 per cent of all young people under the age of 18, there remains a shortage of foster places for youngsters who desperately need the stability and normality of family life. My colleagues will address many of those points during the debate.

The focus of the amendment in my name is deliberately narrow. The amendment calls on the Executive to "reconsider"—I stress that word—

"its decision to withdraw funding from the Airborne Initiative."

I am pleased to say that that point of view has attracted considerable cross-party support. Today is the first opportunity to debate in Parliament what is an extremely contentious and controversial decision. It is appropriate that that opportunity has been taken.

Any comprehensive strategy on young people must seek to tackle the offending behaviour of a minority of young people. That means that it must focus on preventing young people from becoming offenders in the first place. However, it must do more than that. It must also embrace the notion that a young person, once he or she starts to offend, is not necessarily a lost cause. We must always look for the best and most effective ways of addressing and challenging the offending behaviour of young people; we must find the best ways of making young people face up to their behaviour and try to change it.

It is a fact of life, however sad, that for some young offenders prison is the best and the only option. However, for many offenders prison is not the best or the most effective option, yet—proportionately—in Scotland we send more people to prison than almost any other country in Europe. The latest figures, which were published earlier this week, show that the prison population is continuing to rise—it is up another 2 per cent on the last figures. Nearly 1,000 young offenders are in Scottish prisons right now.

Sending more and more people to prison might not be a problem if it were having a positive effect on levels of crime and reoffending, but it is not. Scotland has one of the worst reoffending rates in Europe and, as we know, violent crime is increasing. The truth is that for many offenders—particularly young offenders—prison just does not work. Short-term prison sentences especially do not work. Offenders go in, they come out, they reoffend and they go straight back in through a revolving door.

That is why there must be—I know that the Executive agrees and that it is committed to this—a range of alternatives to custody for courts to consider. It is important to stress that alternatives to custody are not soft options. In fact, many alternatives to custody are much more demanding and challenging than short-term prison sentences, which do little in the way of rehabilitation.

**Mr Raffan:** I agree with Nicola Sturgeon on the cycle of reoffending. Does she, too, think it interesting that the former chief inspectors of prisons for England and Wales, Stephen Tumim and Sir David Ramsbotham—particularly in his latest and quite remarkable book—and Clive Fairweather up here and Derek Lewis down there

have all talked about exactly what we are talking about, which is sending fewer people to prison and breaking the cycle of reoffending by getting kids and young adults into training and education in prison?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Keith Raffan's point is extremely valuable and important. Later, I will talk about what I consider to be the formidable expert opinion in Scotland in support of that approach to tackling reoffending—an approach that is seen in initiatives such as Airborne.

The problem with prison—especially short-term prison sentences—is that, because it does not challenge the offending behaviour of prisoners, it is not as successful as many alternatives to custody in reducing reoffending. Any penal policy worth its salt must be effective as well as tough and any strategy for young people must include a range of measures, because there is no single solution. There must be a range of measures that are designed not just to contain the minority of young people who offend, but to challenge and change their behaviour.

In its public statements, the Executive agrees with that. The motion rightly refers to “addressing offending behaviour” and the Minister for Justice claims to be committed to reducing the prison population and tackling reoffending. Against that backdrop, the decision to withdraw funding from the Airborne Initiative seems perverse.

The Airborne Initiative offers a tough and intensive alternative to custody for some of the most difficult and persistent young offenders in the country. There has been a great deal of comment about the infamous “Chancers” documentary, which some say showed Airborne in a bad light. However, given the type of offender the initiative deals with, it is no surprise that the project has encountered problems and challenges along the way and that it does not succeed in rehabilitating every young person who comes its way. For a programme that deals with high-tariff offenders, particularly in the age group that it deals with, a high drop-out rate goes with the territory.

Nevertheless, the success of Airborne has been impressive and has been improving. People who complete the course are less likely to reoffend than others who are sent to prison or who receive other community-based sentences. A study for the Executive completed in 2000 by researchers at the University of Stirling suggested that the reconviction rates for those who attended Airborne were 21 per cent less than for those who received alternative sentences. It also concluded that Airborne provided

“a valuable addition to the range of non-custodial options available to the courts.”

Okay, that was four years ago and I accept that there is an argument that time has moved on. However, since then, Airborne has been praised by the Scottish Executive. Only a few months ago, Justice Department officials wrote to the outgoing chairman praising him for his good work and the progress that had been made by the initiative. I understand that a report by the social work services inspectorate—although I do not know, because it has not been published—identifies significant progress and improvement in the service that Airborne is providing.

That brings me back to Keith Raffan's point. In addition to the views of the management and staff of Airborne and the graduates of the programme—although I suppose that it could be said that they are bound to stick up for it—there is a significant and formidable body of expert opinion in Scotland that is adamant that the Executive has got it wrong. Twenty-three respected individuals in Scotland, including a former High Court judge, academics, businessmen, the former bishop of Edinburgh and former prison inspectors of both Scotland and England have put their names to a letter supporting the Airborne Initiative and are part of the campaign to persuade the Scottish Executive to change its mind.

In his opening remarks, Peter Peacock said that the decision on Airborne was well considered. Although I accept that the Executive may have more information than is available in the public domain, all we have had from ministers—who, as far as I am aware, have not so much as visited the initiative—is an assertion that the initiative does not provide value for money. Not a scrap of hard evidence has been offered to back that up. The figures cited by Airborne of £116 per week for a place on the programme—albeit when it is full—compared with £574 per week for a prison place have never been challenged by the Scottish Executive.

**Karen Gillon:** I welcome the SNP's support for Airborne. Unfortunately, that support was not evident in the constituency when Airborne was facing a difficult move to Braidwood House. The absence of the SNP and list members was notable. Will Nicola Sturgeon say on how many occasions the Airborne Initiative has been full?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Last year was the second best year for participation in the Airborne Initiative, but the fact that the programme has had problems and has found it difficult to reach full capacity does not render it worthless. As I said, the nature of the programme and the nature of the offenders it deals with almost make it inevitable that problems will exist. However, where there is evidence that something is worth while and is making a contribution to solving a problem—and although Airborne is by no stretch of the imagination making

the only or even the biggest contribution, it is making a worthy contribution—I suggest that the Scottish Executive should turn its mind to addressing how to help it to solve its problems, rather than simply pull the rug from under it.

As the principal funder of the project, the Scottish Executive would be quite within its rights to insist on changes to the operating methods of Airborne, but it has not done so. Instead, it has asserted, with no evidence, that the initiative does not provide value for money. I have just cited the figures of £116 a week when the project is full. Even if the project is only half-full, the costs would still be almost half the cost of a prison place. To my knowledge, the Scottish Executive has never challenged the figures. What people object to is the fact that a decision has been taken that does not appear to be based on hard, solid evidence.

In any event—this is the point on which I will close—there is a danger that week-for-week comparisons miss the point. Someone who is referred to Airborne, or any project remotely like it, is, at the point of referral, heading for a life of crime—a life in and out of prison with all the costs that that will entail over a number of years for the public purse. Even if Airborne is not successful all the time, when it is successful it prevents that from happening. I listened to a chap yesterday who had gone through the Airborne project. He had been in and out of prison, but is now in employment and about to set up his own business. When the project is successful, it turns people who would otherwise spend most of their lives in jail into citizens who make a contribution to society, get jobs and pay taxes. How can that be quantified in pounds and pence?

My amendment asks the Scottish Executive not to make a snap judgment today to reverse the decision, but to reflect on the arguments that are being made in support of Airborne—and on the expertise of those making them—and to think again. The amendment asks for common sense and a listening ear and I hope that members of all parties can unite to support it.

I move amendment S2M-943.1, to insert at end:

“and calls on the Executive, as part of its overall strategy to address the offending behaviour of young people, to reconsider its decision to withdraw funding from the Airborne Initiative.”

10:01

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** My interests are as registered in the register of members' interests. I welcome the debate this morning. Having read the Executive's motion, I see that it touches on many areas that impact on young people.

Although the First Minister has restated continually that education is a key priority and although he talks about youth crime, it is obvious that the Executive is failing to deliver on its promises, such as its manifesto pledges on primary school pupil attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The fact is that young people, parents, teachers and taxpayers are getting a raw deal. Teachers involved with children are getting a raw deal through more bureaucracy and paperwork, and violence against them has soared under Labour, regardless of whether the Minister for Education and Young People blames the statistics. Parents of children are getting a raw deal as they have little input in their child's education and few have genuine choice. Children, parents and taxpayers are getting a raw deal, because there have been record levels of investment with little to show for it apart from increases in violence, truancy and indiscipline. There is now an attack on a member of school staff every 12 minutes of the school day, which is unacceptable.

Most important is the fact that young people feel alienated because attainment remains too low and violence against pupils is too high. Now it appears that the First Minister is warming to the Prime Minister's plan to allow random drug tests. We will be very interested to hear the First Minister's answer to Keith Raffan's question later to see whether it mirrors the reply that the Minister for Education and Young People gave Parliament this morning. It is the latest Labour plan, which can easily damage trust between teachers and pupils if applied inappropriately. Carrying out tests without parents' authorisation could be a questionable policy.

The best way for young people to get a better deal is for the Executive to understand that the current monolithic state structures need real, radical reform. If the Executive is serious about giving young people a better deal in education, it must give parents choice and head teachers more power through the schools passport policy. If the Executive is serious about tackling the problems of crime and disorder, it must deal effectively with young offenders, particularly those who offend persistently. That requires early intervention and the identification of parents who might be struggling to cope and whose children are therefore most at risk of becoming involved in crime.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Lord James Douglas-Hamilton refers in his amendment to the schools passport policy. How much money from scarce public resources would go to the substantial subsidy for private schools?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The answer is none. If Mr Rumbles wants to intervene and contribute, he is welcome to do so, but we expect him to do a bit of homework first; then he can make a constructive contribution.

Let us take one example of where the state structures and central policies threaten common sense: the policy of class sizes of 20 for all secondary 1 and secondary 2 classes in English and maths. Some schools will agree that that is what is required, but other schools might have other priorities. Why not let the school's head teacher and school board decide how best to use the resources? That would give the best deal for every young person in school.

I welcome the Executive telling us that it is committed to the principles in the report "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright". We support many of the report's recommendations, such as recommendation 17, which calls for a further national review of child protection in three years' time to discover what improvements have been made, and what has to be improved upon.

Nevertheless, I am saddened by the facts laid before us. The percentage of looked-after children who attained standard grade English and maths fell this year, with only 36.4 per cent attaining them in 2002-03. That is a damning indictment; the Executive is failing most of those who have the greatest need.

I repeat my party's stance in welcoming the nomination of Kathleen Marshall as the commissioner for children and young people in Scotland. She will raise to a much higher profile children's issues and interests, safeguard the rights of children and give children a stronger voice in Scotland.

It was interesting that YouthLink Scotland's research findings, "Being Young in Scotland in 2003" pointed out an area where we should do more work. The findings state:

"Young people's knowledge of local and national political structures is poor and this appears to reflect on their attitudes towards voting, with fewer than half agreeing that it is important to vote. This suggests that campaigns to tackle voter apathy need to target young people as well as older ones and may need to start with raising knowledge."

That is a message not just for the commissioner but for parliamentarians, teachers and parents.

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

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I must move on to Nicola Sturgeon's amendment. We consider that it is right that we pause and reflect on the Airborne Initiative before any irrevocable decisions are allowed to stand. The announcement appears to have been a knee-jerk reaction, rather than a fully considered decision.

I will leave members with some wise words from Winston Churchill, who once said:

"The empires of the future are the empires of the mind."

Let us give all our young people a start to their future through innovative and high-quality education.

I move amendment S2M-943.2, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"acknowledges that having a strong economy with efficient and effective well-run public services benefits all in society, and specifically calls on the Executive to adopt the schools passport policy, which gives all schools the incentive to achieve and maintain high standards, thereby ensuring a better start in life for Scotland's young people."

10:08

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I must confess that I liked Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's quotation from Winston Churchill; it was a good quotation that summed up the issues in the debate. I welcome the opportunity to open for the Liberal Democrats and to support Peter Peacock's motion. I also welcome the announcement about the review and the way in which it is to be approached. I will return to that in due course.

The Communities Committee is dealing with the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill and the arguments about the bill should be pursued in that context. It cannot be said too often that most young people do not offend and do not bother their neighbours. Young people are our future and it is of huge importance to our country to ensure that they have the opportunities and support that they need to develop their skills and talents.

The Education Committee is considering stage 2 of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill, which is designed to secure a better deal for young people with additional support needs. In recent weeks the committee, and individual members of it, have met inspirational young people and their parents, teachers, friends and supporters.

The opportunity to engage with young people is one of the huge privileges of being convener of the Education Committee. Last week I met the education committee of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the previous weekend I attended an event organised by the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum. As we all know—this has been mentioned in the debate—young people in care face more challenges than do any other group in society. Many of the people whom I met at the event had had a poor start in life and quite a few had been in trouble with the police, but they all had a remarkably optimistic approach and many of them wanted to put their personal experiences to use by becoming youth workers. They were all a tribute to what can be done when the proper

mechanisms are in place to support young people who have had that starting point in life.

Behind today's motion is an emphasis on helping children who are at risk. I welcome the commitment, which echoes the partnership agreement, to renew, develop and improve the children's hearings system. The children's hearings system, which treats children and young people as being in need of care and protection regardless of the reason for their appearance before the panel, is one of Scotland's great jewels. I should point out that the system was recently applauded by the Scottish committee of the Council on Tribunals as a model of what a tribunal system should be. The panels recognise that the need of 15 or 16 is pretty likely to have been the child who suffered parental neglect or abuse at the age of six. Concentration on that matter should make those who have knee-jerk reactions to youth crime pause for thought.

It would be wrong to pre-empt the review but it is clear that the main problems for the hearings system in recent years have been to do with resources, in relation to the social workers who are available to support it, and the lack of alternative disposals that offer young people routes out of the restrictions of their home life and the poor start that they have had, meaning that they have not had the opportunities that others take for granted to build confidence and develop talent. The minister said that 22 per cent of people who go before the panels do not have social work reports. Unfortunately, the situation is patchy across Scotland and the problem is focused on areas such as Glasgow, where there is a significant shortage of social workers. I believe that people are still being brought back to the panels after three months to determine whether anyone has dealt with them in the meantime.

Against that background, the decision by the Justice Department to close down the Airborne Initiative is regrettable. I hope that the minister will be prepared to consider that matter further, although I am aware that it is not his departmental responsibility. Such issues are never black and white, but the voluntary sector is cursed by structural funding problems and is under constant pressure to reinvent the wheel. In the Social Justice Committee, in the first session of the Parliament, we talked with Margaret Curran about the revolving door syndrome in relation to drug addicts, homeless people and repeat criminals, but it also applies to voluntary sector projects. The unique experience that they have built up over years of work is lost due to their closure and the dispersal—if I can use that word in this context—of staff.

As Nicola Sturgeon said in her extremely moderate speech, the Airborne Initiative deals with

a hugely difficult clientele—young people who have failed repeatedly and whom the system has failed—and is clearly more effective in terms of costs and results than is sending people to jail.

The issue must be considered in a wider context; it is not simply a matter of one project. The difficulty is that we must compare apples with apples. We need to be clear about what the research is, what the background is, what works and what does not work. I am well aware that the Executive has supported an increasing number of projects to try to deal with this area but, nevertheless, the Airborne Initiative is an example of why we should not commit ourselves to one particular approach. We need a basket of arrangements that will help various sorts of people in different contexts.

The minister is well aware that a wide range of eminent and knowledgeable people have expressed concern about the Airborne Initiative's loss of funding. In that regard, I suggest to him and to the Minister for Justice that it would be worth while to remit the issue to a suitable committee of the Parliament that could examine the project's record and the minister's criticisms of it, report on the issues—perhaps in the wider context that I have spoken about—and address the issue of whether an Airborne mark 2 might be created with the aim of improving the service while keeping together the expertise of the staff. That might require continued funding for a period, but I think that it would be an honourable way forward that would suit the mentality of the Scottish Parliament.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** That is an excellent suggestion and, like Robert Brown, I hope that the ministers will take it seriously.

**Robert Brown:** I thank Nicola Sturgeon for that intervention.

I would like to deal with the general principles of the debate. It is a bit of a pity that the debate has focused on the Airborne Initiative because the motion touches on wider issues. The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament have much to be proud of in terms of their record on children and young people. We have taken action to help children in care and have supported with funding and consideration educational services for those with additional support needs. We might want to do a bit more in relation to our support for youth organisations but we are awaiting the youth strategy, which will allow us to examine that aspect in context. Like Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, we have welcomed the recent appointment of Kathleen Marshall as Scotland's first children's commissioner, following the work in the first session of the Parliament of Karen Gillon's Education, Culture and Sport Committee. All those developments are positive signs and are

attributable to the existence of the Scottish Parliament and its ability to concentrate on such matters.

There is a considerable future ahead of our young people. It is crucial that we put in place resources and support mechanisms that will give all our children the opportunities that they might not have had in the past to enable them to develop their full potential to become citizens of the country in the most advantageous way and to develop their careers and perspectives as well as they can.

10:16

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** I would have loved simply to address the Executive's motion in the main part of my speech, as there are many elements in it that I support, and many issues that it raises that we need to address, but I am fuelled by a sense of urgency in relation to the Airborne Initiative, so I will be dedicating as much time as I can to that subject.

First, however, I would like to address a couple of the points that have been made so far. The minister has mentioned that a review of the children's hearings system will be undertaken, but I am worried by the fact that, apart from a brief mention in Robert Brown's speech, no one has so far dealt with the issue of social work. The problems that the children's panel system has faced over the past 20 or 30 years—since the Kilbrandon report, in fact—have been to do with a lack of social work provision. That is the problem that needs to be addressed. I think that merely setting up a committee to undertake yet another review of the children's hearings system is absolutely secondary to addressing the real problem. The minister referred to the fact that there is now a Cabinet delivery group, so I assume that the Education Department is working hand in hand with the Justice Department and social work departments on this matter, but I would like to hear from the minister exactly what the delivery group is saying about social work provision in relation to our attempts to help young people. I do not want to hear simply about a review and extra supports for the system—

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** I have some sympathy with what Robin Harper is saying about social work provision. However, does he accept that, in relation to the children's hearings system, local authority provision is equally important? One of the difficulties that we have had with the children's hearings system has been to do with the fact that disposals become the responsibility of the social work department rather than the local authority as a whole.

**Robin Harper:** I absolutely accept that point and I would like the minister also to address that matter when he sums up.

All too often, people address structural matters rather than what is in front of them. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, for example, talked about examining the structures of education. My view is that our education and support system needs to take account of the needs of young people in relation to the experiences that they have at school. Why is it that many people play truant? What is it in our education system that causes young people not to turn up for what, for many of the poorest ones, should be their opportunity to improve their lives?

**Robert Brown:** Will the member take an intervention on the issue of structures?

**Robin Harper:** I am sorry, but I am in the middle of making a fairly important point, which links in with what I want to say about the Airborne Initiative.

The curriculum in our schools is placing ever greater restrictions on the ability of head teachers to develop a flexible ethos that allows children to be released into more positive experiences.

Several members have already mentioned how we should trust and respect our young people. Recent research from Cambridge that looked at young people in the United Kingdom—I am sure that it is also applicable to Scotland—showed that 75 per cent of young people are involved in some kind of volunteering.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton referred to young people's interest in politics. The Cambridge research showed that 35 per cent of young people in the UK had signed a petition of one kind or another. Our young people are interested in engaging in society and in responding to political affairs. The issues in their schools may be quite minor, but young people get out there to argue their case, sign petitions and so on. However, given that many young people are turned off by politics, we need to look at what happens in schools. Instead of just being taught about politics, they need to be able to experience it.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** You have one minute.

**Robin Harper:** Oh, gosh.

That is where the Airborne Initiative comes in. As I have discussed with the minister on previous occasions, the level of outdoor education provision in Scotland has been declining, yet it has been accepted for years that, if we want to develop young people's self-esteem and self-confidence, outdoor education is one of the best experiences to which they can be exposed.

At the end of the debate, I want to hear the minister explain why he can find £10 million for extra help for children's panels, £13 million for intensive community work and a doubling in investment—that is, a 100 per cent increase—in extra programmes for adults who have been in trouble and have been sent to prison while, all of a sudden, he cannot continue to provide a mere £600,000 to Airborne. That just does not add up.

Airborne provides something that is absolutely unique. The Executive will be chucking out the baby with the bath water if the rug is pulled from under Airborne's feet. We have two weeks. I am happy to hear what Robert Brown said, but I am also happy that the SNP has lodged its amendment to the motion.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have to hurry you.

**Robin Harper:** I plead with the Executive to listen and to accept the SNP amendment.

10:22

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** I am glad that the very first line of the motion for debate this morning highlights

"the very positive contribution made by Scotland's young people".

It cannot be stressed often enough that the vast majority of young people engage constructively in their local communities. Like other members, I pay tribute to the young people who recently assisted us in appointing Kathleen Marshall as the commissioner for children and young people.

In the time that is available to me, I want to deal with two broad issues that affect young people: our education system in general and our children's hearings system in particular. However, before I do so, I want to pick up on Robin Harper's final point about the need for a commitment to outdoor education. Let me enlighten members who are not already aware of this that several local authorities, including my local authority in Fife, are still involved in running an outdoor education centre at Ardroy on the west coast of Scotland. I benefited from attending courses there when I was at school and I know that people continue to do so. We should consider the centre at Ardroy as a model.

**Robin Harper:** Under Lothian Regional Council, there used to be an outdoor education teacher in almost every secondary school in Lothian. I believe that only two or three schools still have that as part of their timetable. The reality is that outdoor education provision in Scotland has declined over the past 20 years.

**Scott Barrie:** Obviously, I have no expertise from which I can speak about provision in the Lothians or by the City of Edinburgh Council, but

the issue that Robin Harper has highlighted is perhaps just another good example of the reasons why people should move north of the Forth, where they could enjoy a much better education system and standard of living.

As usual, the Tory amendment is an attack on Scotland's comprehensive system of education. Let us be honest. The Tories have never supported comprehensive education and never tire of complaining about it. Whether they call their proposal "school passports" or use some other euphemism, the point remains that, whatever name they choose for it, the Tories' policy is to reintroduce some form of selective education.

I believe that every school in Scotland should be an excellent school and that a high-quality education should be available to all. That is why I believe in the comprehensive model. I am proud to have been educated at a comprehensive school, as, I am sure, are most members who are present in the chamber. The principles that created comprehensive education are as sound now as they were when I commenced high school some 30 years ago.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** We all agree that we want all schools to be excellent, but the sad fact is that many schools are not. How does Scott Barrie respond to the members of his party who move house to live in the catchment area of a better school?

**Scott Barrie:** Given that parents have some choice over which school they apply to send their children to, it is not necessary for them to move house. Allowing the vast majority of young people to go to the school in the area in which they live is a much better model for driving up standards than encouraging people to choose a better education by either opting out of the state system or moving house.

If one examines the indicators that influence people about which school they wish their children to attend, one does not need to be a genius to work out that the schools that appear to do much better are schools such as—if we take my local education authority as an example—Madras College and Bell Baxter High School, which have much better catchment areas than other schools. We need to recognise the difficulties with some of our catchment areas and do something about them, rather than focus on trying to get more people into particular schools.

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

**Scott Barrie:** No. I have given way enough and I must press on.

I accept that there is a need for the system to be invigorated to meet the needs of our young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Allied to that is the fact that

only motivated pupils will fulfil their potential in the classroom and in later life. That is why the school curriculum needs to be reformed to increase student choice and to create a well-balanced core curriculum. The additional choices should include vocational training.

In the couple of minutes that I have remaining, I want to deal with the children's hearings system, whose role in assisting young people I was pleased to hear highlighted in the minister's opening speech. He was right to draw the distinction between those who appear at a hearing on offence grounds and those who appear on grounds of care and protection. As any children's panel member or social worker will confirm, the most difficult, traumatic and lengthiest hearings are those for which the grounds of referral are the care and protection of the young person. That is particularly the case where the person involved is very young.

I am pleased that there is to be a review of our children's hearings system. The last review took place in the lead-up to the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which changed some elements of our child protection system. The old system's place of safety orders were replaced by child protection and child assessment orders, for which application must be made to the sheriff court rather than to a justice of the peace. The old system certainly needed updating, but the new system that was put in place is more onerous and bureaucratic.

I suggest that the new system sometimes does not protect children in the way that it should because it requires people to go through so many hoops to establish the grounds of referral. The review needs to look at that issue. We must be careful to take cognisance of the fact that, without an effective child protection system that protects those who are most vulnerable, all the other aspects of our children's hearings system will not function as well as they should.

It is good that we are having a wide-ranging debate this morning. I look forward to hearing other members' contributions in due course.

10:29

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** I welcome the opportunity that today's debate presents and Kathleen Marshall's appointment as the commissioner for children and young people in Scotland. That is an excellent move. We wait in anticipation for the role to be fulfilled properly.

Like Robin Harper, I am concerned about the Airborne Initiative. I have much else to say, but I start by mentioning that, because I want to get in as quickly as I can the fact that I am happy to support Nicola Sturgeon's amendment. The

Executive has shown a pitiful lack of resolve in its support of the Airborne Initiative. The minister freely admits that the Executive is anxious to provide alternatives to custody and to get our prison population down. It is good to have alternatives to custody and we should be considering such things all the time. However, when we are provided with a real alternative aimed at the short-term repeat offenders whom the Scottish Prison Service admits it can do little with, the Executive throws in the towel. It is unfortunate that when we are scraping around looking for alternatives, a good one is closed down in the face of opposition. I hope that the opposition in the chamber today will be fierce.

I hope that the minister is not pulling the plug on the Airborne Initiative as the result of a television programme or of nimbyism and local opposition. I also hope that it is not being closed down on the ground of cost, which would be really unfortunate. Airborne has achieved much success and graduates of the initiative freely admit that, given the choice, they would rather have done their time at Low Moss prison because that would have been the easy option. Airborne is not an easy option but it is successful. The Scottish Socialist Party will support Nicola Sturgeon's amendment and I am pleased that she has lodged it.

I have made my plea for the Airborne Initiative and I hope that the minister will take it on board. I move on to the many points that I want to make in the debate.

We are aware that many of our young people are doing well, but there are lots of young people in our communities who are not doing so well. I will start with those young people who are looked after away from home. I was happy to hear the minister's comments about improvements to that situation. I have seen some of those improvements for myself and I know that teachers have now been appointed to support young people who are in local units between schools and the local care homes. However, there is no room for complacency.

One of the issues that we have with young people who are looked after away from home is the situation in which they find themselves in children's units. In many cases, the combination of young people in those units is not right. Often, vulnerable young people have to go into a unit where there are other young people who are out of control. We are reaping the results of local authorities not supporting alternative placements for young people with the most significant problems—those who need treatment, support and family support so that they can get back into mainstream schools. If we put a young person who is violent or has a drugs problem into a children's unit with a vulnerable child, there will be



more abuse. Unfortunately, a lot of that happens in children's units in our communities.

We do not have permanent staff in such units and, often, the staff are not trained. That is not their fault, because there are people who are willing to be trained and who want to be permanent but who are moved from one place to another on short-term, temporary contracts. The system lacks continuity of care for children. It would be far better if we invested in professionally trained people and a proper system in which small units support children who, through no fault of their own, have to be looked after away from home. We must pay people a professional wage and give them professional training to achieve that.

We must also keep open alternative placements for children who are out of control. Those are a small minority of children, but they have a huge impact on other young people in and out of schools. It is time that we acknowledged the problem. Tagging such young people, as suggested in the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, would be completely disastrous. For a start, many young people who were tagged and had to stay in their homes would abuse their sisters or mothers. They need to have treatment and support. They are out of control and it is not good enough to decide just to throw them back into the family home and tag them so that we know where they are, because they will still have problems that have not been dealt with. Such punitive action is completely ridiculous and I hope that the idea will go away.

In our schools and communities there are other vulnerable young people such as those who live daily with domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse. It is time that we realised that our teachers must be properly trained to deal with such situations. Teachers do not know enough.

I am a teacher and I know that many teachers do not get access to women's aid courses on domestic violence, do not have the chance to work with drugs workers and do not get the support from the community that would enable them to do the job that they have to do. For goodness' sake, let us put some decent funding into family support in our communities. I was saddened to learn that the Cumnock family support facility has just closed due to lack of funding. It supported drugs users and their families in an excellent fashion. I plead for joined-up working to support young people in our communities.

10:35

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** It would be fair to say that there is a genuine sense of anticipation about the minister's summing-up speech. Of course, there always is.

I have said before that, in debate, our critics are our greatest friends. Those who consider what we are doing and make constructive suggestions for modifying our behaviour, policies and practices are the ones to whom we should listen most closely. We should test the challenges that they give us.

Members should note that the SNP amendment deletes nothing from the Executive's motion. If we wanted to, we could play petty, party-political games and fiddle around with it, because the Executive congratulates itself on certain things. I am happy to subscribe to what the Executive has said, but the request to reconsider the Airborne Initiative seems to be gaining widespread support.

