

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 7 October 2004

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 7 October 2004

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

Scotland's International Image

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-1831, in the name of Jack McConnell, on Scotland's international image, and two amendments to the motion.

09:30

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): This week, we finally celebrate the opening of this fantastic building and the start of devolution's next chapter. Today, I am pleased to mark that next step with a debate about Scotland's international image and the launch of our international strategy. This is about our place in the world and, more important, our vision to enhance it.

Over the past five years, many of us have hosted visits by distinguished overseas guests. They come because they see what we are doing and the relevance of that to the wider world. Many more will be arriving for the official opening of the Parliament on Saturday. The eyes of the world will be upon us once more. We must make the most of this opportunity for the good of Scotland. As devolution matures, we must resist the temptation to concern ourselves solely with matters inside our own borders. Scotland's success—social, economic and cultural—will be shaped by our ability to look beyond ourselves and to share and contribute to the world around us.

Today, I want to describe the way in which Scotland's devolved Government intends strategically and systematically to build relationships with others and to promote our country internationally. Success will mean more tourism, more students, more investment, more exports and more people choosing to live and work in Scotland. It will fuel our ambition and drive us forward as a nation.

Scotland has always looked to Europe for inspiration. Our auld alliances run deep. We are now forging new friendships in an enlarged European Union. This building is itself a reflection of our long-standing connections with Europe, and this chamber is set up in a distinctive European style. Scotland has enjoyed strong affinities with a number of European countries over the centuries. We have seen flows of people moving between here and the European mainland throughout our

recent history. First and foremost, Scotland's political priority internationally is the European Union. More than three quarters of the work of the Parliament is influenced by decisions taken by European institutions.

We have two clear goals in Europe: we have positioned Scotland as a leading legislative region, alongside Bavaria, Catalonia, Flanders and others; and we will focus our efforts to influence the United Kingdom Government, EU member states, regions and institutions on EU policy issues that affect Scotland.

Scotland has had enormous success on the European stage in these early years of devolution. The recognition of the significance of subsidiarity and the new EU treaty cannot be overstated. Our role as one of the leading legislative regions was crucial in winning that argument. In March this year, I held up regionalisation of the common fisheries policy as a further measure of the EU's commitment to the devolved agenda. Next month, we will be pleased to welcome the first meeting of the North sea regional advisory council to Edinburgh. I was delighted this week when support for that regional agenda was given by the new European Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.

This year, I have held the presidency of the group of regions with legislative powers. I am looking forward to welcoming the leaders of Regleg to Edinburgh next month, for their major conference.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): Can the First Minister give the Parliament and Scotland evidence that he has secured actual decision-making powers for Scotland within the European policy-making network since he became First Minister? The regional advisory councils that he is boasting about do not have any decision-making powers as far as fisheries are concerned. No decision-making powers have been secured for negotiations over the constitution either.

The First Minister: It is depressing that the person who, until recently, chaired the Parliament's European and External Relations Committee knows so little about what is happening in Europe and elsewhere. We have a Parliament that has placed us at the heart of that European process and ensured that we have the support of not just the UK Government but the European Union for changes that will give us a more significant role in the future, alongside other ancient and historic nations of Europe, such as Bavaria, Catalonia, Flanders and others, which have supported us in that drive. I believe that the changes will be important not just for fisheries but for the constitutional treaty, which the Scottish nationalists are committed to voting against when we have a referendum in this county. The changes

will give this devolved Parliament a greater role on the European stage.

Since 1 July this year, this Government has undertaken an extensive programme to promote contemporary 21st century Scotland to people from around the world. We have introduced the strategy because the image of Scotland as a place of great myths, castles and misty mountains alone simply does not reflect the reality of modern Scotland. In the five years of devolution, Scotland has changed for the better. It is a country in which we are doing and saying different things and in which there are signs all around us of economic, social and cultural renewal. However, the world's perception of us is based firmly on an image of the past—an image that certainly puts us on the map but does not demonstrate either progress or aspiration.

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): The First Minister is talking about the image of Scotland. He will be aware that one of the most symbolic emblems that we have is our saltire. What is his view on the use of the saltire to promote Scotland?

The First Minister: My view on that subject is well known. We have ensured not only that the saltire is more heavily used throughout the world, but that it will be even more heavily used by British embassies and consulates and other buildings overseas in future and that we will use it more extensively in our own Government buildings here in Scotland. We already do so inside those buildings and we are preparing the guidance that will ensure that it is used more often outside them. Already, in my time as First Minister, the saltire has been given more prominence outside Executive buildings—something that I think the Parliament should follow.

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): Will the First Minister take an intervention?

The First Minister: Before Ms Robison comes in, I want to refer to the outrageous, inaccurate and deceitful statements made by Bruce Crawford yesterday on this subject. We have in this Parliament a clear position that there is a devolved Government, which I lead, and a Parliament, which is organised on a corporate basis, involving all the parties. The Parliament makes its own decisions, on an all-party basis, about the organisation of this building and the rules that are enforced around it. I hope that the Parliament decides to use the saltire more in the new building, and it will have my support in doing so. However, when Bruce Crawford—who has probably had more influence over this than I have, as he has been a regular member of the Parliamentary Bureau—said yesterday that it is not the Parliament's responsibility but our devolved Government's responsibility to fly the saltire more outside this building, he deceived the Scottish

public. That is wrong and he should not do it again.

We need to demonstrate—

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, First Minister. I think we have a point of order.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Under which standing order?

Fergus Ewing: Is it in order for the First Minister to accuse a member of this Parliament of deceit?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Crawford is not present to answer that point. Carry on, First Minister.

The First Minister: I would not want to upset Fergus Ewing by commenting on other members of the Parliament, because of course he would never do that.

We need to work as hard as we can to demonstrate that Scotland is hungrier for success than anyone else. That is why we have put in place a range of measures to put Scotland back on the map. We have had groups of international journalists undertaking familiarisation visits in advance of the opening this weekend. We promoted our country to international visitors at the Edinburgh festival and major sporting events this summer. We are supporting foreign broadcasters, including Chinese broadcasters who are with us this week producing documentaries on Scotland, and we have produced new promotional materials on fresh talent. Our website, scotlandistheplace.com, has had 150,000 hits or page impressions from all corners of the globe since its launch in May. However, that is just the start.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): The First Minister said earlier that Scotland's image was much attached to its past—one thinks of such things as the Scottish diaspora. Does the First Minister agree that in cultural tourism, based on our Scottish cousins out there around the world, and eco-tourism, we have a great opportunity for the future, not least in places such as my constituency of Caithness and Sutherland?

The First Minister: Unlike those on the Opposition benches, who think that Scotland is a terrible country that nobody would ever want to come to, we believe that Scotland is a great country that people would want to come to. We must build on our great cultural and environmental strengths to ensure that they do.

As I said, this is just the start. We are gearing up to make the most of Saturday's opening of the

Parliament, sending images and messages to every international news agency, and we will back up that heightened profile with well-placed advertisements and targeted promotions.

We have a campaign for the long term, but we are already making our mark. Most important, we are harnessing the energy, expertise and enthusiasm of all those with a passion for Scotland. Everyone who is in a position to promote Scotland, including public agencies, Scots abroad and our top companies, should speak to the world together—many voices, delivering a consistent and clear message about modern Scotland.

I firmly believe that Scotland has a great opportunity to make an impact again but, to be a player on the world stage, we have to be open to new people and new ideas. We have to be bold in how we go about doing that. In Scotland, we have been brave and open enough to say that it is in our national interest to welcome fresh talent, alongside developing our home-grown talent. At a time of declining population, we need to welcome new people to contribute to our economy and our communities.

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: Our fresh talent initiative is about more than just numbers of people, although Mr Brocklebank might have something else to say.

Mr Brocklebank: While I accept what the First Minister is saying and agree that it would be wonderful to attract people back to Scotland, how does the aim of attracting good entrepreneurial people back to Scotland square with the fact that, at this moment, fishermen from Peterhead and Fraserburgh are fishing off Namibia because they have been driven out of their waters?

The First Minister: I could, of course, create artificial fish in the sea, but that would be a silly proposal. There are stock shortages and it is to the credit of Scottish fishermen that they have taken an enterprising and innovative approach and have gone to other waters to fish to ensure that they can look after their families.

By asking that question, Mr Brocklebank cannot divert attention away from the fact that, at the Conservative party conference yesterday, we heard yet again that the Conservative party will overturn the policy that Murdo Fraser, to his credit, has pioneered, which is designed to reverse declining population in Scotland. I have welcomed and encouraged Murdo Fraser's support for the fresh talent initiative. For the Conservative party in London to overturn that policy and say that no regional assistance will be given to Scotland or any other part of the United Kingdom to reverse declining population is very wrong. Indeed, I must apologise to the chamber. Yesterday, I said that

the Scottish National Party was the only party in the chamber that is run from outwith Scotland, but it is clear that the Conservative party is in that category as well.

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)

(Con): Has something escaped my attention or is not the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament still part of the UK Labour Party and is not the leader of our country—Britain—Mr Blair and not the First Minister?

The First Minister: The difference is that, when the coalition parties approach our leaders in the United Kingdom and say that Scotland has a distinctive problem and we would welcome working with them, in collaboration, to deliver the changes that might make a difference to Scotland's long-term future, they say, "Yes, go ahead. We will support you." They do not overturn the policy and leave us behind.

Our fresh talent initiative is about more than just numbers of people; it is a signal of intent. It says something important about the scale of our ambitions for Scotland. It says that Scotland is the best place in Europe to live, work and study and is also the most welcoming place. This month, I look forward to opening our relocation advice service, which will demonstrate in a practical way how we can welcome new people, from refugees to post-graduate students—new Scots who will contribute to our country, our economy, our cultural diversity and, ultimately, our national success. In today's rapidly changing global economy, a small, connected country such as Scotland can respond quickly as new opportunities arise.

I am clear about where our priorities lie internationally. We must always be quick on our feet in responding to new opportunities. We must be ambitious enough to target Europe, America and—yes—China. Our engagement with the European Union is the cornerstone of our external strategy, and the strength of Scotland's links with America are such that we must continue to build on the good work that has been done there in recent years. However, we must also look beyond Europe and the strong links that we have with the USA to consider where other new opportunities might lie.

Since China opened up to the world and welcomed foreign investment and partnership, it has experienced rapid economic growth—about 9 per cent per year for the past decade. Many see the growth of China as a threat, but we in Scotland can and should treat it as an opportunity. Next week, I will lead a delegation of Scottish universities, colleges and businesses to develop our relationships further. I want our universities and colleges to strengthen their links with China. As China's economy grows and its relationship with the international community develops,

Scotland has a unique opportunity to become one of its most responsible and friendly—

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the minister take an intervention?

The First Minister: I have a problem with time and I will have to continue—sorry.

We can work with China to help deliver economic reform, eradicate poverty and promote a positive change in human rights. We already have the advantage of many established links. Scottish Development International has new offices in Beijing and Shanghai, but to support them and strengthen Government ties, I have decided to locate a Scottish Government official in Beijing on a full-time basis. That person will work closely with others to ensure that we present a coherent, strategic approach to our activities in China. Of course, they will also work closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Council. That is a significant step for our devolved Government and it signals the increasing importance that we attach to our work in China.

Scotland's international strategy is clear: we will target our efforts on the regions, nations, states and superpowers in which we believe we can have our voice heard. We will step up our work in the coming year. In America, we will use the hook of tartan day to do a lot more to promote Scottish universities, businesses and tourist destinations. In Europe, we will pursue the decentralisation agenda to get the EU to make better decisions and to have those decisions implemented more effectively. Building on the model of Scotland House in Brussels and our post in the British embassy in Washington, we will create a new post in Beijing to co-ordinate Scottish activity in China. We will step up our efforts to attract fresh talent to Scotland and we will continue our collaboration with the Home Office to find more flexibilities in the UK immigration system. We will make the most of this week's increased interest in Scotland with the opening of the new Parliament building, and we will build on that to promote Scotland when the G8 meets here next year.

We will do all those things to enhance Scotland's standing in the world with increased determination, confidence and focus, but I want to make a further point this morning about a really important development in our international strategy. I have always been clear that the greatest imperative in our external work is economic: to improve trade, welcome tourists, increase joint ventures between businesses, and encourage flows of knowledge and expertise, all of which help to grow Scotland's economy. However, if all there was to our international strategy was a plan to grow Scotland's economy, we as a devolved nation would be missing the point. Our international strategy must be not only about how

much money our small country makes. There is a more profound prize to be found when we build friendships with others.

At a time of worldwide insecurity, growth of international terrorism and extreme gaps in wealth and prosperity, perhaps the greatest prize will be won if Scotland and others like us take responsibility for the world around us: for the environment, for greater tolerance and for increased development for all. I passionately believe that learning about others—their customs, traditions and cultures—breeds a common understanding between peoples; our lives become enriched and our minds are opened. Scotland is part of the prosperous world, but we know that many countries are not. I want to give a clear message this week that Scotland is interested in those countries and is determined to play its part in supporting them to meet the many challenges that they face.

Today, I announce that our devolved Government will take those international responsibilities even more seriously. As a first step, we will set aside resources to assist the exchange of skills and experience between Scotland and developing countries. The powers of devolution mean that there are specific ways in which we can contribute to the international development agenda. In the coming months, there will be three basic elements to our work, which I will outline briefly.

First, there are areas of our work that have important implications for developing countries. In the content of the school curriculum, in our procurement policies and in the way we encourage corporate responsibility within businesses, we will actively consider the impact of our policies on the developing world.

Secondly, there are specific times when the international aid community can come together to respond to an urgent humanitarian crisis or emergency. We assisted the Scottish aid charities last year in their appeal for Iraq, and at times of international crises we will help those who take a lead in mobilising Scotland's response.

Thirdly, and most significantly, we will target our assistance through the broad-based development of non-governmental organisation capacity in Scotland. We will make a contribution where we can be most useful. At all times, we will work closely with the United Kingdom Government and, from today, Patricia Ferguson will have specific responsibility for co-ordinating those efforts.

Scotland cannot simply feel satisfied with its past achievements, great thought they are. We must speak to the world about our future, too. We have the people, the culture, the education and the enterprise to compete with the best. Now is the

time to stand up and promote our country, our businesses, our universities, our artists, our musicians and our sportspeople. Now is also the time to take our responsibilities seriously as a partner in worldwide development. Now is the time to talk up our successes and increase confidence at home and abroad. Now is the time to tell the world about Scotland, and we will.

I move,

That the Parliament shares the Scottish Executive's ambitions to build relationships across national and regional boundaries to deliver social, political, cultural and economic gain; welcomes efforts to promote Scotland's international image and to attract people to visit, live, work, study and do business in Scotland; acknowledges the importance of promoting Scotland's interests overseas; agrees that Scotland has a role in meeting the shared responsibilities of the international community, and welcomes the publication of the Executive's first international strategy.

09:51

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I welcome any contribution that we, in Scotland, can make to helping developing nations. Everybody in Scotland wants this nation to play its full part in making the world a better place for everyone who lives in it. However, that underlines one of the key problems with today's debate.

The problem is not the objectives that the Scottish Executive has laid out in the motion—all of us can sign up to those objectives. The problem is that the Scottish Executive's external relations strategy is anything but clear. Yesterday, the First Minister could not even tell John Swinney which minister was responsible for that strategy. The problem is that the First Minister repeatedly fails—he has done so again today—to demonstrate the vision and ambition that are absolutely vital if Scotland is to achieve the objectives that the Scottish Executive talks so much about. I shall outline my thoughts and the thoughts of the Scottish National Party on the four key steps that we must take as a nation to enhance our international profile.

