

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 3 November 2004

Session 2

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2004.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,  
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ  
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate  
Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by Astron.

---

## CONTENTS

Wednesday 3 November 2004

### Debates

Col.

<b>TIME FOR REFLECTION</b> .....	11409
<b>SCHOOLS</b> .....	11411
<i>Motion moved—[Peter Peacock].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Fiona Hyslop].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Ms Rosemary Byrne].</i>	
The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock) .....	11412
Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP) .....	11418
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con) .....	11422
Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP) .....	11426
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....	11428
Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	11431
Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP) .....	11434
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	11436
Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD) .....	11439
Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab) .....	11441
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	11443
Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green) .....	11445
Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab) .....	11447
Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP) .....	11449
Ms Byrne .....	11450
Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab) .....	11452
Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) .....	11455
Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP) .....	11457
The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson) .....	11460
<b>BUSINESS MOTION</b> .....	11464
<i>Motion moved—[Ms Margaret Curran]—and agreed to.</i>	
The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran) .....	11464
<b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS</b> .....	11466
<i>Motions moved—[Ms Margaret Curran].</i>	
Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	11466
The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin) .....	11467
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	11468
<b>RENEWABLE ENERGY (HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS)</b> .....	11480
<i>Motion debated—[Maureen Macmillan].</i>	
Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab) .....	11480
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	11483
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	11485
Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green) .....	11486
Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab) .....	11488
John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD) .....	11489
Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....	11490
Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	11492
The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson) .....	11493

---



## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 3 November 2004*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** As usual on a Wednesday, the first item of business is time for reflection.

**The Rev Dr Iain D Campbell (Free Church, Back, Isle of Lewis):** I thank the Presiding Officer for inviting me to address the Parliament today.

This is not my first visit to this august and venerable chamber. It was my privilege to lead a group of singers from our native island to participate in the official opening of the building. I know that that was a busy day, but members may recall that we sang a Gaelic psalm on that occasion.

To have had the opportunity to do so was an honour in itself. However, it was only one of several opportunities that we have had over the past year to take our style of Gaelic psalm singing outside of the Hebrides. Visits to Paris, to Liverpool and to Alabama in the United States of America have allowed groups from Lewis to represent their country, their culture and their religion in a wide variety of settings. My church in Lewis also hosted some 500 people in October 2003, when we made a definitive recording of the genre on CD.

Much as we appreciate such opportunities, the strength of our Gaelic psalm singing lies in the expression that it gives to a living and dynamic faith that joins together the timeless word of God and the culture-bound religious life of a people in the worship of God. The church is the natural context for the singing of the psalms and has been since the days of the New Testament. Every time a precentor stands in public worship to lead the singing of the psalms in that way, he is immortalising a moment of sacred praise that binds him and his congregation to the faith of generations.

Our own national bard admirably captured the essence of this religious music. In "The Cotter's Saturday Night", Robert Burns describes a family at worship, chanting "their artless notes", tuning their hearts and taking up a psalm. The bard continues:

"From Scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her lov'd at home, revered abroad".

What shall we say about new Scotia? Will we have the wisdom and the boldness in modern Scotland to recover the bard's vision? Will we realise that it is our highest honour and our greatest wisdom to let the word of God dwell in us richly, so that we will embrace its message and live by its counsel? Will we have the humility, the courage and the faith to pray the ancient prayer of the psalmist?

"Dhia, d'fhirinn is do sholas glan  
Leig thugam iad a-mach  
Ga m' sheòladh chum do thulaich naoimh  
's mo thabhairt chum do theach."

"Send out your light and your truth;  
let them lead me;  
let them bring me to your holy hill  
and to your dwelling!"

May that be our prayer personally, corporately and nationally. Thank you.

## Schools

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, and three amendments to the motion.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. On previous occasions, you have been prepared to take action in relation to statements to the Parliament. When ministers have given out too much information beforehand, they have not been allowed to make a statement. It is my concern that we are seeing a new way of trying to subvert the rulings of Presiding Officers. For instance, the statement on efficiency in government was pulled, but last week in Hamilton, rather than in the Parliament, a minister made a speech on modernisation and efficiency in government in which he made spending announcements.

Today we have a debate on education that has been flagged up by articles in the press and briefings to the broadcast media as being about the most significant change to education in a generation. Surely members should expect such a significant change to be announced to the Parliament. I am concerned that, instead of statements being made to the chamber, they are being avoided altogether, so that it is not within the remit of the Presiding Officer to admonish or discipline ministers.

Either the Executive is showing arrogance and contempt for the Parliament or its management of parliamentary business is sloppy and in disarray. I leave it for members and the public to choose which of those is the case. However, I ask the Presiding Officer to discuss with the Executive business manager how the situation can be avoided in future.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Presiding Officer, as you will be aware, I raised this issue at yesterday's meeting of the Parliamentary Bureau. The Minister for Parliamentary Business has promised to reflect on how ministerial announcements will be handled in the future. On this occasion, however, there is another problem. In its answer to the question put to it, the Executive made reference to some documents available in the Scottish Parliament information centre. I inform you that those documents were not available until 2.30 pm today, whereas the announcement was made on Monday.

**The Presiding Officer:** My problem is that I am not always in a position to know what is made public and whether something is in the public domain. Of course, I accept the primacy of the

Parliament. I will continue discussions. Does the Minister for Parliamentary Business have something to add at this stage?

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran):** The Executive is firmly committed to respecting the protocols of the Parliament and I will investigate the issue of when documents were placed in SPICe, of which I was not aware. I make it clear, as I did at yesterday's meeting of the Parliamentary Bureau, that the Executive, as the properly elected Executive in this country, has the right to communicate with the public about its policies. We will continue to do that. I will ensure that everything that we do properly respects the protocols of the Parliament, but I will not prohibit our communication with the Scottish public.

**The Presiding Officer:** That is clear. We will move on.

14:37

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock):** It is a particular pleasure to me to open this afternoon's debate. I accept that Brian Monteith was seeking to make a proper point and welcome the fact that he has recognised that the debate concerns significant announcements. However, what he said today is different from the press statement that he issued two days ago, in which he described what we have said as phoney announcements.

This week, I have set out immediate actions to improve our schools in a variety of ways. Those actions will deliver more exciting education for pupils, enable parents to give their children more choice in schools and give teachers and head teachers more freedoms. There will be actions for work to give employers and young people the skills that they need and actions for Scotland to ensure that we have ever-improving education that is competitive on the world stage. I am delighted that our plans have been so warmly and widely welcomed by parents, teachers, head teachers, pupils, business and academics, if not by those who oppose us in the chamber.

Since devolution, we have concentrated our efforts on putting right the huge and damaging legacy of the years when the Tories were in government—years of underinvestment in cash and in policy thinking on education. We have already delivered decisive action in four key areas: new laws to drive improvement in our schools; provision of universal pre-school education; a new deal for teachers in return for contract changes; and the biggest-ever investment in school buildings in Scotland. Those actions have been about getting the right foundations on which to build further change in the future.

In setting our agenda for further change, we triggered a national debate on education. That debate demonstrated the high degree of attachment that Scots have for their education system, which is rooted in every community in Scotland and in the values of duty and obligation to all our citizens, not just a privileged elite. It is the role of Government to provide the best education for all our citizens. Every local school, in every local community, should be excellent. We should not expect anything less. Our comprehensive system is the right system to deliver excellence for Scotland. The national debate showed no desire for any other system and confirmed that our approach commands the support of the Scottish people.

The national debate did more than that, however. Its outcome reflected the Executive's belief that there is no room for complacency about the future of Scottish education. The debate was as much about setting our sights high and about what we need to keep reforming as it was about what is good about Scottish education. We are clear, and Scotland's people are clear, that we have a sound education system. We have much to celebrate about our system: we are in the top class internationally and many of our young people excel, going on to achieve great things in their lives and to make great contributions to this country.

The national debate on education showed that parents and teachers were concerned about the volume and nature of assessment and testing in our schools and about clutter in our curriculum. We know that too many young people still come out of school with too little. The performance of the lowest-performing 20 per cent of pupils in secondary 4 has remained flat for a number of years. We know that many boys in particular are underachieving and struggle at school. We know that behaviour challenges are accentuated when pupils are demotivated.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** Will the minister spell out in more detail than he has given us today and what has appeared in the press what he will do to drive up the standards for that 20 per cent of pupils who have made no improvement and, indeed, for the almost one third of pupils who leave school with few or no qualifications?