In his contribution, Robert Brown said that the partnership agreement contains a commitment to help children who are at risk. In many ways, the Airborne Initiative picks up those who remain at risk through late childhood into early adulthood, and that is why we support it. Robert Brown's proposal to refer the issue to a committee for consideration is one that I find attractive, although I have not yet had the opportunity to discuss it with my colleagues. Were it to be the Communities Committee, of which I am a member, I know that Johann Lamont, the convener of that committee, has been ruthless—I think that that is the correct word—in her pursuit of protecting communities throughout Scotland from that small minority of children who cause problems. I am sure that, because of its deliberations on the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, the committee has the background to equip it to consider the issue in a fair and unbiased way. I cannot speak on behalf of the committee, but I judge that it has accepted that there are problems. As yet, the committee has to flesh out its agreement on the solutions to those problems, but that is politics and that will be dealt with in due course.

The plea for interim funding to allow the Airborne Initiative to continue is well made and I hope that the minister will be able to give an appropriate response.

During the Communities Committee's deliberations on the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, members have been to places throughout Scotland and have listened to children who behave well and who make a substantial contribution to our communities and to children who have got into trouble. The former grotesquely outnumber the latter; we should be absolutely clear about that. We have been to Polmont young offenders institution and we have seen the effect of the programmes that take place inside that institution, which appear to be beneficial. For those who have not quite graduated to Polmont, there is a need for programmes outside such institutions.

A remark was made earlier that reminded me of the first law of epigenetics, which is that the more highly optimised an organism is for one environment, the less able it is to adapt to another. The key is for the courts and the children's panels to have a diverse range of solutions and disposals for offenders. That is based in reality and in science.

A lot has happened since I was young. A lot has happened since most of us were young. I am a graduate in mathematics—not a terribly good one—and so is my wife. Occasionally we are asked to help youngsters with their school homework. A few weeks ago, a 13-year-old came to ask for help with homework and we found that the boy was studying mathematics that we had studied in our inter honours year at university. Nevertheless, he needed a calculator to do basic arithmetic. I make no censorious remark in saying that—Bell Baxter High School is a fine school, as Scott Barrie said, and I was happy to go there. However, we did things in a different order and at a different pace, and things have undoubtedly changed.

Rosemary Byrne hoped that the idea of tagging young people with problems would go away; however, many of the problems in our society simply will not go away.

In their manifesto, the Liberals made it clear that they supported the Airborne project, and I was delighted to hear that repeated today.

On 10 October 2002, Richard Simpson said:

"we must have processes by which it is accepted that the Executive's decisions are not always totally right or totally wrong, but are balanced decisions that are made on the evidence that is presented to us."—[*Official Report*, 10 October 2002; c 14589.]

Today is an opportunity for the Parliament to put party politics to one side and to accept that the Executive will get it right sometimes, although not all the time. It is an opportunity for us to grow as a Parliament and to look beyond the tiny cost of buying some time for the Airborne Initiative to give us time to consider the issue in committee. I urge the minister to take that opportunity.

10:42

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):** I apologise to colleagues for being late this morning. I had the usual train trouble. My speech will probably be out of step with everything that has been said so far. When I saw the motion, I thought that it was important to talk about the opportunities to support and develop the skills and talents of young people. I do not intend to talk about youth offending. I hope that the debate balances up by the end, as it is important that it reflects the positive contribution of young people.

I want a comprehensive strategy for young people that deals with their aspirations, their future in work and education and the challenges for us in tackling poverty, protecting their childhood and, through our work on the international scene, eradicating their exploitation and prostitution. The Scottish Executive has a comprehensive strategy for tackling those issues, but I want the strands of it to be pulled together so that we can have a national debate about what young people want. I want to see it in a formulation that can be discussed in schools and colleges to ensure that young people get a say in their future.

One of the key issues is how we engage young people in talking about their future. That can be a difficult thing to do. One of the ways in which it is possible to tap into the thinking of young people is by considering issues that matter to them. Members will know that I am passionate about the music industry, as is Ken Macintosh. We have the opportunity to engage young people by using the music industry as a vehicle to bring them into the debate about what they want. The credibility of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister went up no end when they were seen at the MTV awards. That was not just about being seen to be young and trendy, although I know that they both think that they are; it was about recognising the contribution that the MTV awards make to the Scottish economy. I received comments from several young constituents who thought that it was important for the Scottish Parliament to be seen to regard the MTV award ceremony as important. It is a significant event in the lives of many young people. It is important that we, as politicians, think about how we can engage young people in different ways, and that is one of the channels.

I will mention a few other things that have been going on. The cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish contemporary music industry, of which I am the convener, has proposed a number of initiatives that are worthy of consideration. Soma Recordings recently organised an event in the Arches to teach 600 schoolchildren about the importance of the music industry and how they could be part of it—not just as performers but by learning about the technical skills, creative writing and other aspects that the music industry brings together. My favourite idea is something that Ken Macintosh is directly involved in—the use of low-frequency, restricted-service radio licences, which has attracted a lot of attention lately. In Paisley, the use of 28-day licences has allowed young people to learn how to become DJs, presenters and producers. Unfortunately, there is a charge of £10,000 attached to such a licence. The matter is reserved, but we should engage with the United Kingdom Government to try to bring that price down. Such licences are a useful tool for training young people and one that I think they appreciate.

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):**

Does my colleague agree that, as well as improved community access to restricted-service licences, the making of decisions about the issuing of RSLs in Scotland rather than in London would be beneficial for local communities?

**Pauline McNeill:** I agree with that. If we could enable access to such licences, that would be beneficial. Since we aired the possibility of such licences, I have received many requests from people for more information about them. It would be good if we could decide the issue here, in Scotland.

It is important to ask young people what they want from their lives, whether in leisure or in their careers. For some time, I have argued that we should pull together the surveys that Barnardo's and Children 1<sup>st</sup> have carried out so that we can have a national strategy and know that we are providing the type of things that young people want. Probably the most difficult age group to tackle is the 13 to 17-year-olds. They may no longer think of themselves as children and may want to do more mature things; however, sometimes what they want to do is not available to them. Work needs to be done around the needs of that age group.

Aside from what young people want, an important issue is mental health. I recently dealt with the tragic case of a young constituent who lost his life because of the unsatisfactory mental health service that is offered to young adolescents. We need to debate the issue in Parliament at another opportunity. It appears that the service in Glasgow is limited and stereotypical and needs to broaden out to deal with severe mental health problems. There is the will to have a new service in Glasgow and there is some thinking about it; we just need to ensure that we make it happen.

10:48

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

It was quite refreshing to hear a minister give a realistic appraisal of the current problems. Too often, we are aware of the problems but sit here listening to ministers defend the indefensible, so I welcome the minister's remarks. I also welcome the setting-up of a Cabinet group to tackle youth services and delivery systems as well as information sharing and the inspection and quality of services. I further confess that I actually enjoyed Robert Brown's speech—and I told him so. I am getting a wee bit worried. However, I give credit where credit is due and, on this rare occasion, I thought that he gave a moderate and considered speech. Nonetheless, as an Opposition politician, I have a responsibility to highlight the issues that I hope will be considered by the new Cabinet group.

Currently, the debate on young offenders and children's hearings is generally conducted in the context of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill. We need to acknowledge the Audit Scotland report to which the minister referred, which highlighted the fact that between 300 and 500 children on supervision were not getting the service that the children's hearings system prescribed. Contact was made with half the children on supervision less than once a month, and 37 per cent of children's files did not contain a recognisable care plan. Those are only some of the issues that were raised in the report. If the Executive is committed to addressing them, as the motion that we are debating suggests, they need to be considered seriously.

I note on page 4 of the NCH report entitled "Where's Kilbrandon Now?" that, for boys, 1,600 more referrals to the children's hearings system are made on the grounds of care and protection than are made on offence grounds. Although the minister mentioned that, looking behind the figures for referrals to the children's hearings system gives us a much better understanding of the sort of support that these children need.

The NCH report also states:

"From being a system for dealing mainly with those who require compulsory measures of care, the hearings system has become almost the only route of access to services for children in need of care and protection. This is because of deficiencies in the systems responsible for identifying children in need and providing appropriate voluntary support and care for them. The hearings system was not designed for this purpose, so it is no surprise that it has been engulfed in a rising tide of care and protection cases that distract it from its primary purpose."

Surely that is a strong and clear signal to the Executive that it must address the needs of some young people. Before they can even consider realising their potential, they must be enabled to live free from abuse and other problems.

**Scott Barrie:** On the point that the children's hearings system cannot cope with cases, does the member not accept that there is a parallel system to the children's hearings system? The child protection system, with its child protection case conferences and the child protection register, clearly identifies those who are at the most severe risk. Those children can then be allocated the resources that are required for early intervention to ensure that they do not go into the children's hearings system.

**Mary Scanlon:** I acknowledge Scott Barrie's comments about the mechanisms that are in place. However, the NCH report has concluded that the system is not giving children the necessary care and protection.

The Executive also needs to examine the report's comments on the limited range of

disposals. Although I welcome the minister's announcement of what I presume is an additional £10 million for alternative community disposals, the NCH report says:

"Allied to the failure to implement disposals is the lack of imagination and investment in ... leisure, health, education and community services".

That point has been consistently raised by those who have given evidence to the Communities Committee on the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill. I look forward to the Cabinet's report on the matter.

If the Executive is serious about full and active participation and the development of skills and talents, we need to assess and diagnose children as early as possible for conditions such as autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia. In too many cases, potential development years are lost due to delays in or the absence of early assessment and diagnosis and the lack of health care and learning support.

Two weeks ago, I raised the case of a 14-year-old boy in Inverness who was sent home because of the lack of a learning support teacher and who now receives four hours of one-to-one tuition a week. That boy is not the only person who is not realising his potential; his mother had to give up the opportunity of a good job to stay at home and care for him. Parents as well as children are being affected by the situation.

I notice that Peter Peacock referred to having a well-trained work force. I hope that, as Rosemary Byrne said, training will be given to nursery school staff and teachers to identify signs and problems. I also hope that a system of early assessment and diagnosis is introduced for learning support. If that does not happen, we will exclude many young people from any opportunity to develop skills and talents.

10:54

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** As many members have pointed out, it is important that we emphasise the great contribution that many young people make to our society. They are not the problem; they are the solution. They are our future.

The motion contains some good words. Indeed, I very much welcome the way it begins, because it tries to counter the demonisation of young people by certain people in the media and through some ill-judged remarks by politicians. It is important that we put across a positive view of young people. However, we are looking for the Executive to back up its good words with good deeds. Although many good measures have been introduced or are in the pipeline, we need more.

In that respect, the Executive's decision on the Airborne Initiative sends out absolutely the wrong message. There is no point in shooting the messenger—after all, Mr Peacock was simply spouting some stuff that was written by some Executive apparatchik. That said, there has to be serious movement in the Executive's position on the matter and I hope that the minister who will reply—who I know is very sympathetic to many of the issues about which I am enthusiastic—will be able to say something, or that some other comment can be made before 5 pm this afternoon.

There are two ways forward on this matter, both of which could be taken. First, Robert Brown made the excellent suggestion of having a parliamentary committee examine and evaluate alternatives to custody such as the Airborne Initiative and others, make suggestions for future initiatives and propose further development and more funding.

Secondly, the Executive could have constructive discussions with the Airborne management. The Executive might legitimately feel that it is not getting value for money, that not enough people are going through the system and that the initiative is not correctly jugged. It might also have criticisms of the management itself. However, the supporters of the Airborne Initiative feel that its ethos is important and that it provides a unique service that should be improved and built upon. As a result, there is scope to look for ways forward.

After I visited the Airborne Initiative, I corresponded with the ministers at the time and the management. In a letter, the Airborne management suggested:

"Our current nine-week residential module could be adapted to provide shorter or longer, residential or community based programmes aimed at clearly identified target markets."

It might be helpful to have discussions along those lines.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Donald Gorrie will have heard my earlier welcome for Robert Brown's positive suggestion to refer the matter to a parliamentary committee. However, does Mr Gorrie agree that, if such a solution were to be accepted, there would have to be a clear guarantee that it would be accompanied by a commitment to continue the funding for the Airborne Initiative, pending the outcome of any inquiry?

**Donald Gorrie:** Yes.

The Liberal Democrat view is that there should be a variety of alternatives to custody. Indeed, I believe that members around the chamber share the view that there should be a basket of alternatives, as Robert Brown said. For the record, the Liberal Democrat manifesto—which, as a loyal member of the party, I pay great attention to—said that we will

"Increase support for schemes aimed at persistent offenders that have proved more effective at reducing reoffending than traditional methods, in the way that Freagarrach and the Airborne project have."

As I said, we want a variety of methods. In that respect, I think that the Airborne Initiative offers a very important alternative to a particular section of the community. It is a residential course and provides an interesting mix of mountain expeditions and heavy psychological warfare on young people to help them to sort themselves out. In fact, it helps a significant number of those young people. At the very least, several dozen people in Scotland who would probably now be in jail for the umpteenth time are not in jail and are constructive and useful citizens. The Executive's reasons for getting rid of Airborne are wrong.

**Karen Gillon:** I have a genuine question. I wonder whether Donald Gorrie can enlighten us as to why the trainees on the current course at Airborne were sent home, despite the fact that Executive funding for this year had already been given.

**Donald Gorrie:** I have no idea; I do not manage the Airborne Initiative.

The Executive is comparing Airborne with new schemes that have not yet proved their worth. Those schemes might be good, but the position should not be an either-or one—either we fund Airborne or we fund interesting community schemes elsewhere. We should fund both.

If youth justice is the Executive's top priority, it should be the top priority for our money. We must put our money where our mouth is and invest seriously in the whole range, from ordinary youth work, youth workers and youth facilities to alternatives to custody and schemes such as Airborne. I earnestly urge the minister and her colleagues to be more flexible and to take account of the widespread support for Airborne and the desire to use it in a package of alternatives to custody.

11:00

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I begin in the same vein, I hope, as my colleague Pauline McNeill, by discussing the valuable and positive contribution that Scotland's young people make. Scotland is a nation that values and celebrates the diversity of all its citizens. The First Minister's statement in the chamber yesterday drove home the importance of valuing that diversity.

We face many challenges that cannot be underestimated, not the least of which are demographic, economic and technological changes. We compete in an ever-changing global market. Gone are the days that my parents' generation and some of my contemporaries

enjoyed, when the majority had a job for life. It is estimated that young people now face having 10 job changes in their working lives. That is a challenge for us all. We must ensure that our young people have the best possible start and that each child and young person is given the necessary support and skills to realise their full potential. In my previous life, I worked for 18 years in further and higher education and I cannot emphasise too strongly the need to develop the potential of young people in the FE and HE age range. I agree with Pauline McNeill that the ages between 13 and 17 are also crucial.

It is important to remove social and economic barriers that might hamper children's development in their early years. I welcome the pledge to double the spending on the sure start programme. I am sure that many members are aware of examples of how that programme has benefited our communities. I also welcome the fast-track recruitment programme for social workers.

I chair the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on survivors of childhood sexual abuse and I welcome the progress in the area of child protection. I have seen at first-hand in my constituency such progress, and first-class partnership working and inter-agency support. I am sure that similar progress is being made throughout the country. However, outcomes that children see and feel the benefit of are still highly dependent on the performance of social work departments. The quality assurance that the minister announced today for front-line agencies and inter-agency working is welcome, because it will ensure parity of standards throughout the country.

Statistics show that many people who have problems in adulthood with alcohol and drugs have suffered a catalogue of abuse as children. As the minister is aware, each such case is a personal tragedy. We must continue to ensure that measures are taken to protect our children. I draw members' attention to the short-life expert working group that Malcolm Chisholm set up. We can look forward to a national strategy that will ensure that consistent standards are achieved throughout the country.

I believe that education is the ladder of opportunity, particularly in our most deprived communities. Therefore, I welcome the Executive's commitment to tackling the opportunity gap at all stages of schooling. In particular, I welcome the reform of the curriculum to include vocational training. Not all our young people want to go into totally academic careers, so vocational training is most welcome. Our education system is crucial for the development of our children and our economy. Education and training are vital and we cannot allow financial impediments to prevent our

young people from continuing with their education. I welcome the roll-out of the education maintenance allowance for all 16 to 19-year-olds from low income families, which will ensure that the financial barrier is removed.

Further and higher education have a huge role to play in ensuring that our young people continue with education and training. I believe that our FE and HE colleges and universities are world class. They must rise to the challenge of ensuring that we have a high-quality education system. People will stay in education only if they receive appropriate, high-quality education and training. Citizenship and social and personal development are also important. We must help with the transition from education to work as much as possible. Careers Scotland and Futureskills Scotland have a huge role to play in that area. I chair the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament for construction, and it has been said there that the issue is not so much about skills shortages in the construction industry as about skills gaps. One of the big skills gaps in the construction industry is in engineering. We must prepare our young people to be able to meet the challenges of industry.

I want to talk about the work of the Equal Opportunities Committee, especially in the light of the European year of disabled people, about which the Minister for Communities gave evidence to the committee on Tuesday. I make a plea that, when we talk about all members of our community, we take on board the needs of people with learning disabilities and multiple disabilities. On behalf of the committee, I took evidence from different disability groups in Inverness. The document "The same as you?" has been produced and we have said that we want to value the contribution of all members of our society. Therefore, we must concentrate on providing funding and other support for young people with learning difficulties, those with mental health problems—as Pauline McNeill pointed out—and those with physical disabilities. We still face challenges in those areas.

Children and young people have energy, enthusiasm and motivation. They are our future. We should listen to them and, indeed, learn from them.

11:06

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** We have had a number of debates on young people and related subjects. We have had debates on children and young people, the children's hearings system, social work services, children's therapists, child protection, alternatives to custody, youth offending, the children's commissioner, and we now have this debate. It is clear that the

Parliament, through members' business debates, Executive-led debates and committee debates, has touched on the subject of young people a number of times.

Many of the debates have been general in nature, as is the motion that is before us today. Therefore, it is relevant to accept an illustrative amendment to try to articulate some of the arguments, because we face an immediate and urgent situation in the shape of the Airborne Initiative. That situation reflects a regular theme of many of our previous debates; that theme, as Keith Raffan said, is breaking the cycle of deprivation. Children who appear in the children's hearings system for care and protection at the age of eight often end up returning as persistent offenders at the age of 11.

**Mr Raffan:** Robert Brown made an excellent suggestion about remitting the issue of young people to a parliamentary committee for inquiry. Do Ms Hyslop and the Scottish National Party agree that such an inquiry might consider Airborne in the broader context of the type of problems that alternatives-to-custody projects face, in terms of funding, administration, running and monitoring? There is too much paperwork and too much time is spent on scraping around looking for money instead of on helping people.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That point is well made. The Executive should welcome a parliamentary review of services for young people. Such a review should be viewed within the context of reconsidering the position of Airborne. However, for that to be meaningful, Airborne would have to have a short-term continuation of funding.

Robert Brown made a point about Airborne not being the minister's responsibility. We recognise that the Executive practises collective responsibility. Our debates on young people have been conducted in isolation from one another, but the same theme keeps returning: the need to break the cycle of deprivation. We must have an example of an effort to do that and the Airborne Initiative offers a golden opportunity to see an example of joined-up working from the Executive portfolios of education and young people and justice.

The minister stated that Airborne is not relevant to this debate because the initiative deals with older youngsters of 19 and over. YouthLink Scotland, which is the national youth agency for Scotland, recently commissioned a poll on the opinions of young people from the ages of 11 to 25; that illustrates the wide age range within which we can consider policy solutions for young people. It is appropriate to address the issue of the Airborne Initiative here and now, and we can do so by means of the SNP's amendment.

Child protection has been mentioned in the debate. We recognise that problems with care and protection in the early years can lead to problems later on. There is concern about the effectiveness and timescale of the implementation of the recommendations in "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright". I am pleased to say that the Education Committee, under its convener Robert Brown, is undertaking a child protection inquiry.

I share concerns that the timescale for review of the children's hearings system may miss some of the opportunities to make a direct intervention now. The City of Edinburgh Council is concerned that the percentage of cases in which no social worker has been allocated has increased from 9.5 per cent to 22 per cent. That is because of a 14.5 per cent increase in permanent vacancies in the children and families practice team, which represents a significant increase over the past three years. Rather than the issue being investigated over a period of time, after which it may be difficult to have direct intervention, the children's hearings system needs support now.

Part of the motion touches on looked-after children. Members may be aware that this week the BBC is running a season of programmes about looked-after children. In my household, I was forced to watch "The Story of Tracy Beaker—The Movie of Me"; the programme may not have reflected all children's homes, but it was important in reflecting some of the issues and concerns about looked-after children. It is imperative that the issue of looked-after children is addressed.

The interim report on fast-track hearings shows that a much higher proportion of children who were referred on offence grounds for persistent offending, in comparison with other young people who were referred on offence grounds, were living in a residential establishment—28 per cent against 3 per cent—and far fewer were living at home with both parents.

Statistics show that six out of 10 young people who leave care have no qualifications; 20 per cent have had a spell of homelessness and 60 per cent of young people receiving aftercare were not in education, employment or training. It is vital that we address those points.

What does being young in Scotland mean? We have a diminishing pool of fresh talent. We talk about fresh talent, but there are fewer young people for us to work with. We desperately need a national youth strategy and I would like to hear a timescale for that.

The Parliament has an opportunity to do the right thing today. We must give the Executive confidence to do the right thing by young people. It is essential that we recognise that, in relation to youth justice and youth offending, we need one

voice, but many solutions. There must be a range of solutions to choose from.

Donald Gorrie made the important point that although this debate is general and the Airborne Initiative is by no means a solution to everybody's issues and circumstances, the Executive's decision will send out a message. If the Parliament and the Executive are serious about illustrating the fact that there are alternatives, we must take the opportunity for the Parliament, together with the Executive, to undertake a sensible and constructive consideration of the issue. That would be a job well done by the Parliament today.

11:13

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I welcome the debate and the opportunity that it gives us to discuss what we are doing, through the Executive and through the Parliament, to give our young people a better deal. I am confident that our record and our commitment to young people speak for themselves.

Our commitment is perhaps at its most obvious in the improvements and investment that we have made in our schools. I have no doubt that the huge expansion in nursery education and in early-years support is beginning to pay dividends as those children progress through primary, secondary and tertiary education. Smaller class sizes, a more contented work force, the work of the discipline task force, new buildings and improved facilities are also making an impact.

Looking back over the past 30 years, we can see the success of our comprehensive school system. From a previous figure of one in 10, more than half of our young people now have the opportunity to access further and higher education. That is a success story on which we need to build.

I find it difficult to understand how the Tories can still push divisive, back-door selection policies such as the so-called passport scheme. I will direct my comments to Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and Murdo Fraser, because I was struck by the contrast between Lord James's comments in the Education Committee on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill—he argued eloquently for including our most vulnerable children in their local school—and his promotion of an elitist passport policy that is aimed primarily, if not exclusively, at our most able and articulate pupils. How does a child who attends their local mainstream school, where additional support has been put in place, benefit from a passport system that may remove the school's most gifted and able pupils?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Is the member aware that his distinguished father was rector of a very distinguished school in Edinburgh, which had

about 30 feeder schools? That is an example of choice at its best. All that we wish to do is to extend that choice to many others who do not currently have it.

**Mr Macintosh:** Perhaps the member is also aware that my distinguished mother was head of another school in Edinburgh, Drummond Academy. The Education Committee visited Drummond Community High School to see its work on special educational needs.

We are promoting inclusive policies that will help all in our society. The biggest issue facing our schools is not how we turn them into copies of a private school system, but how we improve the opportunities for and achievements of those who do worst out of the current system. Our work on closing the opportunity gap will deliver the best deal for our young people. Our new community schools, breakfast clubs, education maintenance allowance, improved access for pupils with disabilities—the range of measures that are aimed at tackling child poverty—are the policies that will be of most long-term benefit, not only to young people but to the health of our society as a whole.

I commend the Executive on the work that it is doing on the Young Scot card. We are all acutely aware of the need to promote good citizenship among children and young people; on a selfish note, that needs to be done not least to address the worrying attitudes to voting among those under the age of 25. The Young Scot card is an enabling initiative that increases access to services, encourages active participation in the community and can be used to tackle stigma. I believe that its use is well advanced in some areas, but I would welcome any information that the minister can give the Parliament on progress that is being made on rolling out the Young Scot card throughout Scotland.

On a similar note, I ask the minister what progress we are making on developing our plans for increased concessionary travel for young people. We know that it is unrealistic to build the sort of new sports and leisure facilities that our young people crave in every community in Scotland, but free travel is another way to address that issue.

I welcome the Minister for Education and Young People's comments on the children's hearings system. Several members have echoed that sentiment, but I was particularly pleased by the tone of his remarks and I look forward to the consultation later this year on the way forward for the hearings system.

As we know, the children's panel focuses on needs not deeds—a point that was mentioned by Robert Brown earlier. The system is at its strongest in preventing abuse and neglect and

when it intervenes effectively at an early stage to help to protect our most vulnerable children. Conversely, the system is at its weakest where it has lost the confidence of the communities that it protects. That matter will have to be addressed in the Executive's review.

More important, to my mind, is ensuring that the support services that are needed to support the work of the children's panel are there when they are needed. The minister alluded to the shortage of social workers in some areas, which allows children who are on a supervision order to go from one year to the next without receiving any contact from the public authorities. I acknowledge my colleague Scott Barrie's point that that is a problem not exclusively for social work departments, but for local authorities more generally. As the minister said, the situation is unacceptable. Much as I commend the Executive's action in recruiting and retaining more social workers, I hope that Peter Peacock and Margaret Curran will give those specific locations their close attention to ensure that the situation is not allowed to continue. I commend the Executive's motion.

11:18

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

Yesterday, the First Minister made a statement in the chamber on population change. I welcome much of what he said, but it related almost exclusively to the fact that Scotland's overall population is falling. What he did not address—we need to address this issue in future—is the fact that there is population change within Scotland.

We know that for hundreds of years there has been a drift from rural areas into towns and that, in many ways, that drift continues today. The population drift is more obvious in certain parts of Scotland and perhaps less obvious in areas such as Aberdeen and the north-east, where it is masked by the fact that there is a high rural population. However, the residents are often commuters—people who use the rural areas as dormitories—and the people who are born and brought up in the areas still tend to drift away as ever they did.

The problems that cause that population drift are associated with the lack of housing, the lack of effective transport and—I suggest—the lack of appropriate levels of local government funding in certain rural areas. We know perfectly well that even in the north-east, where there is a relatively high level of wealth, there have been jobs crises in areas such as Fraserburgh and Peterhead, which are represented by Stewart Stevenson, who is not currently in the chamber. The Government must accept that, unless it is willing to address the anomalies in local government funding, there will



continue to be serious problems in ensuring that rural areas, and the young people who live there, are properly supported.

The most obvious pressure in rural areas in the north-east—and, my colleagues tell me, in other areas too—is on small primary schools. That is largely as a result of funding problems. Some will argue that small rural schools with composite classes are an inappropriate way of educating young people in their early years. However, the evidence is plain: some of the finest schools in the country, with some of the best results at primary level, are small schools with one, two or perhaps three teachers.

I will give an example from Angus of the pressure that such schools are under. Angus Council, largely for financial reasons, has had to consider centralising primary school education. Small schools such as St Vigeans Primary School, which has been closed already, the Panmure school, which is currently under threat, and Stracathro Primary School, which has been threatened before and may be threatened again in the near future, are perfect examples of schools in which small numbers of pupils and small numbers of teachers succeed in producing education of a very high quality. Such schools are characterised by the fact that more than half the pupils are there as a result of placing requests. The quality of the education drew the pupils to those schools, because their parents were impressed with the schools' records.

From what I have heard from councillors, I understand that councils such as Aberdeenshire Council may be forced to take similar action to Angus, simply because of necessary economies.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)** *rose—*

**Alex Johnstone:** I need to get on; I am sorry. I hope that Brian Adam will have the chance to speak later.

The schools are being put under pressure because of funding difficulties, for which I blame, to a significant extent, the underfunding of local authorities by the Scottish Executive. However, we have an opportunity here, and that is why I am very keen to support the amendment in the name of my colleague Lord James Douglas-Hamilton. Conservative education policy has often made a great deal of sense in the way in which it could be applied in the major cities; too often, however, that policy has fallen down in rural areas where choice is extremely limited or, in fact, non-existent. However, the schools passport policy is very different. It gives parents an opportunity to retain choice and to retain local schools in a way that no policy offered by any other party in this Parliament can. Our policy gives parents the opportunity to guarantee that, if they choose to place their child

in a particular school, the funding will follow the child. Unless we adopt that policy, or one very like it, many of our rural primary schools will be threatened with closure. I would not be able to accept that if we want rural areas to maintain their populations.

It gives me great pleasure to support enthusiastically the amendment in the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.

11:23

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's remarks today—in particular, I welcome the statement that Parliament values the positive contribution that is made by Scotland's young people, and the restated commitment to providing those young people with the opportunities and support that they need to develop their full potential.

Investing in our young people is investing in the future of our nation. That investment is of paramount importance to Scotland's success. Many different issues arise, some of which my colleague Ken Macintosh mentioned, such as child care, early intervention, a good education, and career and voluntary opportunities. The issues cut across portfolios to include diet, nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Those issues start to affect a young person from birth. Promoting and encouraging breastfeeding, for example, is extremely important. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton referred to Churchill. It may come as a surprise—not only to the Tories, but to the rest of the chamber—that I, too, can quote Churchill, who said:

“There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies.”