First, it is absolutely imperative that we are confident about our image as a nation—that we do not fret about it, but celebrate it. Of course, we must ensure that people see Scotland as the modern, vibrant nation that we are. The First Minister is right: our cities, our universities, our industries and our people are just as important as our scenery, our history and the traditional hallmarks that are recognised the world over as symbols of Scotland. However, the First Minister is wrong to say, as he said on 1 July, that we in Scotland have the choice either to wallow in our past glories as a nation of great inventors and bravehearts, or to speak to the world about our future. Frankly, that kind of false choice does

not—to use the First Minister's words—challenge the Scottish cringe, but perpetuates it. It says to the Scottish people that we should somehow be ashamed of our history, our traditions and all the things that make us what we are as a nation.

In fact, we should be proud of and celebrate our past just as much as we talk up our future opportunities. We must learn to be at ease with ourselves. I agree that we should not get stuck in the past, but we should not constantly try to reinvent ourselves either. As citizens of this country, we should have the confidence to be who we are and to be proud of who we are. We should have a Government that has the confidence in Scotland never again to do anything as daft as spend hundreds of thousands of pounds to be told what anyone with half a brain knows instinctively—that, when it comes to international promotion, the saltire is the best flag to fly.

I say to the First Minister, in all seriousness, that we, in the Scottish Parliament, should not be talking about how we might use the saltire a bit more; we should be flying the saltire every day of the week, every week of the year, at the Parliament building. Instead of ranting and raving at those of us who stand up for Scotland, perhaps the First Minister should take a leaf out of our book.

The First Minister: Let there be no doubt that the saltire is going to be well used at home and abroad. I criticised Bruce Crawford earlier and I hope that he is listening, wherever he is today—clearly he is not interested enough in Scotland's international image to be present in the chamber.

I hope that Ms Sturgeon will take my point seriously. If there is a point to be made about the running of this building, she should make it to those who are responsible, make it properly and influence the decision, as I have been doing in relation to the saltire. She should not be ranting from the sidelines.

International research is important and I want to probe Nicola Sturgeon on that point. Does not it make sense for us to conduct international research, as we did this year, not into the symbol that we use for Scotland, but into how Scotland is perceived and the mechanisms and vehicles that we can use to improve the understanding of Scotland around the world? Every single international organisation does that. Why does Nicola Sturgeon not have that ambition for Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon: For the First Minister's benefit, and before he attacks him again, I tell him that Bruce Crawford is receiving medical treatment for the injury that he sustained earlier this year.

I also say to the First Minister that we carried out the self-same research in the mid-1990s, when we

spent hundreds of thousands of pounds to get exactly the same results as we got this time, and exactly the same results as anyone with their finger on Scotland's pulse would know instinctively that we would get, without having to pay market research companies to find out. We have to have confidence in our image; confidence in who we are is the first step to being internationally successful.

Secondly, we have to market ourselves properly and effectively to tourists, consumers and potential immigrants. I do not believe that we do that well enough, and I have a few examples. When it comes to marketing in Europe and north America—the two key markets for tourism—Tourism Ireland spends three times as much as VisitScotland. How can we compete on that basis?

We also need to ensure that we boost our exports. We need to use clear and distinctive Scottish branding to promote our goods abroad. In its day, Scotland the Brand was hugely successful, but the Scottish Executive pulled the rug out from under it without putting anything in its place. That has put our export businesses at a serious disadvantage. The promoting Scotland unit might have broader objectives, but there is a need for an integral part of that to be an equivalent to Scotland the Brand. Right now it does not have that, and that is a missed opportunity when it comes to promoting Scotland and Scottish business abroad.

Then there is the whole question of immigration. I agree with the First Minister's comments about the disgraceful stance of the Conservatives on the issue. However, the Scottish Executive has to reach higher. Its entire policy can be summed up in three words—fresh talent initiative.

I have said before that the fresh talent initiative is an insufficient response to Scotland's declining population. When a nation needs to attract 10,000 new immigrants every year just to keep its population steady, a scheme that will at best attract 8,000 is clearly insufficient. If we were being truly ambitious about managed migration as a solution to our economic problems, we would be pursuing a Scottish green card scheme to enable us to target young skilled workers from abroad and give them the support that they need to succeed in Scotland.

If the fresh talent initiative is the basket into which the Scottish Executive insists on putting all its eggs, it should be properly promoted. The fresh talent initiative is due to start next year, and yet none of the Home Office websites that give information on visas or working in the United Kingdom mention it. The only mention of Scotland on the immigration and nationality website relates to the proposed extension of Dungavel—hardly a message of welcome to Scotland.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: Not just now. I have to make progress.

Even those organisations that are responsible for promoting Scotland to foreign students are in the dark. The University of Edinburgh says about the fresh talent initiative:

“At present the details of the programme are sketchy and a number of issues still have to be resolved”.

In a phone call to the British Council yesterday, my office was told:

“We have no concrete details on how immigration and work permit details will work in relation to fresh talent.”

That is hardly the stuff to inspire confidence in people that the Scottish Executive knows what it is doing.

Phil Gallie: Given the extension of the European Union, does the member envisage that we will benefit from the fact that fresh talent from the 10 new member countries will have the right to work here?

Nicola Sturgeon: Unlike members of Phil Gallie's party, I believe that immigration to Scotland is to Scotland's benefit and should be encouraged. He should direct his intervention to his colleagues rather than to SNP members.

We could do more to promote Scotland in all the areas that I have mentioned, but the third important area on which I want to focus is our presence abroad. Yesterday, the Scottish Executive announced the establishment of a permanent representation in Beijing. I welcome that, but I remind the First Minister that, when he visits China next week, he should raise loudly and clearly the Scottish people's concerns about human rights issues in that country.

Let us compare ourselves not even with any other independent nation—which is what Scotland should be—but with other autonomous regions. The Flemish region, which has a similar population to that of Scotland, has 77 offices in 54 countries. Scotland has only one such office, which is Scotland House in Brussels. We need Scotland Houses in a range of countries that are politically, culturally and economically important to us. We cannot rely on the Foreign Office to represent Scotland properly.

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

Nicola Sturgeon: Sorry; I must make progress. Scotland is not a priority for the Foreign Office. Without putting too fine a point on it, I might add that many of the people who work in that organisation know little about Scotland and care even less.

The First Minister: That is rubbish.

Nicola Sturgeon: Perhaps the First Minister should listen.

The fourth and final thing that we should do to enhance our international profile is the most obvious and important of all: we need to be independent. We need the same powers and the same international status as our neighbours and competitors. It is as simple as that.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: Not just now.

We need to be independent for practical reasons. As the First Minister said, most of our work in the Scottish Parliament is influenced by the European Union. It is absurd that our voice is not heard directly in Europe where the big decisions are taken.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: Not just now. Listen to this.

We also need to be independent for symbolic reasons.

The First Minister: Will the member give way?

Nicola Sturgeon: No.

When we have Governments in London and in Edinburgh telling the entire world that Scotland is too poor and too weak to stand on its own two feet as an independent nation, how can we expect to be taken as seriously as independent Ireland? We need to be independent to have our own voice in the world.

The First Minister: Will the member take an intervention?

Nicola Sturgeon: No. The last time that I took an intervention from the First Minister he made another four-minute speech.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Nicola Sturgeon: The First Minister will not give Wendy Alexander the chance to speak very often, so I do not see why I should.

The Executive is right to say that we must share the responsibilities of the international community, but how can we do that when we are dragged into an illegal war against the wishes of the international community? An independent Scotland would at least have had the choice to say no to Blair and Bush. We would have been able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the international community. Scotland is denied such a choice at present.

I want Scotland to be seen and heard in the world, to have an impact that makes a difference

and to benefit from that enhanced profile. I am a passionate internationalist, but that is why I am a nationalist. To be successful abroad, to be taken seriously and to be regarded as a player, we must first show the world that we are confident, ambitious and serious about ourselves. That is the challenge to the First Minister.

I move amendment S2M-1831.2, to leave out from "shares" to end and insert:

"believes that the Scottish Executive has so far failed to fully exploit the enormous international goodwill that exists towards Scotland; calls on the Executive to use the Parliament's limited powers to implement a far more ambitious, strategic and consistent external relations policy and for such a policy to include the establishment of a distinctive presence overseas to promote Scotland, given that Her Majesty's Government will always be unable and unwilling to promote Scotland with the same degree of enthusiasm and effectiveness that we ourselves could do, and further believes that Scotland will only reap the full benefits of our distinctive international image and be able to play our full part in the world when we acquire the powers of independent statehood enjoyed by our many, internationally-successful neighbours."

10:04

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): The eve of the official opening of the new Parliament building offers us an opportunity, as Robert Burns said,

"To see ourselves as others see us".

There is much of which we in Scotland can rightly be proud. Scottish ideas and people have played an enormous role in the development of civilisation. It is no exaggeration to say that the Scottish enlightenment created the basic idea of modernity and that Scots have played a role in the making of the modern world out of all proportion to Scotland's size and population.

Some members of the Parliament may not share my enthusiasm for the Scottish contribution to technology, capitalism and democracy. However, the insights of David Hume and Adam Smith are universally acknowledged to have transformed our understanding of the world around us. In particular, Adam Smith's insight that free trade is the key to wealth creation has done more than anything else to increase the prosperity of ordinary people throughout the world, enabling literally billions to escape from poverty.

It was not only Scottish ideas that were influential. As engineers, doctors, missionaries, businessmen and soldiers, Scots have played a practical role in the development of many different countries. At home and abroad, people know of the achievements of James Watt, Robert Adam, David Livingstone, Elsie Inglis, Robert Burns and Walter Scott. Their practical and substantial achievements created the perception of Scotland that exists in the rest of the world.

The people of Scotland are still our greatest asset. In modern times, we take pride in the accomplishments of successful entrepreneurs such as Tom Hunter and Ann Gloag, actors such as Sean Connery and Ewan McGregor and sportsmen such as Colin Montgomerie and Kenny Dalglish. Scots shine even in the world of politics. There has been an abundance of Scots in recent Labour Cabinets—we think of Mr Brown, Mr Cook, Mr Reid and Mr Darling—just as there were in previous Conservative ones. I refer to Mr Rifkind, Mr Lang, Lord Younger, Lord Forsyth and Lord Mackay of Clashfern.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Will the member give way?

David McLetchie: Not just yet—I am coming to the good bit.

The Liberal Democrats have been led at United Kingdom level by Scots—the Presiding Officer's distinguished predecessor, Lord Steel, and most recently Charles Kennedy. Even the Scottish National Party is led by a Scot at Westminster these days. *[Laughter.]* I told members that a good bit was coming. I say truthfully to the chamber that there is no greater admirer of Alex Salmond than Alex Salmond. Given the political success that I have described, I have never understood why the Scottish National Party is so keen on independence when we have a colony called England on our doorstep. We may have lost the Darien expedition, but we certainly won the acts of union.

Although individual Scots men and women are capable of great deeds, the wider reputation of our country is not as positive as it once was.

Dr Jackson: The member referred to men and women, but I do not think that he included a woman in his initial list. Are there any women that he might add?

David McLetchie: I mentioned Elsie Inglis, but if the member wishes I am happy to include Mary Slessor as someone from the past. I was also positive about modern businesswomen such as Ann Gloag. There is nothing sexist in my approach. I relish the accomplishments of all Scots, whatever their gender.

As a country, we were renowned for being a world economic leader with a vibrant and dynamic modern economy. I am disturbed that recent research commissioned by the Scottish Executive shows that our reputation has slipped somewhat in that respect. Among international customers, Scotland was not perceived as a place to do business or, indeed, to be on the economic agenda. Although the weather was the main barrier to relocation—even I would not blame the Scottish Executive for that—more worryingly there was an image of Scotland as underdeveloped. It is

ironic that Scotland, which did so much to develop the modern world and was once the epitome of a modern country, now seems to have fallen behind.

Before the First Minister accuses me or others of talking Scotland down, as he habitually does, let me reassure him on this point. I am not talking Scotland down—I am talking the Government down. Whatever he may think, Scotland and the Scottish Executive are mercifully not the same. I believe that the policies of the Executive in many areas are letting Scotland down.

We need to relearn the lessons of our past, so that our international reputation is built on the substantial achievements of today, rather than simply the magnificent achievements of yesterday.

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): On policies and talking Scotland down, can Mr McLetchie clarify his position on the Scottish regiments? Does he back Mr Soames or Mr Howard in that matter?

David McLetchie: Mr Howard has made our position perfectly clear, as did Mr Fraser and Mr Fox on the radio this morning.

We need to relearn the lessons of our past so that our international reputation is built on substantial achievements. There is much on which we can build today. The native inventiveness of the Scottish people still exists: witness the pioneering work being done by Scots in biotechnology. However, we could do much more.

We need to recreate in Scotland the conditions in which our people can create wealth and prosperity. I believe that that means reducing the burdens of tax and red tape and improving our transport infrastructure. Is it not a sad reflection that, no sooner have foreign visitors landed at Edinburgh airport, than they are likely to find themselves in a traffic jam on the A8000 if they want to cross the Forth road bridge? That is hardly a welcome introduction to Scotland.

Many of our public services are equally in need of modernisation. Let us admit that we lag behind many western European countries in standards of health care. It is a national disgrace that so many people in Scotland languish on waiting lists and wait so long for treatment. Such statistics are unlikely to attract families from abroad to come and live here, when they compare our record on a basic service such as health with that of other western European countries where they could equally settle and make lives for themselves.

It is somewhat typical of the Executive that it thinks that our international reputation can be improved by the launch of a strategy. It is not that I disagree with everything that is in the strategy document—indeed, I wish the First Minister a successful trip to China next week. It is just that,

as we have seen in so many other areas, strategies that set out a host of good intentions are not enough; they must be backed up by meaningful action.

I know that image is important. In a world of global communication, as Mark Twain perceptively said, a lie can be halfway round the world before the truth has got its boots on. However, ultimately, Scotland's international image cannot be transformed by clever public relations. Image is based on substance, so we need real improvements, not cosmetic makeovers. I believe that the current weaknesses in Scotland are the result of the wrong political approach. Our international image will improve only if we are prepared to reform our public services and strengthen our economy.

Our country is not all that it could be, because our politicians place too many barriers in the way of people today. Too often, I am afraid, the Government is part of the problem rather than the solution. A good example of that was the recent story that Scottish Equitable was set to change its name because neither "Scottish" nor "Equitable" carried positive connotations. The reason given in the case of "Scottish" was that the financial fiasco surrounding the construction of the Parliament building had undermined the Scottish reputation for probity, rectitude and sound management.

That is a sobering thought and it is why we all have a duty to ensure that the Scottish Parliament builds a reputation for good, honest, value-for-money government that creates a framework within which people in Scotland can flourish and that projects a good image of us internationally.

I move amendment S2M-1831.3, to leave out from the second "welcomes" to end and insert:

"notes that Scotland's historic reputation abroad was built on solid achievement, and believes that the successful promotion of Scotland depends primarily on substance rather than image."