**Peter Peacock:** If Brian Adam will maintain his seat for a while, he will hear the answer to his questions. The basis of what we are doing today is to drive improvement throughout the system to ensure that we address the needs of that 20 per cent of lowest-performing pupils in particular, while providing stretch and challenge in the system for the most able performers in our schools.

Too many young people currently find S2 a drag and they lose the motivation to move forward in

school. School inspections tell us that there is a leadership weakness in some of our schools. Increasingly, our young people will need to be highly skilled and high achieving to respond to future economic challenges. Industry is anxious to have young people with the right skills to be effective in the workplace. Those are the challenges that we need to meet and the agenda that I have set in place will do just that.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** The minister makes an important point about employers and what they expect. Why is it only standard grade that is being considered in the qualifications review? Does he have every confidence in higher still or, based on employers' feedback, should the content of higher still be re-examined?

**Peter Peacock:** The investment that we have made in the new national qualification that embraces higher still is the right way forward. That system is still settling down, but it is producing good results. More young people are moving on to advanced higher, which is the challenge that they require. We have included in our proposals a plan to widen qualifications in vocational subjects, specifically to meet some of the requirements that employers make of us.

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** Will the minister give way?

**Peter Peacock:** I will give way in a moment, but I want to make some progress.

Our agenda is about heightening expectations of our schools and our leaders, giving more freedom to teachers and head teachers, creating more choice for pupils and building tougher but intelligent accountabilities into the system.

Twelve key liberators and drivers of wider action sit at the heart of our agenda. First, a new excellence standard for top performance will be used in all school inspections from 2005 explicitly to raise our expectations of all schools. To support schools and head teachers to meet that standard, we will invest with the Hunter Foundation in a new leadership academy. The academy will use not only what is best in Scotland to inspire and develop our leaders, but insights and expertise from around the world.

The leaders of our schools need the space in which to perform, to innovate and inspire and to drive up performance. We will give them that space by extending devolved school management. We will give head teachers three-year budgets, more budget under their delegated authority and more discretion in staffing structures. Beyond devolved school management, we will give teachers and head teachers the space to practise their professional craft and to use their professional judgment in the interests of their pupils.

Right at the heart of our proposals are far-reaching changes to the school curriculum. Those changes are the key liberators in opening the space that I have spoken about and in opening up the choice and flexibility for teaching and increasingly personalised learning.

For the first time in Scotland, we will have a curriculum that runs from the age of three to the age of 18, in which the purpose of education is clearly defined and focused on enabling all young people to become effective contributors to society, successful learners, responsible citizens and confident individuals. Our plans will ensure that literacy and numeracy remain at the heart of all learning. They will allow more of an opportunity for subjects to be studied in depth earlier, give more time and choice for highers and advanced highers and provide more time for music, drama, sport and work-related learning.

**Ms Byrne:** The plans for highers and advanced highers are all very well and should be introduced at the top end of the education system, but they miss out the young people who want to take access courses. Will the minister provide more resources to develop such courses? Does he accept that those courses can involve young people in innovative work and provide them with the skills with which to go into the world? After all, the range of access courses does not just cover academic courses.

**Peter Peacock:** Access courses form part of the new national qualifications suite. More and more people are taking them and are experiencing the satisfaction of getting a qualification that they would not have received under previous systems. We will continue to invest as much in that system as we are in the whole education system to bring about improvements.

As far as curriculum changes are concerned, I have set a timetable for action to redesign the science curriculum and to remove overly prescriptive guidance in areas such as expressive arts and environmental studies. I have also set a timetable for action to overhaul the curriculum for S1 to S3 to provide more choice for pupils and more time to strengthen literacy and numeracy and to inject greater pace, relevance and motivation to improve young people's attainment. Part of that new phase of work will involve a review of standard grade exams—decisions will be made by 2007 about their future and their links with other national qualifications. The review will be designed to retain what is good about standard grade while simplifying the structure and improving progression.

I have commissioned work on new skills for work courses as part of our national qualifications suite. To ensure greater flexibility for schools and choice for pupils, I will also bring to the Parliament

proposals to abolish the age-and-stage regulations that currently set restrictions on when pupils can sit exams. We will also repeal old demarcation rules and regulations that restrict primary school teachers' ability to teach in secondary schools. However, we will ensure that there are appropriate safeguards for registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Although I see truly exceptional practice in Scotland's schools, I know that that does not happen everywhere all the time. Some schools require radical transformation, which is why this week I triggered our schools of ambition programme. No one should be in any doubt about the fact that we want all our schools to improve on their current positions. Our new investments will allow that to happen, but some schools need to be on a fast track if they are to improve. Local authorities will be able to nominate schools and there will be automatic access to the programme for schools that are receiving intensive post-inspection support from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. As has been widely reported, we are currently discussing support by philanthropic donors to add value to our resources. I have finance to support at least 20 schools by 2007 on the schools of ambition programme.

I will strengthen accountability by introducing measures to benchmark Scotland's performance internationally as a basis for further driving up improvement and by publishing annually a new survey of achievement in Scottish schools that will replace the current five-to-14 statistics that we collect. Moreover, HMIE will soon commence a new round of local authority inspections to ensure that quality improvement processes are being operated to new and agreed standards.

**Mr Monteith:** Will the minister ensure that Scottish schools meet the necessary requirements to be included in the next round of the trends in mathematics and science study, which measures performance in mathematics across schools internationally? That will ensure that we can see our position in relation to other countries.

**Peter Peacock:** I will consider Brian Monteith's point. I am anxious to have all the available data, as those will allow us to benchmark our performance and let us know where we need to change the system more.

Given the comprehensive package of modernisation that I have just set out, the Scottish National Party should feel ashamed that it has nothing to say about Scottish education. In fact, many will be surprised that it has the nerve to take part in this debate. The incomprehensible gibberish of its amendment shows that it is all at sea about educational matters.



Unlike the SNP, the Tories have policies for education, but those policies are divisive and dangerous and threaten everything that is good about Scottish education. During the dark days of their rule, the Tories brought Scottish education to its knees. They represent the biggest threat to everything that we have done to bring about a recovery in the standards and ambition of comprehensive education in Scotland. Scots want the comprehensive system; it is the system that best serves Scotland's needs and ambitions and it is the system that the Tory leader, David McLetchie, has pledged to abolish.

The Tories have also pledged to cut dramatically the resources available to Scotland's schools. If Michael Howard ever got his way, there would be £20 billion of public spending cuts across the United Kingdom, including cuts of £600 million in our planned spending on education in Scotland, on top of the £1 billion in cuts that have already been promised in the funding that supports schools and pre-schools.

**Mr Monteith:** I would be delighted to treat the minister to the next home fixture of Hibernian were he to show me chapter and verse of the shadow chancellor saying that he will cut expenditure on Scottish schools. Indeed, the shadow chancellor has announced an increase in spending in education, which will work its way through to an increase in spending in Scotland. I fear that the minister will not be at Easter Road with me.

**Peter Peacock:** That is extraordinary. Mr Monteith is a great supporter of Mrs Thatcher and he represents a party that ran down Scottish education and made massive cuts to it. He represents a party that is committed to £20 billion of cuts in public services. The Tories could not do that without cutting education spending. Mr Monteith represents the party that now wants to review the Barnett formula. That would inevitably lead to a squeeze and cuts in Scottish spending. I will be happy to send him a copy of the leaflet produced by the Tories in south-west Edinburgh, which pledges £600 million of extra cuts in Scottish education. That is the truth.

Those are the disastrous Tory plans. The Tories would cut the number of teachers, whereas we will grow that number. However, that is not the worst of it. Their whole policy of extending choice between schools is camouflage. Their theory is not simple; it is simplistic. The Tories believe that, if a school is not excellent, the pupils should go elsewhere; they should leave their community, get on their bikes—or on a bus—and travel. Most Scots, who are intelligent people, know that that proposition is ludicrous. It is a policy for the leafy Tory suburbs and a practical nonsense for the rest of Scotland.

The only choice for most Scots is their local school and they want it to be excellent. They want

to be able to choose to send their children to the local school. They do not want their kids turned into nomads who have to travel around Scotland to get a decent education. They do not want a Tory philosophy that does not care if the local school is not excellent, that says that that is too bad and that the pupil should move elsewhere.