Offering a better deal for young people involves supporting children and young people who are in difficulty. I am thinking of family problems, addiction problems, relationship breakdowns, looked-after children, and the minority of young people who persistently offend. We should welcome recent initiatives such as the fast-track recruitment of social workers, the children's commissioner and today's announcement on reviewing the hearings system. We should consider the role of parents who, of course, must take responsibility, but who may need help. In the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, the proposals relating to parents focus very much on providing help and assistance. The chamber should welcome that.

I want to focus on antisocial behaviour and young people. I was pleased to hear in Peter Peacock's announcement that we are holding on to the fundamental principles of the hearings system, which, of course, is internationally

renowned. However, reviewing and consulting on the system is an excellent move.

Audit Scotland's report, "Dealing with offending by young people", says:

"Most children (an estimated 75% of the total number) on statutory supervision for reasons which include offending appear to be receiving the required level of service from councils. But hundreds are not."

The report goes on to say:

"Social workers see some children very frequently, but around half the children on supervision do not see their social workers often.

Children's Reporters aren't getting police referrals or social background reports quickly enough.

The strategic youth justice teams often don't have the right information or the right members to do their jobs well."

I want to consider the hearings system and the proposals in NCH Scotland's report, "Where's Kilbrandon now?" The report concludes that the children's hearings system still offers Scotland the most effective and humane response to children in trouble. It says that, if the hearings system is adequately resourced and imaginatively managed, it can be adapted to meet the needs of our time. The report describes the system as an economic and effective way for public agencies and professionals to work together in the best interests of the child. However, it also acknowledges some weaknesses—including a lack of public awareness, knowledge and support; recruitment difficulties; and the fact that the system has not been reviewed in its 30-year history. I am therefore sure that the minister's announcement will be welcomed.

I turn to the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill. Much in the bill is welcome, especially the acknowledgement of the requirement for support services. There is no doubt that there are problems in communities, but they are not all to do with young people. Much serious antisocial behaviour and criminal activity is perpetrated by adults. Most young people should be congratulated on their positive input to Scottish society.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** Does Elaine Smith accept that many of the people who argue most strongly for the proposals in the bill do so precisely because they are driven by the concerns of young people who live in communities where there is disorder? The life chances of those young people are seriously damaged. As long as there are vulnerable young people who have to deal with that behaviour, as well as coping with school and everything else, we have a duty of care towards them, through our proposals on antisocial behaviour.

**Elaine Smith:** That is an important point and I agree with it.

The small minority of persistent offenders who present with challenging behaviour also need help. They need intensive support and intervention. Most people would agree on that; the differences of opinion arise when we consider whether we have to extend antisocial behaviour orders and introduce electronic tagging. I do not agree that we have to.

In England and Wales, the dangers of the punitive approach can be seen. Barry Goldson, the editor of a publication on juvenile justice, said that such an approach has led to an 800 per cent increase over 10 years in the number of children aged 12 to 14 who are in custody in England and Wales. The dangers are also highlighted by the numbers of young people who try to harm themselves. I understand that, every day, four children in custody in England and Wales try to harm themselves or kill themselves. There is a high rate of reoffending in England and Wales, which is indicative of a system that is based on punishment rather than cure.

Alternatives to ASBOs include acceptable behaviour contracts, which the City of Edinburgh Council piloted last year. The council said that, almost at once, the contracts delivered a real improvement in quality of life to the affected community. In evidence to the Communities Committee, Dr Sula Wolff said:

"One must be terribly careful in relation to children ... Children are developing people—they have a future before them and are open to change."—[*Official Report, Communities Committee*, 3 December 2003; c 254.]

This debate and the Executive motion are to be welcomed. They give us the chance to celebrate young people's contribution and achievements. They are our future and we must invest in our future.

11:29

**Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** This has been a good debate; it has been moderate in tone and mostly moderate in substance. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton is always moderate in style, if not always moderate in some of the things that he comes up with.

Let me start from a very simple premise: all members can agree that we want to give every child in Scotland the best possible start in life and that, through their childhood and teenage years into early adulthood, we want to give them every support and opportunity. We must also support single mothers—indeed, all single parents—so that they have time to spend with their children and to bring them up, and are not obliged to succumb to the pressures of earning a living.

I am sure that both ministers would agree that deprivation takes many forms and that it is not just

financial. Pauline McNeill and Donald Gorrie were right to emphasise how lucky we are with the vast majority of young people in this country; they are a damned sight less deferential and a lot more inquiring than the members of the generation from which I come. We know that from schools' visits to Parliament, which are always refreshing, and from our visits to schools in our constituencies. It can be quite tricky when a forest of hands goes up and pupils ask questions that are sometimes much more difficult than those that ministers face. I am going to Bell Baxter High School—which has already been mentioned—first thing on Monday morning to speak to modern studies pupils.

When necessary, we need intervention in the early years, whether through provision for children with special needs—Mary Scanlon was right to mention the importance of early diagnosis of autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia—or by breaking the cycle of truancy.

In his opening speech, Mr Peacock mentioned the importance of rolling out effective pilot schemes. I am sorry that he is leaving the chamber, because I could not agree more with what he said about sharing good practice, which we do not do nearly enough. We do not roll out a sufficient number of successful projects. I will give examples of two types of such projects. The first type includes the Corner in Dundee and Off the Record in Stirling, which are excellent one-stop shops. I have visited them and I urge other members to do so if they have the opportunity. Those projects provide a range of services that help young people with the problems that they face. By going to them, young people can get help—away from the school environment and in privacy—from their peers and from those trained to deal with sexual or drugs issues, for example.

The second category consists of organisations such as Clued Up in Kirkcaldy and Crew 2000 here in Edinburgh, which do excellent drugs education and prevention work with young people. When teachers in Kirkcaldy schools detect a drugs problem—they do not need a sniffer dog or a blood test to do that—they call in Clued Up. A couple of years ago, I spent a day with that excellent organisation and saw the work that it did. Clued Up is brought into schools discreetly to work with groups of children, some of whom might have incipient drugs or alcohol problems. Catching such problems at that early stage is the way to do things, rather than the approach that came from Downing Street earlier in the week, which was another example of heavy-handed policy on the hoof. Mr Blair should look to Scotland, because we do it better. Crew 2000 does a great deal of good work on drugs education in the club scene.

The minister has my whole-hearted support. Successful projects should be rolled out but, as we

know, many such projects have funding problems. The people who work on the projects and who are meant to be helping young people spend too much time scraping around for money and filling in bureaucratic forms for the Executive. They are not necessarily well trained as administrators or as fundraisers—they are trained to help young people.

We need continuity and consistency of funding. In that context, I strongly support the proposal that my colleague Robert Brown made on Airborne—

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

**Mr Raffan:** Hang on a second—let me finish my point.

Robert Brown said that a parliamentary committee should be given the remit of considering the Airborne Initiative, although I would add that it should be considered in the wider context of the problems that similar organisations face in relation to funding, administration, monitoring, regulation and measurement of their effectiveness.

**Robin Harper** *rose*—

**Mr Raffan:** I will give way to Robin Harper first, then to Johann Lamont.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No. You are in your last minute, so Robin Harper had better be very quick.

**Robin Harper:** Does the member agree that, if the Airborne team is allowed to disappear, a decade of good practice will disappear completely?

**Mr Raffan:** Airborne should be allowed to continue and a committee should examine the subject.

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

**Mr Raffan:** I would love to, but I am in my last minute and the Presiding Officer will not let me.

We should not only share good practice—we should look for it elsewhere. Examples include the excellent play area project in Wrexham in Clwyd, which was discussed in an informative Robertson Trust seminar not so long ago, and the highly effective mentoring projects that were introduced by the former Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo. Imagination, innovation and continuity of funding are key. Our adage for such projects should be, "Let a thousand flowers bloom."

It is not simply a question of preventing offending in the first place; we must also break the cycle of reoffending. I am a passionate believer in prison reform and, in that context, I think that we should send as few offenders to prison as

possible. When they are sent to prison, they should spend less time in cells and more time in education and training. When they leave, offenders should be given support such as that which is provided by the excellent Simpson House project, which is run by the Church of Scotland. Halfway houses should also be available.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I must hurry you.

**Mr Raffan:** Fine.

We should be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, but let us also be intelligent in response to criminal behaviour and supportive of rehabilitation.

11:36

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I want to pick up some of the points that have been made during this wide-ranging debate.

I turn first to children with special educational needs, which Mary Scanlon and others mentioned. I want to highlight a particular matter that is causing some concern to members, which is the nursery nurses' strike that I believe is due to start next week. I do not deny that nursery nurses have the right to go on strike, but such action will have a specific impact not just on children in nurseries but on children with special educational needs, who get the assistance of nursery nurses even though they might not be in nurseries. Parents of such children are extremely concerned that, in those circumstances, their children will not be able to access education.

When school janitors went on strike in 2001, schools that treated children who have special educational needs were given an exemption from industrial action. I urge Unison to think again and to consider exempting special needs schools and classes from all-out strike action, for the sake of the children and parents concerned.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP):** Is the member prepared to accept that the 5,000 nursery nurses throughout Scotland are acutely aware of the need for special needs education and for pre-school education for all children? Will he join me in calling on the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to get back round the table to discuss a national agreement instead of trying to divide the nursery nurses?

**Murdo Fraser:** I am reassured by the fact that Mr Sheridan says that the workers are aware of parents' concerns about the impact that their action could have. In the area in which I live, Perth and Kinross Council has already reached an agreement with the nursery nurses and the same is true of a number of other councils. I do not believe that a national settlement to the dispute is necessary. I do not want to get involved in

discussing the detail of the dispute, but it would be helpful and considerate if the workers and the union were to exempt special needs schools and classes from action.

I want to consider the wider issue of the key role of public services—which the minister mentioned—and their interface with schools, which is the priority for most young people. As my colleague Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said, in many cases there has been a serious failure by the Executive to reach attainment targets. Levels of truancy and violence in schools have been unacceptable.

Scott Barrie and Ken Macintosh referred to our schools passport policy, the point of which is to widen choice. At the moment, there is choice in education only for those who can afford it. We are talking about extending choice so that everyone will have it, not just those who can afford it. I would have thought that that was a pretty good socialist principle.

Labour members such as Scott Barrie are always saying that people should support their local schools and that we would have an excellent comprehensive system if only they did that. I wonder whether he has said that to his Labour colleague who is the leader of Dundee City Council, who does not send her children to a state school run by Dundee City Council but opts out of the state system altogether by sending her children to an independent school. The word for that is "hypocrisy", which we hear all too regularly from Labour members in Parliament.

There must be acknowledgement that parental rights are central to any discussion about children and young people. There is a danger of the state's interfering too much in what should be the private lives of individuals. We remember from the previous session of Parliament the debates about the previous Executive's plan to criminalise parents for smacking their children—a policy that I am pleased to say was withdrawn.

We heard much from the minister today about the philosophy and ethos behind the Executive's approach. Family breakdown is a major social ill and a primary cause of poverty, social exclusion, susceptibility to crime and ill health. All the statistics show that families that are headed by a married couple provide greater stability and support for children than do families that are headed by other relationships. That is not a moral point; it is backed up by statistics. However, the Executive is forever telling us that we should not smoke because it is bad for us, that we should eat healthily, that we should not eat fatty foods and that we should take exercise. It is forever giving us those moral messages, but it is very coy and quiet when it comes to talking about the stability of families. The Executive must give more thought to the matter.

A number of members referred to criminal justice. Robert Brown referred to funding for youth activities, which I have raised in Parliament often in the past. My friend Donald Gorrie has often talked about funding for Youth Clubs Scotland, which provides diversionary activities for young people and helps them to stay out of crime. I am sorry that the funding for Youth Clubs Scotland was cut by the Executive to below the level that was set by a previous Conservative Government.

The SNP amendment concerns the Airborne Initiative. I have heard the concerns that have been expressed in the chamber, although I am no expert on the subject. However, I understand that there are concerns that the Airborne Initiative is an expensive way of keeping people out of crime, but I suggest that it is probably not as expensive as locking them up in prison for many years. The SNP amendment is moderate and well worded and asks the Executive simply to reconsider the funding issue. We are therefore able to support it.

We agree that much has been done, but much more needs to be done to ensure a bright future for all our young people.

11:42

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** We have had a wide-ranging debate today and, with the exception of the Conservatives' flagship policy on education, it has been broadly consensual.

Alex Johnstone rightly showed considerable concern about young people in rural communities who might be denied the opportunity to have their education as locally as possible. However, I say to him that, in the context of the overall Conservative education policy, he might want to look at public-private partnerships. One of the most significant drivers of school closures in rural areas has been the need to aggregate schools in order to make public-private partnerships stack up. That is particularly true in Aberdeenshire, to which he referred earlier. The passport policy will not address that situation.

We also heard reference to the announcement about drugs in schools that was made by our Minister for Education and Young People—a slightly more moderate announcement than that which was made south of the border. I would like to know—perhaps as part of the Executive's wind-up speech—just how many of the 40,000-plus exclusions in recent times were related to drugs incidents. Will the consultation that the minister is conducting with the Headteachers' Association of Scotland include that particular question in order to decide whether to proceed with drugs testing in schools? I have significant doubts about the value of drugs testing in schools and I suspect that it will not enhance relationships in schools if a blanket policy is introduced.

We have covered a wide range of issues from social work training to access to child protection. There is general consensus on most of those areas, so I do not intend to dwell too much on them.

However, I will highlight an area that has not been covered so far. Some 1,200 children aged 16 and over leave care each year and six out of 10 of those children have no qualifications. Such young people do not get a good deal. The fact that three out of 10 people leave school with few or no qualifications means that young people in general do not have a good deal. The minister was anxious to tell us that he was seeking sound policies and I commend him for that. However, I suggest to him that constant repetition of "better deal" sounds more like a soundbite than a sound policy. It is worth while that so many of our young people go on to higher and further education. However, we do not appear to be focusing on the significant numbers of young people who leave school with few or no qualifications, whether they fall into the category of those who are leaving care, of whom six out of 10 have no qualifications, or whether they are from the general population, of whom three out of 10 have none.

Much of the debate has focused on the SNP amendment, which is a measured amendment that merely asks that the Executive reconsider its policy on Airborne. Most members have accepted the principle behind that position and we have heard some significant suggestions about how the policy might be developed and addressed by the Executive.

In the previous session, Dr Richard Simpson passed remarks to the effect that the Executive does not always get it right, that there are times when balanced choices must be made and that the Executive does not necessarily come up with the right answer immediately. That is absolutely correct and it is equally true that every voluntary sector project naturally tries to perpetuate itself, although not every project is worthy of continued existence. To get that balance right is not easy, but the suggestion in the SNP amendment is that there is a route out of the Airborne problem in the form of short-term funding that would allow proper reconsideration by the whole Parliament. The concerns that the Executive might have about the detail of how that project can work could be considered at that stage. We need a range of services to ensure overall delivery of the kind of work that has been undertaken by Airborne. I look forward to hearing positive news from the minister in the wind-up speech.

It is telling that not one Labour member commented on the SNP amendment, with the exception of the minister.

**Elaine Smith:** I made reference to the amendment.

**Brian Adam:** I apologise to Elaine Smith. I do not mean to have a stab at the Labour party; I think that it is positive that Labour members are not concerned negatively about the SNP approach to the matter and I am glad that they might be willing to listen to our approach. I hope that, at decision time at 5 o'clock, there will be an opportunity for reflection on the minister's earlier remarks.

11:49

**The Minister for Communities (Ms Margaret Curran):** I am pleased to be in Parliament this morning to underline how much we value our young people and to acknowledge the wide support for that throughout Parliament. It is vital that I, especially in my capacity as the minister who is progressing the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, have an opportunity such as this to emphasise the positive achievements of our young people both nationally and internationally. I am pleased that we have had the opportunity—although perhaps not as great an opportunity as I would like—to remind colleagues of the range and depth of the Executive's support for young people.

I have only a short time in which to make my speech, so I apologise if I do not respond to all of the wide range of points that were raised. I am sure that if I do not get to some of the points that Robin Harper and others raised we can find ways of ensuring that they are still responded to—I think that that will be down to Peter Peacock.

Let me address the Airborne Initiative. It may, for one project, have taken up a disproportionate part of the debate, but concerns were raised about it and it is appropriate that we address them. I understand that some members are concerned about the decision that has been taken on the Airborne Initiative. We wish, of course, to maximise all opportunities to keep young people out of prison and to enable everyone, wherever possible, to get another chance. We are strongly committed to rehabilitation and I have no hesitation in supporting that principle. I also say, however, that we owe it to all the young people who go through the programmes that the Executive supports to ensure that the programmes are of the highest quality and that they deliver. Sometimes, we have to hold our nerve when making difficult decisions—that is the life of members of the Executive.

The Executive is always happy to subject itself to parliamentary scrutiny on its decisions. The decision on the Airborne Initiative is no different. I listened closely to Robert Brown and I recognise the underlying principles and drives behind his

speech: I think that I now know his analysis of the world fairly well. As an ex-committee convener, I support strongly Parliament's committee system. I may not always like what committees say, but I support them strongly and, as a minister, I value their scrutiny and comment.

I recognise the fact that this is a challenging area of work. We seek to make real progress to find more community-based disposals and to widen programmes. As Peter Peacock said, we are being successful in widening programmes and we are delivering success. We are always happy to engage in debate on that, however, and we are always happy to make our views the subject of comment.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I apologise if I pre-empt anything that the minister is about to say. She referred to the suggestion that Robert Brown made, which is supported by members of various parties, and she says that she is happy to have parliamentary scrutiny. Could she give a response specifically to the proposal that has been made? Would the Executive consider guaranteeing the funding of the Airborne Initiative pending an inquiry by a parliamentary committee into the effectiveness and value for money of the project? I appreciate that different members have different views on the matter.

**Ms Curran:** I emphasise that we welcome parliamentary committees' views on priorities in this area. It is not appropriate for me to be specific about the matter at this moment, but I can confirm that we are happy to work with a committee of Parliament—as we always do—to consider the effectiveness of alternatives to custody, to consider the experience of practitioners and to consider what future options might be developed.

**Johann Lamont:** Does the minister accept that, although there are successful projects, it is necessary also to contemplate the possibility that some projects will be unsuccessful? Will the minister note Keith Raffan's suggestion that we need consistency? Will she outline how we could have a consistent approach so that every time a funding decision is made on a project it goes before a parliamentary committee for scrutiny? Does the minister agree that the role of the committees is to scrutinise the work of the Executive, but not to take lobbying positions on individual projects through committees to get a result out on the other side?

**Ms Curran:** I have some sympathy with what Johann Lamont says. I do not think that anyone in Parliament would ever want us to establish some sort of invidious beauty contest of projects, whereby projects were referred to committees or to the Executive only when they had publicity and high-powered support, in which case their funding would be somehow more protected. I do not think

that any member, including Robert Brown, would want us to get into that position.

It is vital that we focus on some of the substantial remarks that Peter Peacock made in his speech. The number of referrals for offending to the children's hearings system is 14,000, so we must get right our work in relation to young people. The review of the children's hearings system is one of the most significant policy developments in Scotland for some time in that area. Let me make it abundantly clear that we are very supportive of the work of the children's hearings system, and that we are looking to improve it.

Given the work that I have been doing on the matter, it is incumbent on me to emphasise the Executive's firm commitment to prevention and support. Our antisocial behaviour proposals will enhance the range of interventions that are available. The need to ensure that we have available a basket of interventions underlies much of the energy of the debate.

Our proposals will give agencies new tools with which to deal with the various forms of antisocial behaviour that communities experience. They will make it easier for multi-agency approaches to be adopted in relation to complex and sometimes intractable problems, and they will ensure that agencies are held accountable for their actions in order to protect and support the communities to which they are answerable. We will back such strategies with new money from the £30 million package of additional funding that I will make available over the next two years. That funding is over and above the package of £35 million that was announced by Cathy Jamieson.

**Pauline McNeill:** I appreciate the many concerns of my colleagues about youth offending, and about the Airborne Initiative in particular, but does the minister agree that it would have been helpful if the debate had been balanced by what Parliament should be driving towards, which is to ensure that support mechanisms are in place that take into account young people's opinions about what they want Parliament to do?

I spoke about how the music industry can capture the interest of young people. Does the minister agree that another approach could be taken through contemporary dance and linking that with our targets on physical activity? If we engage young people in things that matter to them, that will link to what Parliament is doing. Does the minister agree that that is an important side to the debate?

**Ms Curran:** I agree strongly with Pauline McNeill. One of my big ambitions with the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill is to ensure that we provide the necessary resources and support that will allow young people to engage in much broader activities.

When we talk about young people we tend sometimes to focus on offending. I think that we have broadened our policies, but Parliament desperately needs to broaden its conversation—the way in which we talk about young people. We need a panoply of resources to support young people.

Ken Macintosh's speech helped enormously in that regard, particularly in relation to our work around transport, education and the Young Scot card, which has made an extremely successful contribution to provision of support services to young people. I will not go through all the details of where we are with the Young Scot card now, but I will get those to Ken Macintosh later.

The partnership has made very strong statements about where we will go with regard to supporting young people. We will have a review of the children's hearings system, as has just been announced, and we will support the Scottish Youth Parliament. We have extended provision of fast-track children's hearings, and there is additional support for localised action on youth crime. In response to a point that was made by Fiona Hyslop, I can say that work on the national youth strategy, which will be a centrepiece of the progress that we intend to make in this area, is now being undertaken. We will be taking that work forward shortly, and I am happy to engage with people on it. I acknowledge that Fiona Hyslop has recognised the significance of that work.

As Pauline McNeill said, we have had to address a range of issues in the course of our work with young people, which involves schools and leisure facilities. We must provide for prevention and give young people support when they are in difficulty. Much more can be done in that regard.

One of the most significant points that arose during the debate, if I may go out of step with Pauline McNeill a wee bit, is the attention that is given to young people in care. I do not think that the debate is an appropriate occasion for us to argue with the Tories about what they did or did not do, or for them to make comments about whether we have got our targets right or achieved them. I like to think that we could achieve some political consensus and that we could actually prioritise the needs of young people in care, which is one of the biggest challenges that faces us as a society.

As the minister who has responsibility for housing, I look at the homeless figures and I try to wrestle with the question of how we solve the problem of homelessness in Scotland. I note that a disproportionate number of young people who have left care are homeless. As Peter Peacock said, we know who they are. There are services working with them, and we can effectively touch

and feel their lives. We need to—and we surely can—begin to get services right. On tackling the problems of young people in care, I argue that that is not a priority just of the Executive; it is worthy of Parliament and it is one of the central features of the work that we should take forward.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

#### 1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister and what issues he intends to raise. (S2F-656)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** I am looking forward to seeing the Prime Minister this evening and I am sure that we will have a lot to discuss.

**Mr Swinney:** I hope that the First Minister can get there on time.

Two weeks ago, the First Minister said that council tax was related to the ability to pay. If that is the case, why do the poorest families pay four times as much of their income in council tax as the richest families?

**The First Minister:** Council tax is broadly related to the ability to pay, but it is also a supplement to the national Government's funding of local authorities, contributions towards which come from income tax and other forms of national taxation. One of the express reasons why we have decided to have an independent review of local government finance is not only to consider alternatives to the council tax but to consider the range of council tax bands that were introduced by the Conservatives when the council tax was brought in and to decide whether those bands should still apply. I think that improvements can be made to the system and I hope that the independent review will consider such options.

**Mr Swinney:** The First Minister has not in any way tackled the problem of the burden of council tax on the poorest families. Over the past few years, the burden on richer families has remained almost static as a proportion of their income, but there has been a threefold increase in the burden on people on lower incomes. That is an enormous burden on lower-income households, even if council tax benefit is taken into account. It is a fact that council tax hits the poorest hardest. The First Minister has reiterated that there will be a review. What form of local taxation will he argue for in that independent review? Will he argue for the abolition, retention or amendment of the council tax system in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I am glad that Mr Swinney has acknowledged that council tax benefit is available. Council tax benefit is used by a higher proportion of pensioners than other people in Scotland. Such a benefit system exists to help those who have problems with making their



payments. That does not mean that the council tax is perfect and should not be reviewed. I hope that the independent review of local government finance will consider alternative ways of constructing council tax payments as well as alternative systems.

In the past, I have said that property taxation has a place in this country's system of taxation. Property taxation is easy to collect and is broadly related to people's wealth, which is an important factor. However, other issues in the local government finance system also require to be tackled. If an independent review of local government finance is established, I have a duty as First Minister not to prejudice its outcome and I have no intention of doing so.

**Mr Swinney:** I am interested in what the First Minister will argue for in the independent review. The Deputy First Minister's party has said:

"In Scotland, the Partnership Agreement with Labour commits the Executive to establishing an Independent Review of Local Government Finance, and Scottish Lib Dems will put the case for LIT to that review."

That is welcome. We will argue for a local income tax and I am sure that the socialists will argue for a service tax and the Greens will argue for a land value tax. However, I am interested in what the First Minister will argue for. It is clear that the council tax attacks the poorest in our society most. Is he going to defend a system that punishes the poorest in our society, or will he join the consensus in Scotland and support a system that is based on the ability to pay?

**The First Minister:** In last year's election campaign, Mr Swinney said throughout the country that he would magic up tax decreases for everybody from his equations. I did not hear him say then that he would put up taxes for all income tax payers, as his proposals would allow. That is an honourable position, but let us be honest about it, as the Liberal Democrats are. They argue their case openly at election time, as well as when they are making those kinds of points. The Labour Party's position was very clear in the election last year: we advocated a reformed council tax that would spread the bands more fairly so that people who could afford to pay more would do so and those who are currently in the lower bands would not pay as much as they do now. That was our view in last year's election campaign: that there should be a sensible reform of the council tax. However, we won 35 per cent of the vote last year, not 50 per cent. We work in a Parliament where power is shared with other parties and we are prepared to put our ideas into an independent review of local government finance. Let us all wait to see the outcome of that review.

## Cabinet (Meetings)

**2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-660)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** The next meeting of the Cabinet will, as usual, discuss our progress towards implementing the partnership agreement, but I might also let the Cabinet know what I discuss with Mr Blair this evening.

**David McLetchie:** I am sure that that will be a riveting conversation and perhaps we can look forward to exploring it at First Minister's question time next week.

Will the Cabinet have an opportunity next week to consider the Scottish Executive's long-awaited review of higher education funding? The First Minister will recall that Mr Wallace previously said that the review would be with the Executive before the end of February. Will it be published this week, before the end of February, or next week—a little later—or the week after that? What exactly is the timetable for the publication of the review? When will the Executive's conclusions on the review be made known to the public and to the Parliament?

**The First Minister:** The review will be published in the first half of March and the Deputy First Minister will make a public statement on our initial reaction to it before the end of March.

**David McLetchie:** I thank the First Minister for his answer, which is a little different from what the Scottish Executive's spokesman said to journalists, which was that the review would definitely be published next week.

No doubt there are issues that are still to be resolved and I raise one of those with the First Minister. He will have noticed this week that the new minister for kite flying, Mike Watson, suggested that the graduate endowment should be raised significantly to cover even more of the £70 million cost of student support, which would, in turn, allow the Executive to increase direct funding for universities. When I questioned the First Minister about the matter last month, he refused to rule out such an increase, so I ask again: will the First Minister rule out increasing the graduate endowment by more than the rate of inflation?

**The First Minister:** I hope that Mr McLetchie was not accusing Mr Watson of being a devious backstabber or anything like that. I think that Mr Watson deserves congratulations from the chamber on his recent marriage to Clare. [Applause.]

I welcome Mike Watson's contributions—and the many other contributions from members—to the

current debate on higher education funding. We have made no decisions on higher education funding, save for the important and principled decision that we will not introduce tuition fees or top-up fees for Scottish students in Scotland's universities. We will need to consider the higher education review that we receive from the working group that we established last year. We will assess the review and its implications and the Deputy First Minister will make an initial statement in March.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** We have an urgent constituency question.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I am sure that the First Minister was as alarmed as I was to hear the shock news last week of the closure of Caithness Glass, which produces the epitome of a quality product, which is recognised all over the world. Every single job in Wick is vital. The news came completely out of the blue—indeed, I understand that the enterprise network was not even warned of it. Will the First Minister give me an assurance that the Scottish Executive will do everything in its power to work with the enterprise network—and whomsoever—to identify a new buyer and to resuscitate that vital, quality firm in my constituency?

**The First Minister:** I think that we would all agree that Caithness Glass produces a quality product of which all Scotland can be proud. I would certainly be keen to give Jamie Stone the assurance that not only the enterprise networks but the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department will give every assistance to the local community to secure either alternative employment or an alternative owner to ensure continued production in the Wick area.

### Young Offenders (Rehabilitation)

**3. Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive ensures that projects that specialise in the rehabilitation of young offenders are effective and represent good use of taxpayers' money. (S2F-674)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Almost all projects for young offenders are the responsibility of local authorities in Scotland. Local authorities are also responsible for the on-going monitoring and evaluation of all locally based young offender programmes, including full consideration of the effectiveness of the programmes and, which is important, their value for money.

**Karen Gillon:** The First Minister will be aware of the debate that surrounds the Executive's decision to withdraw funding from the Airborne Initiative in my constituency. I would be grateful if the First

Minister could outline the reasons behind the decision. I ask the First Minister to ensure that the positive aspects of the Airborne Initiative can be passed on and used by others who operate in the field of alternatives to custody.