10:14

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

I am always confused by the Tories' opposition to the fresh talent initiative because, if ever a party needed fresh talent and new faces, it is theirs. Michael Howard, who we thought had been safely buried 6ft under by Ann Widdecombe with a stake driven through his heart, has been resurrected. In turn, Michael Howard has beamed back—from interstellar space the one and only John Redwood. Fresh talent? New faces? The Tories have gone back 10 or 12 years.

We cannot say that the Tories do not have policies, because they have three on Scottish regiments alone. They have Michael Howard's policy, Nicholas Soames's policy and—he has left

the chamber—poor Murdo Fraser's policy. They have three policies, total confusion and total chaos. I understand why the Tory members are all here and not in Bournemouth—I would be, too—because, if they were down in Bournemouth, they would need to be on a mixture of Prozac and something else.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

It is interesting to hear such comments being made by a man who sits in the Scottish Parliament representing a party that supports all the Labour Party's policies here but opposes all the same policies at Westminster.

Mr Raffan: Alex Johnstone need not say that to me, because I am known for being independently minded. Of course we support the policies, because the partnership agreement is a good piece of work. It was negotiated over three weeks and unanimously passed by our party executive. We are a democracy; we consult our party. Michael Fry, the former Tory candidate and great Tory historian, says that the Tories have a part-time leader. He says that Mr McLetchie needs to go out and speak to some Tories so that he can represent his grass roots rather than just the ramshackle platoon that is left in Bournemouth.

I welcome the fact that, in his keynote speech earlier this year, the First Minister said that substance is more important than style. I want to be constructive. The Opposition parties must learn that it is no use coming to the Parliament just to oppose, because they must propose as well. Debate is not about being negative, knocking everything down or squabbling about flags; it is about making proposals as well and I intend to make constructive proposals for the First Minister.

This is an interim debate, because the European and External Relations Committee is conducting a lengthy inquiry into promoting Scotland overseas. The inquiry is worth while and I hope that the committee's report will be constructive and will come up with ideas that will contribute to the international strategy that the Executive has been developing. We are learning from what other countries are doing: members of the committee have been to Flanders, France and Ireland and I have no doubt that we will also learn from our forthcoming trip to the United States of America.

It is important that we should be constructive, because, as the First Minister said, we will be judged on substance. We must not be unrealistically ambitious and try to do too much and we should not depend on the past. I agree with the First Minister that we must try to think of and present our nation as an agile and vigorous small country—and the best of the small in specific areas. Our reputation—I prefer that word to "image", because that is what it is—is high in certain areas, such as higher education, the life

sciences, renewable energy and financial services.

On higher education, research shows that we are regarded worldwide as having centres of excellence in our universities. However, we must examine what others are doing, not least the Australians and Americans or our neighbours south of the border. For example, the University of Nottingham has become a leader in the field by establishing campuses in Malaysia and China.

I welcome the First Minister's trip to China. I hope that he will also go to India, where there is strong economic growth and significant potential for us. The First Minister is right to say, as he did earlier this year, that we have to catch the moment between the opening of the Parliament building and the G8 summit next year in Perthshire, which is part of the region that I represent.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on the international commission for Africa and I agree with the chancellor's international finance facility initiative. I also agree with all the work that the Prime Minister and the chancellor are doing together in trying to achieve the millennium development goals, which should find cross-party support.

The First Minister said earlier this year that we must connect the past with the present. We have a long-standing connection with sub-Saharan Africa. In the summer recess, I went to the 15th international AIDS conference, in Thailand, where I had the privilege of hearing Nelson Mandela three times in 24 hours. I heard about the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa—in Botswana, for example, 38.9 per cent of the population are now HIV positive.

I congratulate those in Scotland who are undertaking initiatives in Africa. For example, Lothian NHS Board has established a link with hospitals in Zambia and Fife Council has deputed one of its primary school headmasters to go to Malawi to help to restructure the educational system, in which class sizes are now 300 or 400 because of the number of teachers who have fallen victim to AIDS. We can take forward such initiatives through the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland, as I hope Ms Ferguson will do. There is a real opportunity for us—particularly with the G8 meeting focusing on the Prime Minister's commission for Africa—to highlight these issues, on which Scotland can make a contribution to the wider world.

We must look at what others do. For example, Hauts-de-Seine, a département just outside Paris, has an imaginative scheme for economic volunteers. Participation in the scheme is an alternative option to national service and the volunteers are sent overseas to help. Flanders has

an international youth work programme, under which young people between the ages of 16 and 25 can apply for a subsidy for international projects anywhere in the world, except for dangerous areas—other than that, there is no limit to the place that can be chosen. The project lasts for between one and three months. The young people develop a business plan and one in three of the proposals succeed. That is an excellent way in which those young people can show their country to the world and show what they can do to help others in much greater need than themselves. Those are effective projects that promote one country in other countries.

We should not only have such schemes for the young, because we have a huge resource in our retired people. My father retired as an anaesthetist and went to work overseas. That is an example of what we should be doing. Older people here are important. The Chinese are right: we are too agist. We must use older people by enabling them to go to help as doctors and nurses in Africa. In Bangkok, I spoke to a representative of Médecins Sans Frontières who works in South Africa. I asked what we could do to help and he said, "Stop poaching our nurses." We should send some of our retired nurses and doctors, who have immense experience, out to sub-Saharan Africa to help. I believe that we can carry out such schemes successfully.

I am glad to say that my colleagues in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association have kindly put me on its international executive, which is the governing body for the association worldwide. I hope that we can take forward some of the schemes that I have mentioned within the CPA. This is the first time that a representative from the Scottish Parliament has been on the international executive and that is an opportunity for us.

We can all play our part. As I said, we want to be known for our centres of excellence in higher education, in research and in other specific areas. However, as the First Minister stated, substance is what people will see; that is what they will experience at first hand. We must stand by our reputation and build on it. That will be done slowly, in incremental ways, but we have a huge opportunity.

In the old days, people used to say that, if they went to any country in the empire, they saw the Scots at the top of the tree and all the way down it. It does not matter where we are in the ranking. What matters is that we make a full contribution, which we can. We can do so as parliamentarians. We can give the lead to people: from the young to the old, doctors, nurses, students or whomever. We should again send people out to the developing world, including to sub-Saharan Africa.

We should show that Scotland is playing its part and that we are Scottish internationalists rather than nationalists. That will make our name.

10:23

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab):

Given that over the next few days we will showcase our stunning new Parliament to the world, it is appropriate that in this chamber we should be debating Scotland on the international stage.

Colleagues have referred to the work of the European and External Relations Committee. We have been taking evidence for some months on how we promote Scotland and what our image is across the globe. It will take us some time to assimilate the information that we have collected, but the inquiry has brought us into first-hand contact with those who promote Scotland and those who visit Scotland.

I take issue with what Nicola Sturgeon said this morning. I think that she is being deliberately obtuse. The SNP has no exclusive right to be proud of Scotland's traditional image.

I say, on behalf of the partnership parties, that we are a nation that is rich in culture, steeped in history and heritage and renowned for poetic and literary genius. As I come from Ayrshire, I cannot say that without mentioning Burns, Robert Service and Robert Louis Stevenson. We are proud of that heritage. We are blessed with landscapes and countryside of remarkable natural beauty and we have our own Gaelic language. We have much to promote and of which to be proud.

We are also a modern, dynamic, welcoming Scotland, with first-class universities and a highly motivated work force. That was recognised last week, when Scotland was judged to be the UK region of the future in the *Financial Times* "fDi" magazine's European cities and regions of the future awards. Criteria on which regions were judged included economic potential, cost effectiveness, human resources, transport, information technology, telecoms and—this is important—best foreign direct investment promotion strategy.

Mr Stone: A visitor to Caithness recently wanted to visit the Castle of Mey. The visitor rang the tourist centre in Thurso, but was put through to staff in Livingston, who did not know where Thurso was and eventually told the visitor that the Castle of Mey is in Devon. I agree with Irene Oldfather's comments, but is it not the case that the marketing for and the directing of tourists and visitors to this country are matters that we must get right?

Irene Oldfather: That is exactly what our strategy is about. I am happy to agree with the member on the matter.

It is important to talk Scotland up. We have established a reputation as an innovative, forward-looking country with a knowledge-driven economy. Every member of the Scottish Parliament has a role to play in the promotion of Scotland and MSPs are uniquely placed to be individual ambassadors for Scotland. The First Minister spoke about the progress that has been made in contributing to the EU constitution revision process, of which I am very proud. I am disappointed that the Opposition parties have given so little recognition to that work.

This week in The Hague, the commission for economic and social policy of the Committee of the Regions, of which I am a member, responded positively to my suggestion that we hold a meeting and seminar in the Scottish Parliament during the UK presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2005.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does the member equate that success with the success of Malta—unequivocally a country, rather than a region—in helping to renegotiate the fisheries policy, which will benefit Scotland more directly?

Irene Oldfather: I disagree fundamentally with Margo MacDonald, because I believe in the principle of the UK.

If the Parliament gives the go-ahead to the commission coming to Scotland and we can meet the technical specifications, we will have the support of UK colleagues to host the meeting in Edinburgh. There is much competition to host such meetings, but we have support because we are one of the big delegations. I am excited and enthusiastic about the proposal and I trust that members and the Executive will support it.

Let us not forget that there are ambassadors for Scotland in all our communities: educationists, the children who participate in the Socrates and Comenius programmes and the young people who study throughout Europe through the Erasmus programme. There are proposals in the EU for a threefold expansion of the Erasmus programme, which I hope that we can support.

I praise the work of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, in particular the council's trade missions. Between November 1998 and May 2004, the council organised 32 missions to 35 destinations. Some 434 companies took part at minimal cost and recorded exports of £113 million. However, I draw to ministers' attention the fact that the grant that supports the initiative, which is administered by the UK Department of Trade and Industry, is under threat of closure next March. The SCDI is requesting that the funding be reviewed. I am sure that ministers will agree that in the past the funding has represented good value for money.

I am running out of time, so I will conclude. I live in Scotland not just because I was born here—all my family and my husband's family live in the United States—but because I want to live here and I wanted to bring up my children in Scotland. Today we should talk Scotland up. The Conservative amendment talks about substance instead of image, but I hope that the measures that the First Minister and I mentioned put that in perspective. The SNP amendment reflects the same old negative approach that talks Scotland down. I am happy to support the motion.

10:30

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): We have to acknowledge that progress has been made and that we have come a long way. To his credit, the First Minister recognises the need to raise not only our game, but our sights. However, the horizons should be not simply those that are visible from the chamber, but those beyond our shores.

Talking the talk is not walking the walk. We need to do more, to go further and to push harder and the best way of doing that is for Scotland to become an independent nation state. More—much more—can be done and must be done, even within a devolved structure, especially in the three key areas of immigration, trade and tourism. Again, although some progress has been made in each of those areas, much more needs to be done.

On immigration, we have the fresh talent initiative, which is welcome. However, if it is not to be at best a failure or at worst fraudulent, we need to see delivery. My colleague Nicola Sturgeon referred to the figures that show that the Executive is incapable of delivering what is needed. Currently, we are being undermined by the Executive's inability to bring in fresh talent.

The principal of Stevenson College Edinburgh advised me in a communication:

"18% of international students recruited by Stevenson College Edinburgh for this academic year have cancelled their study place. Of these 31% were due to visa refusal."

The First Minister wants students to extend their stay, but the tragedy and reality is that many students cannot even access a study place, never mind extend their stay in Scotland. Much more requires to be done in that area. Other devolved Administrations achieve much more: both Quebec and South Australia have the powers and, more important, the means of delivery. We need to take on powers including those to establish a Scottish green card scheme.

In addition to the fresh talent initiative and as an immediate answer to some of the problems that we face, we need to address the issue of wasted talent. I am referring to asylum seekers who, whether incarcerated or restricted from work, have the skills and abilities that could be used for the benefit of the individual and—perhaps more important—of our nation. We must cease the nonsense of disbarring those people from using their talent to benefit our society. We must ensure that the policies that the Tories seek to impose and those that Blunkett is currently invoking do not have any writ north of the border.

On trade, we welcome the announcement about China, but it is clear that Ireland is the model—Ireland is the Celtic tiger that leaves everyone else in its wake.

Leaving to one side the argument about independent nation states, we can see that other federal, devolved nations do much more than we do. Through the Quebec legations and Export Vlaanderen, the Quebec and Flemish Administrations have people on the ground moving, motoring and trying to deliver on trade and to boost the economy of their regions or federal areas. We are singularly failing to match them, let alone keep the Irish in our sights. We have to improve and deliver on that. There is no such thing as a Belgian trade attaché; people represent either Flanders or Wallonia. There is no reason why Scotland could not replicate such a scheme, not simply in Brussels, Washington and Beijing, but across the globe.

Mr Raffan: It is important not to exaggerate the point about Flanders having 77 offices, as it has people—I believe that people are more important than offices—and 21 of them are locally hired. Moreover, the trade missions are undertaken on a Belgium-wide basis. They are headed by Prince Philippe, just as in Ireland they are headed by the President. Nonetheless, Mr MacAskill's point on that is worth investigating.

Mr MacAskill: I am happy to take those points on board. As I said, Export Vlaanderen does a wonderful job for Flanders. If we did half as much for Scotland as it does for Flanders, our trade figures would improve substantially.

On tourism, the VisitBritain-VisitScotland situation has not worked out. VisitBritain means us no harm, but it is not possible to sell Scotland fully under a British identity: Scotland needs to be sold as the unique brand that is Scotland. The quick fix that Tessa Jowell imposed is unravelling. It came about because of her desire to provide funding for the tourism councils in England, as it was right and legitimate for her to do. However, she did not have any right to undermine structures or to force VisitBritain to take on the responsibility of—and to some extent to become—VisitEngland.

We need to ensure that VisitScotland sells Scotland. If that means working in co-operation in many areas with VisitBritain, so be it, but VisitScotland should decide on the areas that it will target and the areas in which it will work in co-operation. There is an argument for using a UK identity, but the choice and the budget for that must be dictated by VisitScotland.

Let us not delude ourselves about the success of visitScotland.com. The company lost more than £1 million in year 1, doubled its losses in year 2 and has had its ownership transferred from the private sector partner Schlumberger Sema to Atos Origin. It is a pity that the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport is not here to address the issue, because the Executive needs to get a grip. We face the situation that Atos Origin could decide to sell visitScotland.com on the open market to the highest bidder and the site could be bought by Tourism Ireland. If the site goes to the highest bidder, we face the absurd situation that our major competitor could own our e-tourism portal. That is not impossible, given that losses have doubled and the site has been bought by a major international company. That company does not give a toss about selling Scotland; it wants to maximise profit. We ignore that at our peril.

The things that I have mentioned can be done under devolution, but some things can be done only if we are a nation state. That is where I fundamentally disagree with Irene Oldfather. Transnational bodies are increasingly becoming the norm in international situations. In many instances, that is good and we should welcome it—it is important that small nations work together in, for example, the World Trade Organisation. However, the building block is the nation state. Large regions, no matter how powerful, whether California or Catalonia, are not represented in the United Nations or the EU, whereas nation states, whether Micronesian atolls or Malta, are. A country requires to be a nation state to have its voice heard. I support the SNP amendment.

10:36

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife (Green)): In a little over 48 hours, this Parliament will be officially opened. No doubt it will be a proud moment for many people in Scotland. The images of the Parliament opening will be beamed to people's television sets around Scotland and the UK. However, in 272 days' time the G8 summit will be opened at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire, images of which will be beamed around the entire world. The eyes of the world will be on Scotland, and on the agenda both inside and outside Gleneagles.