Parents want a Government that will stand by their school, invest in their school and bring about improvement. That is exactly what they have in the Executive. We will not abandon schools and sacrifice excellence on the altar of false choice—a choice that will never be available for thousands upon thousands of Scots. The Tories seek to serve the few at the expense of the majority. We reject that philosophy fundamentally.

By contrast, in the Executive the people of Scotland have a Government that is committed to every community and to every pupil. We have the ambition and the policies to deliver ever-improving education. The 12 key actions that I have outlined today will help to drive the further actions and commitments that are set out in the document “ambitious, excellent schools” and will deliver just that: ambitious, excellent schools. They represent a programme of action for having an ever more successful schools system in the future and I commend that programme to the Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's agenda for the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation, as described in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*, which builds on the investment and success in education over recent years and sets out plans to bring a transformation in ambition and achievement through higher expectations for schools and school leadership, greater freedom for teachers and schools, more choice for pupils and better support for learning so that the individual needs of young people can be better met, and tough, intelligent accountabilities to drive improvement.

14:54

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to discuss the future of education in Scotland. We were promised a revolution in education, but what was published was scaled down to simply and modestly

“the most comprehensive modernisation ... for a generation”.

We now have a more proportionate explanation of what is being proposed, which consists of reviews and reforms. By the end of the debate, we may finally have the admission that we are largely being presented with supply-side, producer-led changes, which will result in administrative change for the institutional arm of education in relation to assessments, but which contains little that is concrete, as yet, in relation to improved

educational experience for and attainment by pupils.

If highers in hype were being awarded, the minister would have secured one at grade A. If there were standard grades in exaggeration, he would have bagged one before the qualification was withdrawn.

I say to the Tories that the free market does not inspire enthusiasm for learning; teachers do. The Executive champions institutional interest and the Tories champion free-market self-interest, but the SNP champions the community of interest. Scotland needs real, pupil-centred educational change that marries the core skills of literacy, numeracy and communication to flexibility and choice in the curriculum and an emphasis on the tools that are needed to comprehend and appreciate not just the modern world of work, but the modern world in which we live. We need to value and promote active citizenship in a world in which people are increasingly alienated.

The Executive's long-awaited proposals are finally here—although perhaps not, as most of the proposed changes will not be ready for introduction until after 2007, by which time yet another cohort of pupils will have left school. I am making a serious point about the timescale, scope and impact of the changes. The fresh-faced, bright-eyed five-year-olds who started their education in 1997 with the words "education, education, education" ringing in their ears are now the S1 pupils who are marking time, as the minister has said. In 2007, when most of the proposed changes are introduced, 20 per cent of those children will be in S4, underachieving and being failed by the system. A generation of pupils under Labour ministers—the class of 1997—will have been untouched by changes. "Education, education, education" meant "later, later, later". Each one of those five-year-olds of the 1997 intake could have expected more. It is economically imperative for Scotland that we raise the game, not just for some, but for all.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** It is not clear how the establishment of yet another talking shop in the form of a national education convention would assist the educational progress of the children who started their education in 1997.

**Fiona Hyslop:** The national debate for education came hard on the heels of the report by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in the first session of the Parliament, which included many suggestions and challenges that were made through public consultation and involvement. A standing national education convention would provide the pace and drive to make changes happen sooner and offer a consensus for progress more effectively than would the welcome but rather delayed measures that have been announced today.

I will touch on another aspect of national policy making. There is a glaring contradiction in two key areas of Government policy. The Executive's economic policy identifies the need to reverse the country's population decline, but its education policy depends on that decline to reduce class sizes and to cope with the retirement of 40 per cent of teachers during the next 10 years. Many of the Executive's proposals rely on a limitless supply of teachers—the partnership agreement promises to increase teacher numbers to 53,000.

I welcome many of the proposals. The clearing out of the excessive assessment and bureaucracy that hinder teachers' ability to teach is overdue. I welcome the proposal to identify 20 schools of ambition, but would it have been made without the welcome philanthropic support that we understand has been offered? Twenty schools out of 2,826 will be identified. Does that mean that the Executive is unambitious for the remainder of our schools? Is the proposal simply a good way of presenting the rationing of resources to pay for the servicing of public-private partnership revenue costs, which next year will be three times greater than the actual spend on buildings?

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** I am conscious that Fiona Hyslop is well into her speech. Given the lack of information in the SNP amendment about the alternatives that the SNP would offer, I hope that she will devote the remainder of her speech to telling us exactly what the SNP would do differently. Perhaps she will do so, but we have heard nothing about that so far.

**Fiona Hyslop:** We have been presented with what we are told is

"the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation".

It is right and responsible of the Opposition to examine every detail of that programme. Robert Brown knows well that one of the most revolutionary measures that could be taken would be to slash class sizes to ensure that teachers had the time to teach and pupils had the space to learn. The Executive adopted that practical proposal at a late stage.

The proposal to establish a leadership academy is welcome. However, it is perhaps an indictment of the Executive that head teachers, who might be responsible for an organisation of 800 people, should not already have received targeted support. Head teachers should already have 80 per cent control of their budgets, but the bureaucracy in the system is such that they do not have that control.

The idea of having a fresh curriculum is great, but we are still waiting for the results. Let us hope that pupils, parents and employers get a say. Opportunities for vocational experience are now

on the agenda of all political parties—perhaps we should reflect on the fact that the Howie report of 11 years ago considered such issues. Breadth and flexibility in the curriculum should be championed, but the hatchet men from the Scottish Qualifications Authority appear to be showing their virility in potentially axing highers in modern languages, in an era of global trading, and in biotechnology—it is ironic that we should be debating that near to Midlothian, where we have a biotechnology park.

There may be a link between colleges and national qualifications, but the Executive does not make it explicitly. It is fine to have more time for highers, but why sit 10 highers when university admissions are based on proposals for four or five highers? The Executive's proposals do not explicitly make the link with lifelong learning.

The proposals talk about an excellent gold standard from HMIE. That might be helpful, but the schools that already achieve the best results do so within an ethos and culture of continuous improvement. The proposals will hardly make a difference to them and they will certainly make no difference to the schools that are not reaching that standard.

I understand the logic behind having a qualifications review, but the mess over the introduction of higher still has yet to be properly addressed. Changes to the age-and-stage regulations are fine and will be meaningful for the few pupils who will be affected, but those are hardly the modernising changes of the generation.

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

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am conscious of the time and want to move on.

Moving primary teachers into secondary schools will help to cover the problems with teacher shortages and class sizes. I am pleased that the commitment dragged out of the Executive by the SNP some months ago—that the General Teaching Council would be key in the changes—has been adopted.

What we need is a community of interest. There is no monopoly, in the chamber or in the country, on the ambition for success for our young people through education. We desperately need to build a consensus on how to move forward. We should not have a top-down approach from the Executive. For centuries in Scotland, there has been a community of interest in education for all.

**Ms Alexander:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I am in my concluding moments.

The contribution of the Hunter Foundation and the thoughtful speech that Tom Hunter delivered

during the summer is testament to that community of interest. The Executive's belated national debate was a stab at capturing the national interest, but we need a sustained expression of that shared interest. If people want a cultural change among all the interested parties—parents, pupils, employers, universities, colleges and businesses—we will have to elevate that tangible community of interest and give it practical and continuing means of expression. That was the point that I made to Elaine Murray. The SNP proposal for a national education convention would provide for that. It would provide for accountability and a national common interest that would allow a shared strategy and vision to be delivered. That is what is sadly lacking from the series of practical, managerial changes that the Executive has presented today.

I did not taste excitement and enthusiasm in the reforms. They have not generated palpable anticipation and or an expectation that could be catching. If they had, the minister could truly make the claims that he has made today. There is an old saying: judge me not by what I say, but by what I do. The 1997 school generation will judge the minister by his actions and the minister is in danger of being hung by his own hyperbole.

I move amendment S2M-1925.2, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"acknowledges the publication of the proposed changes to education contained in the Scottish Executive's *Ambitious, Excellent Schools* but is concerned that many of the proposals are structural, administrative and managerial in nature, depend from a resource perspective on the short-sighted presumption of continued falling school rolls and that, although they may have an impact on the educational experience of a few pupils, they will not provide comprehensive change for all and are centred on a national curriculum review which will deliver only in 2007 after the current generation of pupils has passed through school under Labour ministers of education, and urges the Executive to provide a shared national vision and strategy for education which the nation can contribute to by establishing a National Education Convention to address the persistent under-achievement of 20% of pupils and to provide a pupil-centric education system which can create the conditions for success for this generation of school pupils."