**The First Minister:** I am very keen to do that. The decision on the Airborne Initiative's latest application for funding was made on the grounds of effectiveness and value for money and on the basis of comparisons with other programmes. It was not to do with the amount of money that is being spent on offender programmes or in other parts of the Executive's budget. Every single penny of the money that would have been spent on Airborne in the next financial year will be spent on other offender programmes that we believe are more effective in tackling offending outwith custody.

I believe that alternatives to custody are vital in Scotland. Our prison population is far too high. We need to have effective alternatives to custodial prison sentences. In particular, we need to ensure that alternatives are in place for the most serious young offenders, who are the people who go on to offend again and again in a life of crime.

The Airborne Initiative will have given us some important lessons that can be taken into other projects in the years to come. I welcome the scrutiny that will take place if one of our parliamentary committees decides to look at the issue of reoffending and at the contribution that these programmes make to tackling reoffending.

Let us go forward with the commitment not only to achieving value for money but to doing something about a problem that has plagued Scotland for too long. The number of custodial sentences is far too high. Programmes in the community that tackle the reasons that lie behind why young people get themselves into the situation of offending are worth our support. I hope that we can further improve them in the years to come.

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** Given that a distinguished and expert group of individuals including a former High Court judge, the ex-chief inspectors of prisons for Scotland and England and the chair of the Scottish Civic Forum believe that the Airborne Initiative is worth supporting, has the First Minister considered the possibility that the Executive, perhaps with the best of intentions, has got it wrong? Will he consider, as a possible compromise solution, guaranteeing the funding of the Airborne Initiative pending an inquiry into the effectiveness and value for money of the project by one of the Parliament's committees?

**The First Minister:** I understand that the initiative has been the subject of some debate in the chamber this morning. I want to be very clear

that the suggestion that Nicola Sturgeon made would be a wrong step precisely because the money will be better used in the other offender programmes that will receive it in the next financial year. If the assessment was that those programmes are more effective than Airborne in dealing with the same group of young offenders, it would be wrong of us to take the money from those more effective programmes and return it to Airborne.

I believe that good lessons are to be learned from some aspects of the Airborne Initiative. That is why the Executive will not only take those lessons on board but welcome any scrutiny by a parliamentary committee. The better informed we are about the best solutions to the problem, the better will be the decisions that all of us make. Frankly, the less party political those decisions are in the period ahead, the better they will be.

The area is one that requires serious national debate in Scotland. Next month, we will launch a very open consultation on tackling reoffending. The consultation will look at all the alternatives and at the best way ahead for Scotland. International comparisons will be made as will comparisons between individual schemes in Scotland. That is the way ahead for us to tackle the issue. Ultimately, our objective has to be to reduce reoffending and to ensure that those young people get a better start to their adult lives than it is clear they had as youngsters.

#### **Affordable Housing (Rural Areas)**

**4. Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister whether any new measures are planned to help rural communities to access land for affordable housing. (S2F-666)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Our partnership agreement commits us to increasing the availability of affordable housing in rural areas and that is exactly what we are doing. This year, we are investing £59 million through Communities Scotland and, last October, at the convention of the Highlands and Islands, we announced an extra £10 million for rural housing. However, because sites and services are also an issue, we are working with the Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Water, for example, to increase the supply of good-quality serviced sites in rural Scotland so that, when the funds are available, they can be properly used to put houses on the ground.

**Richard Lochhead:** Is the First Minister aware that the lifeblood of many of our rural communities is being lost as local people—particularly young people—are unable to afford to live in their own homes and communities where they were born and bred? Many communities are spending years trying to get round the obstacles to access land

and build affordable housing. It is the duty of the Government and the Parliament to demolish those obstacles. Given that access to cheap land is the crux of the problem, will the First Minister bring forward specific radical measures to ensure that communities and people can access cheap land, which is a huge element of the cost of building a new house in rural Scotland? Will he give powers to our rural communities to compulsorily purchase local land?

**The First Minister:** Land is being examined as part of the review of affordable housing—into which yesterday we added possible changes to Scotland's population projections. That is part of the reason why we have been looking at the role of the Forestry Commission and its land in releasing capacity for housing developments. In the Highlands in particular, we have also looked at the potential for some of the larger estates to release land. I have had a number of discussions about that with Highland Council, which is interested in the subject. The Minister for Communities goes to the Highlands on 15 March to conduct further discussions.

We will continue to look at possible solutions, but we should not take away from the fact that there has been a shift in recent years. Thousands of new homes are being built in rural Scotland. I will open a new development on the Isle of Arran—my homeland—at the end of March. New housing developments are being built, but there are not yet enough of them, which is why we have to do more.

**John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** Will the First Minister welcome with me the work of housing trusts such as the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust that are trying to deliver low-cost private housing in high-pressure areas? In view of the First Minister's announcement yesterday about encouraging the immigration of skilled workers to Scotland, how does the Executive plan to address the consequential increase in housing demand in rural areas?

**The First Minister:** As I said yesterday in my statement, we have asked Margaret Curran, the Minister for Communities, to examine the potential consequences of a positive shift in Scotland's population projections as part of the review of affordable housing. She is going to take that matter forward.

The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust does a very good job. It is precisely such local organisations that can provide some of the solutions to ensure that appropriate affordable housing is available in small communities. Where small communities feel a sense of ownership of and loyalty towards housing developments, we find a stronger community at the end of the day.

### Random Drug Testing (Schools)

#### 5. Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife)

**(LD):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Executive intends introducing random drug testing in schools. (S2F-672)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Scottish teachers are already aware of the need to be alert to signs of drug misuse in schools. The guidance that we issued in June 2000 sets out the action that should be taken by schools if a young person is found in possession of drugs, is suspected of intending to supply drugs, or is suspected of being under the influence of drugs. However, this week, Peter Peacock has written to the head teachers' associations to ask for their views on random drug testing, and we would listen to those views carefully before we took any further action or had any further discussions.

**Mr Raffan:** When the First Minister meets the Prime Minister this evening, will he tell him of some of the highly effective ways that we have in Scotland of tackling drug problems in schools, from which Mr Blair can learn? Will he tell him of Kirkcaldy's schools, where when teachers detect a problem—and they do not need a sniffer dog or a blood test to do so—they call in an excellent organisation called Clued Up to help with drugs education? Will he accept an invitation from the local member Marilyn Livingstone and me to visit Clued Up, to see at first hand the great work that it does, and to visit a school with it? He can bring the Prime Minister along with him.

**The First Minister:** If it is possible for me to do so, I will be happy to visit Clued Up in Kirkcaldy. I had the informative experience—I will not say pleasure—of visiting the Phoenix House project in Aberdeen towards the end of last year. Although the stories that one hears in those situations from the people who have been struggling with a drug addiction can be chilling, their determination to recover their lives and get off drugs and the assistance that they are getting from their peers and professionals in the field are inspiring. We should support those projects, of which there are not enough throughout Scotland.

It is important in our review of rehabilitation services, which is under way, that we have a positive outcome and ensure that we not only remain hard on those who sell drugs in Scotland but give every support to those who want to get off drugs and recover their lives.

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** I welcome the First Minister's comments and I am pleased to hear that he will consult the head teachers. The existence of drug testing might lead some vulnerable young people to switch to more exotic drugs and I hope that he will take that on board. I ask him to ensure that all our schools

have dedicated drugs workers, because at the moment the service is patchy and is not provided across the board. Many of the drugs workers have been taken off duty in schools because of the shortage of social workers. I ask the First Minister to ensure that we have dedicated drugs workers in schools who know what they are talking about and know how to support children and help teachers to identify problems.

**The First Minister:** I am happy to ensure that that issue is considered properly in the current review of rehabilitation services. It is vital that services are available to school communities as well as to communities, parents and families. There has been nothing more heartbreaking for me in the past two years in which I have been First Minister than meeting families who have been told that they have to wait for rehabilitation services. We have to tackle the issue and we will do so and publish our proposals in the near future.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** Does the First Minister accept that random drug testing in the absence of authorisation from parents is likely to encounter extremely strong opposition?

**The First Minister:** I am conscious of the views that have been expressed this week about random drug testing, which is why Peter Peacock has written to the head teachers' associations; head teachers are the people who can give us the best assessment of their current powers and the way in which they handle matters.

I do not imagine that there is a parent in Scotland who would be unco-operative if there were a serious suspicion that their youngster was involved in drugs. I hope that parents throughout Scotland take their responsibilities seriously. When they do, we can give them every support to get their youngsters back on the straight and narrow.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** Does the First Minister agree that Scottish education policy must not be made on the hoof in reaction to domestic headline-grabbing initiatives by the Prime Minister? The drugs issue in Scotland is too important to be dealt with in that way. Does the First Minister understand that neither parents nor teachers have asked for random drug testing in schools? If the head teachers reject the invitation that the First Minister has given them to implement such powers, will he apologise for wasting their time?

**The First Minister:** I have to say to Ms Hyslop that if she ever gets the chance to meet parents who are in that situation, she might regret the sort of statements that she has just made in trying to score party-political points on the issue.

Drug taking among teenagers—and sometimes those who are not even teenagers—not just in schools but in communities throughout Scotland is a deadly serious issue for the parents of the children involved and for the parents of children who might be in contact with children who have taken drugs or are selling drugs. It is a serious issue, because dealers exploit young children more effectively than they can exploit adults. Any solution to that problem is worth considering properly and carefully. That is precisely why Peter Peacock has written to the head teachers' associations and why in England and Wales guidelines are being circulated, which I hope are effective.

We in Scotland have a way of dealing with the matter. We issued guidelines in 2000. We might have to update them and if we do we will consider that seriously and debate it openly. At the forefront of our minds should be tackling the problem, supporting parents and helping children out of drugs situations. Making excuses for that sort of nonsense does not wash.

### **Genetically Modified Crops**

**6. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the First Minister who will make the final decision about whether genetically modified crops are grown commercially in Scotland. (S2F-655)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** There are a number of hurdles that anyone wishing to commercialise a GM crop must overcome. First, European directive 2001/18/EC provides the legal framework regulating the importing and cultivation of GM crops. Decisions are taken by the member states and the European Commission on a collective basis. The Scottish Executive is fully involved in decisions to determine the UK position.

Secondly, it is necessary for a plant variety to be added to the national seeds list in the UK. That is a collective decision of the UK Government and the devolved Administrations. It is a reassurance measure for farmers—it is not a safety assessment. The crop must already have passed a rigorous assessment that it presents no increased risk to human health or the environment, under directive 2001/18/EC.

Thirdly, if, and only if, GM crops were proceeding to commercial growing, we would wish to have in place a co-existence regime that provided reassurance to both organic and conventional farmers and to the public. This is a devolved matter, but one where we might wish to take a common approach across the UK.

**Alex Johnstone:** The First Minister might be aware that I am not personally opposed to this technology but have expressed grave concerns

about the way in which public opinion was left behind long ago. Will he undertake that, if there is to be a separate Scottish decision, there will be a separate and comprehensive Scottish consultation in advance of that decision?

**The First Minister:** I have tried to explain to Alex Johnstone the complex network of decision making and the various legal layers at which decisions will be made. It is important that we actively participate in the process and take on board the outcome of the consultation processes that we have already had which, like almost every survey, demonstrate that there is genuine public concern about the consumption of foods containing GM ingredients and the release of those organisms into the wild. I believe that it is the job of Government and the industry to respond to those concerns and have regard to them. I give the member an absolute assurance that, if science shows that there would be harm to individuals or the environment, GM crops will not be grown in Scotland.

**Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Is the First Minister aware that there have been no long-term studies of the effects of genetically modified organisms on human and animal health and that there is mounting evidence that GM maize causes increased mortality in the livestock that eat it? Who is liable for the harmful effects that might occur in Scotland once Chardon LL maize is commercialised? Does he agree that it is time that the Executive came off the fence, defended the precautionary principle in its partnership agreement and used its existing powers to block the addition of Chardon LL maize to the UK seeds list?

**The First Minister:** That decision is currently being discussed among all the devolved and national Governments in the UK. There are no current proposals, as far as I am aware, for GM maize to be grown in Scotland, but we have an interest in the decision and are involved in discussions.

Ultimately, we must have regard to the scientific evidence. If the scientific evidence shows that there will be harm to humans or the environment, we will not allow the crops to be grown in Scotland. If the scientific evidence shows otherwise, we will have to take that on board.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am pleased to hear the First Minister's assurances. Does he agree that Scotland should focus on producing premium crops in a GM-free environment?

**The First Minister:** One way in which we should do that is by supporting the organic sector in Scotland and our recent increases in funding for the sector and our strategy for organics are doing

just that. That strategy has my full support and I am sure that, when Ross Finnie returns, he will be desperate to get on with it.

14:30

*On resuming—*

12:29

*Meeting suspended until 14:30.*

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Question 1 has been withdrawn.

#### Asthma

**2. Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what research is being undertaken into the incidence of asthma in Scotland. (S2O-1375)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** In 2002, Scotland took part in an international study of asthma and allergies in schoolchildren that suggested that, while the diagnosis of asthma had become more common since 1995, the prevalence of symptoms had declined. The Global Initiative for Asthma has suggested that, of the countries involved in its survey, Scotland has the highest incidence of the symptoms of asthma among 13 to 14-year-olds. Both those studies have yet to be published, but their findings, when available, will inform the policies and clinical practices of NHS Scotland.

**Cathy Peattie:** I suggest that the minister also considers research into environmental factors, such as damp housing or the wrong kind of central heating, and, more important, into understanding asthma drugs. Many parents do not understand the role of asthma drugs or which inhaler their children should use. People often get a prescription and use their blue inhaler when that does not help to prevent asthma. I suggest that a lot of work needs to be done on the promotion of self-management in relation to asthma. That might help in relation to some of the figures that we are dealing with.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Cathy Peattie made two points. I hesitate to discuss the first when the Minister for Communities, who has responsibility for housing, is sitting on my right. However, I have been aware of the issue since I had that responsibility—which was a long time ago—and the issue bears examination.

On the second point, Cathy Peattie obviously speaks from a great deal of knowledge and is on to an important issue, part of which might be able to be developed through our commitment to the development of personal health plans. That approach will be of considerable relevance to asthma sufferers, as indicated, I think, by the recent Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network guideline on the management of asthma.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** According to the National Asthma Campaign, pollution is the biggest concern for people with asthma. Some 70 per cent of sufferers say that traffic fumes make their asthma worse. Will the minister work with his colleagues in other departments and urge them to adopt policies such as the establishment of car-free residential developments, the designation of low-emission zones and the setting of national traffic reduction targets for Scotland?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I hesitate to speculate on all the different factors in the causes of asthma, because I have discussed the matter recently with several clinicians and there seems to be a degree of uncertainty about it. In fact, I was curious to discover last week, when I looked into the matter, that the incidence of asthma is just as high on the island of Skye, for example, as it is in industrial areas. The issue is complex, but I am sure that the objectives that Patrick Harvie flags up are desirable for health in general terms, so to that extent I certainly agree with him.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I would be quite happy for the minister to have a chat with his colleague with responsibility for housing, if he wants to, before he answers this question. Is he aware of the research that was carried out by Stirling Howieson of the University of Strathclyde into ventilation rates, indoor humidity and dust mite allergens, which concluded that the design and use patterns of Scotland's houses are highly likely to be the most significant single driver of the current asthma pandemic in Scotland? Will ministers consider the implications of that research for housing standards in Scotland and the Government's central heating and energy efficiency programmes and report back to the Parliament?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I am certainly aware of that research. I remember that when I was a member of the Health and Community Care Committee I met Stirling Howieson—in fact, I wrote a paper for the committee that included some of his research, but I do not know what happened to it; because I left the committee it seemed to disappear somewhere. I am sure that Margaret Curran is also aware of those issues and that, together, we can explore those important matters.

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** While I am on my feet, I bring greetings from the Speaker and members of the Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands.

Further to the questions that have been asked, what guidance on self-management plans will be given to education authorities to ensure that self-management can be carried out safely during the school day?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** That is certainly something that we will want to look at as we develop the idea of personal health plans more generally. Working in partnership with patients is an important way forward in the management of chronic disease. This week I spoke to the person who is organising the primary care and diabetes collaborative improvement programme. Certainly, the idea of working in partnership with patients, which includes self-management, is an important part of that programme. I am sure that we will look at the issues that relate to schools as part of that work.

### Schools (Edinburgh)

**3. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has received representations about the City of Edinburgh Council's school catchment areas review. (S2O-1366)

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock):** We have had four representations from parents.

**Margaret Smith:** The minister will be aware of the grave concerns about the Craigmount High School review, particularly from parents in the Gylemuir area. Will the minister confirm whether the Education Department will be called on to look at the matter and whether, in so doing, it will look not only at the review process but at the content of the decision that is being taken? Will he confirm that parental views, parental rights and human rights legislation—among other things—will be recognised in the decision?

**Peter Peacock:** The statutory position is that decisions about school catchment areas or school closures are devolved to local authorities. There are, however, provisions for certain decisions to be referred to ministers. Margaret Smith referred to a school that is more than 80 per cent full, in which case the matter would be referred to ministers for their consent before any changes to the boundaries could be made. In that context, it would be quite wrong of me to comment on the specific instance that she raised; if the council concerned decided to change the school boundaries, the case might in fact be referred to me.

Clearly, such decisions are difficult for local authorities. However, it is the case that shifts in population happen over time in local authority areas. Whereas some schools are over capacity, others are under capacity, and local authorities have to seek to address such issues.

As I said, if the council concerned decided to proceed, the case could come to me. Given that these matters are devolved to the local authorities and that the school meets the more-than-80 per cent criterion, we would look not at the merits of

the case per se but at whether the council had followed the procedures that it is required to follow under statute. I have no reason to believe that the procedures are not entirely compliant with human rights legislation, but I am happy to write to Margaret Smith about that.

#### **Galleries and Museums (Fife)**

**4. Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether ministers have any plans to visit galleries or museums in Fife. (S2O-1350)

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** I intend to continue visiting a wide range of arts and cultural venues and locations across Scotland. I look forward to visiting Fife at a future date, diary permitting.

**Iain Smith:** When the minister finally gets to Fife, I am sure that he will be made aware of the many excellent galleries and museums in north-east Fife, including the Scottish Fisheries Museum at Anstruther. I would like to draw his attention in particular to the Crawford Arts Centre and hope that he will accept my invitation to visit the centre to see for himself the excellent work that it does, not only for north-east Fife and St Andrews but for the whole of Fife. Is he aware that the Crawford Arts Centre is the only contemporary visual arts centre—indeed, it is the only visual arts project—in Fife to receive core funding from the Scottish Arts Council and that that funding is now under threat?

**Mr McAveety:** I recognise the concern of the member and of those who are involved in the work that is being undertaken by Crawford Arts Centre as the key visual arts centre for the whole of the Fife area; I also recognise the support that it gives to others.

I am aware that a feasibility study is being undertaken; the study is led by the University of St Andrews, which is the owner of the arts centre. I hope that the outcome of the study might lead to a realignment of the centre and the priorities that are emerging from the Scottish Arts Council in line with our general cultural direction. I hope that we will see a long-term future for the Crawford Arts Centre.

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I know that the minister is aware of the work that is going on in my constituency of Kirkcaldy in central Fife to develop a creative arts and cultural strategy. We have seen a decline in manufacturing industry in the area and we are looking to fill the gap. I wrote to the minister to invite him to my constituency. Does he agree that it would be worth while for him to come and look at the partnership work that is going on in Fife?

**Mr McAveety:** As I said earlier, I am happy to try to find time, diary permitting, to visit a variety of

places in Fife. If that can be done, I would like to facilitate the visits that members have raised today. However, what I can say is that, as a result of informal discussions, I hope that we can highlight some of the effective ways in which we can develop partnership. If we are serious about developing cultural partnerships, we need the involvement of local communities and many other organisations, such as the enterprise network and local authorities. The more that we work in that way, the more likely it is that we will have a sustainable arts future in the long term, not only for Kirkcaldy but for Fife in general.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Is the minister aware that funding for the Crawford Arts Centre has stood still for 10 years? Is he further aware that the arts centre discovered from a press release that there was no guarantee that it would receive funding beyond 2005? It has not yet been given any explanation by the Scottish Arts Council about why it will not receive funding beyond 2005. I hope that the minister visits the Crawford Arts Centre but, before he does so, will he rattle the cage of the Scottish Arts Council and ensure that it is in contact with the arts centre so that it can explain the rationale behind the decisions? That is no way for a public body to act, and the Scottish Arts Council should take far more positive steps to build relationships instead of trying to destroy them.

**Mr McAveety:** I assure the member that I have raised the issue of the handling of recent announcements by the Scottish Arts Council directly with its chief executive and chairperson. Decisions about priorities and criteria are assessed by peer groups in the respective art forums—the visual arts forum, in this case. I suggest that we await the outcome of the feasibility study. I hope that there will be synchronicity with the broad direction being taken by the Scottish Arts Council and the Executive, so that the concerns that the member has raised about the longer-term future of the arts centre can be addressed.

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I endorse what has been said about the future of the Crawford Arts Centre in St Andrews. I also welcome the fact that Frank McAveety might decide to visit the kingdom of Fife, despite the problems announced by former First Minister Henry McLeish, who appeared to think that everybody from outwith the kingdom of Fife was part of some kind of Labour mafia.

Perhaps Mr McAveety, as one of the senior capos, will take the opportunity, if he comes to Fife, to visit the Byre Theatre in St Andrews, which is one of the jewels in Scotland's artistic crown. I have already discussed with Bryan Beattie the possibility of the minister coming along. Perhaps



he might bring with him Richard Findlay, the director of the new national theatre, so that they can talk about future possible commissions for the Byre Theatre in St Andrews.

**Mr McAveety:** I have a funny feeling from all those requests that I might not get out of Fife—if I ever manage to get there in the first place.

I have a liberal and enlightened view of how arts can transform communities. I do not share the view of my predecessor; I think that arts are for everyone in Scotland, not just for those in central Scotland, the north of Scotland or Fife. If I can find the time to address those issues, I will be happy to do so. I have had many great cultural experiences in Fife—[*Laughter.*]. Since my obsession with central Scotland is a particular sport, I am delighted that Jock Stein had great success in Fife when he was the manager of Dunfermline.

### Skiing

**5. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it will support the Scottish skiing industry. (S2O-1361)

**The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace):** Promotional support for the industry is provided by VisitScotland. In respect of business development, the enterprise networks will consider business proposals put to them that aim to provide a sustainable future for the Scottish skiing industry.

**Mike Rumbles:** While I fully understand the fact that the Executive cannot bail out an ailing company, such as that at Glenshee, it can support a new buyer who is willing to invest in a diversified venture. Will the minister do all he can to ensure that such support is forthcoming to any potential buyer? Not only is the skiing industry important to Scotland, but it provides a much needed economic stimulus to remote communities such as Braemar in my constituency.

**Mr Wallace:** I am very conscious of the importance of industries such as the skiing industry in places such as Braemar; indeed, I recognise the representations that Mr Rumbles and Mr Swinney have made on that issue—a subsidiary of the company concerned has a golf complex in Mr Swinney's constituency. I can assure Mr Rumbles that, once a preferred bidder has been identified, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Lochaber Enterprise—within whose area lies the Glencoe ski resort, which is owned by the same company—will be willing to discuss detailed options for assistance. They will have my full support and encouragement in that.

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** I reinforce Mr Rumbles's comments. The Glenshee Chairlift Company, which is in some jeopardy at the moment, makes a serious economic contribution in my constituency. The lesson that the Executive must take from the whole debate about public support, including investment support, for the skiing industry is that an overall strategic approach must be taken throughout Scotland to guarantee that individual centres are not jeopardised. Allocating public expenditure to one particular venture in the country, rather than spreading it strategically across ventures, puts into jeopardy local economies such as that in my constituency.

**Mr Wallace:** I certainly hear the point that Mr Swinney makes. With regard to present situation, I am assured that both Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been in discussions with the Glenshee Chairlift Company about its difficulties. In looking to the future, it is important for us to continue to try to identify what support might be available if a possible new buyer is identified. It is also important for us to give general support to the skiing industry in Scotland, which, as Mr Swinney and Mr Rumbles rightly point out, brings useful employment to areas where it is difficult to identify other sources of employment.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** Although I add my support to both my colleagues who mentioned the importance of the Glenshee resort, will the minister also recognise the vital role that is played by Glencoe in skiing in Scotland and the importance of Cairngorm, which is also in my constituency? The funicular railway there is an excellent facility that is able to operate all year round. If the building at the bottom of the Canongate is not ready by July, would the top station of the funicular be an appropriate place where we could meet for our deliberations?

**Mr Wallace:** Mr Ewing will recognise that I have already referred to the Glencoe resort and to the fact that Lochaber Enterprise is keen to work alongside the company with regard to future developments there. It is right to make the point that one of Cairngorm's advantages is that it has opportunities for activities all year round. Without trying to speculate on what might happen at Glenshee or Glencoe, it may well be that as we look to the future we do not consider only skiing. However, that is a matter for potential buyers to consider as matters progress in the area.

### European Year of Education Through Sport

**6. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to promote and encourage participation in the European year of education through sport. (S2O-1354)

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** I was delighted to help with the Scottish launch of the European year of education through sport at Hyndland Secondary School in Glasgow earlier this month. The roll-out of our active schools programme, in which we are investing £24 million, is a fitting way to mark the initiative. SportsScotland, on behalf of the Executive, is working with the Youth Sport Trust, the United Kingdom co-ordinating body, on taking forward activity during the year.

**Irene Oldfather:** No doubt the minister is aware that the campaign's slogan is, "Move your body, stretch your mind". Perhaps he intends to lead by example on that.

I particularly want to ask the minister about the soccer lingua programme to teach and promote languages through football. Does he agree that the programme presents a real opportunity to demonstrate that languages are not just for the classroom but can be used in a wider sense in sport and can be fun? Will he do what he can to encourage Scottish young people to participate in the programme?

**Mr McAveety:** I am willing to pursue that and to ensure that young people benefit from awareness of the programme. Access to languages is obviously a key element as we move into a wider market for sporting activity and opportunity. I give the member an assurance that we want to work with sporting bodies and their representatives. I have already met representatives of the Scottish Professional Footballers Association to consider ways in which players can have a learning package that is much more flexible than the singular package that has sometimes been their experience at club level. Perhaps languages can be one way of doing that and of encouraging players when they get the European contracts that they are interested in.

### **Schools (Sustainable Energy)**

**7. Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive what public investment the commitment to build 300 new schools by 2009 represents and what possibilities such investment offers in respect of sustainable energy. (S2O-1369)

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock):** The current approved commitment to spending on the school estate represents some £2,000 million of new investment. Under the partnership agreement, new schools should demonstrate commitment to the highest design and environmental standards.

**Mr Ruskell:** Will the minister tell me whether the public-private partnerships that are building the schools can make use of Executive grants, such

as those that are given by the Energy Saving Trust and the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative, to cover the higher capital costs of installing renewable energy options such as wood-fired heating systems? Parents who are involved with a particular PPP scheme near Aberfeldy are keen to have such systems installed in their school.

**Peter Peacock:** I am happy to write to Mr Ruskell about the details of what can and cannot be accessed by way of funds. Generally speaking, we are seeing extremely innovative design in PPP projects in Scotland, whether or not they have access to those funds. They are using new energy-efficient techniques, new insulation techniques and new heating systems, and are trying to do that work in an imaginative and modern way to improve the design of schools in their own environment.

Huge benefit to the environment can come from the massive investment that we are making in school education. We expect design to be of the highest standard. We have issued guidelines to support that and have held two conferences to help people to share good practice in the design of new schools throughout Scotland.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's positive response. I suggest that guidance could set standards for the whole of Scotland, requiring every education authority to consider the opportunities that renewable energy presents, for example. That would embed renewable energy in all school projects at the start and would mean that the 30-year life cycle analyses would begin to generate the projects. That would happen only if the Executive required all local authorities to consider such matters in progressing that massive programme of public expenditure throughout Scotland.

**Peter Peacock:** I am happy to keep the guidelines under review and to consider incorporating whatever practices would benefit not only schools, but their surrounding environment and the more general environment. An unprecedented opportunity is available, because investment at the current level will not occur again for the best part of a century. We must take the opportunities to make advances now, because we will not have them again. I am keen to do whatever I can to support the actions that Sarah Boyack and Mr Ruskell said that they want to be pursued. I would be happy to hear from either of them about what they would like to be included in guidance.

### **Area Tourist Boards Review**

**8. Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive on

what date it will publish the review of area tourist boards. (S2O-1347)

**The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety):** We need to ensure that the area support structure for Scottish tourism meets the needs of the rapidly changing tourism market. The ad hoc ministerial group on tourism is presenting its report to the Cabinet. That report will cover the area tourist board review in the context of wider Scottish tourism issues. An announcement will be made in Parliament as soon as the report has been agreed.

**Mr McGrigor:** I thank the minister for his answer, but we were promised an announcement before the 2003 election. As tourism is Scotland's biggest industry and brings in billions of pounds, why is it still waiting for the results of a major review of its structure? The result of that review has been delayed time and again and the new tourism season is almost upon us.

The perception in the industry is that the Executive does not care enough for Scotland's first industry, especially given the shambles of *visitscotland.com*. How can the Executive pretend to promote Scotland as a must-visit destination when our tourist boards are still paralysed?

**Mr McAveety:** I give the assurance that the Executive considers tourism to be a key element of economic growth and development, which is why we have had for the first time a series of discussions with ministers with different portfolios about presenting to Cabinet in the near future ways in which we can ensure that we address the wider issues, not just the structures.