If the First Minister is watching my speech on a television somewhere in the Holyrood complex, I remind him that on 17 June he said:

"It will be a privilege for the people of Scotland to host the world leaders."

I say to the First Minister that I am not so sure about that.

The First Minister also said:

"I, for one, am very pleased that the top table is coming to Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 2004; c 9233.]

I ask the First Minister what about the bottom table of the world's poorest countries? They are not coming to Gleneagles to eat shortbread and play golf. They will be lucky if they get the crumbs that are swept from the summit table.

Mr Raffan: Does Mr Ruskell accept that the centrepiece of the G8 summit will be the report from the commission for Africa on how the developed world can help the third world? Surely he is in favour of that. Surely he is not going to carry on whinging in the way that he is. The G8 will not be eating shortbread and playing golf; it will be giving aid to sub-Saharan Africa. Does he not want that?

Mr Ruskell: Yes, I do, but the proof of the pudding will be in what the Executive and the UK Government push on the G8 agenda. Mr Raffan knows that well.

The reality is that we need global leadership on issues such as climate change, which the Prime Minister has said is the greatest threat to humanity this century. We need leadership on poverty and injustice, which are fuelling the downward spiral of hatred, war and terrorism.

When he attended the world summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg, the First Minister said:

"The poorest countries will not make progress unless the wealthiest countries—like Scotland—become more sustainable and use fewer resources to sustain our standards of living."

Where is the leadership from the Scottish Executive and the First Minister? Where is the raising of the game? The only things that are being raised are figures on climate change, pollution and traffic. People are coming to Scotland to look for answers on how we can tackle the root causes of climate change. They are not going to find the answers in the tartan tourist brochures that will be handed out at airports when they arrive or in tours around flood defences, which only deal with the symptoms of climate change, not the root causes.

On climate change, the Prime Minister said on 14 September:

"the world's richest nations in the G8 have a responsibility to lead the way".

How is the Scottish Executive leading the way? It is setting an example to the world of how to take

two steps forward and three steps back. It is good that the Executive sets targets for renewable electricity generation—two steps forward; but it then fails to set targets for energy efficiency—three steps back. It reopens a couple of rail routes and supports the principles of congestion charging in Edinburgh—two steps forward; but it then builds the M74 and the Aberdeen western peripheral bypass, and even entertains the fallacy of having a second Forth road bridge—three steps back.

Phil Gallie: Will Mark Ruskell give way on that point?

Mr Ruskell: No, I have too much to say; I need to move on.

The danger is that like attracts like. If the First Minister sets out an economic policy of wealth creation at the expense of quality of life and the environment, he will attract to Scotland businesses that want to create wealth at the expense of quality of life and the environment.

The First Minister and the Executive have influence and powers. They have influence over the UK Government, the EU Commission and the Council of Ministers. In addition, this year the First Minister has held the presidency of the group of regions with legislative powers in the EU, but it is a complete mystery what he has been doing on that group all year. We cannot even get him to come along to the European and External Relations Committee to tell us what he has been doing. I do not know what he has been doing; perhaps he has been working with the 10 devolved regions throughout the EU that want to establish GM-free zones to find a way through the Commission's regulations. We just do not know.

I want the Executive to use its influence on the global stage and to raise its game. I want it to take a stand on the general agreement on trade in services—GATS—which is leading to the wholesale privatisation of our public services and is placing them in the hands of multinational companies across the globe. I want the Executive to take a stand and to use its position of influence on aid to increase the aid budget from 0.33 per cent to 0.7 per cent of gross national income. I want it to continue to work for reform of the common agricultural policy to make trade in food globally fair.

The First Minister has two opportunities. Later this month, he has an opportunity in China to talk not just about business investment, but about human rights and greater autonomy for Tibet, an issue that has resonated strongly in the Parliament in recent months. His second opportunity will come in 272 days' time at the G8 summit; it is one that may not come round again in his career. I urge him not to let down Scotland, the Parliament or himself, but to show global leadership and to

show Scotland as an example to the rest of the world of how we can face the challenges this century.

10:43

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Many of the stories that I grew up with began, "There was a time long ago and a long time ago it was." There followed tales of drunken philosophers and romantic revolutionaries, who were often one and the same person. Nevertheless, they set the scene for the historical context within which my country—Ireland, where I was born—was viewed.

The perceptions of Scotland are not hugely different; the peoples of Scotland and Ireland are very similar. As has been mentioned, the research that has been done identifies the fact that many of those perceptions were based on 1930s, 1940s and 1950s social conditions and emigrants' memories. Time and economies move on, but memories do not. We must acknowledge that the perception of Scotland abroad is largely as it has been defined in the research findings. However, we know that Scotland is a land of modern tourism opportunities. Although it takes advantage of its cultural heritage and those nostalgic memories, it offers new, vibrant and exciting things for people to do. It is a land of modern communications. Following the policies of the Executive, broadband access here is as good as that which is available in other countries. Scotland's academic standards are second to none. For example, the University of St Andrews in the north-east of Fife, which is in Iain Smith's constituency—

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Christine May: I will give way in just a second.

The University of St Andrews is almost at the top of the research and investment league table. In industry, companies are queuing up to come to talk to us, especially in light of our renewable energy policies. Almost every week, I meet—

Richard Lochhead: Will the member take an intervention?

Christine May: I said to Phil Gallie that I would give way to him, so I ask the member to allow me to finish this point.

What we are doing in renewable energy means a great deal to my constituents in Glenrothes and Levenmouth.

Phil Gallie: I commend Christine May for her comments on communications. Communications in Scotland—as in most other countries these days—are very good. That is due to the vision of Margaret Thatcher, who saw a change in the telecommunications industry, the privatisation of which laid the foundations for the good communications that we have today.

Christine May: It is the vision and the drive of the Executive that have made broadband communication available to almost 100 per cent of the citizens of Scotland.

The old and the new blend together; now, on the basis of the research findings, we need to change perceptions. What the European and External Relations Committee and the First Minister and his colleagues are doing is ensuring that we know what those perceptions are and that we have the evidence to back up our instincts. I regret to say this, but we cannot build any sort of policy on instinct alone. I was sorry to hear the Tories agreeing with the Scottish National Party that research findings and a strategy were unnecessary and that we could work on instinct. The First Minister has spoken about targeting; we need to target the mature markets in the United States and Canada. On Monday, along with others from the cross-party oil and gas group, I will meet the Speaker of the Senate of Canada to discuss oil and gas exploration. Scotland has a large diaspora in Canada and great academic, trade and cultural links with the country.

However, there are emerging markets, such as China—I welcome the announcement that Scotland is to have a presence there—and we should also consider the European Union, where Irene Oldfather, other colleagues and I have done a lot of work to ensure that Scotland's views and needs are recognised when decisions are taken. Those views and needs are not always recognised by ministers in Westminster. Sometimes we need to influence members of the European Commission and build links with other regions and states that have similar needs to those of Scotland. That is how decisions that are good for Scotland are arrived at.

The First Minister announced the fresh talent initiative. For years I have listened to Opposition parties telling us that we need, where possible, to retain students in this country, yet when we announce a policy to address that we are ridiculed for it. The relocation advice service will ensure that people who wish to stay and those who can be attracted here are given the information that they need.

Finally, let us talk a bit about flags. I would be delighted to fly the flag for Scotland; I will wrap myself in it if that is what is needed to ensure that the Scottish image is promoted. However, I will also ensure that when I talk to overseas businesses or when I go abroad, I have the facts, the figures and the information that is needed to persuade people that Scotland is the vibrant country that I speak of. Let us fly the flag for Scotland, let us do it in a united way and let us ensure that we promote the Scotland that we want this country to become.

10:49

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): It is highly appropriate, as we approach the formal opening of our new Parliament building on Saturday, that we are examining the place of Scotland in the world and how Scotland is seen abroad. The First Minister set exactly the right tone when he opened the debate with an excellent speech, whose quality was matched later by Keith Raffan and Irene Oldfather. I very much support Irene Oldfather's representations about the funding of SCDI, which is important to Scotland. When the Deputy First Minister replies at the end of the debate, I hope that he will be able to say that that is an issue that the Executive will discuss at the highest level with the UK Government.

It is obvious that the image of Scotland abroad is of huge importance for the Scottish economy, for Scotland's influence in the world and for our self-image—to see ourselves as others see us, as has been said before.

Our international image cannot be changed overnight by a slick public relations campaign; to an extent, I agree with David McLetchie's comments in that regard. Our image is built on what people learn about us at school and depends on people meeting us as tourists, students, football supporters and business people and, indeed, as children—children are ambassadors for the country when they take part in exchange visits.

There is a contribution from our export products, particularly food. Although we occasionally have mixed feelings about it, whisky, haggis, shortbread, Aberdeen Angus and Barr's Irn-Bru form part of Scotland's image.

Margo MacDonald: Could Robert Brown give us some examples of other countries that have that clear image that he describes? Is it not true that we are far too concerned with our image and less concerned with the facts, as outlined by Christine May? Indeed, I think that we still think of Switzerland as somewhere that makes cuckoo clocks.

Robert Brown: It has been said a number of times that the substance underlying the image is important. We could no doubt use PR techniques to enhance our image and build on our strong points, but if the substance and the quality are not there, we will not have something to sell across the world in the first place.

There are some extremely powerful visual images of Scotland, including the Forth road bridge, Edinburgh Castle, the Queen Mary and, more recently, the Scottish Parliament building itself. All those images, and many more, make up the complex image of Scotland abroad. Those are images that have built up over many generations and they are overlaid by newer and more modern

ones. Our own Parliament—the building, the architecture and the iconic architect—and the whole home rule project are already a big plus for us in Scotland.

People now come to Scotland to see how home rule is working out: to look at the building and to get a sense of Scotland's new place in the world. Scotland is one of the oldest polities in the world, but it is now linked in new and more satisfactory ways to the other nations of the UK and Europe. Christine May was quite right to talk about partnership working being important in many ways to the future of Scotland.

I turn to the use and symbolism of the Parliament—both the building and the institution. This Parliament must become not just an iconic building, but an iconic democracy—by our style, by the way in which we approach things and by developing our own ways of doing things in the light of best international practice. That means examining how we do things internally here and how we do things externally, in our relationships with other organisations. That needs input and ideas not just from the parliamentary authorities but from the best minds in the Parliament and beyond.

I wish to touch on the question of language, which is increasingly important. I think it was the First Minister who mentioned speaking to the world together. Can we speak to the world together if our command of foreign languages is not quite what it might be? It is a matter of shame to me that when we meet delegations abroad, I might just be able to understand things if people speak slowly in French; however, I cannot speak French very adequately. That goes for many people in the Parliament and beyond, both in Scotland and in the rest of Britain. We are not very good at speaking the languages of the world when we relate to other people.

In an odd sort of way, the moves that are going on with the introduction of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill and with the importance of Gaelic in Scotland's life set the way ahead. The Gaelic-medium schools in Glasgow and other parts of Scotland, which deal with Gaelic using emerging techniques from the beginning of primary school, may well show the way forward for how we approach modern languages in general. One of the lessons that has come out of that experience is that people who have had the dual-language experience early on are able to deal more satisfactorily with other modern languages later. Let us take that as a supreme example of the way in which we should be building on our traditions and moving forward into the future.

The First Minister touched on the importance of China. We cannot approach China, the biggest nation in the world, simply through the Chinese

Government; there are small bits of China—Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and others. The relationship with China is a complex one. In one respect, I agreed with Nicola Sturgeon's speech: I believe that we ought to be speaking to the Chinese about human rights in those areas as well as trying to develop our links.

I echo Keith Raffan's comment about building on the best of small and specific areas. If one message comes out of the debate, it is that we should be building on the excellence of Scotland in specific areas. I support the motion.

10:55

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I do not want to talk Scotland down; I prefer to talk it up and to show it as a fantastic place to visit for a holiday, an ideal place to bring up a family and a competitive place in which to do business. It is my firm belief that Scotland can be all those things, but it is not being helped by the Scottish Executive's policies or the action of its agencies and quangos.

When we talk about Scotland's international image, we are talking about a beautiful land mass and a fine people. One of my favourite pictures came from a stained-glass panel on one of the early Caledonian MacBrayne ferries. It depicted a Highlander, steadfast and strong, with the motto, "You may break but never bend me"—an image of a brave, honest people who were incorruptible, an image crafted in the face of adversity and harsh weather conditions and an image based on pride in a culture and a history.

Last week we debated the Scottish regiments. How much of that pride stems from their heroic efforts? One of the most recognisable images of Scotland worldwide is that of Scottish regiments with their pipe bands and tartan uniforms, yet we have a Labour Government that appears to want to do away with them. On the subject of uniforms, it puzzles me why the First Minister would want to portray Scotland's image on, of all days, tartan day by wearing a rustic blouse and a pinstriped skirt. It did not do much for the tartan industry, but to each their own international image.

The international image of Scotland's land mass is portrayed by the magnificent open scenery in which dwells our rich diversity of plants and wildlife, including, of course, our monarch of the glen—the native red deer. What would people think if they knew that that icon of our Scottish international image was under threat of indiscriminate culling by Scottish Executive agencies, whose aim seems to be to transform the Scottish landscape back into the jungle that our ancestors painstakingly cleared to form the foundation of our internationally famous

agricultural industry? For that matter, members should look at what has happened to our internationally famous fishing industry. After five years under this Executive it has been decimated.

Visitors have a mental image of Scotland before they arrive and experience it for themselves. They will leave with the impression of what they have seen, what they have heard and—dare I say it—what they have smelt. In many areas of my region, especially in the towns of Argyll and Bute, such as Campbeltown, Inverary, Rothesay, Dunoon and Tobermory, the efforts of Scottish Water to incorporate new sewerage systems has had the effect of creating flooding and an offensive smell. I am led to believe that Scottish Water has said that it will accept no further connections in Campbeltown, which puts an unbelievable burden on the local council and anyone planning to expand. What does that do for Scotland's international image? A country is judged by elements of its infrastructure, and water and sewerage are pretty basic elements.

Mr Raffan: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I fail to see what water connections and sewage disposal have to do with Scotland internationally.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): I am sure that Mr McGrigor will get to the point.

Mr McGrigor: Mr Raffan ought to admit that a smell of sewage certainly has something to do with image. In Scotland a visitor who is unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and smells sewage is going to think that Scotland is moving backwards.

Visitors will also think that Scotland is moving backwards when they drive on many of the so-called A roads. Ever since Roman times roads have been one of the criteria used in recognising degrees of civilisation, and those who govern Scotland must realise the importance of a first-class transport infrastructure. It is unfair to those who try to promote tourism in Scotland that the basic infrastructure is not up to scratch. People do not necessarily mind driving on single-track roads, but they do mind their cars being damaged by potholes.

What about Scotland's international cultural image? This year the Scottish Executive has emasculated Scottish Opera. What message does that send out from the country whose major festival—the Edinburgh festival—was originally based on opera? What message is the Executive sending out to the international community by refusing to lift the ban on alcohol at Murrayfield stadium? The ban continues to lose Murrayfield major sporting events. We need more international events in Scotland. We need a visual arts festival

to bring the international art world back to the country that once launched the enlightenment, and we need more sporting activity to ensure that we have a healthier population.