15:03

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** Although I thank the minister for his contribution today, I suggest that it would have been best if the Scottish Parliament had been told first, in accordance with the normal protocol. After all, if these reforms are very significant, they are surely sufficiently significant to be told to the Parliament. The spin has certainly been that the reforms are the most important for a generation.

In my view, the reforms do not go nearly far enough. We would go very much further and

would introduce the fundamental reforms that we believe Scotland needs. It is no coincidence that David McLetchie has visited Sweden to learn how its public service reform programme has transformed schooling for the better. In that country, any organisation can present proposals for new, independently run and publicly funded schools, with increased parental choice and—as it happens—higher standards. As long as the schools fulfil certain basic requirements, they will be approved.

For each pupil that they are able to attract, the schools receive a payment that is equivalent to the average cost of educating a child in their local council area. In other words, funds follow the pupil to the school that their parents choose. The school does not choose the parents; instead, the parents choose the school.

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

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I want to continue for a moment.

The Swedish reforms, which were enacted by a coalition of centre-right parties in 1994, remain firmly established and are supported by the Social Democrats who are in power. Indeed, six of the seven parties in the Swedish Parliament support the scheme. The only remaining opposition to it comes from the Communist Party of Sweden. More important, choice is backed enthusiastically by parents, 90 per cent of whom support the principle behind the scheme. Some 83,000 children have benefited in about 1,000 schools.

**Peter Peacock:** I am interested in the Conservatives' sudden interest in Swedish policy. I now understand that the reason for it is David McLetchie's visit to Sweden. I invite Lord James Douglas-Hamilton to tell Parliament where Sweden sits in relation to Scotland in the international comparisons of performance.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** What the minister says is extremely important. Comparative information is available—[*Interruption.*] The minister is saying that Sweden's schools are behind Scotland's, but the evidence available shows that standards in the Swedish schools in question have gone up. That is a useful precedent.

If the minister will not listen to the Conservatives, he should at least listen to the Social Democrats in Sweden, who have done a good job of providing higher standards.

**Mike Rumbles:** Will the member give way to a Liberal Democrat?

**Ms Alexander:** Or, indeed, a social democrat?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Nowadays, social democrats can be interpreted as including

Liberal Democrats. I am glad that that has been pointed out.

The independent schools in Sweden provide a high quality of education to their pupils and there is strong evidence that the competition that they produce is having a beneficial effect in driving up standards in municipal schools. That is going a great deal further than the coalition is prepared to go at present; the Social Democrats in Sweden have adopted a more enlightened approach, which we are only too proud to support.

**Ms Alexander:** I, too, am much interested in the Swedish system. As the Conservative education spokesman in Scotland, can Lord James Douglas-Hamilton clarify for us the difference between the Swedish scheme and the proposals of the Conservative party in Scotland? In particular, I ask him to comment on the fact that the Swedish scheme offers no opportunity for parents to top up or to buy their way out of the system. Can the member confirm that, under the Conservative plans for Scotland, there would be no top-up of any kind, or is he just informing the Parliament about a scheme that he does not support?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I always enjoy giving way to Wendy Alexander, because she always makes perceptive points. I am glad to be able to reassure her. As regards independent schools, the Swedish scheme does not allow for topping up by parents and what we propose is similar to the Swedish scheme. I am used to proposing policies that years later the Labour Party is only too glad to support—right-to-buy council housing is an example of such a policy. I believe that it is only a matter of time before the Labour Party comes round to our point of view. The scheme in Sweden and the scheme that we advocate are similar; the principle is the same.

I say to the minister that we are not in favour of cutting funds; we are in favour of more direct funding, which is different. It would not be my wish to cut funds.

**Peter Peacock:** I have a quote on that.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am telling the minister what my position is on the matter; I do not mind what anyone else has said. Although I am against the cutting of funds, we are in favour of more direct funding. I am entitled to express that view from the front bench.

**Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have a lot to say, so I will continue for a moment.

The key to promoting schools that foster ambition and allow excellence to thrive is to set high standards of achievement and discipline. Parents and teachers must expect and demand

high standards, both from themselves and from pupils, if better results are to be achieved.

The Executive's objectives and targets might be well intentioned, but in our view they are insufficiently radical. Although higher still was introduced only five years ago, the Executive is already proposing an overhaul of the qualifications system. That, along with the apparently inexorable march of grade inflation, undermines public confidence in our examination system. Our Scottish highers have a proud heritage, but we must ensure that standards are maintained, not dumbed down in the constant effort to meet Executive targets. We need to start concentrating on maintaining exam standards, so that pupils' qualifications continue to be held in high regard.

**Mike Rumbles:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have only one more minute.

We strive to maintain high expectations of good discipline in schools. We know that many more teachers are taking early retirement, that indiscipline is a serious problem and that many primary and secondary school heads have received no training in dealing with discipline issues. The matter deserves attention.

The proposal to use assessment and feedback, in the Executive's document "Assessment, Testing and Reporting 3-14: Consultation on Partnership Commitments", is not new. We believe that the plan to use a bank of assessment resources misses the key point. We must trust teachers to exercise their professional judgment in assessing achievement, but we emphasise the essential need for meaningful, comparative data, so that parents can compare schools' performance and make informed decisions.

I am glad that, as we have argued for a long time, the minister proposes to maintain the modern apprenticeships scheme, which we established. It is no use the minister pretending that his policies are totally different from what has gone before; the best and the most useful policies are being maintained, which I must say is a point in the minister's favour. He cannot get away with pretending that he rejects everything that we stand for, because he does not.

Above all, we believe that the key to achieving excellence lies in empowering parents through increased choice, while giving head teachers and their schools far greater freedom to cater for those choices. As I have said many times before, we stand for standards, choice and opportunity. We believe that the Executive's overall response is inadequate to meet the challenges that face education today. "Could do much better" is the only possible verdict on the proposals. We will

continue to argue for fundamental reform for parents and pupils alike in Scotland, because we owe it to them.

I move amendment S2M-1925.1, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"acknowledges the Scottish Executive's agenda described in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*; recognises, however, that, in order to achieve its aim of promoting ambition and encouraging excellence, schools must be granted greater autonomy and that public funds must be allowed to follow the pupil to any school of the parents' choosing so that parents can exercise genuine choice between schools and not just within schools, encouraging the expansion of popular schools and the upgrading of unsuccessful schools."

15:12

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP):** I, too, welcome the debate. It has been extremely difficult to pick up on the trickle of information that has come out through the media in the past few days and we have more questions than answers. I hope that the minister will answer those questions today.

The motion says that the measures are

"the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation",

but what is on offer? It is disappointing that the reduction of class sizes is not at the heart of the minister's announcements. There is no indication that the minister plans to introduce a new maximum class size of 20—which would be in line with the Educational Institute of Scotland's policy—other than for practical classes, although we have the not-so-new ambition to reduce class sizes in primary 1 and in S1 and S2 mathematics and English classes.

Will the minister explain what he means by

"wider reductions in pupil:teacher ratios"?

Does he mean in all classes or only in some? We have a vague message without a full explanation. He also talks about delivering

"new resources to allow the employment of 53,000 teachers and more support staff by 2007".

We all welcome the introduction of more teachers and support staff, but why does the minister not take a courageous step by announcing immediately a national maximum for class sizes—based, as I said, on EIS policy—alongside a planned timescale for recruitment and retention and a review of schools' capacities to deliver? Without national standards, there will be no equality. Many children in the most deprived areas sit in classes of 30 to 33 and that situation will continue. The average figures do not reflect the reality for thousands of young people.

The reforms that the minister has announced will involve bi-level teaching on a far greater scale

than has been seen in Scottish secondary education to date, if the age-and-stage regulations are to disappear and some pupils are to be allowed to sit exams earlier. The hothousing of able pupils will require much consultation and planning. Consideration will need to be given to the implications for students of stress, age differences in classes, students moving school and the age at which universities accept students.

I welcome the curriculum review, and I acknowledge that more flexibility in the secondary sector is vital if we are to provide an appropriate education for the 20 per cent of young people who currently leave school disillusioned and without qualifications. However, I am not fully confident that the minister's proposals will provide for that group of young people. How will the provisions on a flexible curriculum, removal of the age-and-stage regulations and new skills for work courses fit into our comprehensive system? How will they fit into the higher still programme? Will the minister clarify whether he intends to set or stream classes? Does he intend to resource the further development of access and intermediate courses? Many of the access courses could well provide vocational course work.