I am sure that Jamie McGrigor would agree that no one says that dealing with structures is the single solution to Scottish tourism's problems. We need to combine a long-term training and development strategy with—as the First Minister said yesterday—attracting fresh talent, particularly from throughout Europe, to contribute to meeting the hospitality sector's needs, and with more effective marketing. Pulling all those elements together has taken time but, in the long run, we will make the right decision. Once the Cabinet has made its decision, which will happen in the near future, we will announce it to the Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 9 has been withdrawn.

### **Skin Cancer (Surgery)**

**10. Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what the role is of Mohs micrographic surgery in the management of skin cancer in the national health service. (S2O-1334)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** Mohs surgery is used to treat some skin cancers, such as cancers with a high recurrence rate or cancers on the face.

**Mr Macintosh:** Is the minister aware of the benefits of Mohs techniques, in particular for cancer patients who face invasive and potentially disfiguring surgery around the eyes, nose or ears? Is he aware that, unlike the United States or even England and Wales, which have 27 Mohs specialist consultants, Scotland has no nationally available Mohs service, although the surgical procedure is long established and effective? Will he investigate the work of Dr Robert Herd and Dr Colin Fleming in Glasgow, Perth and Dundee, to see whether their efforts to deliver one Mohs session a month might be expanded to make Mohs surgery available to patients throughout Scotland?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I agree that we need to make more Mohs surgery available, but I am advised that it will remain a fairly low-volume procedure throughout Scotland. The national service advisory group concluded that Mohs surgery was best organised regionally. It has asked the regional planning groups to take the issue on board and I will ensure that that happens. It is thought appropriate to organise the treatment regionally, given that it is a low-cost, low-volume procedure.

### **Road Traffic (Targets)**

**11. Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Executive what consideration it has given to setting interim targets as part of its policy to stabilise road traffic at 2001 levels by 2021. (S2O-1370)

**The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen):** We have considered interim targets, but our clear priority is to deliver a major programme of investment in public transport improvements. Spending on public transport will increase by 70 per cent from 2002-03 to 2005-06.

**Chris Ballance:** Given that other ministers, such as the Minister for Communities, set targets—for example, for fuel poverty—including interim targets based on the latest data and a requirement to report, and given that traffic levels are continuing to rise, does the minister not think that it is necessary to turn a pledge into a policy by reporting regularly to the Parliament on interim targets?

**Nicol Stephen:** I could spend time reporting regularly on interim targets or I could get on with the programme of work that I believe is vital if we are to deliver improvements. This week I was present when work started on the Larkhall to Milngavie rail line—the first branch line to be

reopened in Scotland in the past 25 years. The previous such line was reopened in 1979. We have many other ambitious projects: the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line and the Borders rail link, bills for which are already before the Parliament; the Edinburgh tram projects; the Airdrie to Bathgate line; the Glasgow crossrail project; the Aberdeen crossrail project; and the Invernet project. This is one of the most ambitious programmes of investment in public transport that there has ever been in Scotland and we are determined to deliver on it. That is the way to get passenger numbers to increase, to make the shift to public transport and to deliver on a real commitment.

### **Council Tax (Glasgow)**

**12. Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will discuss with Glasgow City Council the council's level of uncollected council tax. (S2O-1341)

**The Minister for Finance and Public Services (Mr Andy Kerr):** I meet Glasgow City Council regularly. I have encouraged all councils, including Glasgow, to keep up the year-on-year improvement in council tax collection levels.

**Bill Aitken:** The minister will be aware that Glasgow's record in this respect has not been good. Far from improving, the council tax collection level in Glasgow is now something like 8 per cent lower than the Scottish average, resulting in £23,326,538 not being collected in the previous full financial year. Given that that uncollected tax results in the average band D council tax payer in Glasgow having to pay an additional £123, does the minister not think that his discussions with Glasgow City Council should take on a somewhat more urgent tone?

**Mr Kerr:** I am sure that the member will be aware that the Tories' poll tax made it acceptable not to pay council tax in many communities. I point out that £126 million of the £281 million debt in Glasgow is a direct result of the Tories' poll tax. The Tories are culpable in the matter of collection rates. Since reorganisation, the increase in Glasgow City Council's council tax collection rates has been above average. In fact, since reorganisation, it has collected 10 per cent more and the collection rate has now reached 83 per cent. That is not enough and we want councils to do more. I want to work with the Labour-led council in Glasgow, which in the past three years has delivered below-inflation increases in council tax and will continue to do so next year. I also support the pay up for Glasgow campaign.

### **National Health Service (Patient Transfer)**

**13. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many patients are currently

awaiting transfer from NHS hospitals to care homes. (S2O-1352)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** Information on patients whose discharge from hospital is delayed for reasons other than clinical need is collected nationally by means of a quarterly census. The latest published information, from the October 2003 census, showed that 581 people in NHS hospitals were awaiting transfer to care homes, of whom 418 had been delayed outwith the six-week discharge planning period.

**Mr Stone:** Although I do not contest what the Scottish Executive is trying to do, I have recently had several examples of patients who seem to be stuck in their hospital beds for rather longer than they would like. I will not give their names and details right now because it would not be appropriate, but I would be grateful if the minister could consider what is happening in the far north of Scotland. I do not for one minute suggest that NHS Highland is not doing its best, but a problem appears to have reared its head.

**Mr McCabe:** We have established the process of delayed discharge as an absolute priority within the Executive. During the past few months, we have made substantial new investments to our local government and health service partners that are to be applied to the delayed discharge process. We have engaged in intensive dialogue with our partners in local government and the health boards. We intend to visit each delayed discharge partnership during the coming months.

On Monday of this week, I convened a meeting of social work department conveners and health board chairs to discuss the question of delayed discharge. I will speak to council leaders and health board representatives in a few weeks at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities conference and we will discuss delayed discharge specifically.

Our purpose is to stress to our partners—and I stress that they are our partners, because the arrangement is a tripartite one between the Executive, local government and the health boards—that this is an absolute priority and that we must reduce the figures without any more time passing.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I refer the minister to his consultation document "Proposals for Maximum Fees to be set by Scottish Ministers for 2004-05" for the care commission. Under the heading "Unintended consequences", it says:

"It is possible that some smaller providers may have to close. It was always accepted that this might happen".

How many of those small care homes might have to close? How many elderly people will be displaced and where will they go?

**Mr McCabe:** I do not necessarily accept that the question and the way in which it was put are directly related to delayed discharge. The Executive's position is that there is a market, and some people will make market decisions for a variety of reasons. For example, in cities such as Edinburgh, where property prices are spiralling so high, there are occasions when a provider might decide to realise an asset rather than carry on their business. That is a commercial decision for the operator and they are perfectly entitled to make such a decision.

A range and capacity review is going on and is considering the requirements for the next five, 10 and 15 years. We will take on board the results of that review to do our best to ensure that there is an adequate supply of care home places.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I am delighted that this issue is now being addressed. The Executive tells us that enough money is being allocated to care in the community and I have no reason to doubt that. However, NHS Highland, the Highland social work department and the local health board all say that they do not have enough money. Jamie Stone is referring to the cases in Caithness, where there are eight free beds in Seafield House and patients lying in the county hospital who cannot get out because the social work department says that it has no money. Will the minister address that specific issue? I would be happy to put him in contact with the families who have written to me, as, I am sure, would Jamie Stone.

**Mr McCabe:** I mentioned earlier that we intend to meet each delayed discharge partnership in Scotland. The partnership that the member mentions is obviously one of those and I will take on board the points that are made then. I assure the member that there will be an objective consideration of any claims of underfunding. If there is to be underfunding, we are under an obligation to take it on board. However, through our discussions with health boards and local government, we are confident that the amount of money that has been made available is sufficient. In some instances, there might be different local circumstances and we are more than willing to examine those when we meet each partnership.

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** Is the minister aware that delayed discharges are a particular problem in Falkirk? Recently, the situation seems to have become worse instead of better, despite the targets set by the Scottish Executive. Will the minister make urgent contact with Forth Valley NHS Board and Falkirk Council to identify the root cause of the problem and, I hope, expedite a solution?

**Mr McCabe:** As I have indicated, part of our programme of action is to meet each delayed discharge partnership. I will consider giving some priority to the order of those meetings if Mr Canavan is suggesting that there is a particular difficulty in that area.

### Mobile Phone Theft

**14. Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will liaise with mobile phone operators to promote greater awareness of mobile phone theft. (S2O-1372)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** We gave our support to the Virgin Mobile personal and phone safety campaign that ran over the Christmas period in 2003. We also provide Scottish police forces with "Protect your PHONE" information leaflets, which are also available to the public from the major mobile phone retailers in Scotland.

**Rhona Brankin:** As a recent victim of mobile phone theft, I have become acutely aware of the scale of the problem, especially among younger people. I place on record my thanks to the Dalkeith police for their speedy return of my phone. Does the minister agree that local police forces have enough to do without having to deal with mobile phone theft and that mobile phone operators have a responsibility to ensure that opportunities for mobile phone theft are kept to a minimum?

**Hugh Henry:** I encourage the mobile phone operators to do everything in their power to minimise the amount of mobile phone theft. However, equally, I would not hold the mobile phone operators responsible for those who are intent on theft. A partnership is required. The police have a job to do and we need to create better awareness. Rhona Brankin is absolutely right to say that we need to do more with the mobile phone operators. An initiative exists between the Home Office and the mobile phone operators. The central equipment identity register is a mobile phone database that can prevent stolen mobile phones from being used on any United Kingdom mobile network, thereby reducing the attractiveness of mobile phones to thieves. There is a facility to report the international mobile equipment identity number of the stolen phone to either the network operator or a general number to enable it to be cancelled. Those are things that the mobile phone operators are doing; nevertheless, we should all remain vigilant.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 15 has been withdrawn.

## National Health Service (Prescription Charges)

### 16. Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland)

**(Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it has made in its review of NHS prescription charges. (S2O-1340)

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** Proposals for the review have been drawn up and are currently under consideration by ministers. Although the detailed arrangements for the review are not yet finally determined, I can say that it is our firm intention to consult widely with patient interest groups, national health service professionals and other key stakeholders. That will ensure that all the interests and concerns that are expressed are taken into account.

**Mrs Milne:** I am sure that the minister realises that I am not entirely happy with that answer. In July, he sent me a letter in which he said:

"we expect the review"

of prescription charges for people with chronic conditions

"will commence within the next few months".

Similar answers were given to the same question from other members until, in January, Mr Chisholm confirmed in a written reply to Michael Matheson that he expected the review to begin within the "next few months".

This constant fobbing off is becoming unacceptable, as many patients in my area and throughout Scotland anxiously await the outcome of the review. Will the minister please give me a projected timescale for the review—if he can—and assure me that it will not end up way behind schedule, like other projects that we have heard about today?

**Mr McCabe:** I am glad that the member recognises that there is a full agenda in health. The Executive is interested in completing the review as part of that agenda and not in undue haste. I want to ensure that, when the review starts, the preparatory work has been done properly, with the result that the review produces the most comprehensive analysis possible, thereby giving assistance to the highest possible number of patients. That is the approach that we are taking and that is why we are spending time ensuring that our preparation is comprehensive. We want the result to be equally comprehensive.

**Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP):** The minister may be aware that my proposal to abolish prescription charges in Scotland is about to go out to consultation. Just 6 per cent of the NHS's drugs bill in Scotland of some £733 million is recovered from charges, yet tens of thousands of patients are deterred by the cost of £6.30. Can the minister

tell us whether the review considered the outright abolition of those charges as one of its options?

**Mr McCabe:** Ninety per cent of prescriptions that are administered in Scotland are administered free of charge. The figures that Mr Fox cites may be correct, but there is a range of difficult choices within health. We are still talking about a considerable sum of money and it would be harsh indeed to have to consider which services had to suffer from the complete abolition of NHS prescription charges. I do not expect that complete abolition will be considered as an option in the consultation.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** We have been waiting 36 years for this review, especially under Governments of Nanette Milne's party. Should we not wait a little bit longer just to get things absolutely right? I know that 36 years is a long time to wait, but surely a few weeks more will not matter.

**Mr McCabe:** Not for the first time, I am forced to agree with Mr Rumbles. His approach is eminently sensible.

**The Presiding Officer:** On that note, we conclude question time.

## National Health Service (Work Force)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-944, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on building and supporting the national health service work force, and three amendments to the motion.

15:11

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm):** The theme of this afternoon is simple: health care staff matter because they make the difference in delivering dedicated care to the people of Scotland day in, day out. I start by thanking all of them and pledging my determination to value, to empower and to support them to an ever-increasing extent.

Yesterday, the latest figures for the health care work force in Scotland showed a net growth in whole-time equivalent staff of 4,310 in the past year, with increases in every NHS board in Scotland. That growth includes 1,003 more qualified nursing and midwifery staff, 428 more allied health professionals and 246 more medical staff. As I said, all those staff are whole-time equivalents.

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I thank the minister for giving way so soon. How many of the 1,003 nurses and midwives that he mentioned are midwives?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I accept Carolyn Leckie's point: the vast majority of those 1,003 are nurses. However, we plan to increase the number of midwives. Their number has to some extent been declining because of the declining birth rate.

I want to make a more general point about the figure for nurses and midwives. Although I am never complacent, I have to say that I checked annual increases over the past 20 years and found that last year's increase was the largest during that period. Indeed, it might well be the largest increase since the period before 1984. We should acknowledge that.

Growth will improve further by building on the 27 per cent rise in student nursing numbers since 1999, and through all the initiatives that have been spearheaded by the facing the future nursing and midwifery recruitment and retention group, which I chair as a matter of priority. As part of that approach, opportunities are also being offered to health care support workers to become fully qualified nurses. For example, on Monday, I will meet some health care support workers from Glasgow who have, while still in employment, successfully completed the higher national

certificate in health care at Cardonald College, and have now entered the second year of pre-registration nursing at the University of Paisley. That flexible route to registration, in which those people are front runners, has since commenced all over Scotland.

Planning the work force is crucial. We need to deliver the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. That means planning the size and shape of Scotland's largest work force for five or 10 and more years hence. We do not have a good track record on work force planning; indeed, it seems to me that it never happened at all in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result, last year we established the national work force committee, supported by a newly established national work force unit in the Health Department, to bring coherence and leadership to work force planning for NHS Scotland. We have also been building work force planning capacity at local and regional levels, appointing regional work force champions and investing in regional work force networks.

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** I thank the minister for giving way. I certainly agree with what he said about delivering the right people to the right places. However, nearly half of the new posts for the health service are administration posts. Does the minister believe that that is delivering the right people to the right places?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** That is nonsense. Is Shona Robison really attacking medical secretaries who support clinical staff, people who look after medical records—who are vital for patient care—and people who service and staff ambulance control rooms, who are certainly vital for patient care? I notice that both the Scottish National Party and the Conservative party are going down that route. I assure members that the number of senior managers in the health service has declined by hundreds since the days of the Conservative Government, when the bureaucracy of the internal market was at its height.

By the end of March, we will have developed our first national work force plan to coincide with the establishment of the new boards throughout Scotland. The plan will provide a comprehensive position statement and scenarios for the future. The new boards, the regional service and the work force planning networks will be able to draw on the national picture—the first national plan—to inform their planning processes in the longer term and, in turn, they will inform further development of the national plan. In addition, we at the centre will be better able to ensure that the supply of staff matches the service's demand for them.

We are also starting to do our work force planning on an integrated care-group basis. The report of the expert group on acute maternity

services highlighted the importance of work force planning in the delivery of a high-quality maternity service. To achieve that, a national maternity service work force planning group has been established. The group—chaired by Professor Andrew Calder—will, in line with the expert group's report, oversee the development of a strategic approach to integrated work force planning and service development for maternity services in the NHS in Scotland. I look forward to following the group's progress.

Planning is important, but delivery matters even more.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** Will the minister give way?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I will do so in a moment, but I am behind just now.

There is an immediate recruitment and retention challenge for NHS Scotland and we have already made progress in partnership with NHS employers. For example, we have done so under the banner of our facing the future programme for nurses and midwives and, with the input of the NHS centre for change and innovation, we have given new prominence to flexible working. Examples of that include: self-rostering teams in Forth Valley NHS Board; job-share extension of maternity leave in West Lothian; annualised hours in Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board; weekend-only working in Argyll and Clyde NHS Board; and career-break opportunities in Lothian NHS Board. In an increasingly competitive labour market, it is important that NHS employers are at the leading edge in terms of offering flexibility.

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

**Malcolm Chisholm:** The next in line is Jamie Stone, but he will also have to wait.

NHS employers also need to treat staff well. Our staff governance standard, which was launched two years ago, demonstrated our clear commitment that the NHS in Scotland should be an exemplar employer. The standard is unambiguous and reflects our fundamental belief that staff should be well informed, appropriately trained, treated fairly and consistently, involved in decisions that affect them and provided with an improved and safe working environment. Our programme to tackle violence and aggression towards staff is just one tangible expression of the standard. We have funded a range of practical projects, including personal-attack call systems, electronic lock-down areas and barriers in accident and emergency departments. We will not accept violent or aggressive behaviour and are working actively to make NHS Scotland a zero-tolerance zone for such behaviour.

The standard is already a key element of our formal performance assessment of all NHS organisations. We should never forget how significant is the contribution that that assessment makes to putting NHS Scotland employers at the leading edge of human resource practice, which adds practical value to recruitment and retention of staff. However, we do not believe that that is enough. We want to go further by giving staff governance the kind of legal underpinning that is enjoyed by financial and clinical governance. That is why we are including the standard's principles in legislation that will be brought before Parliament. It will be the first legislation of its kind and it will embed staff governance principles as the right way of doing things throughout NHS Scotland.

**Mr Stone:** I thank the minister for the courtesy of putting me first in his queue.

The name Andrew Calder sparked me to get to me feet. I cannot gainsay Professor Calder's professionalism or his commitment to his job. Indeed, he has been very courteous. However, I am interested to know how the minister sees his own powers in terms of intervening in, reviewing and, if necessary, overturning recommendations that are made by the good professor. The minister knows that the issue is close to my heart.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Professor Calder is doing a risk assessment in relation to maternity services in Wick. He will present his report to Highland NHS Board within the next two or three weeks and NHS Highland will come to a view on it. Ministers will make a ruling if proposals for change are brought before us. That is all that I can say about that at present.

As I have mentioned, there is much that we can build on, but the challenges in the future are formidable. The improvements that we are bringing about in work force planning, recruitment and retention, and in making NHS Scotland an exemplar employer, are not in themselves enough. Everyone recognizes that things need to change in order to achieve higher standards of patient care, delivered by the right staff working reasonable hours.

Alongside the initiatives that I have already mentioned, the new contracts for consultants and general practices, together with the pay modernisation proposals under the agenda for change, will be key to enabling the service change that is required. They will provide a platform for new working arrangements, career development and the forging of new roles for all staff groups that work in NHS Scotland, and among independent medical contractors.

We need to change what is done and how it is done: we have relied for too long on overworked doctors in training to deliver care round the clock.



Instead, we must look to provide consistently high-quality care through teams of trained staff throughout the day and night. We have to change the relationships between professions as we look more and more to clinical teams and networks of skill to meet the needs of patients safely for 24 hours a day.

**John Scott:** Is the minister aware of the staff shortages in Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board, which threaten the future of the two paediatric units in Ayrshire? Will he intervene personally if the board decides—supposedly in the name of delivering a better service for Ayrshire—to close one of the units?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I made clear the general position of ministers with reference to service change in responding to Jamie Stone, but I have followed the development of the situation to which John Scott refers. The main issues that are being flagged up in Ayrshire are to do with clinical safety and the quality of care. I will talk about those matters in the last part of my speech.

The impression is sometimes created that change in the health service is being driven by work force legislation rather than by a fundamental commitment to improving services. I want to put the record straight today by stressing that that cannot be right. I want change to be seen and understood by staff and patients in terms of better services for the future, because that is how I see it. I want to make it clear that, in my book, service reform means ensuring maximum local access to services that is consistent with clinical safety and high-quality care.

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Will the minister give way?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I do not have time. I am in my last minute and I must move to my conclusion.

The Executive supports and pays tribute to the staff of NHS Scotland, who make such a difference to the people of Scotland 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Health care staff matter, and money spent wisely on health care staff is money wisely invested in Scotland's future. No one is pretending that the journey will not be challenging as we move into that future, but I believe firmly that we can, through the policies that we are delivering, meet and overcome those challenges to deliver great benefits for NHS staff and for the people that they serve.

I move,

That the Parliament appreciates the vital contribution of a high quality healthcare system to the lives of everyone in Scotland and to our economy; acknowledges the fundamental importance of the 150,000 staff who help care for patients and pays tribute to their dedication and professionalism; welcomes the recent significant increases in staff numbers across the NHS in Scotland and the action

taken to promote more flexible ways of working, create safer workplaces and protect frontline staff, support continuing professional development, and develop new roles and teamworking, but recognises the challenges facing the Scottish Executive in achieving a sustainable healthcare workforce in the long term through local, regional and national service and workforce planning and redesign, against the background of wider demographic and labour market challenges.

15:23

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** It is right that we take the opportunity in such debates to praise the work of the staff in the NHS. I join the Minister for Health and Community Care in doing that: those staff work in difficult circumstances to deliver the best service that they can within the resources that are made available to them.

It would be churlish of me not to welcome the increase in the number of staff in the NHS in Scotland, so I do so unreservedly. However, it is also important that we use such debates as an opportunity for a bit of honesty about the state of the NHS. It is strange that when there is a good news story about the NHS, ministers are always willing to appear in the media and claim credit for it, but when there is bad news either no one is available for comment or—if they are—they blame the health boards for the problem. A little more honesty and a little less spin would be welcome.

Although the minister welcomed the increase in the number of staff in a flurry of excitement, he failed to mention that half the posts are administration jobs. Although I accept that some—perhaps a good many—may be required and desirable, is it not interesting that not one word in the minister's press release is about the fact that some of the posts are for administrative staff? The press release is all about staff on the front line. If it is something to be applauded and welcomed, perhaps he should have mentioned it in his press release.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** Shona Robison will have received, as we all have, the MSPs' update from the Scottish NHS Confederation, which makes the good argument that good management techniques are necessary to reduce bureaucracy. The update also says that good managers need to be in place to make the necessary changes. Does Shona Robison agree with the confederation?

**Shona Robison:** I like good management, but I do not think that we necessarily require more managers to have good management. The Minister for Health and Community Care accepted that.

The minister failed to mention the fact that although staff numbers are up, which we welcome, numbers of vacancies are also up. Consultant,

nurse and allied health professional vacancies are at an all-time high and vacant posts are left unfilled for increasingly long periods. Consultant vacancies have increased by 82 per cent since 1999, and 52 per cent of vacancies remain unfilled for more than six months.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** The simple reason why that is the case is that the numbers that we and the trusts have decided to employ have increased considerably. The significant fact is that the overall numbers are increasing.

**Shona Robison:** Yes, but we still have vacancies that are causing the contraction of services the length and breadth of Scotland. Before I discuss that further, I want to put the issues in context. The most important point to consider is the impact on patient care. I suspect that we will hear this afternoon what it means for patient care when there are vacancies and their consequent effect on waiting times.

On a number of occasions in the chamber, I have acknowledged the increases in the health budget. The figures are up by 43 per cent since 1999. That is indisputable and it is absolutely right that we should welcome that. However, it is frustrating that, for every £1 million of increase in the health budget since 1999, only five additional staff have been employed in the NHS. No one is going to tell me that each of those people is receiving £200,000 as a salary, so the question has to be this: why is not more of that money reaching the front line? Only the minister can answer that.

Work force problems are, without doubt, the most fundamental issue in the NHS. Shortages are having a profound effect. More staff are required to compensate for the increased pressures on working times. The NHS in Scotland is, for a variety of reasons, failing to attract enough new consultants, nurses or allied health professionals. The pressures are the driving force behind many of the service changes that we see in Scotland. The pattern is familiar: issues relating to clinical governance and safety arise in a locality, often because consultants are not seeing enough patients to keep up their competence and skill levels. Once a question mark hangs over a service, there tends to be a knock-on effect and more staff are lost from the service. Reviews then undermine the stability of the existing work force, which leads to a catch-22 situation in many parts of Scotland.

That was the situation in the Belford hospital in Fort William, where only the force of public opinion—3,000 people turning up for a meeting on a dreich night—led to a pulling back from the proposal to downgrade the hospital. There are also concerns about the possible withdrawal of consultant-led maternity services from the

Caithness general hospital in Wick. I know that that issue is dear to the heart of Jamie Stone. Real issues are affecting people throughout Scotland. We have to address those issues.

Not for a minute would I try to play down the importance of clinical governance and safety, nor would I say that services should never change or relocate, because sometimes they should. However, we have to acknowledge the geography of Scotland. If we want to attract people to come and live and work in Scotland, we have to have health services for those people in all our localities. We want people to move to localities such as Wick and Thurso, but people will not do that if they cannot access health services. We have to develop more flexible ways of delivering specialist services. Surely, in this day and age, with modern technology and perhaps with good will, we should use the opportunity that is provided by the new consultant contract to link consultants with others in larger hospitals. Technology can help people to maintain their skills and competence.

It should not always be the case that lack of patient numbers within a particular locality leads automatically to withdrawal of services, but at the moment that is what is happening. That is why the substance of my amendment is that there should be a pause for reflection that would allow us to consider the national picture that we want in Scotland. If one was to start with a blank piece of paper, one would not end up with what we are going to end up with—a fragmented service. We need to take national control of the situation to ensure that we have a truly national health service, regardless of where in Scotland a person happens to live.

I move amendment S2M-944.2, to leave out from “recognises” to end and insert:

“is concerned that consultant, nurse and allied health professional vacancies are at an all-time high and that these healthcare workforce shortages are resulting in the ad-hoc and arbitrary centralisation of services across Scotland without adequate public consultation and often to the detriment of patient care, and therefore urges the Scottish Executive to carry out a national review of service planning and redesign in order to ensure equality of access to acute and primary care services in all parts of Scotland.”

15:30

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

**(Con):** Today's debate is very important for the future of our health service. I join the minister in commending all the people who work in the health service for their integrity and hard work. My amendment notes the increases in staffing in the NHS that the minister has talked about, but many of the figures that are used are simply head-count figures and some are not linked to full-time equivalents. If that were done, it would make the

picture a bit more realistic. At some stage, the minister might be able to give us some of the statistics in full-time equivalent terms.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** If David Davidson had listened to my speech, he would know that every figure that I gave in my speech was a full-time equivalent figure.

**Mr Davidson:** I thank the minister for that, although such figures were not in his release yesterday.

That said, I agree strongly with some of the points about work force planning that are made regularly in Parliament; we must have work force planning. It should be mentioned that, in Conservative Government days, work force planning was done locally rather than nationally—a point to which I will return later.

We want all front-line staff in the NHS—not just emergency staff—to work in a safe environment. The minister will have to pay some attention to the security aspects of many of the buildings in which such staff work and in which patients are treated.

Money is not the sole cause of the problem. The issue is about having enough bodies on the ground and putting patients at the centre of the NHS: the essence is that services should be focused on them. To do that, we need capacity but, to be quite frank, we simply do not have the bodies. The minister is right to say that posts are being created; I hope that they are being not only funded but filled. We need to look in that direction. It is frightening to contemplate the fact that more and more staff, including nurses, will want to retire in the next 20 years.

This week, comments have been made about medical equipment not being up to scratch—those were the Auditor General's comments, not mine. The people on the ground want to know that they are working in an environment that gives them full professional freedom and ensures the safety of the people whom they treat.

**Carolyn Leckie:** Will the member give way?

**Mr Davidson:** In a moment. The general medical services contract and out-of-hours services were debated fully in yesterday's members' business debate, which Alasdair Morgan secured. As I said then, the issue is not just money; it is about getting the right people to go to the right places. The minister and I agree on that.

The minister may recall that on the Health Committee's away day we discussed the fact that flexibility in the work force was not simply a question of who should do something, but who could do something. If members could agree on that, much greater flexibility in the work force could be achieved, but that will have to be backed up by

better access to continuing professional development during working hours, not just in people's own time, which will be an expensive drain on people's ability to deliver services.

I am afraid that the European working time directive seemed to catch the Executive unawares, even though we have known about it for eight years. It has not been correctly allowed for and, if we are to do anything to resolve the shortage of doctors in Scotland, we must produce more of them. The issue of whether we need another medical school is worthy of debate. We would have to staff such a school and, if the additional top-up fees come into play in England, that will have a detrimental effect on our ability to attract people to teach young doctors in Scotland. A shortage of consultants would mean that many would-be consultants would have no one to train them. That is another problem.

We must free up the hospital system and move it away from central management control so that hospitals can set their own conditions and go into the marketplace to attract people from the rest of the United Kingdom or encourage new graduates to stay and work here in Scotland. That is one of our major problems.

Over the past few weeks, the minister has talked about other professionals working in the health service in ways that they have not previously. I assumed that the pharmacy contract would have been in place before we dealt with the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Bill because it contains an aspect of care.

We are not talking only about doctors and nurses. What about the physiotherapists and the other professionals whom people need to be able to access? The truth is that we are going to have a work force problem in pharmacy. If we are to take on some of the roles that the profession would like to take on, there will be a need for another pharmacy school to replace the one that was closed at Heriot-Watt University. I suspect that such a school would come to Edinburgh because of the existing excellent schools in Glasgow and Aberdeen.