If Scotland is to be a business leader again, we should listen to the business leaders who tell us that one of their chief concerns is the lack of appropriate skills among young people. The Scottish Conservatives will promote business-led vocational training at further education colleges. That training will give young Scots the skills to create businesses. Business rates must come down and people must be allowed to keep more of the money that they earn. That is how we will get young people to stay in Scotland. I am all for fresh talent, but what about the talent that is already here? Surely that should be encouraged. There should be less control and more incentives for entrepreneurs.

Vocational training is needed in the tourism industry to ensure that people achieve a standard of excellence that makes them proud of what they do. The French or the Italians will hold a waiter's job with pride and, for them, to be a chef is something to be sought after. Yet somehow people in this country think that those jobs are undignified. What utter nonsense.

Our food—our meat, fish, shellfish, potatoes, raspberries and so on—is the best in the world. We should make more of that image and of our brand. However, what has the Executive done with Scotland the Brand and the taste of Scotland award scheme?

Scotland has punched well above its weight in terms of its international reputation. However, lately it has done so despite the policies of the Executive rather than because of them. Further, dare I say that one of the main reasons why Scotland has done well is that it is a member of the most successful partnership ever, the United Kingdom? On that point, I must say that I hope that the European Union has managed to rediscover Wales, which, although it will never be anything like Scotland, is also quite an important part of the UK.

11:02

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I welcome the First Minister's positive statements. He clearly articulated the devolved Government's role in the UK structure and clearly listed the policies that he and the Scottish Executive are pursuing not only to promote Scotland economically but to get across some of the values that we want to share with other countries. Keith Raffan's point about what we can learn from other countries is also important in that regard—we should not underestimate that.

We have heard about the role of the European and External Relations Committee and the inquiry that it is undertaking—I welcome the fact that the inquiry will build on research that was undertaken recently by the Scottish Executive and I wish the committee well. From what Christine May said, I understand that the committee is taking evidence from a large number of sources and countries, which will be helpful. Other committees are talking with other countries and legislatures. All such activity is helpful and, in that regard, we should not forget the work of the cross-party groups. The Presiding Officer's work with the cross-party international development group is also useful.

I would like to mention the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to which I, Keith Raffan and others belong. I will talk later about the importance of that body's work.

The economic aspect of the promotion of Scotland on the international stage is extremely important. Part of that involves tourism, which is extremely important to my constituency, which contains Stirling and part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park. Through VisitScotland, I have tried to find out what we are doing in that regard and, having read its annual reports and so on, I have to admit that we have a long way to go. However, the four strands that have been identified in the organisation's most recent annual report show that we are moving in the right direction.

Building the brand is important. The Scottish Executive's research discovered that people abroad know about the older images of Scotland, but we must build on the new aspects such as the Parliament—the building, the values and how we work—and somehow get those aspects into the branding.

We must continue to extend access opportunities to this country. In that regard, the Superfast Ferries service to Rosyth has been particularly important and the air route development fund has been useful, particularly in relation to links to America.

We must extend the products that we offer. Our success in outdoor activities and sport, including the Olympics and paralympics, is being extended and can be built on.

I agree with one point that Jamie McGrigor made: we must increase our commitment to training and we must examine the skills gap in the hotel sector. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that projects are starting with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise. Also, of course, we have EventScotland and tartan day.

I will address something that the Parliament should be doing, which Keith Raffan and others mentioned. We must act in a responsible way and

we must look to where there is need, and the greatest need that I see at the moment is in Africa. This morning, we saw Bob Geldof on our screens. He was looking back 20 years to the situation in Ethiopia and he reiterated that the problems that existed then still exist. We are not moving forward. Horrendous statistics can be quoted; for example, in a letter to *The Herald* yesterday, Paul Chitnis, who is the chief executive of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, wrote:

"half of Africans live in extreme poverty, one-third go hungry and one-sixth of children die before they are five".

He also said that 30,000 children die every day from preventable diseases. That is absolutely horrendous. We must try in every way we can to do something about the problem. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is to link with legislatures in southern Africa and the adjoining countries to consider some of the issues. Keith Raffan mentioned some of the good work that is going on with universities and health boards; we must pursue that work.

There are good pointers on how we are portraying Scotland and the Scottish Parliament on the international stage, but we have to keep pressing forward. I wish the European and External Relations Committee well and I also wish the new minister, Patricia Ferguson, well.

11:08

Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP): This morning, the First Minister said that during his trip to China next week he will announce the opening of a permanent office and the placing of a permanent Scottish representative in Beijing. Perhaps the Deputy First Minister will tell us in his reply whether that representative will be Malcolm Chisholm or Frank McAveety.

The First Minister should know that a worldwide poll that was conducted recently on the internet found that the most famous Scotsman in the world is not Sean Connery, Ewan McGregor or Billy Connolly but groundskeeper Willie from "The Simpsons". Perhaps when Janet or Jack goes to Beijing, he will bear that in mind.

There is, of course, a serious debate to be had. I am disappointed that Mr McLetchie made reference before me to the quotation from Burns:

"To see oursels as others see us".

Over the centuries, millions of people have left Scotland. They were cleared off the land—the Highlands and Lowlands—and sadly but bravely traipsed the world looking for work and a better life. Now, Scotland rightly invites people to come here to visit, live, work, study and do business. However, there is unfortunately mean-spiritedness in that invitation and in this debate. In a way that is

quite out of character for Scottish people, the Executive and the Government seek to deny that chance and opportunity to prosper to people from all over the world who try to escape persecution and come here for a better life.

Those people seek to endow us with their talents and abilities—the most precious assets a nation has—and in return we turn many of them away. Kenny MacAskill mentioned the experience of international students in Edinburgh and made reference to the plight of asylum seekers, of which the Parliament is all too aware. We should feel shame at detaining them and their kids in prison at Dungavel. We should add that to Scotland's international reputation and image. We should ask those whom we send back to where they came from to be persecuted, what red carpet we rolled out for them and what they thought of the famous Scottish welcome. What does that do to Scotland's international image?

We have a persistent reputation abroad for high levels of poverty, poor health and poor housing. When I visited Australia and New Zealand this time last year, I was struck by how many people there saw that we had made little progress in eliminating those ills and in eradicating poverty.

There is much to be proud of and there are many positive things about Scotland, to which members have alluded in the debate. I suggest that our young people are one of the assets of which we should be most proud, along with our talents and our spirit of internationalism. For the first and perhaps only time in my life I agree with Keith Raffan, who expressed that well when he talked about Scottish internationalism. There is a profoundly held belief in and sense of internationalism in this country. We punch above our weight as inventors and pioneers, in arts circles—such as music, film and literature—and in sport. With other members, I pay tribute to the image that the tartan army—our football fans—has abroad. We get kicked out of every competition early doors, but we bring home the award for being true supporters of friendship and international goodwill. Those supporters are a credit to this country.

The motion talks at length about attracting people to Scotland to visit, spend money, study here and not return home, to live and work here—provided that they have acquired the necessary skills and training—and to do business. Am I the only member who gets the sense that we are only after their money? There are higher values. There is repeated emphasis on Scotland as a place to do business, but what about Scotland as a place to visit and to make friends? Why is the emphasis always on the commercial imperative and our profiting financially from international connections?

The business community is not all that exists here in Scotland. In fact, that community is small

and is often an elitist and spoilt minority. What about the imperative to foster solidarity, international goodwill and friendship? What about sharing wealth from here and abroad? What about sharing experiences and cultures and recognising the achievements of other countries and cultures?

When members of the non-business community come to Scotland, they find it to be an expensive place to visit—Scotland often seems to be interested most in their money. Whether people visit in August, for the Edinburgh International Festival, or at hogmanay, Scotland is often an expensive place to be. My American friends who come here are aghast at the cost of eating out, the cost of accommodation and the cost of visitor attractions.

The First Minister's motion states:

"Scotland has a role in meeting the shared responsibilities of the international community".

The phrase "the international community" is nothing but a euphemism for the military, political and economic rule of America. It is a cloak that the First Minister hides behind to pretend that there is some legitimacy behind the increasingly naked aggression of Britain and the junior Blairite sidekick.

I value the worldwide community of peoples—the same peoples who spoke repeatedly last year against the illegal and unwarranted military intervention in Iraq. Scotland's international reputation is sullied while its troops are occupying Iraq: that is the reality that the rest of the world sees daily. I ask the First Minister to bring the troops home. If he is looking to build relationships across the Arab world and across the whole world, he should bring those troops home. That is the responsibility that we share with the international community.

11:14

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I am encouraged by our having this debate, and that there is such a broad view in Parliament that we should place greater focus on external affairs and international promotion of Scotland.

I remember vividly fighting the 1999 election and being pilloried by the Labour party for having the audacity to propose the appointment of an external affairs minister for the Scottish Parliament. The cry was that the SNP wanted consulates not clinics. The result of the Government reshuffle that was announced on Monday is that six ministers now have some responsibility for external affairs. For the sake of clarity for the Labour front bench, they are Mr McConnell, Mr Wallace, Margaret Curran, Tavish Scott, Tom McCabe and Patricia Ferguson. I am glad that we have moved on and accepted what

the SNP was arguing for many years ago; it is important for Parliament to have a voice in the world and for Scotland to be promoted. The announcements about our representation in Washington and China are important parts of that process.

Mr Raffan: Does Mr Swinney agree that it might be helpful to know for which particular aspects of external relations each of those six ministers is responsible and who is the co-ordinating minister?

Mr Swinney: That would be jolly helpful, and that was the purpose of my helpful intervention on the First Minister yesterday, which is at column 10914 of the *Official Report*, but to which I got a rant in response. I am sure that Mr Wallace will be able to answer that question today.

Mr Raffan mentioned the importance of the European and External Relations Committee inquiry into the promotion of Scotland abroad. It is now my privilege to chair that committee and to lead completion of that substantial inquiry. I seek an assurance from the minister that its conclusions will be borne in mind by the Executive in the finalisation of the strategy. A tremendous volume of detailed work has been done by Mr Lochhead, my predecessor, and the members of the committee and it is important that we reflect on that during the inquiry.

In the good old days when I worked for a living in the real world, I used to design strategies for private companies. A strategy is not just a collection of actions that are designed to make one feel busy. They must give a cohesive and purposeful direction to an organisation or country as to what it wants to achieve. The international strategy that the First Minister published this morning is certainly a busy agenda and a complex set of actions. However, I question the extent to which those actions are grouped together into a cohesive international strategy. In that strategy, I do not see what we are trying to promote as being the key credentials and identification of Scotland.

We should be promoting Scotland on the strength of our traditions, our values of integrity and probity and the strength of our enterprise and innovation. However, I do not see that bursting through from the strategy that the Government has produced.

I question the extent to which the strategy is able to do what Robert Brown set as its target. Can we speak to the world together? This small country in which we live has an immensely complicated system of government. Organisation after organisation is spending this amount, that amount and the next amount of money on promoting Scotland abroad, but I question the degree of cohesion among all those organisations. If all the money was put together, it would add up

to a princely sum, but I question whether it is being spent cohesively and effectively, and whether the strategy does anything to narrow the focus.

My final point is about the fresh talent initiative. I made clear when I was leader of my party—the First Minister knows this—that we support the fresh talent initiative, but my constituency experience makes me deeply sceptical about whether the Scottish Executive has woken up to the challenges of the fresh talent initiative. I am glad that Mr Wallace will reply to the debate because I want him to consider the difficulty that is faced by one of my constituents. She is a young woman from the Ukraine who has come to Scotland and has married, who has status and who can stay here indefinitely, according to the Home Office. However, she cannot access funding from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland because she has a degree from the Ukraine that the Scottish Executive will not recognise. She is getting a double-whammy of penalisation because the Student Awards Agency for Scotland is not taking its lead from the First Minister. I hope that Mr Wallace will say something constructive about that issue in his summing up.

11:19

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): People in Scotland are, and always have been, ready to embrace the bigger picture. They recognise the immense international influence of Scotland's diaspora. Scotland has always been keen to grasp ready-made social and commercial networking channels, which are made available through events such as tartan day in the USA and Canada. We know that we need to seize opportunities and learn to work together.

However, ask an American businessman about his image of Scotland and the response will be instructive. Although there is consensus that the very name opens doors, such people say that we spread ourselves too thinly. We appear to lack a single focused body that can co-ordinate all the organisations and identities that Scotland offers. Those different identities do not need to be diluted, but harnessed into a united front that says "Scotland" to a world audience.

We are all guilty. Too often, when we are abroad, we go by the name of the organisation that we represent instead of the overall name that recalls where the organisation comes from. We must sell under one banner the diversity of Scotland and what that represents in total.

Mr Raffan: The member makes an important point. Just last week, a senior diplomat said that we did not make nearly enough of the Scottish diaspora. Does the member agree that we should look at how the Irish make the most of their diaspora, especially in the United States?

Helen Eadie: I agree with Keith Raffan that we need to learn lessons from wherever we can.

On tourism, we all want to see far greater liaison among bodies such as the British Tourist Authority, VisitScotland, the British Council, the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Enterprise. A breakdown in communications has existed for many years, but the devolved Parliament is now taking the opportunity to put that right.

Several ideas on promoting Scotland were suggested in the research that the First Minister commissioned. One idea was that politicians have a potential role in engaging commerce in the work of building Scotland's image. The potential role of celebrities was felt to be unnecessary, but it was suggested that we should consider securing testimonials of business successes in Scotland. That corresponds with the experience of international participants, for whom personal contact is often a strong influencing factor in deciding whether to visit. We also need to engage the experience and talent of the wider community including local authorities, students and trade unions, which have rich experience that could be brought to bear.

In addition to the fresh talent initiative, we should commend the Scottish Executive's other initiatives, such as the global Scot network, which is a co-operative project to forge closer relationships with senior businessmen worldwide. The previous Secretary of State for Scotland, Helen Liddell, also deserves credit for fronting up friends of Scotland, which is a more widely based initiative that was targeted at harnessing the global good will that is already felt towards Scotland. The common aim of those initiatives is to create a cohesive image for Scotland internationally.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member give way?

Helen Eadie: I do not have time.

Colin Fox mentioned students and the need to project an image that goes wider than just business interests. We all travel abroad, so we all recognise that we should not diminish the sort of input that I saw being made by Scottish students and young people in Romania this year. Those students, who came from universities from throughout the United Kingdom but particularly from Scotland, had gone to Romania to give voluntarily of their time and commitment. They were very good ambassadors for the country. We need to embrace all of that in our thinking and to consider how we can build on that kind of image.

Finally, I want to touch on a personal example that shows how it sometimes comes down to what we do as individuals. I know one woman who went from the University of Edinburgh to work in Cluj in Romania. She was seconded there when Romania was working hard to gain EU

membership which, regrettably, it has not yet managed to achieve. I regard her as a big-hearted Scot, because she gave up her legacy and family fortune so that she could build provision for disabled people in that city in Romania. Someone like that is worthy of commendation, but what she has done is typical of the way that Scots go abroad and spread the good message that we have to give.

We should congratulate ourselves on the fact that Scots have given of themselves over so many years and centuries. Our challenge now is to pull all that together and to promote it in a coherent message.

11:24

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I have cast aside for the moment the remarks that I initially intended to make, because when the First Minister opened the debate he concentrated very much on European issues and Scotland's place in Europe. He pointed to the element of subsidiarity that will be introduced by the new constitution to which he and other parties are determined to sign up. Some of his comments would bear questioning. I ask the First Minister how on earth he can say that there is greater subsidiarity when he acknowledges that 75 per cent of the Parliament's business is dominated by European legislation and regulation. It is estimated that that figure could go up to something like 95 per cent if we sign up to the constitution that he supports.