The minister must give an assurance that he will consult widely before taking any decision to make substantial changes to standard grades. Teachers have been through years and years of change, from one type of course to another. Implementing the five-to-14 curriculum was a huge change for teachers and caused a great deal of work. The standard grade was introduced, followed by higher still, which is still not fully implemented. Many of the intermediate and access courses have not been developed, and here we have another change. What assurance will the minister give teachers that he will fully resource those changes and ensure an easy transition from the qualifications that we have at present?

On extending devolved school management, three-year budgets are a step in the right direction, but only if ring-fenced funding for social inclusion, the excellence fund and so on are added to the equation, thus providing schools with a much-needed ability to plan for and provide long-term strategies to combat deprivation and indiscipline.

On early intervention, nursery and the early stages of primary school are the crucial, formative years when social, emotional and behavioural difficulties should be addressed. Joining up services and working with parents must be part of a clear strategy to address those issues. I would like answers from the minister on that area, because I was disappointed that there was not more focus on early intervention.

On increased powers to head teachers, how are national standards maintained? How much

instability will the reforms cause to subject departments? Will head teachers be able to decide priority subjects and drop others?

Reforms in education to bring our system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century are required, but do we require the benevolent support of business leaders, or "philanthropic donors" as the minister describes them? Would it not be more appropriate to increase taxes for those high earners and to use the money provided to give equality of opportunity throughout Scotland, in all our schools, alongside national class maximums of 20? Many of the measures announced by the minister are positive and will be helpful, but what is lacking is the vision to continue our comprehensive system and to resource it appropriately; that is where there is a difficulty.

There have been no announcements about class sizes or about early intervention, and there have been no announcements with any real meat to them about discipline. Those are the major issues for teachers in our mainstream schools at present. It is disappointing that the proposals offer an unequal system—a system that will not tackle the root causes of problems in our schools and which will not benefit those young people who are failing at the moment.

I move amendment S2M-1925.3, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"believes that all Scottish schools should be ambitious, excellent schools and that a first move towards achieving this would be to reduce all non-practical class sizes to 20 and all practical class sizes to 15 or less as part of a national minimum class size policy."

15:19

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** It gives me great pleasure to open the education debate for the Liberal Democrats. I believe that the education reforms announced this week by Peter Peacock and Euan Robson are extremely significant and set the framework for a programme of steady improvement that was envisaged by the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. As Peter Peacock has pointed out, the Parliament and the Executive spent the first session of the Parliament sorting out the mess left to us by the previous Conservative Government. There was the implementation of the McCrone report to restore the morale of our teachers, the creation of rights to nursery school places for three and four-year-olds, and the school building and modernisation programme to restore the very fabric of our schools, which were left to rot by a previous regime that saw spending on public sector infrastructure as being a cost rather than an investment.

**Mr Monteith:** Will Robert Brown give way?

**Robert Brown:** I ask Brian Monteith to let me get into my speech.

In this second session, we can move forward. In Scotland, we have the great benefit of a tradition that strongly values education for its own sake. That led to Scots being, in significant measure, the inventors of the intellectual and physical structure of much of the modern world, and there was a justified claim for Scottish education being the best in the world. We also have the opportunity that falling school rolls provide to use growing educational resources—in particular, staff and new schools—to make choices about what will best contribute to improving the school experience and best support the achievements of young people.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Will Robert Brown explain the contradiction between an economic policy that aims to reverse those falling school rolls and their use as an opportunity? Those two approaches do not compute, and if we are to have faith and confidence in the policy of trying to increase Scotland's population, it is essential that we do not put all our eggs in the basket of relying on falling school rolls for improvement.

**Robert Brown:** It is not a question of relying on falling school rolls, but the fact is that school rolls have been falling, and that gives a one-off, unique opportunity that has been built on by the supply of new and additional teachers.

What are the challenges that we face and the obstacles that we must overcome? Clearly, the first is motivation. Recent research by Careers Scotland has established the interesting point that young people who have aspirations, who have an idea of the direction in which they want to go and who are motivated will achieve better academically than others of similar gifts who lack that direction. We must empower children and young people into effective decision making about their personal curriculum choices and inspire them to aspire and achieve. Too many young people are turned off by part of their school experience, particularly in secondary school, are not motivated and do not achieve their potential.

The second challenge is time. Teachers and educators throughout Scotland repeatedly complain that the curriculum is overcrowded, that there is too much paperwork and that the system is too driven by the constraints of exams. Exams should certify achievement, not drive the curriculum. Teachers must be freed up to teach and enabled to use their talents to inspire.

The third challenge is quality. All Scottish schools do good work, but some are more effective than others. Some schools succeed far above expectations based on their socioeconomic profiles, while others underperform. We want and need all schools to overperform and we must provide the framework in which that can happen.

The fourth challenge is indiscipline. There is not an unstoppable wave of crime raging across our schools and ravaging them, but there is a significant and probably increasing problem of low-level indiscipline that can demotivate teachers and children. Its causes are often largely outside the school, but it must be tackled by effective early intervention, which is the point that Rosemary Byrne, who is no longer in the chamber, made.

**Brian Adam:** Does Robert Brown agree that that is especially true in some of the schools a larger proportion of whose pupils do not leave with standard grades or other qualifications, and that that is related to the inclusion and exclusion policies that have been adopted, which do not create an atmosphere that is conducive to delivering good-quality education and enthusing kids?

**Robert Brown:** I accept the first part of Brian Adam's point—there is a problem in schools in which there are more underachievers than in some others—but I am not sure that I accept the second part of it.

The last challenge is transition. There are issues with the transitions between nursery and primary school, between primary school and secondary school and between school and the more adult world of work and higher and further education. Adapting to change does not come easily to any of us, and that is compounded by differences of style and, sometimes, language between different sectors and levels and sometimes by inadequate structures for building seamlessly on what went before.

I will pause to dismiss the nostrums of the Opposition parties. Scottish National Party members are condemned out of their own mouths. I challenged Fiona Hyslop halfway through her speech to give an indication of what the SNP's alternative proposals are.

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Will Robert Brown give way?

**Robert Brown:** No; sorry. I have taken enough interventions so far and must proceed a bit.

The SNP calls for a national education convention, but not a single additional idea has come from the SNP so far. If ever there was an admission of a lack of an alternative vision, that is it; the SNP has no proposals, no alternatives, no nothing.

Then there are the Tories. Even according to their own terms, their market solution does not do what they say it will. If money follows the pupil to any school of the parents' choice, the inescapable effect will be not to upgrade unsuccessful schools, as the motion says, but to starve them of funds. By contrast, the Scottish Executive is investing

specifically in those schools that are in need of transformation, through the schools of ambition programme. There will be a wide welcome for the leadership academy for head teachers, which is to be funded through the generosity of the Hunter Foundation. I welcome the emphasis on school leadership and on the ability of schools to control more of their own budget. The Tory remedy is a charter for educational vandalism and a starkly reduced choice for most people.

Most people want good local schools that are well resourced and that are able to deliver a sound education for their children. That is what Liberal Democrats want and it is what the Scottish Executive wants. The reforms that have been announced this week will deliver on no fewer than 16 Scottish Liberal Democrat manifesto commitments in a partnership agreement that is heavily shaped by Liberal Democrat aspirations and contributions in this area. It builds on the foundations that were laid in the first session of the Parliament.

I am not sure how much longer I have, given the interventions that I have taken. Could I be guided, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** You have about 50 seconds.

**Robert Brown:** I want to touch on vocational choice in secondary schools. The central change there is in the emphasis on increasing individuals' self-confidence and focusing on aspiration. Better certification of soft skills is already used by organisations as diverse as Fairbridge and the cadet forces to achieve that, and such an approach has a major role for more people in school. We should also mention the achievement of 30,000 modern apprenticeships, two years ahead of target. That is important in that it establishes 30,000 role models for those who come later.

The success of our young people in the world, in entrepreneurship and their exercise of citizenship, is the highest test of public investment in education. To plagiarise Mr Campbell from time for reflection today in quoting from the prayer of the psalmist, the challenge that goes out to our schools and our educators is to

"Send out your light and your truth".

I warmly commend the Executive's proposals to the Parliament, because I think that they allow for exactly that: they allow our educators to inspire and motivate our children with opportunities that they have not had for too many years.