No one seems able to get access to dentists. I am pleased that we are moving ahead with the outreach centre in Aberdeen, but it remains to be seen how good that will be; the problem is in attracting people by providing the right environment for them to work in.

Many administration staff seem to be involved in central bureaucracy rather than working at local level. If we could reduce much of the centralisation in the health service and allow hospitals to opt for trust and foundation status, it would give them time to get on with their local work. I do not dispute the fact that they would need high-quality

managers, but we do not need more paperwork shoved down into the system from the centre. We have to ensure that we are trying to deliver the best possible and widest range of care that is accessible to everybody in Scotland.

I move amendment S2M-944.3, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the recent increases in staff numbers across the NHS in Scotland and the need to promote more flexible ways of working, create safer workplaces and give greater protection for all frontline staff; seeks improvement in support for continuing professional development and in developing new roles and teamworking, but recognises the challenges facing the Scottish Executive in achieving a sustainable healthcare workforce in the long-term through local, regional and national service and workforce planning and redesign, against the background of wider demographic and labour market challenges, while recognising that over-centralisation of services and critical GP and consultant shortages in some board areas is leading to reduced patient access to health care.”

15:37

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I place on record my absolute and undying admiration for NHS staff and the work that they do above and beyond the call of duty. Working as a midwife in the NHS was and still is the hardest job that I have ever done. I welcome the SNP and Tory amendments that deal with issues of centralisation and the impact of the reduced hours of consultants and doctors on services and care. The horrendous ratio of general practitioners to patients that is proposed for out-of-hours care in Lanarkshire—where one GP will cover home visits for 115,000 people—illustrates that point ably.

I am sorry that David Davidson did not take my intervention. I was going to ask him whether he agreed with the British Medical Association, which puts the blame for the structural staff shortages that we have today fairly and squarely on the fact that trusts took decisions to employ far fewer staff than were needed because of the financial pressures on them. It is a bit rich to suggest that we go back to the dark days when trusts were introduced and given local autonomy on staffing levels. The gap between the number of NHS staff in place and the number needed widened during the Tory years and that led directly to the structural staffing problems that we face today.

However, since Labour came to power, despite starting to address work force planning, it has failed to plan resources effectively to cope with the impact of the European working time directive and demographic change in the population and work force. The convergence of reforms and changes to contracts, the working time directive, an increase in specialisms and the crisis in recruitment and retention all at the same time, leave the NHS poorly equipped to meet the health needs of the

Scottish population, never mind reduce the need for health care of that population.

I will concentrate on specific points that are referred to in our amendment. The money diverted to profits via private finance initiatives and public-private partnerships would be better spent in support of the development and expansion of the NHS work force. That would also ensure that all NHS staff would be entitled to the same pensions and benefits.

The situation in maternity care and midwifery illustrates the abominable lack of appropriate planning of staffing according to care needs and changes to practice. In one year there has been a 16 per cent reduction in the number of registered midwives and a reduction in the number of student midwives. As I have already communicated to the minister, there are massive differences in staffing levels across the country depending on where birth rate plus, a staffing tool, has been introduced. In one area, where birth rate plus has been introduced, there are five midwives to 20 patients. In other areas, given all the historical problems that we have had, there are only two midwives to 20 patients.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** That gives me an opportunity to say that, as part of the facing the future work, we have undertaken a very big workload project. The report on that, which will come out soon, commends birth rate plus. We are very keen to address the disparities between different staffing levels.

**Carolyn Leckie:** I am very glad to hear that. That clearly has implications for the resources that will be needed to meet the extra vacancies that will arise as a result of birth rate plus being rolled out.

Work load is a serious issue, as has been highlighted by the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Nursing. If the Executive seriously wants to put commitment behind aspirational policies and health promotions supporting breastfeeding and so on, I would point out that we are even shorter of midwives than the number of authorised vacancies would suggest. With little time, midwives naturally prioritise according to clinical need, putting that above psychological or social care. That is the picture across the whole NHS where such prioritisation has to occur. The current statistics only scratch the surface. A quantification of the reduction in work loads and the increase in the number of staff required is urgently needed. I support the RCN and RCM in their aims in this area.

I make no apology for turning to the question of pay. Agenda for change is not the panacea that it has been claimed to be. While consultant pay has risen by between 25 per cent and 30 per cent, up

to 30 per cent of staff could lose money under agenda for change, according to Unison. Some could lose a dramatic amount of money, going down from £40,000 to £22,000 a year, with only one year of protection. That is a massive erosion of the current protection arrangements.

Shift working will attract fewer enhancements and, with family-friendly policies having no real meat across the board, shift work will be even less attractive than before. The minister himself earns 10 times more than hospital cleaners or catering workers, the majority of whom are women. Eighty per cent of administrative and clerical staff earn less than £260 a week, and 85 per cent of them are women. Incidentally, receptionists, medical secretaries and ward clerks would be insulted to hear that they are not front-line NHS staff. Chefs—mostly women—earn £5.34 an hour, while plumbers earn £8.83. Out of 360 cooks, 254 are women. There are 139 plumbers in Scotland. Guess what—none of them are women. As for closing the gap, we have not even seen a shortening of it. Agenda for change was meant to reduce historical pay inequality among health workers but, under current job profiles, it fails miserably. The Executive could address the shortcomings of agenda for change by establishing Scottish bargaining machinery.

As I said earlier, the hardest work that I have ever done in my life was in the NHS. It is time to stop making mugs of NHS workers. We need to end the shame of poverty pay in the NHS. We need to stop the private finance initiative and public-private partnerships. We need to reduce the work load and radically increase investment in pay and careers. We need real as opposed to token family-friendly policies. That is the only investment that will work.

I move amendment S2M-944.3, to leave out from “recent” to end and insert:

“moderate increases in staff numbers in some staff and professional groups but regrets the lack of resources and effective planning devoted to the NHS workforce by successive governments, in particular the failure to plan effectively to ensure that enough NHS professionals were trained and employed to meet the needs and changing demography of the Scottish population, the requirements of the working time directive, the New Deal for Junior Doctors, the new consultant and GP contracts or the increasing demands for staff in specialisms; further regrets the continuance of the two tier workforce through PFI/PPP and the unacceptably wide gaps in pay and pay settlements between NHS workers; believes that our health service in Scotland will only be able to properly meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Scotland by stopping all PFI/PPP projects, making substantially greater investment in training, professional development, recruitment and retention, eradicating poverty pay and gender discrimination in pay, rewarding all NHS staff equally, proportionately and appropriately and by reducing the unacceptably high workload pressures on NHS staff.”

15:43

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** I am delighted to support the motion this afternoon. I echo the statements that members have already made on the excellent work that our hard-working NHS staff carry out. Through dealings with constituents, I know that the general public appreciate the service that NHS staff provide, and the motion pays tribute to that. The Scottish Executive has a duty to ensure that the right conditions are in place not only to allow that good work to be continued but to attract new or returning staff to the NHS.

There are a huge number of different elements to the NHS work force. It will probably not come as a surprise to many members that I will concentrate my comments on one particular field: the NHS dental work force. I make no apologies for that. The recent stampede to register at a new NHS dental surgery in Stonehaven was well publicised, and it came as little surprise when it was revealed that Aberdeenshire has the lowest number of dentists per head of population in the country, with just 24 for every 100,000 people, compared with the Scottish average of 40.

Dentistry is certainly one area in which NHS workers do not feel greatly valued and, as a result, many dentists no longer carry out NHS work. That has made it impossible for many people to access an NHS dentist, particularly in rural Scotland. The general shortage of NHS and private dentists and dental staff is a factor and there can be little doubt that too few dentists have been trained since the Conservative Government closed the Edinburgh dental school.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** Does the member agree that, of the 14 objectives for health in the Executive's draft budget document, none relates to dental services or dental health?

**Mike Rumbles:** I am surprised by Stewart Stevenson's intervention. I thought that he would at least recognise the tremendous work that is being done by the Executive to change the situation. I will come to what is being done in a moment.

The commitment in the partnership agreement to establishing a dental outreach training centre in Aberdeen is currently being taken forward by NHS Grampian and there is also a commitment for the Executive to consult on the need for a full dental school. I am delighted that even the Conservatives have recognised the error of their ways on the issue.

Mary Scanlon said in the chamber in September 2002 that a new dental school

“simply would not be possible”.—[*Official Report*, 5 September 2002; c 13517.]

However, I was pleased that David Davidson was quoted in the press just two weeks ago as saying:

"Scotland definitely needs a new dental school."

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

I remind Mike Rumbles that I said what I did in the context of advice from a professor at the faculty of dentistry in Dundee, who simply said that there are not enough dental specialists to start another dental school in Scotland. I also remind Mike Rumbles that an outreach centre is not a dental school.

**Mike Rumbles:** I notice that Mary Scanlon has not refuted anything that I said up to that point. There has been a conversion in the Conservative party. I welcome the fact that the Conservatives realise that, as they say, there is more joy in heaven—however, I will not continue that line of thought.

**Mr Stone:** Go on.

**Mike Rumbles:** No—it is too tempting.

There is evidence that dentists are more likely to practise where they study. Recent figures that show that Aberdeenshire has the lowest number of dentists seem to confirm that. Glasgow and Dundee—which are the locations of Scotland's two dental schools—have two of the highest numbers of dentists per head of population.

We must ensure not only that new dentists are trained but that those who are currently working in the NHS are looked after.

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member taken an intervention?

**Mike Rumbles:** I am afraid that I do not have enough time.

The current consultation on modernising NHS dentistry is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get the issue right and to ensure that dentists are properly remunerated and encouraged to stay in—and indeed return to—the NHS. I am convinced that Tom McCabe, who is the minister with responsibility for the dental service, is personally committed to such real and radical change to ensure that everyone in Scotland has access to an NHS dentist.

The commitment in the partnership agreement to deliver free dental checks for all is part of an overall move to preventive medicine, which the Liberal Democrats feel strongly about. With Executive ministers taking a proactive rather than a reactive approach to health care, I hope that we can ensure that, instead of a national sickness service, we can truly claim to have a national health service. Building and supporting our work force is the key factor in achieving that objective, as the work force is the most important resource that we have. I urge members to support the motion.

15:49

**Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** I welcome today's debate and congratulate the Executive on bringing it to the chamber.

Staff are the cornerstone of the NHS. By far the biggest part of the NHS budget goes on staff. Without the 150,000 people who care for patients 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the health service could not exist. We must therefore be serious about supporting those who deliver care.

I would like to focus on a couple of ways in which we can improve the support that is currently offered to staff. First, we must tackle problems of recruitment and retention of all health care staff. We can ensure that the NHS is seen as a desirable place to work only by providing health care staff with quality working environments and working conditions.

To be fair, I think that progress has been made. There have been eight new hospital developments since 1999, which have greatly improved the facilities in which staff are expected to work. Anyone who has worked in some of the dilapidated Victorian hospitals in Scotland, as I have, will tell you what a difference the new facilities make.

The minister highlighted the importance of staffing issues by indicating his intention to amend the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Bill to include staff governance, in a move that unions and other staff representatives welcomed.

The figures are positive. This week, we heard that the latest figures show a net growth in the health care work force in Scotland of 5,059 in the past year. However, the simple fact remains that some NHS trusts face the prospect of 60 per cent of their staff retiring within the next 15 years.

We need to make the NHS more appealing and family friendly. Historically, people who worked for the NHS—nurses in particular but also other health care staff—worked night shifts or day shifts, but the more modern approach has been a system of internal rotation, so that everyone works their share of nights and days. Although that approach has many benefits, not least for work force planning and career development, it does not always represent a family-friendly policy that suits everyone's circumstances. Twelve-hour shifts can be beneficial for many reasons, but they are not necessarily suitable for everyone. We must ensure that trusts look imaginatively and reasonably at the needs of individuals when working practices are considered.

In line with the First Minister's statement yesterday, we should encourage fresh talent from abroad to work in the NHS. However, it is imperative that such workers should be treated in

the same way as other staff. It is important that we ensure that concerns about the possible exploitation of international staff are seriously addressed.

We must also address the shortage of doctors. Some 90 per cent of pre-registration house officers who graduated in Scotland work in Scotland, but the figure falls to 45 per cent in the case of specialist registrars. We need to make the health service in Scotland an attractive proposition for all staff and encourage those who graduate in Scotland to stay here. In that context, I am pleased to hear that the current system whereby students from the University of St Andrews spend their pre-registration year in English hospitals will soon end. History suggests that students who start work in Scotland are much more likely to remain here and it is important that we do everything that we can to help that happen.

On nursing shortages, I have advocated in the chamber in the past—and I will continue to advocate—a non-academic route into nursing. By offering only an academic route, we completely disfranchise a significant number of people who would make excellent nurses but who are unable or unwilling to pursue the solely academic route. Again, I urge the minister to consider offering a more vocational approach, to encourage more people into the profession.

We must also consider regional planning. The Executive motion mentions the challenges that are faced in

“local, regional and national service and workforce planning and redesign”.

It is crucial that we rise to those challenges. I am sure that all members are aware of the recent experiences in Greater Glasgow and Argyll and Clyde NHS boards in relation to maternity services planning. The lack of strategic regional planning has meant that individual health boards have developed their own maternity services strategies. There needs to be greater integration between health boards. Although the boards say that they have regular discussions with neighbouring boards, I believe that that should happen on a much more formal basis and that significantly greater emphasis should be placed on regional planning. The minister must take that on board as he considers the guidelines for consultation.

The current uncertainty about the future of maternity services and acute services is worrying for staff. I have spoken about this before, but it is desperately difficult to attract staff to hospitals that are earmarked for closure. The uncertainty can only add to recruitment and retention problems.

Before I close, I raise the issue of agenda for change, as Carolyn Leckie did. The minister is no doubt aware of Unison's concern that the

programme could lead to a reduction in salaries for up to 30 per cent of staff. I hope that the minister will address that in his closing speech. The reduction of remuneration is clearly no way to tackle recruitment and retention problems in Scotland.

The Executive is to be commended for its work in building and supporting the NHS work force. This week's statistics are a testament to that good work. Despite the fact that work remains to be done, I support the motion.

15:55

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Although, because the figures state that it is the case, all of us must acknowledge that there has been an increase in staffing, the increase is simply inadequate. I refer to a parliamentary answer that I was given some time ago on the subject of consultant radiologists in which I was told that in September 2002 there were 25 consultant radiologist vacancies. Given that it takes 12 years to become a radiologist and that radiologists are at the front line of the detection of terminal illnesses and severe diseases, the impact on waiting times for individual patients is crucial and can often be fatal.

Further to that, when I was thinking about what I would say in the debate today, I decided that I would not look at statistics, which we do all the time. Knowing that all our filing cabinets are full of our case loads, I decided that I would refer to some of the problems that the Executive's national health service causes to individuals.

The first case is based on a parliamentary question. I asked

“what the waiting times have been from detection of cancerous cells by smear test to colposcopy in each year since 1999-2000, broken down by NHS health board area.”

Of course, the minister's answer was that the information is “not collected centrally”.

I was also told that NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, which reports on cervical screening, has a minimum criterion that

“90% of all referrals for an abnormal smear should be given an appointment within 40 working days and 90% of referrals with a moderate or severe abnormal smear within 20 working days”.—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 16 December 2003; S2W-4707]

That ain't happening out there in the field. A letter that I received said:

“I would like to draw to your attention the fact that despite me having cancer detected on my smear I had to wait 4 months for colposcopy at the hospital. I was originally told two weeks by my GP but this turned into one month, then two months then 4 months. Various excuses were made from staff shortages to holidays to consultants going on conferences ... The wait for the clinic knowing that the

cancer was growing was horrible and I don't know how I would have survived without the support of my husband and friends."

That case is not special to my filing cabinet; all of us have cases like that.

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** If the member has information of that sort, I suggest that the most appropriate way to deal with it is to forward it to ministers so that we can examine the circumstances. That would allow us to return an adequate response to the member.

**Christine Grahame:** I did so: I wrote to the minister and submitted supplementary questions, but am left with the information in the parliamentary answer.

The second case is that of a gentleman, Mr L, who suffers from a trapped nerve in his back that has escalated in severity. Mr L is registered blind. His consultant referred him to the Western general hospital with the recommendation that he be treated as a priority, but Mr L was told that he would have to wait for 65 weeks. Mr L's dog has been taken from him as he is no longer ambulatory. He is on a major cocktail of drugs, which he was supposed to be on for six weeks only but, as he cannot see a consultant, he will have to continue to take.

The list goes on. I have a case of a gentleman who was suffering from severe depression. Although he was suicidal, people cannot see a psychologist on an emergency basis in Scotland; they have to see a psychiatrist. The gentleman's psychologist had to engineer a case meeting with the psychiatrist so that the case could be treated as an emergency. The gentleman in question did not want drugs; he wanted to work his way through the problem.

It is all very well to give us the figures, but those are the issues out there for real people in Scotland. Every member in the chamber has cases like those. Although individuals should not have to come to MSPs to get pushed up the queue, it works. If we send out a letter with the Scottish Parliament heading on it, people will get moved up the queue. What about all the other people out there who are not moved up our lengthening queues?

I am glad that the Health Committee is to look into the subject. We decided to hold our own inquiry into the recruitment and retention of staff in the NHS. There is a crisis out there and all of us know that it simply will not do to paper over the cracks. The committee will hold a civic participation event after which we will inform our inquiry and then take a year to carry it out. If the Executive cannot do that, I hope that the committee can.

15:59

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** Sometimes I feel a bit sorry for Scottish Executive ministers, given the frequency with which I get to my feet and go on about maternity services in Caithness.

It was no accident that I pushed the First Minister to encourage new talent to come to Scotland yesterday. I see that as being one of the possible solutions. I would like to talk about the package that supports those people. I know that that is something that very much interests Mary Scanlon, although she is not with us at the moment. When we had a vacancy for a GP in Helmsdale in east Sutherland in my constituency, it became evident that what was on offer in terms of living in a beautiful part of the Highlands was not flagged up in the advertisement for the vacancy, as I am sure Eleanor Scott will recall. I think that we have probably learned from that.

During the past few days, I have learned of the resignation of the third consultant from the Caithness general hospital maternity service in Wick. The reason, in as much as one can trust what the newspapers say, is that the support, the working conditions and the back-up were not good enough. That is why that person has gone. Now we are down to locums. Tom McCabe and Malcolm Chisholm have heard me make this point before, and I am sorry to be boring about it by going on and on, but we need to think outside the box, so in the time available to me, which is not much, I would like to make a few points.

The Belford hospital in Fort William has a consultant called David Sedgewick, who was at the University of St Andrews with me. He has made the interesting point to me that his work is not just about delivering babies and that he does other work in the hospital, such as small ops or getting rid of a lump. He rejoices in that and says that it is a great strength and a great advantage, which actually makes the work better. He is multiskilling and there is something that we can learn from that. It is interesting that what is being said in Fort William about the Belford is that that is a positive approach.

The point about rotation is also important. It may or may not be the case—I speak with parliamentary privilege, but I must be careful nevertheless—that the third consultant left Caithness general hospital because of a feeling of isolation. In other words, contact with Raigmore and other parts of the NHS was perhaps not as good as it could have been. We should think about rotating consultants, so that they work for a few weeks or a few months in one place. Behind that, there should always be peer support and communication.



The minister will be aware of an example about which I was exercised about a year ago. The proposal for accident and emergency services in Thurso was that GPs should come out and that the service would go. In fact, a constructive solution emerged, and I salute NHS Highland for that. It is based on the Aberdeen royal infirmary model. A new service was put together using information and videoconferencing that involves peer support and a GP in Thurso being able to link up on screen with a professional in Aberdeen. In some ways, we could build on that for the future of maternity services and also when it comes to doctors and dentists.

It is an old point, but we cannot take away the distance or the remoteness. It is not really a case of me saying one thing and Mr Rumbles's good friend Tom McCabe saying something different. In fact, I think that there is a way in which we can solve the problem by being imaginative. I wait with interest to see what will come out of—

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will Mr Stone accept an intervention?

**Mr Stone:** I am in the final seconds of my speech. This is not Stewart Stevenson's starter for 10, although it will be shortly.

For heaven's sake, let us think outside the box on this matter. That is my one plea.

16:03

**Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind):** The good will of NHS staff in every aspect of the service has cemented the NHS together and in that respect the situation is no different today from what it was when I started out 35 years or so ago. We can talk about work loads and wages, but the most important thing in the health service is probably morale, which is currently at its lowest ebb. What boosts morale is the fact that one can do one's job, having been trained to a high standard as a doctor, a nurse or even a typist. If people cannot do their job within the service, they almost feel like giving up. I have seen typists almost in tears with the amount of work that they have had to cope with, but there was never any chance of getting another typist. Good will is important.

Uncertainty pulls down morale. There have never been as many changes in the health service as there have been in the past 10 to 15 years and I think that everyone in the chamber agrees that the changes that are about to happen are the biggest since 1948. In some areas, such as Glasgow, many major changes are about to take place. Management is important in that respect, although I notice that the NHS Confederation in Scotland seemed to imply that good management is obvious because the lack of it—in accident and

emergency services in some areas, for example—hits the headlines.

I cannot understand why we cannot get things right. People are still waiting for four to eight hours in casualty for treatment. We cannot knock down hospitals. People are not out there fighting for bricks and mortar. They want a better service. They appreciate the work that NHS staff do for them, but it is not fair for NHS staff to have to treat people on trolleys—we need to find beds. If it is the case, as I fear it might be, that there is an accelerated closure of Stobhill hospital and perhaps the Victoria in Glasgow, we will be down by 400 beds and we have not yet built the new bed unit. Good management can make an important contribution to improving morale.

Members have mentioned flexibility. We need to have flexibility and we need to get rid of the agency nurses, given all the money that they are paid. It is a shame that nurses have to work for an agency to get a higher salary, but who can blame them? Who blames the people who go to work for NHS 24? The service is well run and I commend it—I have been back to have another look at it and I hope that it succeeds, because now that it is here to stay, it must work. NHS 24 cares for its staff; it is sad to hear a person who has worked in the NHS for 21 years say that they have never been valued before but that they feel valued in NHS 24.

I would like a bit more transparency. Nurses tell their line managers that there are not enough nurses. They should not have to cobble things together and plead for more staff—there should be more staff. It is not safe for the nurses if there are too few of them and it is not safe for patients in wards if there are not enough nurses to supervise.

The BMA and the Royal College of Nursing made an important point about retaining the services of staff who are about to retire. We are reaching the stage where we do not have enough staff despite the increases. It is exceedingly important for us to retain the services of people who work in the NHS and to give them a little more time. Please let us have more transparency. We have a big problem and we should work together across parties to help to solve it.

16:08

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** It is always a delight to speak in a debate with Mike Rumbles. Every time I hear him, I thank the Lord that I am a Highlands and Islands MSP and can work happily with Jamie Stone and John Farquhar Munro. Mike Rumbles's inability to listen makes him a prime candidate for being the person who can cause a rammy in an empty house. I agree with Carolyn Leckie: the hardest work that I, too, ever did was in a maternity unit. I think that

that would apply to many women throughout Scotland.

For many years, we have seen the expansion and upgrading of hospitals, mainly in the acute sector, as Labour followed through the Tory plans. We have also seen growth in health staff numbers, more training opportunities and greater accessibility to health care provision. The hospice movement has expanded, as has the provision of voluntary sector care, community psychiatric nurses and family doctors, who are undoubtedly the backbone of our health service, with 90 per cent of patient contact. I name those as some of the growth factors in health care only to set the scene for the recent decline.

As a Highlands and Islands MSP and Health and Community Care Committee member for four years, I know that acute hospitals are now struggling to overcome financial deficits by cutting back where possible and that there are queues when a dentist mentions the NHS. Orkney NHS Board is cutting the number of patients being sent to Aberdeen for treatment; Western Isles NHS Board faces a £600,000 overspend and is cutting its services; Caithness general hospital in Wick is cutting its maternity service; and Oban and Fort William hospitals face downgrading or merging. Bedblocking is rife because councils say that they have no money for residential and home care—I accept Tom McCabe's point about that. Low-priority chiropody patients' treatment has been cut drastically. I have a huge case load about that. That cut has made some people housebound. Others have had the offer of having their toenails removed so that the waiting list can be cut. Those are only some factual examples of the crisis that faces the NHS in Highland. When they are put together with the report of people in Wick pulling out their own teeth, we can hardly honestly commend the Liberal-Labour coalition for its support for and management of our health service.

Against that background, I remind the minister of his statement that

"If it can be done in primary care, it should be done in primary care."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 2002; c 11239.]

I ask him to consider the health care model in Nairn, which Dr Alastair Noble has pioneered. I believe that the example is well known to him. Under that model, local services, including the council social work department, work together. That has reduced the number of hospital admissions enormously, particularly for mental health care. We always say that best practice is out there but that it is not rolled out. That model is a good example of that.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I assure Mary Scanlon that we are promoting that model of care through community health partnerships, which we will discuss in relation to the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Bill next week.

**Mary Scanlon:** I would be delighted if the minister could tell me where else the Nairn model exists. Moreover, will he take account of the potential of our community hospitals in rural areas for the new out-of-hours service and for local health care?

Too often, we talk about the health service as if it involved only doctors and nurses. I commend the BMA and the RCN for the job that they do in representing their members, but some of the most critical shortages—Shona Robison mentioned them—are of chiropodists, radiographers, physiotherapists, speech therapists, dieticians and others. The input of the professions that are allied to medicine can add much to quality health care. I hope that the minister will examine seriously with his Westminster counterparts the pay scales and conditions for those professions in relation to those of other health care staff. It should not always be those who shout loudest who have the most attention. The professions that I have mentioned are a bit of a cinderella service.

I hope that a mechanism and time can be found in the Parliament—through the committees or otherwise—to undertake post-legislative scrutiny regularly and to monitor the implementation of, for example, the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 and, in time, the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. That is crucial, as we are passing legislation in the knowledge that staff shortages exist and that we will create greater staff shortages. When the Parliament discussed the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Bill, it was stated that Scotland had 29 vacancies for psychiatrists. The bill required an additional 28 psychiatrists. I do not suggest that the bill should not have been passed, but I ask the minister where the 57 psychiatrists are to come from.

A high-quality health care system depends greatly on staff, but we also need premises such as day centres, respite care establishments, drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation facilities, medium-secure units and supported housing.

We must engage more fully with the complementary medicine sector. In 1996, the Conservatives produced a paper that set out a protocol for fundholding GPs to refer patients to that sector. I would like the Executive to make a similar commitment on alternative medicine.

16:14

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate; I thought at lunch time that I had lost my chance. I support the motion in Malcolm Chisholm's name, as it recognises the challenge

that faces the Executive and the national health service and the need for more flexible ways of working. The minister is right that staffing issues—how professionals are recruited, trained and retrained and how they deliver their services—are at the heart of the major issues in today's NHS. Indeed, they are the key to cracking perhaps the biggest challenge—the relentless march towards centralisation.

As we know, throughout the country staffing problems are causing or being used as an excuse for the centralisation of acute services, sparking outrage in local communities. With the agreement on junior doctors' hours, which is now legally enforceable, the implementation later this year of the European working time directive, the impending fallout from the new GP contract and the new, expensive consultant contract, things may get worse before they can get better.

Following the summer of centralisation, the Health Committee agreed to hold a major inquiry into NHS staffing and training, the details of which are being drawn up. I am glad that the Executive now realises that the issue is sufficiently important to warrant a debate in the chamber. However, I am concerned that the talk of building and supporting the NHS work force is code for trying to deliver patient-centred services by giving professional staff whatever they want—in other words, acceding to professionals' demands at the expense of the community's expectations.

No right-thinking person would want to be treated by a tired, badly trained doctor, but that is not the same as saying that the interests of professionals and the interests of patients are always one and the same. Some might go so far as to say that on occasion they are mutually exclusive. For example, our communities want accessible health services in which they feel they have a stake. Our consultants want to work in massive teaching hospitals that reflect their specialist interests and they want to reduce their weekend working. Our communities think that they elect us to run the health service. The royal colleges, with their grip on work force planning, know that they run it. Of course, the issue of who runs the NHS is not a new one. Bevan famously said that he had to stuff the consultants' mouths with gold to get them into the NHS in the first place.

That takes us neatly to the issue of the new consultant contract. We increased top consultants' pay from £70,000 to £80,000 a year in return for greater flexibility. Under the terms of the GP contract, which was debated in the chamber last night, we will again hand over money up front without guarantees of reform. Questions remain. How much has it cost and will it cost? What benefits are guaranteed for patients and when will

they be delivered? I hope that we have not paid for a pig in a poke.

We must ensure that we get value for the public purse in courage, innovation and change and that we challenge the vested interests that would prevent change. Until we tackle the reform issue, debates such as this about raw numbers will be fairly academic. It does not matter how much more money we stuff in or how many more people we employ—if we employ them in the same way, there will not be much change. If professionals do not work flexibly and we do not consider upskilling nurses or improving training, we will not reap any benefits. The vast majority of NHS staff want to deliver a first-class service for patients, to maximise their skills and to develop their careers. However, vested interests are putting barriers in their way. If we want to maximise the potential of NHS staff and to deliver the consequential improvements in patient care, those barriers must be brought down wherever they are found.