Irene Oldfather: Will the member take an intervention?

Phil Gallie: In the very early days of the Parliament, we talked about joined-up thinking, but I wonder at times where that goes in debates such as this. I see many contradictions between what members have said in this debate and what they have said at other times, especially with respect to developments in Europe and the European constitution. Nicola Sturgeon was right to point to the fresh talent initiative and the Scottish Executive's reliance on it. However, I ask the Scottish Executive—perhaps the Deputy First Minister will be able to answer my question—how the fresh talent initiative fits in with articles 13, 15.2 and 39 of the new constitution. It seems that we will have no discretion in deciding who can come into this country and who can work here, apart from those who already live in European Union countries. The European Union will determine who is able to come here from other parts of the world to work.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Will the member give way on that point?

Phil Gallie: I have time to take only one intervention, and Irene Oldfather asked first.

Irene Oldfather: Mr Gallie mentioned that 75 per cent of the legislation that is relevant to the Parliament comes from Europe. Does he agree that part of Parliament's role is to scrutinise that legislation and that the new treaty increases our scrutiny role? He also mentioned—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: One question is enough.

Phil Gallie: I agree with Irene Oldfather that the new constitution gives us a scrutiny role. It allows the UK Government and the Scottish Parliament six weeks to scrutinise new legislation and to report back to the Commission. Thereafter, the Commission will make a decision and will merely bear in mind what we say in Parliament.

The First Minister emphasised heavily the fund for international development. That sounds fine to me, and I commend the Executive for turning its back on the recommendation of the European and External Relations Committee that an extra £18 billion of UK money go into European structural funds. However, I remind the Executive that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has suggested that one of his reasons for resisting the European Commission's requirements is so that he will have money to invest in areas such as the Highlands and the Borders in our country, where structural funding is needed. The First Minister talks about having a fund for international development, but I wonder whether he has made funding provision to cover that need.

Much is said about our poor performance when it comes to economic growth. I look back to the early 1990s, when Scotland stood third or fourth in the UK regional ratings for economic growth; now we are at the bottom of the heap and that has happened since the Scottish Executive took control of our affairs.

I commend the First Minister for his visit to China, as it is right that we should seek out new market areas. It is also right that he should talk about human rights when he is in China—that is inevitable. However, we must concentrate on Scotland's interests and image. As David McLetchie pointed out, that image is built on our history, on pride, on ingenuity and on development that Scots people created for themselves, without Government intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): I ask Linda Fabiani to make her speech brief.

11:30

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I will be brief, Presiding Officer.

I think that everyone in the chamber agreed with the First Minister when he said that we ought to share in, and contribute to, the world around us—of course we should. Keith Raffan said that the Opposition must offer proposals. Nicola Sturgeon certainly did so, but I will offer another one.

Scotland can play a major role in Europe and the world by having the vision to promote peace and stability. In his final address to the European Parliament, Nobel peace prize laureate John Hume called for the creation of a peace and reconciliation department. To stress the importance of such work, he called for an EU commissioner who would be dedicated to the task of conflict resolution. What better vision is there than that of assisting the process of conflict resolution in global trouble spots? What better place to site a centre dedicated to such work than here in Scotland?

Scotland has long contributed to peace efforts in troubled parts of the world. For example, at the end of last year, my Westminster colleague Angus Robertson MP helped to broker a major conference in his and Margaret Ewing's constituency. Parliamentarians from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia attended to try to help resolve disputes in the south Caucasus. That is a model for what Scotland and Europe can work towards achieving.

As a small nation, we could play an important role in building peaceful and stable international relations. We are, after all, a nation involved in a process of self-government that has already secured significant constitutional change in a peaceful and democratic fashion that many people admire and cite. I believe that our reputation for democratic and peaceful constitutional change means that we could be established as a force in aiding conflict resolution, even with our current regional status. Imagine what we could do if we were independent.

I agree, of course, with Nicola Sturgeon's amendment and I urge members to vote for it. Among other things, the amendment asks for

"the establishment of a distinctive presence overseas to promote Scotland".

I believe that we can have such a presence and that we can bring overseas people here by the establishment in Scotland of a European centre for peace and reconciliation. I ask the Scottish Government to promote that vision.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: My apologies to remaining members, but we must now go to closing speeches. John Home Robertson will close for the Labour Party. You have a strict six minutes, Mr Home Robertson.

11:32

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): The debate was opened with a confident and positive statement by the First Minister, reasserting his determination to develop Scotland's role in the EU and the wider world and to take full advantage of the new opportunities in the new Scotland. A debate of this nature might have been seen as an opportunity for the Parliament to speak with one voice. However, I am afraid that we have an official Opposition that seldom fails to disappoint, even on occasions such as this.

The First Minister had something to say on many issues: the fresh talent opportunities for people coming to Scotland; tourism; culture; science and technology; the work of Scottish non-governmental organisations; and our contacts all over the world, including in China. He also referred, of course, to the important opportunity to identify Scotland with the saltire. The whole chamber will be struck by the contrast between that positive agenda, which we can all surely unite behind, and what we heard from the nationalist Opposition this morning.

I am afraid that the official Opposition in the Parliament represents the chip on Scotland's shoulder. We have heard it articulated again today by Nicola Sturgeon, Kenny MacAskill and others. Nicola Sturgeon referred to the "Scottish cringe", but that is what she is. That is part of the political agenda in this country that we must grow out of. Scotland has moved on and there is so much that we can achieve. However, I am afraid that there is no such thing as achievement in the lexicon of nationalism. There is no such thing in Scotland as something that is half-full; it is always half-empty. That is to do with a fundamentally irrelevant, negative agenda that has the objective of causing chaos and that leads to constitutional crisis, disruption and independence. It is wrong.

Richard Lochhead: If the member's theory is that anyone who wants constitutional change for Scotland has a chip on his shoulder, does that mean that he himself had a chip on his shoulder prior to 1999, before we had the Scottish Parliament?

Mr Home Robertson: I wanted to achieve home rule for Scotland and we have done that. That debate has been won and it is time to start building on the strength of what we have achieved.

I was a little surprised when I was asked to make the closing speech for the Labour Party in this debate, because my international contacts in recent years have tended to be in places such as Bosnia or Kosovo during nationalist civil wars and, most recently, the west bank in Palestine. It must be said that economic and cultural opportunities

are not always obvious in the world's disaster areas, but I was delighted to hear what the First Minister said about the prominent role of Scots in international relief agencies in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world. Linda Fabiani and others have also touched on that matter, which is extremely important. Humanitarian workers from Scotland in United Nations agencies and in NGOs are ambassadors for Scotland because their work is important and it is valuable for Scotland's image. I whole-heartedly welcome the First Minister's statement that the Executive will actively support that work and I endorse what Helen Eadie and Sylvia Jackson said on that issue.

I will pick up on a point that David McLetchie and George Lyon raised. Others have mentioned the Scottish military's work around the world and I suggest that, this week of all weeks, we should highlight the exemplary work of Scottish soldiers and other military personnel in peacekeeping operations throughout the world, which I have seen for myself in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Parliament should be proud of the military personnel from Scotland who deliver security and humanitarian aid in conflict zones. We all deeply regret the disruptive changes to regimental structures, but we should all strongly support the Scottish military's vital work now and in future. It will continue.

Mr Ruskell: Would John Home Robertson define the Scottish military's current operations in Iraq as peacekeeping operations?

Mr Home Robertson: I certainly would, because, if our soldiers were to be withdrawn from the south of Iraq, something far worse would ensue for people in that part of the world.

Like John Swinney, Irene Oldfather and Keith Raffan, I am a member of the European and External Relations Committee, which is gathering a lot of important information about opportunities for Scotland. We need to build on that work.

I will say something about the Parliament building, about which, as members are aware, I know a lot. We have a building that is a wonderful asset for the people of Scotland. It is a brilliant new image for Scotland that can be part of our promotion overseas, so let us learn something from the experience of building it. Linda Fabiani, I and others who have worked to achieve the building worked in an unbelievably hostile atmosphere because so many people in Scotland like to wallow in failure. We could do without that doom and gloom aspect of the Scottish personality in the new Scotland; we have achieved something great—a great new image for Scotland—so let us build on it. Let us learn from the mistakes of the past few years and stop talking Scotland down.

11:38

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

The debate has been interesting, if not fire starting, and has resulted in one or two incidents of novelty value. I particularly noted Robert Brown's idea of comparing the Scottish Parliament building to the Queen Mary, which is a new one on me—the Titanic has been a more common comparison in recent times. We also had the unique spectacle of Keith Raffan making a point of order to challenge the relevance of another member's speech. If he sets a trend for that, the Conservatives will try to continue it on his behalf.

So much for the Liberal Democrats; let us move on to serious politics. The First Minister opened the debate by talking up Scotland's connections with Europe. Scotland has strong connections with Europe, but Phil Gallie made a good job of challenging the idea that Scotland should commit itself to an ever-deepening union with Europe at the expense of its connections further afield.

Jack McConnell mentioned the connections that Scotland has with the United States, but he ignores at his peril the strong connections that we have with other parts of the English-speaking world. I remember very well striking up a conversation with a car-park attendant in Boston, in the United States, who said, "Hey, you're from Scotland, aren't you?" I was proud of the fact that he had recognised my accent and I said, "Yes." The next thing that he said was, "That's near Ireland, isn't it?" That shows that Ireland has connections—especially in Boston—which were achieved through migration. We should not ignore our strong contacts in areas of Canada, Australia, the United States and New Zealand, which will benefit us in the long term.

The SNP's contribution to the debate was not as negative as John Home Robertson suggested. We agree on many issues to do with how Scotland is interpreted internationally and how its image is interpreted, but as ever the SNP has made the mistake of including in its amendment the separation clause. The SNP will never get the support of the Conservatives by including that clause. I continue to question the way in which the SNP pushes separation as the only way in which Scotland can promote its image or cure all its ills. The truth is that Scotland is part of the most successful union that the world has ever seen—that is the United Kingdom, not the united Europe. We must remember that that relationship is the strongest thing that we have to support us. Nothing that we can do will change the fact that we cannot survive if we turn our home market into a foreign market.

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):

Scotland's international image is of the utmost importance. Does the member agree that it is sad

that in two and a quarter hours of debate no mention has been made of the deplorable domestic image of Scotland? We are in the fourth richest economy in the world, but a quarter of a million pensioners live below the poverty level. All the parties that did that to this country deserve to be shown a red card.

Alex Johnstone: John Swinburne makes a point that did not occur to me in connection with this debate, but it is a relevant one.

We must remember that if we are to attract foreign talent to Scotland, which is what the First Minister talked about in his opening speech, we must ensure that people who might seek to come here feel confident that they will be provided with the necessary services and support that they need in the long term. In some respects, that is not the case today. However, at the same time, many people who might have sought to come to this country, do not do so because they believe that Government interference would restrict how they conduct their lives.

Before I leave the SNP contribution to the debate, I will address Nicola Sturgeon's suggestion that the argument that is put by other parties is that Scotland is too poor and too weak to be an independent country. I suggest that no party in the Parliament makes that argument. The fact that that simplistic argument is wheeled out time and again by the SNP makes it common currency in the political environment when it would not otherwise be so.

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: No.

In my final minute, I want to move on to the subject of immigration. The Conservative party has been accused of changing its immigration policy at its conference over the past few days. Let me restate the Conservative party's policy. We need fresh talent and we are willing to see fresh talent come to Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom to fill gaps where those exist. We also believe that this country—Scotland included—must be a safe place where asylum can be provided for those for whom it is necessary. We have a great tradition of providing asylum; some of the leading politicians in the country, including the leader of the Conservative party, owe their presence in the country to the fact that asylum was granted in the past. However, we must not confuse that issue with the issue of bogus asylum seekers who come to this country to seek asylum and then try to become economic migrants as part of the process. That has undermined confidence in the system. We cannot afford to let the distinction become blurred. I support the amendment in David McLetchie's name.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Richard Lochhead and remind him to stick to a strict seven minutes.

11:45

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): Parliamentary debates on international issues are usually very good. We have had a good debate today, with the exception of the contributions from the Conservatives and the Labour Party.

I think that all members agree that the advent of the Scottish Parliament raised the nation's profile internationally, which is a good thing, and that the situation has improved during the past five years. However, the purpose of the debate is not to talk about what a great place Scotland is, as most Labour and Tory members have done, but to hold the Government to account for its record of promoting Scotland overseas during the past five years and to consider what more we can do with the Parliament's existing powers and what we could do if the Parliament had more powers.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Richard Lochhead: I am just getting started.

We have to use devolution to become a much more outward-looking country. The SNP certainly believes that it is not possible to be a Scottish nationalist without being a Scottish internationalist.

The First Minister's opening comments about Scotland and the proposed European constitution demonstrate that he and his colleagues live in cloud-cuckoo-land. I have paid great attention to the debate on the constitution during the past few years. I remember the Executive saying that it would fight to ensure that the European Commission directly consults Scotland, but it failed to do so. I remember Henry McLeish, the former First Minister, saying that he would fight for Scotland to have access to the European Court of Justice, so that we could enforce subsidiarity through the courts, but that was not achieved either. Of course, the proposed EU constitution does not recognise Holyrood as a national Parliament, so we also missed out on measures to give the Parliaments of Europe a say in blocking unpopular proposals from Europe.

When I was convener of the European and External Relations Committee, I met dozens of dignitaries from overseas, either when such people visited Scotland or when the committee made overseas visits. I met politicians, civil servants, business people and others and I was struck by their enormous good will towards Scotland. Those people think that Scotland has an enormously positive image and would give their right arms for such an image for their countries.

Our national icons, Scots emigrants over the years and our trade links with foreign countries have forged a positive image of Scotland throughout the world. However, the people whom I met are equally perplexed about why we do nothing to capitalise on Scotland's good image and the enormous good will that exists towards the country. Time and again, people told me that they never see or hear anything from Scotland. That is why we must question the Government's strategy.

During the past five years, a range of low-key, low-level trade agreements with other countries have been signed—of course, such agreements are non-binding. Events have been held, such as Scotland in Sweden, Scotland in the Netherlands, and Scotland with Catalonia. They were worthy events, but when I lodged a parliamentary question to ask the former Minister for Finance and Public Services, Andy Kerr, what efforts are made to follow up such events, he replied:

“no specific report, covering the areas where follow-up activity has taken place, is available.”—*[Official Report, Written Answers; 21 September 2004; S2W-10303.]*

Phil Gallie: Will the member clarify the SNP's position on extending the powers of the Scottish Parliament? Is he in favour of the revised European constitution, which would undoubtedly take powers away from the Scottish Parliament?

Richard Lochhead: If no changes are made to the constitution, the SNP will vote against it. That is a long-standing policy.

I want to return to the Government's international strategy. In May, EU enlargement took place, but the Government completely failed to respond to that. The Irish have set up direct air links with every one of the 10 accession states, but Scotland has no new links to any of the states. Flanders—a country of 6 million people—signed an official treaty with every one of the 10 accession states in the run-up to EU enlargement, but Scotland has signed no real agreements with any of those countries.

Mr Raffan: Is the member aware that the director of the Flemish foreign affairs ministry said that the treaties were not a good idea because they absorbed too much of the Parliament's time and that there are better ways of building relations with other countries?