15:27

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** Some members might know that I lived in the south of

England for 13 years. Ten of those years were during the prime ministership of Mrs Thatcher. One of the reasons why I returned to Scotland when my eldest child was three was that I wanted my children to be educated in the Scottish comprehensive system. I did not want to lug my kids around schools, hoping that one of them might take them in; I did not want to study various schools' prospectuses, trying to work out which was best; and I did not want my children sitting an exam at the age of 11 to work out whether they were a sheep or a goat.

We have heard an awful lot from Lord James Douglas-Hamilton about Sweden, but there is an example of Thatcherism and Tory policy much nearer home—down south.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Dr Murray:** I have only just started. Opting out was an absolute mess in England. If the Tories are proposing that we go back to that absolute mess, they should take their lessons from south of the border, not from Sweden.

**Murdo Fraser:** When the member moved back to Scotland and was considering buying a house here, did she have an eye on the catchment areas of particular schools?

**Dr Murray:** Absolutely not. I have never looked at catchment areas when buying a house. That has never been part of my approach, because I believe in the comprehensive system in Scotland. My children have done quite well out of it: I have a son at university, a daughter in S6 and a son in S4. We do not need to talk as if Scottish education were bad—it is not. Scottish education—the comprehensive system—has delivered and it has been good. It is good for my children and it is good for the children of the class of 1997.

An awful lot of nonsense is being talked about choice. Most parents do not want a whole range of schools to choose from. That would be completely unworkable in Dumfries and Galloway, as in much of the rest of rural Scotland. What parents want is a local school that will provide their child with an excellent education, that will develop their abilities to the full and that will equip them with the skills that they need for further or higher education or for work. Particularly important, they want a local school that will develop their child's self-confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to become a fulfilled and responsible citizen.

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

**Dr Murray:** No.

The education that my children and the class of 1997 got was good. However, that does not mean to say that the system does not need to be



modernised and improved, and that is what the Labour Government has been attempting to do since 1997, when it came into power. At first, we concentrated policy and resources on pre-school education, the renovation of school buildings, the modernisation of teachers' pay and conditions and the building of a legislative framework that is founded on the right of all children to receive an education that fully develops their potential. That is a pupil-centred approach.

Quite honestly, I did not understand a lot of the SNP amendment, probably because the SNP basically agrees with us and with what we are trying to do. We are all trying to move towards a pupil-centred approach that is based on the needs of individual children. The time has come to move on and to ensure that the education that is offered to our young people is suited to their needs and the needs of Scotland. We must ensure that individual success and the success of the country's economy are achieved as fully as they can be.

Teaching and learning are not just about facts, dates, mathematical equations and chemical formulae; they are also about learning how to learn. The individual must understand how they learn so that they can learn best. That is a transferable skill that the individual takes from their education and uses for the rest of their life. That is not dumbing down; such education is about understanding what teaching and learning are all about.

Languages that are not spoken after exams often go rusty, as I know, and one often forgets quite a lot, but the successful learner of a language will know how to tackle learning other languages, whether for work or for leisure.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Is the member concerned that languages such as Italian might be dropped from the curriculum? Does that provide flexibility and choice?

**Dr Murray:** That is not part of Executive policy, but it does not necessarily matter which languages are learned. The skill is in knowing how to learn a language. Equally, the science that is learned at school, and the science that I learned at university, progresses so fast that much of what one learns is no longer relevant, but one has learned how to deconstruct, analyse and solve problems—again, that is a transferable skill that can be taken from education into all other parts of life.

Of course, there are certain core foundation skills that need to be developed in all children, such as literacy and numeracy, but after that the curriculum needs to be sufficiently flexible to allow teachers to unlock and encourage their pupils' learning strategies so that they learn how to learn and what their individual strengths are. That is why

discussions about choice in the school curriculum are far more important than discussions about choice between schools.

Teachers need an uncluttered curriculum; they need the space in the school day and the professional freedom to be able to nurture the wide range of individual young people's abilities and interests and to help them to learn about their learning. They also need to be supported by quality professional development and excellent leadership.

I believe that the direction of the Executive's agenda for action is absolutely the right one. I am excited about it because it opens up the curriculum for the individual to allow the development of transferable skills. That is an important development in education and it is in accord with much of educational philosophy. I commend the Executive for taking on board the representations that were made to it by many educationists—that is why the agenda has been so widely welcomed by many parts of the education system.

I have some experience of teaching and I know how exciting it can be both to learn and to help and enable other people to learn. We must concentrate on making teaching and learning exciting for teachers and pupils.

15:33

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I will try to widen the debate and put the discussion on school education in the wider context of lifelong learning and the education system that we want in this country. I start by saying that I am not going to engage in party-political point scoring because education is too important for that. With all due respect to the Executive, and I mean this genuinely, it could have learned from the Irish experience. There is a general consensus in Ireland that one of the reasons why its economy has become a tiger economy in the past 20 or 30 years is that it gave priority, on a consensual basis, to tackling the problems in its education system and gave top priority to investment in education and educational reform.

I say to the Executive, and particularly to Robert Brown, who mentioned the SNP idea of a convention, that the Irish brought all the key players together at an educational convention. The host of that convention was not the Irish Government, but the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The OECD brought in its expertise to take not an inward-looking perspective, but an international perspective on Irish education.

**Ms Alexander:** Will the member give way?

**Alex Neil:** I will give way in a minute.

One statement in Peter Peacock's paper with which I agree is on the need to benchmark our performance internationally. Scottish education has many good aspects and outperforms some of our competitor nations in many subjects, but that is not a standstill situation. The money that our competitor nations are investing means that they could catch us up or overtake us.

If the Executive builds education policy by a convention-type approach that uses the likes of the OECD and builds a national consensus that involves the left and the right, parents, teachers, pupils, students and other stakeholders in the education system, its educational reform will be more likely to be right and to stick, so that the system does not need to be changed a few years later. Such changes, which have occurred almost with Government after Government, have greatly contributed to education problems in Scotland and many have contributed to the morale problem in our schools, especially among our teachers.

**Robert Brown:** The idea of a convention is fine; I have no objection to that per se. However, does a convention not need some input—some ideas, for example—not only from the outside, but from policy makers, the Executive and the would-be Government parties?

**Alex Neil:** Of course that is the case. I am just about to go on to that in the three or four points that I will make in the three minutes that are left for my speech.

We tend not to perform as well as we could and should in our deprived communities. Often, a lack of performance in a classroom and in a school is a result not of teachers in that school being inferior to teachers in any other school, but of pupils' living conditions outwith school hours. One fault and gap in the minister's paper is the lack of a holistic approach. He has simply taken the old-fashioned approach of considering what happens to kids between 9 o'clock and 4 o'clock. What happens to them before 9 o'clock and after 4 o'clock often determines their performance.

**Peter Peacock:** I hope that Alex Neil will take my point in the spirit in which he makes his speech. It is clear from my thinking and will be reflected in what HMIE does that the excellence standard that we are talking about for schools will capture what happens in our best schools, which take up the points that the member makes. The new excellence standard will encapsulate that thinking and require schools to move up over time to embrace those matters.

**Alex Neil:** The minister will find complete support for that approach from SNP members.

I will highlight other, more basic, issues to the minister. As he knows, I have been a long-time

supporter of free school meals. I will give the reason for that. Many Labour MSPs have privately spoken to me about the subject and one who was in social work before she became an MSP told me that she saw many kids who went to school with nothing in their belly in the morning. A kid who goes to school on an empty belly will not learn, perform or achieve until their belly is filled with basic food. That is why we need to take a much wider approach—in the spirit of community schools—to considering all influences on educational performance.

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** Will the member give way?

**Ms Alexander rose—**

**Alex Neil:** I will take Wendy Alexander's intervention because I always keep my promises to her.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please be quick, Ms Alexander.

**Ms Alexander:** I am all in favour of building consensus, but it must be around reform and not reaction and around leadership rather than lazy timidity. Perhaps OECD involvement represents leadership, but of the convention that the SNP proposes, it has been said that the big idea is a big meeting at which interested parties would "have the power to delay ... proposals".

None of that went on in Ireland. Is the member in favour of OECD leadership and of interested parties having the power to delay proposals? That way lies reaction and not reform.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You should finish now, Mr Neil.

**Alex Neil:** Ms Alexander did not tell us where the quotation was from. I presume that it was from one of her earlier articles.