16:18

**Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland)**

**(SNP):** As I have only two or three minutes to speak, I want to introduce one or two fresh angles to the debate. We all support attempts to build and support the NHS work force, because if the system is better for staff and the NHS it will be better for patients. However, we must give NHS staff the right tools to use in our hospitals, the right skills and the right working conditions.

I reiterate a point that I have made in the chamber on numerous occasions since 2000. We must bring the medical equipment in our hospitals up to standard. I was not at all surprised when today Audit Scotland released a report, which was publicised yesterday, indicating that 25 per cent of equipment in our hospitals is beyond its standard life and 37 per cent has no value in hospitals' accounts because it is so old and out of date.

I have lodged written questions and asked oral questions on the matter and I have raised the issue in several debates about health. More than three and a half years ago, I lodged a motion, which received support from many of the parties in the chamber. At that time, ministers told me that they had not considered the issue, that they did not have any information on it and, specifically, that they had not investigated the impact on patient care of using old and outmoded medical equipment in our hospitals. I ask the minister to address that extremely important issue today.

We have to make sure that our NHS staff are properly trained in the use of that—preferably more up-to-date and modern—medical equipment. One of the difficulties facing our staff, particularly nurses, is that, although there are more demands

on their skills, their skills are not necessarily being upgraded so that they can do their jobs properly. The new GP contracts that allow GPs to opt out of out-of-hours cover mean that nurses in the hospitals will have to pick up more of the work. We have to make sure that they get the training that they need to do that work, which will put new demands on them.

An example of that was brought to my attention this morning by people working in the NHS. Syringe drivers, or infusion devices, are syringes that inject drugs into a patient over a period of time. They are not standardised between hospitals; indeed, sometimes they are not standardised between wards in the same hospital. Nurses and other staff get no training in how to use the different bits of equipment. A nurse could change ward and suddenly find different dials, or whatever, on medical equipment that they have not been trained to use properly. If we do not give the staff the right training or the right equipment, mistakes will be made in the health service.

In 2000, the Department of Health in England published a profound document—"An organisation with a memory". Unfortunately, there is no Scottish equivalent. The document states:

"the best research-based estimates we have reveal enough to suggest that in NHS hospitals alone adverse events in which harm is caused to patients ... occur in around 10% of admissions".

That is a phenomenal figure. The situation is not the fault of the staff, who do an excellent job under difficult circumstances. It arises because the Government is not ensuring that equipment is up to date and that staff are trained in how to use it. The consequences are devastating for the patients who are the victims of such mistakes and for the staff, who have to deal with those situations and the blame culture that exists in Scotland and elsewhere. We have to tackle that blame culture so that staff can come forward and tell us transparently where improvements can be made in the NHS. According to the document published in England, that could save up to £2 billion for the NHS. We could save lives and money and we could ensure that our staff worked in much better conditions, because they would be better trained and could use better equipment.

I ask the minister to address that issue. We are five years into the Scottish Parliament and it has not yet been addressed, despite the fact that it is being addressed in England. We do not have an equivalent of "An organisation with a memory", which is now deemed to be a world-class report. Scotland has to have an equivalent look at how we can help our staff and patients.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** My regrets to Eleanor Scott who wanted to speak, but I have to go to closing speeches.

16:23

**Carolyn Leckie:** I open by supporting Malcolm Chisholm, who is the most open of ministers and less defensive than some in relation to his portfolio. I support his comments on administration staff. The SNP and the Tories have shown a bit of ignorance about the fact that the majority of administrative staff are low-paid workers who are on the front line. I suggest that those parties get to grips with the facts. They have done those people a great disservice today by undervaluing the role that they play in the NHS.

References have been made to violence and aggression. The biggest measure that should be taken to address that problem is an increase in staffing levels. Every member of NHS staff will say that.

The minister referred to changes in service leading to service provision that is local but consistent with safety and high-quality care. We should define that. When does the level of care become unsafe? Does the minister agree that having one GP per 115,000 patients for home visits is unsafe? I hope that he will tell me that when he sums up.

I agree with Duncan McNeil—which does not happen very often—that there is an estrangement between the public and the NHS boards about their needs for the service and a total democratic deficit that needs to be addressed urgently. I support health boards having direct accountability, but we must remember that they work in a political context and deal with the policies and resources that are made available by the Executive.

I agree with a lot of what Janis Hughes said. The debate is so complex and wide ranging that we could not possibly cover everything. New working patterns and 12-hour shifts are a complicated issue, and it is difficult to balance the needs of the service with the needs of individuals and family-friendly policies; nevertheless, a means of introducing the working patterns with the consent of staff must be established. As a branch secretary of Unison, I had long experience of having to defend workers who were being compelled to work 12-hour shifts because the majority of staff in their departments had wanted them, although they did not. It is not family friendly to compel a single parent with two children to adopt a 12-hour shift pattern that is completely unsuited to their needs.

I fully support the call to address the exploitation of international staff. It is a disgrace that the nurses to whom Unison refers have been employed on C grade. I hope that the Executive is looking into the specific contractual arrangements that have been put in place regarding those nurses, in relation to property rents and so on.

I agree that it is not appropriate that the academic route should be the only route into nurse training. We could increase nursing numbers by being a bit more flexible about that.

My concerns about strategic regional planning are well documented and consistent, and I concur fully with Unison's remarks on that as well. I have experienced closures and have seen the threat of a closure become a self-fulfilling prophecy as staff have left in droves, some of them not remaining in the NHS. There is no doubt that centralisations and closures have exacerbated recruitment and retention problems.

I had the pleasure of visiting the maternity unit in Wick, which, contrary to popular conception, is not underskilled. In fact, the opposite is true—because of the low birth rate there, the midwives whom I met have to practise the full range of midwifery skills to a high level. That is not the case in big maternity hospitals, where midwives tend to specialise more in paediatrics, labour, or whatever. All the midwives whom I met, bar one, have undertaken advanced life-support training in both adult nursing and paediatrics. Again, that is not the case in big, city-centre hospitals such as those in Glasgow, where midwives find it difficult to get the time off or the funding to enable them to undertake advanced life-support courses. There must be recognition of that, as well as of the fact that consultants in Wick operate out of Raigmore hospital at least one day a week. There are alternatives to closures.

I agree with much of what Mary Scanlon said, but I fail to see how her concerns would be addressed by the Tory amendment. Mary Scanlon often confuses me, because although I agree with a lot of what she says, I believe that the Tories' proposals regarding passports would do nothing to make things better but would make things far worse.

We cannot go on centralising. When would it stop? When there was one big super-hospital for the whole of Scotland? We need a national debate and proper consultation involving all health boards, not just a chat on the phone between health boards. We need proper consultation of the whole public, especially in relation to maternity services. The need is so urgent that there should be a moratorium on maternity unit closures until that happens.

We should avoid any perception that the majority of the poorer-paid NHS work force are funding an increase in consultant pay. It is time for equality of value to be placed on the contributions of all NHS staff and for proportionate pay and remuneration.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** I call Mike Rumbles to close for the Liberal Democrats.

16:29

**Mike Rumbles:** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Dentists!

**Mike Rumbles:** No, not dentists, but if Mary Scanlon had been in the chamber, I would have said that this was a double dose of medicine. It is a shame that she is not here.

I want to focus on half a dozen speeches that were made in this interesting debate. Janis Hughes made a very useful speech, especially in relation to vocational training for nursing staff. We must develop that kind of approach. Christine Grahame claimed, among other things, that sending a letter on Scottish Parliament-headed paper to a health board would magically move people up the waiting list. I do not think that it is appropriate to send out the message that people can jump the queue if they contact their MSP. I would not do that, and I hope that the convener of the Health Committee would not do it either.

**Christine Grahame:** My point was that it is not appropriate that such an approach should work. However, if constituents come to us because they are desperate, we have to try to do something for them. My point is that it should not be necessary for an MSP to do that sort of thing.

**Mike Rumbles:** My point is that Christine Grahame said that she did it. I do not think that that is an appropriate message to send out.

**Christine Grahame:** Idiot.

**Mike Rumbles:** Thank you for that, Christine.

Jamie Stone identified problems of isolation in the very north of his constituency. Jean Turner was absolutely right to mention the good will of our NHS staff cementing the service; that is certainly the one theme that emerges from the huge amount of letters about the NHS that I receive from my constituents.

As for Mary Scanlon's speech, what can I say? It is a pity that she is not in the chamber. I obviously hit a raw nerve with her. However, I had given her notice about what I was going to say. I thought that it was appropriate for me to do so; after all, I was only pointing out what she as Tory spokesman for health said about the need for a new dental school in a debate in 2002. My comments should not have come as a surprise to her.

I also want to focus on David Davidson's speech on behalf of the Tories. The Tories have some nerve to speak in debates such as this. The comments in David Davidson's speech were not like the comments that he is reported to have made in an article in *The Press and Journal* this morning. At a time when numbers of

administrative staff have increased by 2,000 to more than 34,000, the number of GPs is up to almost 4,000 and the numbers of nurses and midwives have increased by 1,000 to more than 54,000, headlines in that great Aberdeen newspaper *The Press and Journal* read, "Executive is criticised for 'top-heavy' Scottish NHS".

The story, which also carries a very good picture of David Davidson, quotes that member as saying:

"Surely there is something wrong with a system where the rate of increase of bureaucrats so vastly outweighs that of health professionals. How long will it take for the Scottish Parliament to realise this?"

The Executive is damned if the figures are up and damned if they are down. I would like to have seen the story in *The Press and Journal* this morning if the figures had been down. Will David Davidson enlighten us on that matter?

**Mr Davidson:** I thank the member for being so generous with my publicity. Does he want to be my agent?

Either Mike Rumbles is not reading the story very accurately or I have been misreported. I was simply highlighting the rate of increase in administrative staff in relation to the almost zero increase in the number of GPs over the previous reported period. Indeed, that is what we are talking about today.

**Mike Rumbles:** It is always a good trick for members to claim that they have been misquoted. It is interesting that the Tories call the extra staff "bureaucrats" and condemn the increase in support staff such as receptionists, medical secretaries and everyone else involved in the NHS.

It is ironic that, as Malcolm Chisholm pointed out in his opening speech, the Tories introduced the levels of senior management that we had in the NHS. Those numbers have now been reduced by hundreds. As a result, it is really rich that such a headline and story should appear in *The Press and Journal* this morning. My goodness, I hope that David Davidson will contact the newspaper to get it to rescind its bad reporting. What I am trying to say is that the article, in fact, bore no relation to the Conservatives' response in the debate, which is the most important thing. I will close at that point.

**Christine Grahame:** Please continue.

**Mike Rumbles:** If the member wants to me to stay on, I can do so just for her. However, I think that it is appropriate that I close on that final point.

The debate has been interesting. However, it is a pity that the Opposition parties cannot recognise progress when they see it. I accept that Shona Robison made constructive comments, but the

Opposition parties in general cannot accept that we are going in the right direction, which must benefit the people of Scotland.

16:35

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland)**

**(Con):** In my opinion, the debate is probably one of the most important since May last year. The state of the health service work force is the key factor for the success of the health service. Every party in the chamber is right to record its gratitude for the commitment, dedication and professionalism of all those who work flat out to maintain a caring service for their patients.

I support the Executive's efforts to protect NHS staff from abuse in the line of duty and I acknowledge that the Executive's intention is to achieve a long-term, sustainable NHS work force. There is no disagreement about the fact that unprecedented sums of money are going into the service, albeit not equitably across the country—at least as far as Grampian is concerned. However, that is a matter for another debate.

It is several years since I worked in the health service, but pressures were beginning to be felt by the work force even then. There were consultant shortages in some specialties, although not as many as there are today; dentists were becoming unhappy with their NHS work loads; and primary care was beginning to find it difficult to recruit and retain new doctors. What is worrying is that today, despite all the extra money, things are really no better, as Jean Turner pointed out. Patients are still waiting far too long for treatment and staff morale is low at all levels of employment within the service.

Since entering the Parliament, I have been shocked at what I hear of the amount of unmet need in the service. As members know, there are many health lobbying groups and every one has the same story: there is a lack of consultants, trained and specialist nurses and associated health professionals for multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, asthma, kidney disease, diabetes and children with special needs. The list seems to go on and on. Speech therapists are like hen's teeth. Radiologists, orthotists and occupational therapists are struggling to cope with the demand on their services. NHS dentistry is hard to come by and we have heard today of the crisis in chiropody services in the Highlands. Chiropody is a vital service to old and infirm people; as Mary Scanlon said, without adequate attention to their feet, such people often become housebound. Like Mary Scanlon, I was pleased to hear the minister say that he is considering using the Highlands model for CHPs under the proposed new NHS legislation. However, I share Mary Scanlon's concerns that the demands that will be created by new legislation must be met.

The new primary care and consultant contracts will undoubtedly make life more pleasant for practitioners and will, I hope, encourage recruitment into general practice and the specialties. However, as members know, the nature of the service will change radically, particularly in primary care, and there will be far greater reliance on nurses and associated health professionals to keep the service running. It is easy to say that out-of-hours facilities will increasingly be nurse led and that nurses and associated health professionals will relieve GPs of a significant part of their current work load. However, that must be set against a serious shortage of trained personnel and a volume of recruitment that is well short of meeting even current demand, let alone the demands that will arise from the new contract.

The training of more doctors, nurses, dentists and AHPs is clearly needed urgently. Once trained, they need to be attracted to remain in their professions and within the health service in Scotland. I share Janis Hughes's views about practical training for nurses being better than a more academic approach. I remember the days when nurses did their apprenticeship in the wards and good, caring, professional and extremely competent nurses were the outcome. I accept that junior doctors used to work hours that were far too long, but they got much invaluable practical experience in the wards and in the operating theatres. There is a risk that their training could become less than adequate when the working time directive is fully in place. Much of the work that junior doctors did previously—mostly under supervision—will fall to qualified consultants in the absence of the junior doctors, who benefited greatly from senior doctors' experience in the old days.

Jamie Stone's proposals for rotational posts for consultants in remote areas sound interesting. I am sure that the minister will consider them.

I am pleased that the videoconferencing techniques that were pioneered in Aberdeen are paying dividends in remote communities. However, there are serious shortages of front-line staff. Like David Davidson, I was appalled yesterday to learn that in the past year the number of administrative staff in the NHS in Scotland has increased by another 5.6 per cent, while the number of GPs increased by a mere 0.5 per cent and the number of nurses by 1.7 per cent. That comes on top of a 13 per cent increase in the number of administrators in the previous three years, compared with a 0.8 per cent rise in the number of GPs and a 3.5 per cent rise in the number of nurses and midwives. Those figures indicate that the service is top-heavy with administrators who are chasing Government targets, organising and carrying out consultations

and dealing with initiative after initiative from the Executive.

For goodness' sake minister, please release the health service from bureaucracy and put money where it is needed—towards front-line staff who could deliver patient care far better if they were freed from the Government's apron strings and allowed to get on with the job for which they thought they were trained. That way, the health service will once again become an attractive prospect for health professionals across the board.

16:41

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I put on record the fact that my colleagues in the SNP and I fully appreciate everyone who works in the NHS: kitchen porters; administrators; consultants; nurses; and all the others. The list is so long that I cannot possibly go through all of them, but we certainly appreciate the very good work that they carry out, sometimes in difficult conditions. I am speaking in particular of nurses and others who happen to work in accident and emergency departments at the weekend who, unfortunately, are not given proper protection. We debated the issue several weeks ago and I am sure that the Parliament could have passed something that would have given all public service workers the protection that I believe they deserve.

I give a big thanks to Irene Yardley and the others at Glasgow royal infirmary who have worked tirelessly to get proper protection for nurses, who are, after all, going about their duty and should not be subjected to attacks by drunk and violent patients. I hope that the minister will consider the matter again and perhaps monitor the situation and give us a report on what is happening in accident and emergency departments at the weekends when, unfortunately, people are drunk and violent. I look forward to getting such a report.

I listened to the minister's speech and I appreciate the sentiments that he expressed about the challenges that are being faced in achieving and sustaining a viable and professional work force within the NHS. However, as Shona Robison and other members have mentioned, vacancies within the NHS have risen considerably since 1999 under the Lib-Lab coalition Government, regardless of what Mike Rumbles says. For example, consultant vacancies in Glasgow have risen by a massive 156 per cent and the number of nursing vacancies has risen from 282 to 784.

I acknowledge the minister's comments about recruitment, but it is five years since the Lib-Lab coalition Government took over, so the question is why, after all that time, we are having this debate all of a sudden. Is the Lib-Lab coalition

Government only now recognising that we are so short of consultants and nurses? The Government seems to be paying lip service to the problem, but it is a bit late and it is acting once the horse has bolted.

The situation is of serious concern, particularly when it is coupled with the report published by Audit Scotland the other day. The report states that a quarter of all machines, including X-ray machines, in the health service in Scotland are obsolete—some of them are 15 years over their lifespan. That must give us all cause for concern. As I said, the Government has been in power for five years yet we are reading that kind of report. I congratulate Audit Scotland on its honesty, because I assure members that if it was up to the trust—particularly the one in Glasgow—we would never have found out any of the information.

Clinicians and staff must have access to proper equipment. In some hospitals, they have the equipment but they do not have the manual on how to work it and the person who used to work it has retired. That is a ridiculous situation.

I want to pick up on what the minister said about maternity services and the falling birth rate, which he suggested was the reason for having fewer midwives. I have spoken to midwives and they tell me that lots of midwives go into training but head down south once they have finished, because the conditions there are much better. If the minister speaks to midwives, he will hear the same thing.

The minister says that we can centralise maternity services, but there is a direct contradiction with the First Minister's statement the other day. The First Minister is calling for people to come to Scotland; I think that he wanted 8,000 immigrants to come each year. It is dangerous to assume that we can close hospitals—particularly maternity hospitals—and centralise services when we are actively encouraging population growth. We must consider a moratorium on such closures.

Janis Hughes is right about nursing. People do not have to go into academia to do nursing. Des McNulty and I were at a meeting on Saturday and this was one of the topics that came up. Among the people there were ex-nurses and they asked why people's life experience could not be considered. They asked why people could not become nurses without going to university. I hope that the minister takes up Janis's suggestion.

Mary Scanlon put the fear of death into me when she talked about people pulling out their own teeth. My grandfather used to pull out his own teeth, but it surely should not be a self-inflicted cure. Mary represents the Highlands and Islands and if people there have to listen to Mike Rumbles, perhaps they do feel like pulling out their own teeth. I will leave that to Mary's discretion.

Duncan McNeil mentioned the European working time directive and doctors' hours. He is right to say that services are being impinged upon. However, we have known about the directive for nine years. It was never going to go away; it was always going to happen. Instead of blaming consultants and others, Duncan should perhaps blame his own Labour Government.

**Mr McNeil** rose—

**Ms White:** Sorry, but I am into my last minute. We knew about the problem nine years ago but the Labour Government has done nothing about it.

Jean Turner said that we have to create high morale in hospitals and the NHS. The only way to do that is to have better working conditions and wages and more inclusiveness within hospital services. I agree with Jean. In Wick and Inverness, in the Queen Mother's hospital in Yorkhill and the Southern general hospital in Glasgow and elsewhere, insecurity does no good to staff morale and does not attract new staff. We should consider that seriously before we allow health boards and trusts to tell people that they are going to shut down hospitals. Such talk causes people to move away and to try to find secure employment elsewhere.

In conclusion, Presiding Officer—

**Mike Rumbles:** Hooray!

**Ms White:** Mike Rumbles is saying "Hooray." We said that when he stopped speaking. I do not need to pull out any teeth at all regarding that.

I appeal to the minister and deputy minister to consider the centralisation issue and to consider our amendment very closely. We should have a review of all hospital services, not only maternity services. We will be making a big mistake if we do not consider things holistically and just consider them regionally.

16:48

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe):** This has been a welcome debate on an important subject. Members from all sides have rightly recognised the invaluable contribution that health care staff make to the quality of life in modern Scotland.

Not for the first time, I will disappoint Ms Leckie. I will defend our health portfolio and the service here in Scotland. The Executive is proud of our health care staff. We are proud of the support that we have given them and we pledge that that support will continue, now and in the future.

As Malcolm Chisholm said earlier, health matters, so health care staff matter and money spent wisely on health care staff is money spent wisely and invested well in Scotland's future. The



Executive wants all public services in Scotland to be delivered to the highest standards. None is more important than the health service, which is the very mark of a civilised society.

We have heard about the pressures faced by the NHS and other parts of the health care system. Almost every day—and certainly in the course of this debate—we have heard doom and gloom about shortages and one crisis or another. It is easy to criticise, but more difficult, and far more important, to make real improvements. The Executive has a positive agenda for improving health and health services.

I refer specifically to Mary Scanlon's point on allied health professionals. She is right. That is why we are committed to creating 1,500 additional allied health professionals by 2007; it is also why there was a 5.5 per cent increase in the number of allied health professionals last year.

**Mary Scanlon:** I appreciate that. Will the minister also accede to the request to talk to his Westminster counterparts about pay and conditions for the professionals allied to medicine, which seem to be falling out of step with those for nurses and doctors?

**Mr McCabe:** That is included in the agenda for change.

We have provided extra resources to allow more staff to be recruited. There will be more nurses, more doctors and more health professionals across the board in the NHS.

David Davidson raised concerns about the supply of doctors. The fact that the projected figures for graduates are 750 in 2004 and 894 in 2005 shows that the supply is not the problem; the challenge is retaining the people who graduate.

**Mr Davidson:** A large number of those graduates are sent here by other countries so that they can go back and work in their own health service. Our problem is getting enough of the people who are educated here to stay on here.

**Mr McCabe:** I am glad to hear Mr Davidson echoing the First Minister's words. It is encouraging that there is Conservative buy-in to the policies that the First Minister is promoting.

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

**Mr McCabe:** No, I must move on.

We are investing on an unprecedented scale in work force reforms—reforms that put the patient at the centre and that put improved, safe patient care at the top of the list.

Of course the way in which people enter the nursing profession is important, as Janis Hughes said. Routes into the profession are a matter of great concern to members of the profession. On

the need for flexibility within the nursing profession, we are all obliged to take account of the pressures—demographic or otherwise—that we face in our society. I hear Janis Hughes's point.

Although there is much more to do, real progress has been made and I will provide some positive examples. We have already heard about our integrated work force planning for maternity services, but work is under way in other clinical priority areas, too. Back in October 2002, the need to develop the capacity and capability of the mental health work force was acknowledged and mental health was selected as a pathfinder for work force planning and development activities.

In June 2003, we announced our commitment to establishing a national mental health work force group. The group was formed to lead on work force planning and development activities for mental health services in Scotland on a national level. It is chaired by David Bolger, who is head of the Scottish Executive's new mental health division.

**Richard Lochhead:** The minister mentioned patient safety. In 2000, a profound and world-renowned report, "An organisation with a memory", was published south of the border to learn from past mistakes and the National Patient Safety Agency was subsequently established. Will the minister outline what will be done in Scotland to emulate that report so that we can learn from past mistakes in the Scottish NHS, increase patient safety and help our staff with appropriate skills and resources?

**Mr McCabe:** Patient safety is at the forefront of our mind and is taken into account in everything that we do in the NHS. Of course we will take on board best practice, not only from this country but from around the world.

The membership of the national mental health work force group reflects the partnership approach that is being taken to developing the agenda in question. The group is made up of representatives from NHS Scotland, local authorities, NHS Education for Scotland, trade unions and professional organisations, as well as from across the Scottish Executive's Health Department.

On skills development, we are supporting the development of our staff because we know that it is of the utmost importance. The health care work force is already highly skilled, but we want to see further advances. One success story involves supporting health care staff who want to develop through the completion of Scottish vocational qualification courses. *[Interruption.]*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order. There are about five minutes left of the minister's speech. The volume of conversation is rising to

levels that are extremely unco-operative and unsympathetic and some very animated conversations are being held. I invite those members who have something that they desperately want to say to take advantage of those five minutes to say it outside the chamber so that the minister can continue to respond to the debate. *[Applause.]*

**Mr McCabe:** As I said, we want to support those health care staff. Our support has resulted in an increase of 40 per cent in the uptake of the SVQ in care in the acute health care sector and it has trebled the uptake of SVQs in clinical and non-clinical roles throughout NHS Scotland—better skills for better care.

Malcolm Chisholm mentioned staff governance. The staff governance standard is already a key element of our formal performance assessment of all NHS organisations. We should never forget how significant a contribution that makes to putting NHS Scotland employers at the leading edge of human resource practice. That adds practical value to the recruitment and retention of staff.

Janis Hughes also mentioned the agenda for change. It is worth reminding colleagues that the agenda for change was compiled through negotiation with a series of trades unions. It is being tested through pilots in Scotland and south of the border. It is easy for anyone to cherry pick, but the agreement must be seen in its totality and it will take time to assess it properly. I make a plea now for that time to be given.

The Executive supports the national health service. The dark days of the 1980s are gone and there will be no run-down and neglect of staff. That said, the status quo is not an option either. We do not want to preserve the service in aspic.

**Mr McNeil:** Does the minister agree that the call from various parties for a moratar, a moraturi—

**Members:** Moratorium!

**Mr McNeil:** A moratorium on maternity services—that is difficult to say at this time of the day. Does the minister agree that that call is just a cop-out and that it would have made no difference to maternity services in Dumbarton or Inverclyde, where the clinicians decided to shut the services down? Does he agree that there is no role for health board managers or politicians in overriding the wishes of clinicians when they believe that an unsafe service is being provided?

**Mr McCabe:** I certainly agree with the sentiments expressed by Duncan McNeil. As I said before he spoke, the status quo is simply not an option and changes must be made. The argument for those changes has to be won. I respectfully suggest that it is the responsibility not only of the Executive to make the argument for

those changes; it is the responsibility of every member who has decided to play a part in public life in Scotland.

Although we are prepared to make such changes, to take the hard decisions and to ensure that the argument is won, I also want to ensure that we provide an assurance that we will not forget about the importance of supporting staff as we pursue reform.

Health care staff matter and money spent wisely on health care staff is money wisely invested in the future of Scotland. Supporting front-line staff and encouraging innovation are the essence of reform. That is what makes a difference to patients and what will make a modern, responsive health service. I encourage every member here to support the motion and to reject the amendments lodged by the SNP, the Conservatives and the Scottish Socialist Party.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

16:59

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-942, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for the consideration of legislation.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) that the Justice 1 Committee reports to the Justice 2 Committee by 12 March 2004 on the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2004; the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 2004; the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2004, (SSI 2004/49); the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2004, (SSI 2004/50); and the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2004, (SSI 2004/51); and

(b) that consideration of the Prohibition of Smoking in Regulated Areas (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 2 November 2004.—[*Tavish Scott.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-943.1, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, which seeks to amend motion S2M-943, in the name of Peter Peacock, on a better deal for young people, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

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)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 61, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**Members:** Shame!

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. The second question is, that amendment S2M-943.2, in the name of James Douglas-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S2M-943, in the name of Peter Peacock, on a better deal for young people, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGregor, 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)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 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)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 19, Against 104, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-943, in the name of Peter Peacock, on a better deal for young people, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 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)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

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

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 14, Abstentions 45.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament values the very positive contribution made by Scotland's young people and is committed to ensuring that they have the opportunities and support that they need to develop their skills and talents and participate fully and actively; supports the Scottish Executive's commitment to working with young people, their families and communities, with the newly appointed Children's Commissioner, and with those responsible for service delivery, to provide high quality universal services and targeted support for the most vulnerable; welcomes the Executive's commitment to helping looked after children make the transition to successful, independent adulthood, to ensuring that all children are safe from abuse and neglect, to addressing offending behaviour and to reviewing the Children's Hearings system to develop and improve the current service; recognises that young people are often predominantly the victims of anti-social behaviour, and welcomes the Executive's commitment to tackling it more effectively.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-944.2, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S2M-944, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on building and supporting the national health service work force, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 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) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 43, Against 81, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth question is, that amendment S2M-944.1, in the name of Mr David Davidson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-944, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on building and supporting the NHS work force, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)

Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 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, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 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

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 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)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 18, Against 67, Abstentions 39.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The sixth question is, that amendment S2M-944.3, in the name of Carolyn Leckie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-944, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on building and supporting the NHS work force, 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)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (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 16, Against 82, Abstentions 26.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S2M-944, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on building and supporting the NHS work force, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Frances (West 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)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 McGregor, 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)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (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)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 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 75, Against 22, Abstentions 27.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament appreciates the vital contribution of a high quality healthcare system to the lives of everyone in Scotland and to our economy; acknowledges the fundamental importance of the 150,000 staff who help care for patients and pays tribute to their dedication and professionalism; welcomes the recent significant increases in staff numbers across the NHS in Scotland and the action taken to promote more flexible ways of working, create safer workplaces and protect frontline staff, support continuing professional development, and develop new roles and teamworking, but recognises the challenges facing the Scottish Executive in achieving a sustainable healthcare workforce in the long term through local, regional and national service and workforce planning and redesign, against the background of wider demographic and labour market challenges.

## Co-operative Development Agency

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-827, in the name of Johann Lamont, on planning for a co-operative development agency. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the crucial role of co-operative and mutual organisations within local communities and across Scotland; recognises the wide variety in size, capacity and in areas of activity of co-operative and mutual initiatives; congratulates those involved within the co-operative and mutual sector both on the key role they play in local and Scottish-wide economic activity and in delivering social justice; welcomes the commitment of the Scottish Executive to establish a co-operative development agency—CDA—and believes that departments across the range of Executive responsibilities must work together to ensure that the CDA will effectively support and strengthen co-operative and mutual enterprises in all their diversity.