Richard Lochhead: I heard the evidence to which the member refers, but I heard a different story, which is that the Flemish are deriving great benefits from those links and from their offices in the accession countries. Scotland has only 21 Scottish Development International offices, which have a narrow focus, but Flanders has 77 offices in 54 countries throughout the world. Those offices do not just have an economic role but promote

Flanders in a range of areas. Scotland does not have such representation.

We do, of course, have a first secretary in Washington. Again, that step forward was made under Henry McLeish—there have been no others until the First Minister's welcome announcement today. Even in Washington, with a first secretary and a secretary, we have a budget of only £250,000. We have to be part of the British embassy in Washington and yet the Northern Ireland bureau in Washington—which represents 1.5 million people compared with our 5 million—has its own premises, several members of staff and a budget that is many times the size of ours.

I welcome the First Minister's announcement that we are to have a full-time official in China. Although that is a good step forward, he or she has a lot of work ahead of them. As the First Minister is going to China next week, I checked the website of the British embassy in Beijing this morning. One of the pages that acts as a gateway to the UK has a big picture of David Beckham in his England top, which gives an insight into the mindset at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It cannot be trusted to represent Scotland overseas, as it simply will not do that with the same enthusiasm as Scotland would do.

As I have visited many British embassies, I can give the chamber a slight insight into the embassy mindset. When someone walks into the embassy, they see London broadsheets all over the reception area but no indication of a Scottish presence—we are simply not on the embassy radar screen. When I sit down with British embassy officials, they say, "Oh, you have a Scottish Parliament. What is it responsible for? We don't know anything about it; we never get briefings from Scotland." *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Richard Lochhead: Either British embassy staff are very lazy or they are not being briefed by the Scottish Government. Whatever the reason, British embassies cannot be trusted to represent Scotland overseas.

Even the British Council, which has thousands of employees throughout the world and which is supposed to promote Scotland, does not do so. That is despite the fact that it has an enormous budget and that education and culture are devolved matters. We have ministers who are responsible for those two areas and yet the British Council is accountable to Westminster and not to the Scottish Parliament. The situation is ludicrous.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now, Mr Lochhead.

Richard Lochhead: Of course we have to gain more powers eventually, but we also have to use

the powers that we have at the moment much more efficiently and ambitiously. Come back, Henry McLeish, all is forgiven. The First Minister has been appalling and the best message that we can send out internationally is to require the powers of a normal independent country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have to close, Mr Lochhead. I call Jim Wallace to close the debate. I hope that you can do so in nine minutes, minister.

11:52

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace): By and large, the debate has been a good one. Certainly, the speeches of members on the partnership benches have been positive.

A number of members referred to the fact that the debate has taken place just a couple of days before the eyes not only of Britain but of the world will be on Scotland when this building—this magnificent piece of architecture—is opened. As Robert Brown and Sylvia Jackson said, it is not just the building but the very fact of home rule—as Linda Fabiani said, major constitutional change taking place peacefully—that has attracted a lot of attention to Scotland.

In many of my overseas visits, I have noticed that people take a keen interest in finding out what is happening in Scotland. They want to know how we managed to achieve our devolved powers and what the extent of those powers is. The opportunity that home rule has given us is one on which we are building with the publication of the strategy. We want Scotland to be seen in a positive light internationally.

The strategy is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to support the policy priorities that we have set out where they have a clear international dimension. It involves effective interaction with the European Union and the rest of the world. It matters for jobs, peace and stability and for the richness and diversity of our culture and society.

The strategy is one in which all ministers have a responsibility to promote Scotland at home and abroad. Indeed, I believe that all members of the Parliament have a responsibility to do so. The work on the promotion of Scotland that the European and External Relations Committee is undertaking under John Swinney's distinguished convenership is welcome. We look forward to the committee's conclusions.

We recognise the role that is played by global Scots and by global friends of Scotland. Helen Eadie mentioned the Scottish diaspora and perhaps we could tap into it even more than we do at present. We need to see how we can

communicate the Scottish image and message more effectively to all corners of the earth.

The negative tone of Opposition members has been disappointing. Nicola Sturgeon set the tone when she moved her amendment, which amounts to saying that Scotland would be better off internationally if we had better websites and independence. She said that she was a passionate internationalist and Richard Lochhead said that one cannot be a nationalist without being an internationalist. That comes from the party that wants to take us out of NATO—which has provided peace and stability in Europe over the past 60 years—and that will vote against the European constitution, in effect to take us out of Europe.

Richard Lochhead: The Deputy First Minister's own party passed a motion at its conference calling for exclusive competence for fisheries to be removed from the constitution. Should he not also be voting against the constitution?

Mr Wallace: My party has been one of the most consistently pro-European parties for a long time. We will vote for the constitution. Richard Lochhead introduced the red herring of competence in fisheries. I make it clear that there is no material difference between the constitution as it is now and the situation when the SNP argued for Scotland in Europe. The SNP has betrayed principle for sheer opportunism. It did it no good—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Mr Wallace: It is interesting to note that the SNP peddled its argument in the European election and, compared with the Liberal Democrats and Labour, which fought a positive campaign—

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): You are a hypocrite, Mr Wallace.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Matheson!

Mr Wallace: We are the parties that saw success. The SNP did so badly that it lost its leader.

Phil Gallie: Will the minister give way?

Mr Wallace: No, I want to make progress.

Much has been said about embassies and trade missions. We have been told that Scotland would be a much better place if we had 77 addresses round the world. It is important to point out that as part of the United Kingdom we have access to one of the largest and most sophisticated networks in the world, through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's embassies, high commissions and consulates, through the work of the British Council, and through the work that Scottish Development International does in key places. It was scurrilous of Richard Lochhead to

attack our embassies and consulates as he did. My experience has consistently been that they go out of their way to help Scottish ministers and Scottish trade missions when they visit foreign countries. He totally undervalues the benefit to Scotland of having that network of UK embassies and consulates.

In another whinge, Nicola Sturgeon compared Scotland's expenditure on tourism with that of Ireland. It is important to point out that although Tourism Ireland might spend more money marketing Ireland, VisitScotland's return on investment is much better, which is the sort of thing that efficient government encourages. Tourism contributes £4.5 billion to the Scottish economy, while it contributes only £2.9 billion to the Irish economy. Scotland had more visitors than Ireland had in the last year for which comparative figures are available—20.7 million compared with 13.3 million.

It is also fair to point out that the Executive already invests £80 million a year in tourism through VisitScotland, the enterprise networks and other bodies. Scottish tourism is performing strongly, with signs of continued growth in key markets. The latest figures for 2004 show an increase of 12 per cent in the number of visitors who travelled from abroad in the first six months of this year compared with the same period last year.

In addition, we have taken the initiative through EventScotland to try to ensure that Scotland becomes a place that can host major events, such as the MTV awards, which we hosted last year. Next year, we will host the world downhill mountain bike championships in Fort William. Scotland will become a place that people look to, and where we have the opportunity to market and project ourselves because of the work done by organisations such as EventScotland.

Robert Brown and Irene Oldfather made points about future funding for the Scottish Council for Development and Industry to undertake horizontal missions. UK Trade & Investment is currently reviewing funding policy for trade missions. There are assurances that no money will be lost to Scotland. Consultation is going on about the design of the funding scheme. No decisions have yet been made.

One of the great contrasts that we heard today was between the speeches of Mark Ruskell and Keith Raffan. From Mark Ruskell's speech, one would think that the G8 summit was about the worst thing that ever could happen to Scotland, when in fact it will be a showcase for Scotland.

Mr Ruskell: Will the minister give way?

Mr Wallace: No. Mark Ruskell seemed to have completely missed the point that, as Keith Raffan pointed out, one of the centrepiece discussions at

that summit will be on the commission for Africa. There was widespread agreement in the Parliament on how important that is.

Mr Ruskell *rose*—

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): We are almost out of time.

Mr Wallace: The work that Gordon Brown has been doing on debt relief shows that Scotland will take global poverty seriously when the eyes of the world are on us. We will be debating issues of international importance.

David McLetchie's concern was that it is not possible to have an image without substance, but the substance is there. It is not just in our heritage, of which we are rightly proud, but in things that are here today. Scotland is home to two of the world's top 20 banking corporations. Biomedical engineers in Scotland successfully fitted the world's first bionic arm. Scotland was the birthplace of the world's first cloned mammal. Keyhole surgery and the beta-blocker were pioneered in Scotland. Magnetic resonance imaging scanning was invented in Scotland. Scotland was the second country in the world to be hooked up to the internet. The computer hard disk was invented in Scotland. Europe's first lung transplant was carried out in Scotland. The world's first automated teller machine was developed in Scotland. Scotland is the biggest producer of personal computers in Europe and it produces a higher number of university and college graduates per head of population than anywhere else in Europe. That is substance and that is what we want to promote. This is a great country and all members should join us, especially over the next two days, to ensure that, when the world's attention is on us, people see just how great Scotland is.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Before questions to the First Minister, members will want to welcome the honourable Noel Cringle, President of Tynwald in the Isle of Man, and a large delegation of members and staff from state legislatures across the United States of America. [*Applause.*]

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I take the opportunity to welcome Margaret Ewing back to the chamber. [*Applause.*]

To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-1118)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I will resume my new habit in this building, from which I took a break last week, by noting that Kathleen Jamie, a poet from Fife, whose style has been compared to that of Robert Burns, has won the Forward poetry award. As today is national poetry day, it seems entirely appropriate to note that a Scot has won that award this year. Patricia Ferguson will be writing to her. [*Applause.*]

At this afternoon's Cabinet meeting, we will discuss matters of importance to the people of Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon: I add my warm congratulations to Kathleen Jamie on a well-deserved tribute.

Last week, the emergency surgery unit at St John's hospital in Livingston closed. Does the First Minister believe that that will improve the quality of care for patients in West Lothian?

The First Minister: I believe that, when the people who are responsible for such matters locally give us their expert opinion that they have had to make a decision in the interests of the safety of patients, we should not overrule that decision.

Nicola Sturgeon: Last night, I visited a woman in West Lothian. The story that she told me paints a very different picture to the one that the First Minister has painted in this chamber on previous occasions.

Two weeks ago today, she had a hysterectomy at St John's hospital in Livingston. She was discharged three days later, but last Tuesday, the day after the emergency surgery unit at St John's closed, she was rushed back to hospital by ambulance. Because there was no longer an emergency surgery unit at St John's, she had to

be shipped to Edinburgh's royal infirmary, where she spent 11 hours in pain on a trolley and another 12 hours—still in pain—in an assessment unit, waiting for a bed to be found. I am sure that the staff did their level best, but it took 23 hours for that woman, who—let us not forget—had undergone major surgery less than a week earlier and who was in severe pain, to be admitted to a ward. That was all because, two days earlier, the Executive had allowed the emergency surgery unit at her local hospital, where she could have been treated quickly and close to home, to shut its doors.

Will the First Minister please explain to that patient how his policy has improved her quality of care?

The First Minister: Nobody would be surprised to hear that I would be deeply distressed to learn that that had been the case. Obviously, I would want to consider the individual case. If we are going to make political points about it, I would want to know exactly what treatments were required.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): It is a human point, Jack.

The First Minister: I am very concerned about the human point—that is exactly my point, in fact. The individual concerned should be at the centre of our concerns. I would of course want to examine not only the circumstances of that individual case but whether the decision that Lothian NHS Board made last week, on the advice of medical experts, had an impact on it. If that is the case, it is a matter that Lothian NHS Board will have to consider. I would be equally concerned if what was regarded as an unsafe level of provision at St John's had been continued, thereby perhaps making that individual's condition even worse. It is important that we consider those matters rationally and that we take the expert opinion. I will certainly look into that individual case but I will also ensure that, when we consider it, we consider the hard facts and ensure that Lothian NHS Board learns the right lessons.

Nicola Sturgeon: That lady also told me last night that, when she complained about her predicament to the staff at Edinburgh royal infirmary, they told her to take it up with the politicians because, they said, it was politicians who were closing hospital wards. She took it up with me, and now I am taking it up with the First Minister. Is it not the case that the Executive's health policy is failing patients, failing hospital staff and failing Scotland? The question that the First Minister has failed to answer is why. So, First Minister, why?

The First Minister: I would be very happy to quote Ms Sturgeon in answering why. On 28 May last year she said that

"hospitals do need to be modernised. Some degree of centralisation of services is sensible"—

Members: Ah.

Stewart Stevenson: Twenty-three hours, Jack.

The First Minister: Let me finish. Nicola Sturgeon said:

"Some degree of centralisation of services is sensible for medical reasons..."

It is important that, rather than seek to capitalise politically on the challenges of the health service, we seek instead to find the right solutions for the health service. There are challenges in our health service, and there are, at times, local proposals for excessive centralisation. When that has happened, the Executive and successive health ministers have acted. However, there is also an important case for change, for the decentralisation of services and for the reallocation of resources to ensure that that can happen, and there is a need for the highest quality of service.

It is precisely because patients have to have a voice—not just through their politicians but through their own representatives—that we have in the past week improved the patient involvement measures in our national health service with the establishment of the new Scottish patient council. It is vitally important that patients have a voice themselves, as well as through the Executive. The new measures that Malcolm Chisholm announced last Saturday in his final act as Minister for Health and Community Care will ensure that patient representation is improved in future.

Nicola Sturgeon: Centralisation that results in a woman in pain waiting 23 hours to be admitted to a ward is not acceptable in anybody's language. What the people of Scotland are waiting for is not a change of face, but a change of the policy that results in that kind of scandal in our hospitals. They are still waiting for the First Minister to answer the simple question: why is it happening?

The First Minister: Increasing specialisation is happening where it saves lives in modern Scotland. It is happening so that the people of modern Scotland can have the best technology, the best skills and the best-trained doctors, consultants and nurses available to save their lives and allow them to live longer.

I have said to Ms Sturgeon that I will look into the individual case that she has raised, and it will be followed through by our health ministers. The policy of decentralising services right across Scotland to the most local level possible, while ensuring at the same time that specialised services are provided to the highest possible

quality, is important for the lives of the people of Scotland. That is a policy that we intend to improve upon and to further.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that the experience that Ms Sturgeon has related to us is unacceptable? I recognise that the First Minister will consider the matter further. Does he also agree that my constituents in West Lothian deserve the highest quality of care wherever it might be provided; that the issues of transport—although they are acknowledged to be difficult—are side issues compared to that of a quality of care that can be delivered only in certain places; and that it is unacceptable for Ms Sturgeon to use a constituent of mine in the way in which she has done today?

The First Minister: If the distressing story that Ms Sturgeon has recounted here today is true—

Members: Oh!

The First Minister: I am not about to say here in the chamber that I will not look into individual cases when they are raised with me as First Minister. If the story is indeed true, it is a distressing case that requires not just my looking into it, but action to be taken by Lothian NHS Board to ensure that the standards that we expect are met. That will be our clear intention. It is important to ensure that, throughout the Lothians, and indeed throughout the wider east of Scotland, we have the highest quality of care, both in local centres and in the centres of excellence. As I said recently, the changes that are taking place at St John's hospital and elsewhere are changes that, in many cases—in relation both to services at St John's and to the quality of care provided in the specialist centres—save lives. I know that only too well.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues will be discussed. (S2F-1115)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans to meet the Prime Minister.

David McLetchie: They might get round to discussing financial matters when they do meet. The First Minister will be aware that Professor Arthur Midwinter told the Parliament's Finance Committee this week that, on the basis of the financial settlement for local authorities,

"it would not be surprising if there were council tax increases above the level of inflation".—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 5 October 2004; c 1749.]