**Ms Alexander:** It is from the 2003 SNP manifesto.

**Alex Neil:** I am sorry, but the reality is—*[Interruption.]* Look, I get enough heckling at home without any mair here.

The reality is that such an approach—the Irish approach, the OECD approach, the Robert Brown approach—is the right approach. Reform, not reaction, is important, and there would be reform from an SNP Government.

15:40

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** It is always a pleasure to follow Alex Neil. I will try to shatter the consensus that he has tried to establish.

The Executive's motion talks about

"the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation".

Quite apart from the hyperbole behind that statement, I welcome it, as it is a tacit admission that Scottish education has not been good enough over the past five years. It is right that there should be such an admission. As we have said before in the chamber, the comprehensive system fails too many people in our society. In fact, if we were setting out to devise an education system that was deliberately engineered to exclude the least well-off in society from educational opportunities, it would look pretty much like our current comprehensive system.

We have heard about the choice between rural and urban schools. It should be remembered that Scotland is one of the most urbanised countries in western Europe and that most pupils in Scotland do quite well out of the comprehensive system—I accept that.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Murdo Fraser:** Not at the moment, but perhaps shortly.

There is a section of society—and the people in it tend to be from less privileged backgrounds—that does not do well out of our current system. The people I am talking about tend to live in cities.

Cities have a range of schools. There are good-quality schools, but, as Robert Brown said, some schools underperform. Access to good schooling in our cities tends to depend on people's means. It is all very well for the middle classes—they can buy their way out of state education by going independent, as around one in four parents in Edinburgh currently does, or they can buy their houses in the catchment area of good schools. We know that people do that. I heard what Elaine Murray said. She must be virtually the only house buyer in Edinburgh in the past 20 years who has not looked to see which catchment area the house that she was buying falls into. Any estate agent in Edinburgh or Glasgow will say that one of the first things that parents ask about when they come to look at houses is the catchment area that the house falls into. Of course, houses in the areas in question command a premium.

**Dr Murray:** I want to put the member right on something. I actually live in Dumfries, and not in Edinburgh. Therefore, I would not be purchasing a house in Edinburgh with any idea about catchment areas.

**Murdo Fraser:** I had understood that Dr Murray lived in Edinburgh previously when she moved up from England.

**Dr Murray:** No.

**Murdo Fraser:** Certainly, if someone is buying a house in one of our cities, they will look closely at the catchment area, as any estate agent will say.

The minister might seek to defend that system, but it leaves people behind. That is why the Tory idea of extending choice is an opportunity for all those people who are excluded from the current system. It is all very well for the minister to take an I'm-all-right-Jack attitude, which is typical of the Labour benches. They think, "We're fine. We have our ministerial and MSP salaries. We can have the choice, but, sorry, you can't because you can't afford it. You can't afford to buy your way out. You can't afford to buy your houses in the catchment areas of good schools." That is deplorable.

**Peter Peacock:** My kids are through school, so my ministerial salary will not buy any choice for them. However, the major flaw in what the member has just said is that the policy that the Conservatives are pursuing is not going to liberate those people who currently can make those choices—it is going to force people to move house. In many parts of Scotland—the parts that Elaine Murray and others live in and that most of my constituents live in—if a person wants to exercise a choice between schools, they will have to change their job and the town in which they live. Therefore, it is not a choice for most people in Scotland. It is a phoney choice.

**Murdo Fraser:** It is clear that the minister was not listening because I said that the problem essentially relates to urban Scotland. The problem schools tend to be in urban Scotland. He is excluding people on the basis of their means and social background. The Executive should not champion such things.

I want to move on to deal with specific proposals. I welcome very much the idea of extending vocational choices to education. The Conservatives have championed that in the past. A report from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department not so long ago concluded that the Executive's plans for stronger links between schools and colleges would be realised only through better management of the process to ensure that collaboration worked. Much more needs to be done, but we are moving in the right direction and that is welcome.

I welcome leadership training for head teachers. We should all congratulate Tom Hunter and be very glad that he has made the contribution that he has. However, giving leadership training to head teachers does not achieve much in itself. Head teachers need more powers and authority, especially over budgets and to deal with discipline issues. As the Association of Head Teachers in Scotland has said, we need more direct funding for schools and less interference from education directors.

On the cash from Tom Hunter and Irvine Laidlaw, we should all be glad that there are philanthropic Scots who are prepared to put something back into the community. We should welcome not just their money, but their input. I welcome the fact that the Executive has a programme of encouraging education and entrepreneurship. When we have people who are entrepreneurs with experience as well as cash, we should be looking for their input into those courses and drawing on that.

We should also have more specialist schools. If we can have specialist schools in sports, music and the arts, why can we not have specialist schools in modern languages, mathematics or science and engineering? If comprehensive schools specialising in music, the arts or sports can select pupils who have a particular aptitude in those subjects, why can we not extend that principle? What is so unique about those subjects that means that they can have specialist schools when other specialisations cannot?

The Executive has taken faltering steps towards a better system. However, its failure to tackle some of the fundamental problems in the comprehensive school system is nothing to be proud of for an Executive that claims to be in favour of social inclusion.

15:47

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** The Executive has taken great strides forward in education since the Parliament started. We have made great improvements in buildings that are genuinely welcomed by schools and councils; the funding has been increased; we sorted out the teacher problem reasonably well through the McCrone settlement; we got rid of league tables; and this new document points the way to many better things.

One point that we have not dealt with well so far is excessive bureaucracy. I have several times offered my services to Mr McConnell as an anti-bumf tsar, but he has not taken me up on that. If people do not trust me, perhaps the ministers could set up a small group that would be empowered to challenge every piece of paper circulating through the education system and, if it is not necessary, to tear it up. That would be of huge benefit to schools. We must vigorously attack the excessive bureaucracy that stems from all sorts of sources.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Much bureaucracy comes from continuous assessment. Is it not the case that accuracy of assessment may help to relieve the volume of assessment, leaving more time for teachers to teach?

**Donald Gorrie:** We certainly want teachers to have more time to teach, and we must try to strike

a balance between that and exams, teachers' assessments and outside assessments.

There are many issues around motivation. Many Americans have gained PhDs by writing 700 pages saying that if somebody is keen they will work a bit harder; which is true, nonetheless. If the motivation is right, that will greatly reduce the discipline problems that Robert Brown and other members have mentioned. A lot of low-grade problems in many schools could be dealt with by enthusing the pupils, among other things.

Although we, as a society, are placing more value on manual skills and vocational education, we still hold an extraordinary view that our Victorian predecessors would have found peculiar—that someone who gets their hands dirty is somehow inferior to people who dress as we do. We must break that. Many intellectual people would benefit from having some manual skills and we would all benefit from having intelligent plumbers, electricians and so on.

We should use outside bodies that offer their services to help to motivate pupils and to develop soft skills, such as interpersonal skills and personal esteem. Projects such as skill force, and organisations such as the Prince's Trust, the Outward Bound Trust, Fairbridge, Barnardo's and many others provide good courses. We should make more use of those and use them in a more wide-ranging way than we do at present.

The enhanced schools that I visited recently in North Lanarkshire offer a good way forward. Enhanced schools are specialist schools but not in the traditional way, in that they do not attract people from far and wide. They are local comprehensive schools that have been given additional resources, which went on sport in three of the schools and on music in one. The effect of that has been to galvanise the school as a whole. It has motivated the young people to take more pride in themselves and to develop other skills as well as their skills in sport and music. The effect spills over across the board.

The lesson from that for ministers is that they should focus funding, and help councils to do so, rather than spread the money more widely, as tends to happen. The enhanced schools have been a huge development for those communities. They have helped to develop new sports clubs, music groups and so on. They have also developed relations with primary schools and they have helped primary teachers to acquire more skills. A great deal of benefit has come from that programme because it put money into a particular school department that already had strengths in a particular direction.

We want to make secondary schools more flexible. We have a good departmental system of

teaching people in secondary schools, but that perhaps militates against the new flexible approach that is set out in the Executive's document. We need to work on making the internal mechanisms of secondary schools more flexible.

Also, we must continue to fund good projects. The Executive has a tendency of helping to fund people who start things, but of stopping the funding after two or three years, after which all the benefit is lost. We must keep funding good projects that are evaluated as successful.

We should also provide more funding for organisations such as sports clubs and youth clubs so that they can liaise better with schools. Such clubs contribute a huge amount to education. As Alex Neil said, a lot of education takes place outwith school. We should fund such organisations better than we do at the moment because they were starved of funding for many years before the Parliament was set up.