17:10

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** I am very pleased that the motion on the establishment of a co-operative development agency has been accepted for debate today and I thank members who signed it. I declare an interest as a member of the Co-operative Party and of the Co-operative group of members of the Scottish Parliament.

Members might be aware that the commitment to establish a co-operative development agency is in the partnership agreement. It might not be as visible or controversial a commitment as others in the document are—we will perhaps leave those for another day—but its inclusion is an important milestone in the work to recognise, promote and strengthen the co-operative and mutual sector. That work is important in any process of developing and strengthening local economies and the broader Scottish economy.

I thank all those people who have worked so hard in a variety of organisations to develop the policy in support of the co-operative sector. In particular, I pay tribute to Joe Hill, who will soon retire from his post as deputy national secretary of the Co-operative Party. He shares his name with a revered progressive figure of international renown, but in the co-operative movement in Scotland and beyond, our Joe Hill is every bit as admired. He was the first to recognise the importance of a co-operative development agency and drove the policy with great determination. When the agency becomes a reality, it will represent a fitting achievement to mark his long years of fighting for the co-operative movement and its values.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of the sector, but there remains insufficient understanding of its diversity—in size, scale, areas of activity and impact. Whatever we do around the sector, it will be important to hold on to what is good and unique to the sector and to recognise that some of the joy of the co-operative movement is its very unpredictability. We do not want to lose that element.

Co-operatives provide the most successful examples of businesses that operate for more than profit. Their social purpose is supported by a business model that relies on income generation to be sustainable, rather than one which depends on long-term grants or subsidies.

Co-operation, of course, has a long and proud history; it emerged from people's experiences and developed from their desires for local solutions. It was not based on an academic model—indeed, academia is constantly catching up with the reality of the co-operative movement. It will be important, as we develop the policy around the agency, to look to the real experts inside the movement, to ensure that the agency meets the aspirations that they have for it. We should talk to and work in partnership with the Scottish Co-op, Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland and the range of organisations that represent the sector.

Co-operatives are strengthened by their democratic dimension and stakeholders including customers, service users, employees or the wider community can engage more deeply with their operations through ownership and governance mechanisms. Co-operative businesses benefit from the ability to tap into local knowledge and generate a loyalty to which other businesses can only aspire. The housing co-op movement demonstrates the importance of that dimension and provides us with great lessons on how we shape and deliver services by talking to the people who will use them. There is no doubt that the co-operative housing sector has been excellent; it owes its success precisely to its ability to talk to those who know best what they want their housing to be like.

Co-operation is remarkable in its capacity to survive, modernise and find new expression. It can offer real solutions in all the areas that we consider important today, such as health, housing and community services. Co-operation has survived despite the fact that it has received little or no state intervention or acknowledgment. The wish to establish a co-operative development agency is, in part, about redressing the balance in relation to the attention that Government has given to different parts of the economy. The establishment of the CDA would represent recognition that we can have social entrepreneurs

and enterprises that can have a huge impact on the economy and, in particular, on local economic activity.

It is important that the agency should identify how best it can support current co-operative initiatives and innovation, so that co-operation is not regarded just as an option of last resort when a business is in crisis, as happens too often currently. We do not seek to make a special case for the sector, but we want its importance to have equal value and recognition within economic policy. I will be interested to hear how the Executive plans to progress its commitment to the establishment of a CDA, what its timetable of action will be and who it will ensure is involved in the process of developing the agency.

In making progress on the issue, I want to emphasise the need to take account of the diversity of the sector and of the diverse benefits of its existence. There are economic goals and social goals, both of which are locked together in the co-operative movement. The diversity of the sector means that there is a place for all Scottish Executive departments in ensuring that the CDA is established in such a way that it is effective.

The involvement of the whole Scottish Executive must not act as a means of putting a brake on development, however; it should be the means of facilitating the development of a body that will do what we aspire that it should do. Although the CDA will need to work with other agencies, I would be concerned if we were to discover that it was to be subsumed in another agency such as Scottish Enterprise.

I want to highlight the fact that the agency should not just be about economic activity. The CDA could have an important role in promoting the co-operative ethos and approach, particularly to young people. In that regard, I commend the work of Young Co-operatives, which is supported by, among others, the Scottish Co-op. In Scotland, Young Co-operatives is being offered as a pilot scheme in 10 schools. It is working with more than 150 young people to support young co-operative enterprises.

Young Co-operatives also has an added and important focus on fair trade and brings co-operative enterprise properly into the enterprise agenda. It is a good example of the challenge we face in enhancing economic and social policy and in increasing through education opportunities for people who look for co-operative solutions to the problems that face them and their communities.

I commend the proposal for the development of the co-operative development agency. I urge the Scottish Executive and the minister to make time to ensure that real progress is made on the establishment of an effective agency that will

support those who are developing, or who could or would develop co-operative options.

17:17

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I draw attention to an entry in my register of interests, which shows that I am a policyholder in the mutual investment company Standard Life. I used to be in other mutual companies, but they are no longer mutuals.

I did not sign Johann Lamont's motion but only because of pure inadvertence on my part, for which I apologise. I take the opportunity to congratulate her on securing the debate.

I will not speak at great length. I am in the chamber purely because of the inclemency of the weather, which makes my journey north rather uncertain. I hope that that is not a situation that too many members in the chamber share. Perhaps members who are not here have dashed off in the hope that they can beat the weather to Aberdeen—or is there something going on in Inverness?

Community businesses are an essential part of engaging people in the interests and responsibilities of community life. They are something that I have always supported.

Yesterday's meeting of the Communities Committee turned into a most entertaining hour's discussion of the forthcoming changes to United Kingdom company law, which will introduce new vehicles such as community interest companies and community interest public limited companies. I see fellow members flinching at the thought of my going on at length on the subject, but I do not intend to do so. The debate on CICs indicates, however, that there is life in the old beast yet.

The company in which I have the most particular interest from the point of view of mutuality is Standard Life. I led the campaign in 2000 that defeated Fred Woollard when he wanted to capture the assets of the members of that company for stock market interests. Thankfully, we got a substantial vote against his attempt to do so.

People forget that Standard Life was an ordinary company until the 1920s. It was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but chose mutuality as a way of taking its business forward because it realised that its future lay in engaging with its customers. Mutuality enabled the dividends that it paid to be given to its customers by way of the products that it sold and delivered.

That point leads neatly into the issue of dividends from co-operative companies, co-operative enterprises, mutual enterprises and credit unions, all of which come under the same umbrella.

When we talk about dividends, far too often we think simply of a cheque that is provided to people who have put up money and have otherwise got no engagement whatever in the business of the company in which they have invested. Some people think of a business purely as a cash cow to be milked for everything that it has got and in which there is short-term interest in getting money out of it. Co-ops, mutual enterprises and credit unions are to be congratulated on representing our communities at their finest, with people co-operating not for the financial benefits that accrue, but for the mutual benefits that society will accrue and which people who join together and work together deliver to us.

I am happy to support the establishment of a co-operative development agency, to which Johann Lamont's motion refers. I hope that it does not get subsumed in the maw of Scottish Enterprise, because it would be of a very different character from the kind of thing in which Scottish Enterprise gets involved. However, I expect it to work co-operatively with Scottish Enterprise. I congratulate Johann Lamont and give her my support.

17:21

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I declare an interest similar to Johann Lamont's, as I am also a sponsored member of the Co-operative Party and a member of my local co-op.

It is fitting that, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the miners' strike, I should remind the chamber of the co-operative tradition that was then and is still alive in Scotland to an extent that I have not seen anywhere else in the United Kingdom. It is worth reminding ourselves that, during the 20 years since that dreadful time, many of the community businesses that sprang up have become successful local businesses in their own right. The mutual support ethos is one that is fitting in our Scottish society, where we still have a tradition of caring about what happens in our local communities.

It is time to explode the myth that mutual ownership is somehow not compatible with running a successful business. Stewart Stevenson spoke about Standard Life, but I could also cite the Dunfermline Building Society, the Nationwide Building Society and the Co-operative Insurance Society. The Co-op, with its emphasis on fair trade, supports the world's developing nations and helps them to grow their economies. Today, Mike Watson and I met representatives of Scottish Business in the Community and heard about the push that many big organisations are now making to show what they do for their communities as part of corporate social responsibility—for the environment, for society and for diversity in the work force.

Another myth is that co-ops, as opposed to mutuals, are composed of well-meaning volunteers who, without any pay or training but with worthy intent, do good deeds in the locality but are somehow doomed to fail. Any successful co-operative business must be an economic entity that is capable of standing alone. However it gains its funding—whether through some method of public funding, through the goods that it sells or through its activities—it must be able to wash its face. There is a range of possibilities, and Johann Lamont very ably listed them. They include housing, social care and health, transport, agriculture and now sport—even football, as many of us are involved in developing supporters' trusts.

I ask the minister to confirm that, when he draws up the remit for the co-operative development agency, he will ensure that it takes account of the need for training, both for management and for boards, and of the legal issues that will be involved in establishing such organisations. The agency must also consider governance and financial probity but, most important of all, it must have the support of every single minister in the Scottish Executive. The civil service must be under no doubt that the agency has that support and that it is to work as part of the economic life of Scotland. In that way, we can take account of and build on the willingness of people in our communities to work on behalf of their communities and to build successful economic units in them. I commend Johann Lamont's motion, I give it my whole-hearted support and I look forward to responding to the consultation document when it is produced.

17:25

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I warmly congratulate Johann Lamont on lodging her motion. She spoke about the Labour Party's long tradition of co-operation and about the Co-operative Party. There is also such a tradition in the Liberal Democrats. Co-operation has been a strong trend for us and we have had a strong philosophical commitment to it for many years, particularly against the background of our commitment to a decentralised approach and to community power in all its forms.

Johann Lamont touched on the sector's sheer diversity, which is an extremely important aspect, and to that I would add its independence. It shares with the voluntary sector as a whole several characteristics that we want to develop. The areas in which people co-operate include business and enterprise co-operatives and housing co-operatives, although it is fair to say that those are not as well developed in Scotland as they are in Scandinavia, for example. We might consider why that is the case and why we in Scotland have gone

in the slightly different direction of housing associations rather than towards the co-operative sector as such. Other areas include education and training co-operatives, retail co-operatives, food co-operatives, a variety of arts and cultural organisations, youth organisations, and credit unions. Areas in which people co-operate even include things like farmers' markets, which might not be set up in quite the same way but have the same important ideas behind them.

As a philosophical background to the matter, I take the idea that we live in plural society in which we have central Government in its various forms, local government, and the third sector, of which the co-operative and mutual sector is an important aspect. I confess that I have struggled with how we can make the sector more independent. It is important that the agency does not become just a vehicle for the delivery of central or local government objectives. The sector has its own agenda and its own strength, which comes from its diversity, and it is important for us to support that approach.

Of course, the partnership strongly committed itself to the idea of a co-operative development agency in the recent partnership agreement, and I look forward to that being put in place. I understand that Lewis Macdonald has had several meetings with interested groups in the area. I stress that it is important for the agency to be not a top-down central Government agency but something that is solidly and independently built up from the bottom on the basis of the co-operative and mutual organisations that exist.

Stewart Stevenson touched on the sheer width and potential of the concept in his reference to Standard Life—in which I also have an interest, pension-wise. The sector has been talked about as a mechanism for delivering water services, for example, and there is still relevance in that point. It also has potential in renewable energy, given the way in which wind power machinery can benefit local communities, for example. Some interesting experiments are taking place in Argyll and Bute in that connection. There is considerable scope for basing the sector's dynamism on that idea and on the different legal formulations that are now available to support community trusts and other such organisations that have a part to play.

My final point is on the importance of community business, which is where Johann Lamont started. Over the years, I have had dealings with organisations such as the Wise Group, which is active in the field and which was built up from an idea. It had little experience in the beginning, but developed its expertise and ended up as a major organisation that makes a major contribution not only to the economy of Glasgow and beyond but to the social fabric of the area through

employment and so on. The proposed co-operative development agency is perhaps not the sexiest issue on the partnership's agenda, but it is certainly one of the most important. I have great pleasure in giving support to it and to Johann Lamont's motion.

17:29

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

When Stewart Stevenson spoke, I was reminded that I am a member of a co-operative as well: I am a member of the Inverness credit union.

I thank Johann Lamont for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I would not say that I am an expert on the social economy or the co-operative movement, but what is good about being asked to speak in a debate is that it forces us to read about a subject. I am delighted that I did so.

I welcome Johann Lamont's comments about the sector's diversity. However, the document "A review of the Scottish Executive's Policies to promote the Social Economy", which was published in January 2003 by the then Minister for Social Justice, Margaret Curran, says:

"the role of Scottish Enterprise and its associated network should be to concentrate on the support and development of social economy businesses".

Perhaps the fact that a minister with responsibility for enterprise is to respond to today's debate answers Stewart Stevenson's question about the agency being subsumed in the enterprise network.

The document also says:

"The purpose of this review ... is to assess the social economy's potential to contribute to the achievement of key Scottish Executive objectives and to identify how the Executive and other public sector and independent agencies might help the sector to realise its potential."

I hope that the co-operative development agency will be part of a wider strategy to support the social economy. The agency may be welcome, but I hope that it will not be the only outcome of the social economy policy review and that such a wider plan will include a range of support measures for social firms.

In talking about social firms and the co-operative movement, we should acknowledge the extent of corporate social responsibility activities by many small and large private firms, such as Lloyds TSB and the Bank of Scotland, and the sponsorship by many firms of arts, culture and sport in Scotland. The social economy has great potential.

I will quote from "A Smart Co-operative Scotland", which contains research by Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland. The document starts by talking about co-operative values. The values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy,

equal rights, equity, members supporting one another and

"the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others"

are basic Conservative principles of which Mrs Thatcher would be proud. I am pleased that Johann Lamont endorses those principles. Perhaps we have a little more in common than we realised.

"A Smart Co-operative Scotland" refers to the Scottish Association of Farmers Markets, whose champion I am delighted to say is my colleague John Scott. I am pleased to leave the debate about farmers' markets with him.

In the short time that remains, I will talk about Highland Wholefoods Workers Co-operative, which is based in Inverness and covers the Highlands and Islands. It supplies not only health food shops, but hotels, pubs and others. The enterprise was established in 1989 by five people who contributed £1,000 each and received the support of a Government enterprise scheme—under the Tories, of course. Highland Wholefoods has been going for more than 14 years. It supplies something that people cannot find elsewhere in Inverness and the rest of the Highlands. That is an example of a welcome, green and organic organisation that might not have been established in any other guise.

17:33

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** I welcome the debate and thank Johann Lamont for lodging the motion. It is important to discuss social enterprise and one aspect of its development in Scotland.

Social enterprises contribute greatly to Scottish society in many ways. They combine jobs and economic dynamism with an ethos of being for more than profit, as Johann Lamont said. It is important to recognise that.

Social enterprise is not part of the voluntary sector; it is distinct, because it combines the voluntary sector's ethos with the spirit of enterprise. That is why social enterprises are an important, creative and potentially dynamic part of the Scottish economy.

I welcome the proposed co-operative development agency as part of the development of social enterprise. It is something that is wanted very much by the social economy sector. We should provide assistance and support to people who want to set up a social enterprise, whatever form that takes.

In my previous existence, I did a lot of work supporting community forestry enterprises up and down Scotland. That involved advising community

groups that wanted to take over the management of their local forests on some of the different ways in which they could advance such projects. Sometimes a co-operative was appropriate, sometimes a community trust was appropriate and sometimes a charitable company limited by guarantee was appropriate. As Mary Scanlon said, we must think about the role of the co-operative development agency as part of a wider vision of supporting social enterprise in Scotland. There is already a broad range of organisations that support the different kinds and aspects of social enterprise. The co-operative development agency has an important role to play in that framework, but it should not be the entire support mechanism for social enterprise. Each different part of the sector needs an appropriate support structure.

I agree with the suggestion that the agency should be separate from the enterprise networks. Co-operatives mix some of the ethos of the voluntary sector with the enterprise spirit. As has been said, the agency should run across departments, link to all branches of the social economy sector, concentrate on supporting co-operatives and link with all aspects of government.

Johann Lamont spoke about promoting social enterprise. It is essential to the development of the social economy sector that the co-operative option is fitted into education. If someone goes to Companies House and says that they are interested in starting a business, they must be informed of the whole range of options, including co-operatives. The proposed agency should take as part of its remit promotion, education and linking up with people who are thinking about setting up a company, to ensure that co-operatives are recognised as an option.

If we want the co-operative development agency to become a success, we must consider education and how the agency will fit into the wider sector. I strongly support the motion and efforts towards establishing a co-operative development agency, but we must recognise that it fits into a wider, distinct social economy sector, within which it should play its appropriate part.

17:37

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate. Like my colleagues, I wish to declare an interest—I am a member of the Co-operative Party and a sponsored Co-operative MSP.

In the true spirit of co-operation, I thank my colleague Johann Lamont for lodging this motion and allowing us to celebrate the co-operative sector's contribution to the economic and social well-being of our communities. The real advantage

of the co-operative model is that it adds value by providing an opportunity for those involved to contribute more fully to the operation, ownership and governance of a business. That can help to give businesses a competitive advantage, because stakeholders have true ownership, loyalty and knowledge acquisition.

I am proud to be a member of the Co-operative group of MSPs, which, along with Johann Lamont, welcomes this opportunity to thank Joe Hill for his tireless commitment to the co-operative sector. We all support Joe's vision of a co-operative that is rooted in the community it serves. It is important to note that co-operatives exist to provide services to their members rather than profits for stakeholders.

It is estimated that social economy organisations contribute about 10 per cent of gross domestic product. They form a stakeholder economy in which consumers and employees are given a meaningful opportunity to get involved. The co-operative movement in Britain has a long history of consumer and employee involvement and the idea has been taken up by 800 million co-operators worldwide. The United Nations estimates that almost 3 billion livelihoods worldwide are made secure by co-operative enterprise.

Protection of the rights of citizens as consumers, employees and those without work is still of great importance to society and the co-operative movement.

Christine May alluded to the miners' strike and the years of fragmentation in society from 1979 to 1997. I cannot agree with Mary Scanlon about Margaret Thatcher's contribution. The co-operative movement has tried to meet the real needs of ordinary people. Representing the views of more than 8 million co-operative members throughout the United Kingdom, the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party have worked closely to achieve core objectives and put into practice the principles of co-operating, protecting and promoting consumers' rights.

Co-operation goes far beyond simply working together: it is about democracy and enabling ordinary people to become involved in the organisations around them and to participate in decisions about the future of their communities.

**Mary Scanlon:** Given that the co-operative movement is about equal opportunities, equal access and social inclusion, does the member also include members of the Conservative, Liberal and other political parties, apart from the Labour Party?

**Marilyn Livingstone:** I am talking about the work that I see happening within the Labour Party and the Co-operative Party, which is what Mary

Scanlon would expect me to do. The co-operative movement is much broader.

I welcome the commitment to the co-operative development agency: it is an innovative means of boosting the economy while addressing important social issues. It would exist to assist in the creation and development of community and social enterprises. I hope that the minister will take on board that it should cross Executive portfolios. It has to address problems of social exclusion by giving people access to training, advice and services that will allow them to achieve their aims.

Co-ops are good for the economy, they are a positive force in our community and the establishment of a Scottish CDA is good news for all in Scotland.

17:42

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I congratulate Johann Lamont on securing the debate and I apologise for not being in the chamber to hear all of her speech.

I must declare some interests: I am chairman of the Scottish Association of Farmers Markets, chairman of Ayrshire farmers' market and a member of the Ayrshire country lamb group. They are all co-operatives that I have played a part in creating. I am also a member of about half a dozen others, but I will not go into that.

Co-operatives have a central role to play in new business start-ups. They have other functions, of course, but they are valuable in the creation of new businesses. When an individual is aware of a business opportunity and is sufficiently motivated, he or she will set up their own business or company to satisfy the demand. However, not all individuals have the certainty, the capital or the time to take the risks involved in setting up a new business on their own, and the co-operative route provides them with an opportunity.

Working together collectively, groups of individuals from my background—farming—were able to pool their resources of time, intellect and talent to create businesses that they would not have been able to create individually. In addition, support was in place through the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society, which has a distinguished history in rural areas of supporting new and well-established co-operatives as well as some of Scotland's most valuable businesses. The expertise and corporate memory of that organisation would be a worthwhile model on which the CDA could build. That co-operative route has spawned many new businesses that would not otherwise have got off the ground.

As is obvious, new businesses create jobs. That has been the greatest satisfaction in supporting more than 50 farmers' markets in Scotland.



Working as part of a co-operative has given many of our members the confidence to start up other businesses, such as farm shops, butcher shops and online and direct selling businesses, which are vital in Scotland's currently faltering economy.

At its simplest, co-operation provides an essential stepping stone to allow those with entrepreneurial instincts to take the first step. Of course, many might choose to remain within the collective arena of responsibility that co-operation gives, and that is fine. It is essential that co-operation is fostered, encouraged and developed because, as well as supporting businesses, it strengthens a sense of community.

In the short time that I have left, I would like to develop that point. Whether in urban or in rural areas, co-operatives that are working well together create an enhanced sense of community. Mutual goals that are achieved through co-operation bring satisfaction to those who are involved and develop the transferable team-building skills that are vital to re-establishing a sense of community in areas where it has been lost. Virtual communities, too, can be creative via the internet and can enhance co-operation and a sense of community.

I wish the co-operative development agency well. I look forward to hearing of its creation and seeing it succeed.

17:45

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** I, too, declare an interest as a member of the Co-operative group of MSPs. I am also proud to be a direct descendent of James Standring, one of the Rochdale pioneers who were the founders of the co-operative movement. Like others, I welcome the debate and congratulate Johann Lamont on bringing the topic to the Parliament for debate.

I will begin by talking about a remarkable community business in Mayfield, which is in my constituency. In 1988, residents of Mayfield conceived an idea to revitalise the local community following the virtual shut-down of the mining industry in the area. They tried to create jobs in the wake of losing thousands of jobs following the closure of pits and other places of employment in the area. The long-term unemployment effects on the local economy and local businesses had been incredibly severe.

The founders of McSence initiated the idea of forming a community business that would provide employment and profits to regenerate the local community. They have done just that. The original idea was to collect £5 a week from local businesses for one year, as a contribution to start-up costs for the community-owned business. Those contributions totalled £700,000 and a steering group was set up to decide on the first

business venture. Today, McSence has seven companies that contribute to the regeneration of the community in Midlothian and a turnover in excess of £3 million. It produces annual profits of £250,000, which are ploughed back into the community. McSence has won several prestigious awards for its initiative and, in my view, it is a shining star in the eyes of social enterprise throughout the UK.

I want to ask the minister about an issue that has come up in my discussions with McSence. Currently, McSence and other social enterprises fall into a rather grey area, being neither commercial organisations nor public sector bodies. That causes them certain problems, especially in procurement procedures. When it comes to putting in tenders, they are expected to provide a track record of delivering tenders on time and on budget, but they do not have that track record if they are not able to bid successfully for contracts. It is a chicken-and-egg scenario. I ask the minister to consider creating a level playing field for social enterprises in public and private sector procurement—at least on a trial basis. That would enable firms such as McSence to prove their effectiveness and efficiency in delivering projects on time and on budget.

I would like to add to John Scott's comments about the importance of community development and co-operatives in rural areas. The Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society, which is currently supported by the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, has a tremendous track record of creating and guiding successful agricultural co-ops in the countryside. There is no doubt that, with the massive changes that are taking place in the countryside, that organisation has an important role to play.

There are opportunities for co-operation in farming, but there are other opportunities such as improving the Scottish diet via food co-ops that link growers directly to consumers, the processing of local foods locally, farmers' markets, web trading, farm shops, direct sales to hotels, introducing broadband services to remote communities, rural housing developments and waste recycling, to mention but a few. It is time to provide the kind of specialist support and development services that will enable all those opportunities to be fully developed. They create social inclusion, market inclusion and business skills development. They also sustain local employment, local investment and local self-help and they can secure reinvestment in years to come.

As I believe that SAOS has an important role to play, I ask the minister to discuss with the society and the Minister for Environment and Rural

Development the way forward to ensure that its expertise is used.

I am happy to support the motion.

17:50

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald):** I, too, join members of all parties in congratulating Johann Lamont on securing the debate and echo the comments that she and Marilyn Livingstone made about our colleague Joe Hill.

Members have left no doubt about their level of commitment to co-operation and mutuality. It is shared by the Scottish ministers and underpins our proposal in the partnership agreement to establish a co-operative development agency in Scotland. Although other aspects of the social economy are important, the agency will work in the productive economy and promote co-operative enterprise. I will focus on that area in my speech.

I should first declare my interests in this matter. Like Johann Lamont and other members, I am a member both of the Scottish Co-op and of the Co-operative Party. I am also a patron of Aberdeen Football Supporters' Trust. Although it is not the same trust as the one Christine May mentioned, it follows the same principle and is a new type of vehicle that allows communities to take a stake in the things that matter. Moreover, with my wife and children, I am a stakeholder in a mutual building society that holds a mortgage on our home. I share those interests with many of my ministerial colleagues as well as with many members who have spoken in this debate.

I am glad to have an opportunity to reaffirm our recognition of the importance of co-operative and mutual organisations in contributing to the growth of our economy, providing jobs and offering economic and social benefits to local communities.

Our future economic success will depend on our ability to sustain greater entrepreneurship and creativity; to support enterprise and responsible risk taking; to tackle cultural and social barriers to entrepreneurship; and to promote innovative, imaginative ways of mobilising labour, capital and business ideas such as co-operative enterprises and mutual ownership.

Our commitment to establishing the co-operative development agency can play a key role in carrying forward that agenda. We will look to the agency to help promote, create and develop dynamic and sustainable co-operatives in a number of sectors of the Scottish economy because of the benefits they bring to the economy.

As members have pointed out, the co-operative vision is nothing new. It dates from the time of the industrial revolution 200 years ago and members

who have visited New Lanark will have witnessed its evocative reminder of the vision of economic efficiency and social justice that motivated Robert Owen and so many others, including Rhona Brankin's ancestor and the other Rochdale pioneers in 1844.

From the beginning, co-operatism has been internationalist. I have no doubt that the Rochdale pioneers and Robert Owen would have approved of the fact that this Parliament debated free trade—[*Laughter.*] Sorry, that was a Freudian slip—I meant “fair trade”. They would have approved of the debate that we had before Christmas on fair trade and promoting produce from poorer countries in British markets.

Furthermore, co-operatism has been political from the beginning. The vision of co-operative production and co-operative trade went hand in hand with the vision of workers united to improve working and living conditions. Both those elements went together with the politics of Chartism and the demand for political rights and for a social justice agenda in central and local government. Such things remain true today. In that respect, I was delighted to hear Mary Scanlon this evening sign the Tory party up to the co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Given how widely those principles and values are shared, it is essential that they provide the foundation stones on which the co-operative development agency is built.

**John Scott:** Does the minister agree that the values to which he has just alluded are universal and are not, as some of his colleagues would suggest, just the domain of the Labour Party?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I am delighted by that question. Those of us in other parts of the chamber welcome the Conservatives' commitment henceforth to social equality.

As far as the co-operative development agency is concerned, we will issue a formal consultation document in the next few weeks to inform the development of policy, and will consult on it over a three-month period.

As Robert Brown mentioned, my officials and I have met key players in the sector informally to discuss the way forward and we will continue that process. We have had valuable inputs from the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Co-operation and Mutuality Scotland and others.

We will set out in the consultation document ideas about the scope of the agency, its focus and priorities, the type of body it should be, its proper relationship with the enterprise networks and its relationship with the allied but distinct areas of the social economy that have been mentioned during the debate. One option that we will lay out is for the agency to provide a first-stop shop for those

seeking access to the expertise, advice, training and resources required to support the establishment of new co-operative enterprises. The agency might also offer support services to enhance the growth of existing co-operatives.

There are start-up processes in any new business and we will ask for people's views on that area. We will also consult on potential sources of funding and how the CDA can provide a voice to develop innovative approaches for expanding the sector's contribution to the Scottish economy and to developing international links.

Rhona Brankin asked important questions about social enterprises such as McSence. We are considering a range of ways to improve access to Government contracts and improve the levelness of the playing field for procurement. We will consider Rhona Brankin's suggestions in that context.

I agree with the point, which a number of members made, that the agency must be able to work with Executive departments across all portfolios and across the range of policy. That is happening, as officials from a variety of departments are involved in the discussions.

As has been said, a good deal of work is being done to promote co-operation, with support from the Scottish ministers, in sectors such as agricultural co-operatives, housing and sport. It will be extremely important for the agency to take account of work already under way and to avoid duplication and confusion. Instead, we should learn from the good example of other types of co-operative that are already in place.

The CDA will be important to the Executive and to all who recognise the importance of the co-operative dimension to the history of the wider Labour movement, the cause of social justice and progressive politics in general. Co-operation does not just have a distinguished history; it has the potential for an exciting and dynamic future, not least in economic growth. That is why the consultation on the CDA will be so important and why we will consider the responses to the consultation carefully—to ensure that our conclusions are well founded and command broad support, thereby providing the basis for the CDA's growth, once it is established, over the years to come.

*Meeting closed at 17:58.*



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