It seems that, yet again, the First Minister and his Scottish Executive are going to be responsible for

hitting our hard-pressed council tax payers, particularly those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners.

Council tax has already risen by 50 per cent since 1997, which is double the rate of inflation. Instead of forcing councils to raise council tax, why does the First Minister not use some of the budget increases that his Executive boasts about to enable councils to cut council tax for everyone, right across the board? Is it not the case that, under the Scottish Executive, council tax has become the ultimate stealth tax and that there is no end in sight to increase upon increase?

The First Minister: I absolutely share David McLetchie's concern for council tax payers in Scotland. The difference is that we have acted on that concern and have done so consistently. In every single year since the Parliament was established in 1999, the level of council tax increase in Scotland has been significantly below the last three council tax increases under the Conservative Government that was booted out of office in 1997 for precisely this kind of reason: inefficiency, waste, misdirected priorities and high tax increases to pay for incompetence. I am proud of this Parliament's record of having lower council tax increases every single year since 1999 compared with the increases under the Conservative Government back in the 1990s. I give a clear signal today that we expect council tax increases to be as low again next year, the year after and the year after that. There is absolutely no reason whatever why the settlement announced last week by Andy Kerr should cause council tax increases to be above 2.5 per cent. Any council in which there is a rise above that should be operating its business more efficiently.

David McLetchie: I was interested to hear the First Minister raising the subject of efficiency, or inefficiency, in this context. The truth is that the First Minister's so-called efficiency savings programme is a joke. As we know from bitter experience, councils will react to tighter grant settlements by either cutting front-line services or raising council tax, or both. The whole efficiency savings programme is a complete sham. The same Professor Midwinter of whom I spoke earlier told the Parliament's Finance Committee this week that the efficiency savings identified by HM Government as part of the Gershon review were three times greater than the Scottish target. Yet the First Minister tells us that when it comes to efficiency savings we will go further than south of the border. Mr McCabe, our new Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, refused to confirm that the other day. He told the committee:

"If people want to compare what we achieve up here with what happens down south, that is their business."—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 5 October 2004; c 1758.]

One of the people making comparisons with the south is the First Minister. Will he do so again and guarantee that our efficiency savings will be greater than those proposed by HM Government?

The First Minister: When we announce the full package of efficiency savings Mr McLetchie might regret raising the topic, because it will show just how efficient we are determined to be. The key point that Mr McLetchie made in his first statement was that a tight financial settlement necessarily leads to increases in council tax or reduction in front-line services. That may well have happened in the Tory years, but it does not need to happen today in 21st century Scotland. With the measures that we will promote and the measures that local authorities should implement, local authorities should ensure through the settlement that their rises in council tax do not go above 2.5 per cent per annum. There is no reason for that to happen and I hope that we can work with local authorities to ensure that it does not.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

3. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-1134)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans to meet formally the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Robin Harper: Yesterday's report from HM chief inspector of prisons must have made fairly dismal reading. Does the First Minister agree with the Association of Directors of Social Work figure that 83 per cent of adult prisoners have no aspect of their offending behaviour addressed while they are in prison? Does he agree that that is an embarrassing indictment of the partnership agreement's so-called commitment to reduce reoffending and a major reason why we have overcrowded jails and offenders living in grossly degrading and unjust conditions? Why is the Executive failing so badly and what is the First Minister going to do?

The First Minister: I do not want to comment on individual quotes from organisations when I do not know the full context. Throughout the criminal justice system there is a key responsibility on the social work profession as well as politicians and those responsible for the prison service. That is precisely why we intend to bring those services closer together to ensure that they work together to reduce reoffending in Scotland. Although the action that we propose to improve our prisons, build new prisons and ensure that we end slopping out is important, it is also important that we provide the right services in our communities and prisons to stop the reoffending that has plagued Scotland for too long.

Robin Harper: If social work services were funded better than they are at present they might be able to cope with the workload and the disposals that the children's panel system and prison system would like to give them. At present 650 young offenders are in jail, 72 per cent of whom are likely to be reconvicted within two years. Does the First Minister agree with the Association of Directors of Social Work that the Executive has a naive confidence that punishment through deprivation will reform, that not enough is being done and that what little is being done is not good enough and is not followed through? It is vital that disposals and help given to prisoners in jail and people in young offenders institutions be followed through after they have left. What is the First Minister going to do?

The First Minister: If that were true, I would, of course, be deeply concerned. However, it is of course not true. In the five years since devolution, the level of expenditure in the area that we are discussing has doubled because we understand that it is so important that it requires improved action at local and national level. I have no doubt about the sincerity of Robin Harper's point about the need to tackle reoffending with structured programmes when people are in custody and once they have been released. I entirely agree with him on that point. That is precisely why we have significantly increased resources and it is also precisely why there must be structural change. We cannot continue to have a situation in which 32 authorities, the prison service and others in the system operate in separate and distinctive ways. There must be a better co-ordinated and more systematic approach across Scotland. When we have that, we will be able to reduce reoffending.

Sectarianism

4. Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Executive is taking to tackle sectarianism. (S2F-1122)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Scottish ministers are tackling sectarianism in a number of ways, including support for initiatives, such as the sense over sectarianism campaign, and for groups such as the Scottish Inter Faith Council and Nil by Mouth. We are developing an anti-sectarianism education pack, which will be launched early next year and we are tackling sectarianism in sport with football clubs and others. We have also commissioned a review of marches and parades.

Karen Gillon: I hope that the pilot programme that is being rolled out will build on the work that has been done in schools in my constituency, such as Law primary, on building tolerance and mutual respect for children of all ages and religious faiths. What is being done to tackle the

sectarianism that is far more deeply rooted than simple football affiliation?

The First Minister: We believe that, as well as tackling the sectarianism that exists in a minority—although it is a too significant minority—of our adult population, we need to change the behaviours and attitudes of future generations. It is important that we use the tougher laws that this Parliament has agreed, that we enforce those laws effectively, that we try to change the atmosphere around our two major football clubs in particular and that, in our schools, we encourage the tolerance, respect and understanding that there should be among people who come from different religious backgrounds. I believe that we can achieve that across Scotland and I welcome Karen Gillon's support for that aim.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): Would the First Minister develop the good things that he has already said by publicising more intensively the fact that 110 people have already been found guilty of offences aggravated by religious hatred? That is a good step forward on the part of the police and the courts. Would he consider involving in this issue the problem of hatred of the Jewish and Muslim communities arising from all the troubles in the middle east? They must be defended as well as those who suffer from sectarian hatred.

The First Minister: As I have said before, not only do we need to tackle the traditional sectarianism that has existed in some Scottish communities but we have to ensure that we encourage a spirit of tolerance of and respect for other religions as well. During the Iraq war last year, Scotland showed that it is possible for our educators, police forces, public agencies and private individuals to come together to promote tolerance and understanding and to stand up for minority religious groups that might face bullying or abuse in the playground and elsewhere. I would like us to follow that example again in the years to come.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): Does the First Minister accept that, as Mr Gorrie has indicated, sectarianism can manifest itself in ugly incidents throughout our communities and that, unless we have more police officers in our communities, the measures that he has mentioned are rendered nugatory as there will be no power to detect a breach of law and enforce the law in our communities?

The First Minister: I do not know whether Annabel Goldie was listening to Donald Gorrie's question, which was based on the fact that dozens of people have already been found guilty of offences aggravated by religious hatred. That is an indication of the work that is being done by police forces throughout Scotland. They have the time

and resources to do that work, first because their numbers are at record levels, and secondly because we have an on-going commitment, which is making a material difference on the ground in communities throughout Scotland, to release more police to operational duties, year on year. That is happening as a result of changes in the prison service and in how the police service is organised. I notice that the Conservatives have criticised some of those changes again this week, but if they really support more police officers on the beat and are not just talking about it, they need to back the changes and reforms that are required.

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I welcome any measures to tackle racism and bigotry, but will the First Minister clarify the pilot scheme that is being rolled out in schools and nurseries? Is it a website? Is its use at the discretion of teachers and is there any in-service training on it for teachers in schools and nurseries? Also, in a week that has seen four public houses in Glasgow raided for putting up sectarian artefacts, why is Glasgow not one of the areas for the pilot scheme? To me, it makes more sense for the scheme to be run in Glasgow than in Dumfries, where teachers have said that they have no need for it.

The First Minister: I hesitate to mention my local area in this regard, but North Lanarkshire is one of the areas that has been chosen for the pilot scheme and I assure the member that I believe that it is an entirely appropriate choice for the project. It is important for us to educate children and allow them to develop their understanding in a variety of ways. There will not simply be a website, as somebody said earlier; perhaps we concentrate too much of our attention on websites. We need a variety of educational resources that are appropriate for different ages and that allow children to develop the ideas of tolerance and understanding that make such a difference.

Health Policy

5. Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): To ask the First Minister whether a change of Minister for Health and Community Care will mean that there is a change of health policy. (S2F-1131)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Ministers will continue with policies to improve our nation's health, to improve and modernise the national health service and to ensure that health services are as local as possible, wherever that can be done safely and sustainably. That is the policy of the Scottish Government and not of any one health minister.

Shona Robison: As there will be no policy change, how will the First Minister explain to the people of Lanarkshire why they have to lose emergency surgery from Wishaw general hospital

in his constituency, Hairmyres hospital in the constituency of the Minister for Health and Community Care, or Monklands hospital in the constituency of the Secretary of State for Health, John Reid? How on earth does he expect his constituents to take seriously the forthcoming public consultation on a national strategy for hospitals when, at the same time, Lanarkshire NHS Board is proposing cuts to those hospitals?

The First Minister: Actually, no, it is not. I do not know how anybody could take seriously the SNP's health policy, which is based on raising in this chamber speculation in newspapers as concrete fact and which bases a change of policy on such speculation and scaremongering. As I said earlier, the SNP's leader said last year that a degree of centralisation of services is sensible for medical reasons. We heard from Miss Robison in the chamber—last week and yesterday—and in the nationalists' press releases this week that there should be no changes in the national health service, but if there were no changes—*[Interruption.]*

I am making a serious point about Miss Robison's area. I know that Carnoustie is not in her constituency, but it is in the Tayside health board area. I think that the new primary health care centre in Carnoustie will matter to the people of Carnoustie and the people of Tayside, but it would be stopped in its tracks right now if the Government accepted the SNP's proposal for a moratorium. The centre is being built by a public-private partnership, so it would not even have got to the drawing board if the SNP was in charge of the devolved Government in Scotland.

We need a bit of consistency on health policy, based around the facts, from the Scottish nationalist party. People will get that consistency in health policy from the Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition. They will get a policy that delivers improvements in local health services as well as the safety that is required in specialisation.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that the SNP's no-change policy is not in the interests of patients but is actually an attack on the safety of patients? Doctors are saying clearly that change is needed, certainly in Glasgow and, I suspect, elsewhere in Scotland. The forthcoming blockage in the necessary change in hospital services will be at the expense of the health service improvement that is desperately needed to improve the health of the people of Scotland. We have got to improve people's health. It is not all about hospitals; it is about doing things for ordinary people.

The First Minister: I agree absolutely that health improvement is important for the people of Scotland. Both Opposition parties have shown

consistently their disregard for the importance of health improvement in Scotland, as well as for health service improvement. It is a problem for the so-called party of Opposition in Scotland that it seems to change its policy whenever it is possible for it to get the headlines. Last year, it officially supported the policy of rationalising health services and ensuring that the right services were delivered in the right locations. Now that there is a national campaign against some of those local proposals, the SNP has changed its party policy and has fallen in behind that campaign. It is sheer hypocrisy for the SNP to take that approach. I hope that we can get some more sense into the debate in the weeks ahead.

Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind): Is the First Minister aware that Glasgow and Lanarkshire are continuing to copy the flagship of Edinburgh royal infirmary—a building that was built to avoid blocked beds but which has gone wrong and now has 300 blocked beds? The tendency to use public-private partnerships means that we reduce the number of available beds. Is the First Minister prepared to change his policy or will he increase the number of essential hospital beds?

The First Minister: The problem with bedblocking in Lothian is not the number of hospital beds, but the number of places in the community for people who should not be in hospital beds. As I said yesterday, I believe that people who do not need to be in hospital—especially elderly people—should be in the community with their families, being properly supported by local government and other health service agencies. I believe absolutely that we need to improve the quality of provision in our local communities to support people when they are in care in the community. However, I also believe absolutely that, when people need hospital beds, they should have them.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the First Minister share with us the instructions that he gave to his new Minister for Health and Community Care about the devolution of decision making to local areas in the health service?

The First Minister: Now we hear the policy that says that we need to devolve more decisions—unless there is a headline to be made in opposing the devolution of decisions to local health boards.

There is a balance to be struck between the national strategy and policies of the health service—which should, rightly, be set in the Parliament by the devolved Government—and the decisions that should be made locally not just by health boards, but by the medical professionals and through engaging the patients who are, ultimately, at the centre of our service and should

be even more so in the months and years ahead.

We need to ensure that the right decisions are made locally. However, as I said two weeks ago, it is important that the health boards, which have a statutory responsibility to make decisions in their areas, take into account in making those decisions the factors beyond their boundaries that influence services in other areas. That is an important development that needs to be taken on board by all the health boards in Scotland. I hope that they have heard that message loud and clear.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise for raising the same point of order that I have raised for the past two weeks. As members will see, we have lost a question and First Minister's question time has run four minutes over the half an hour that is allotted to it. Do we accept that we are continually going to break our standing orders or do we update our standing orders? I would prefer to do the latter. Will the Presiding Officer give us some suggestions on how we might make sense of this item of business?

The Presiding Officer: That is one of the matters on which I will reflect during the recess, once the Parliament has been opened on Saturday.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12:34

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Margaret Curran to move motions S2M-1833, S2M-1834 and S2M-1835, on the membership of committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Mrs Mary Mulligan be appointed to replace Bill Butler on the Justice 1 Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Bill Butler be appointed to replace Karen Whitefield on the Justice 2 Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Karen Whitefield be appointed to replace Johann Lamont on the Communities Committee—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

Decision Time

12:35

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-1831.2, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1831, in the name of Jack McConnell, on Scotland's international image, 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)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 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)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)

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)
 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)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 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)
 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

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 30, Against 80, Abstentions 3.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S2M-1831.3, in the name of David McLetchie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1831, in the name of Jack McConnell, on Scotland's international image, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

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)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 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)
 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)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 25, Against 65, Abstentions 23.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S2M-1831, in the name of Jack McConnell, on Scotland's international image, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 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)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 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

Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 82, Against 3, Abstentions 28.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament shares the Scottish Executive's ambitions to build relationships across national and regional boundaries to deliver social, political, cultural and economic gain; welcomes efforts to promote Scotland's international image and to attract people to visit, live, work, study and do business in Scotland; acknowledges the importance of promoting Scotland's interests overseas; agrees that Scotland has a role in meeting the shared responsibilities of the international community, and welcomes the publication of the Executive's first international strategy.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-1833, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the membership of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Mrs Mary Mulligan be appointed to replace Bill Butler on the Justice 1 Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S2M-1834, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the membership of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Bill Butler be appointed to replace Karen Whitefield on the Justice 2 Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth and final question is, that motion S2M-1835, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the membership of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Karen Whitefield be appointed to replace Johann Lamont on the Communities Committee.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. I look forward to seeing you all on Saturday.

Meeting closed at 12:39.

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