I welcome the progress that the Executive has made and I look forward to its delivering on the proposals in this interesting pamphlet.

15:53

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** Although it is some 25 years since my higher English exam, I remember studying the Robert Browning poem "Andrea del Sarto", which contains the famous line:

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what is a heaven for."

That is exactly what the minister was driving at in his opening speech. Like all of us on these benches, the minister wants to ensure that all young people attend an ambitious, excellent school that meets their needs. Such a school should stretch and stimulate young people and it should prepare them for life beyond school. One hopes that it will also instil in them a desire for continued learning throughout the rest of their lives. That is what we should wish for for our current and future young people. That is the heaven that we should try to reach.

Most of the Opposition speeches that we have heard today have failed to realise that ambition. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton's opening speech for the Conservatives gave us a reasonably interesting treatise on the current Swedish model in education—such things are usually reserved for SNP members, who give us a Cook's tour of other European countries—but he failed to explain the extent to which the Conservatives agree with the rest of what social democracy in Sweden has achieved. Do the Conservatives agree with Sweden's progressive social policies? Do they agree with its tax-and-spend policies?

**Mr Monteith:** Will the member take an intervention to allow me to explain?

**Scott Barrie:** Not now.

Fundamentally, the Tories cannot stomach the overwhelming consensus that was evident in the national debate on education and indicated clearly that Scotland believes in and wants to continue with our current system of comprehensive education. If we needed to know how the Tories view comprehensive education, we had only to listen to the vitriol that Murdo Fraser heaped on the system.

The positive view of our current system is shared not just by parents, politicians and teachers, but by young people. In my dealings with the four high schools in my constituency, I have been impressed by their commitment to the current system of education. Few speakers in the debate so far have mentioned the views of young people in the education sector—the very people whom we are trying to help.

The Conservative motion states explicitly

"that public funds must be allowed to follow the pupil to any school of the parents' choosing".

We must see what that means.

**Mr Monteith:** Is the member ready to take an intervention?

**Scott Barrie:** Not now.

Goodness only knows how the proposal would work in practice and how we would accommodate major increases in numbers at some of our high schools. As Mr Monteith should know, high schools in Fife are already very large and could not accept any further pupils, even if parents from outwith the catchment area wanted their children to attend them. We must examine the practicalities of the proposal. Other speakers were right to point out what it would mean. There would be choice for a very small minority of young people and the rest could go to hell. We must take that point seriously.

It has already been said that the Scottish National Party has brought very few new ideas or thoughts to today's debate. I concur with my colleague Elaine Murray, who offered the explanation that SNP members probably agree with much or all of what the Executive is trying to do, but cannot bring themselves to say so. I say in passing that the Plain English Campaign would have a field day with some of the strangled syntax and strange language that appear in Fiona Hyslop's amendment—never mind the pseudo-sociological terms that it contains. The SNP amendment is odd not only in what it says, but in how it says it. My colleague Frank McAveety, who is a former English teacher, may want to comment further in his speech on some of the poor grammar in the amendment.

In an intervention during a previous speech, Brian Adam touched on the 20 per cent of young people who persistently underachieve. That figure includes many, if not all, of the young people with whom I dealt over about 17 years during my social work career. If I understood him correctly, he seemed to suggest that the Executive's inclusion and exclusion policies have somehow contributed to the problem. The biggest impediment to achievement in school is exclusion and an interrupted education. If members cast their minds back to the very good debates on looked-after children that we have had, they will see that there is usually a consensus among speakers that we need to do something to raise the educational attainment levels of that group. If we want to do that, we must keep those children in schools, ensure that they are not excluded and—goodness forbid—ensure that, with the exception of a very small minority, they are not educated outwith the main education system. From previous experience, we know that that does not work.

To quote another former teacher, today's debate should have been about raising our game. We should look for that heaven and lay a new foundation for what we want in the future, so that not only current students, but those who follow them, get what they richly deserve.

15:59

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):**

We should start by sweeping away some of the spin in this debate, which is getting in the way of finding out what pupils experience. As a teacher of some 20 years' experience in schools, I know that the problem of getting children taught as children, rather than as people who fit into a particular list for a certain subject, is at the heart of the matter. We have to take a pupil-centred approach.

Is there a need for a revolution? It has been suggested that we make international comparisons, and Iain Macwhirter made one in the *Sunday Herald* when he pointed out that the OECD benchmark shows that

"Scotland is not only ahead of England in key areas such as reading and maths, but outperforms countries like Germany and Sweden almost across the board. Even in science, not one of Scotland's strengths, we rank ninth out of 32."

We are talking about the need not for a revolution to transform our situation, but for continuity and appropriateness in the kind of schools that we see throughout the country.

Murdo Fraser implied that we are an overwhelmingly urban nation. A third of people live in small towns and small rural communities; more and more people are living in such communities as the largest towns decrease in size. The experience of the bottom 20 per cent of pupils in

those communities is the same as it is in the cities. This is a national issue about how we enthuse the low achievers, who live in Wick just as they do in Dennistoun. We must have a strategy that approaches that problem.

If we are to make international comparisons, let us pay attention to the Cook's tour that is about to begin—in Sweden, Norway or wherever, there is much more local accountability for the way in which schools are run. Councillors in the catchment areas of secondary schools have responsibility for them. We do not have that in our system.

If we are to develop education, we must make those head teachers with devolved powers more accountable to the community in which they find themselves. We are a party of decentralisation, not a party that just sets national standards and places education in isolation from what happens in the communities around it. The debate is about social inclusion, but it is also about giving people in those communities some say in the way the school works and about making the head teachers, who are trained to lead, accountable to those communities. Those points add substance to the debate that it lacks at present.

Although it is good that we have philanthropic Tom Hunter to offer leadership academies for heidies, we said in the most recent debate on the subject that teachers have been expecting better training for 30 years. Have we had it? We have heard it talked about, but we have still not had the kind of input that would allow teachers to progress.

Changes will mean that there will be fewer teachers in the next period of time. In the next 10 years, perhaps about 40 per cent of teachers will retire. The Government says that we need 53,000 teachers to provide specialists to bridge the gap between primary and secondary education and new specialists in physical education, art, drama and music to replace those teachers who are retiring. It is convenient that we will have fewer pupils—perhaps that is how we will achieve the teacher numbers—but the fact remains that many of those who are retiring are the people who have the skills to meet the new requirements. There is no discrimination in favour of modern studies or music teachers being kept on; we are losing skilled people across the board and there is no plan in place to ensure that those losses are made up in the specialisms that will enhance the experience of pupils.

Continuity is important. There have been many initiatives; indeed, this Government is guilty of an initiative frenzy because initiatives make good headlines. It would be a good idea to transfer the youth music initiative, which is guaranteed for three years and will allow primary 6 pupils to experience music training, into the core curriculum

instead of delivering it through the Scottish Arts Council, although that has been very good.

We need to look at ways in which to inspire children. Graham Berry of the Scottish Arts Council pointed out what we all know:

"Research has shown that involvement in the arts can not only inspire and challenge children, but increase their educational attainment and develop confidence and communication skills, so strengthening the position of the expressive arts in the school curriculum will continue to be one of our key objectives."

How can we possibly have motivated children and active citizens if they are denied the opportunity to take part in such activities in the core curriculum? The minister's plans emphasise the basics, but, as others have said, there needs to be more emphasis on exposure to the arts.

How will we square such circles? I hope that the minister, when he replies to the debate, will tell us whether he will make the kind of investment that I have mentioned; whether the necessary number of teachers will be available; and whether pupils, who deserve to be involved in such an approach, will be able to see whether this so-called revolution will deliver it.

16:05

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** First, I congratulate the Executive on proposing 70 quite sensible ways of allowing Scottish education to move forward. As a member of the EIS and a former teacher, I should point out that in the 1970s we had 70 major changes; in the 1980s, we had 70 major changes; in the 1990s, we had 70 major changes; and now, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 70 more major changes have been proposed. No other organisation or group of professionals in the history of the world could have coped with so much professional and developmental change over 30 years. The minister should bear in mind that the roll-out of the changes must be supported in the most enlightened way at every step.

I am greatly sympathetic towards Fiona Hyslop's amendment, particularly her comment about providing "a pupil-centric education". In fact, Rob Gibson has provided me with an ideal lead-in to my speech. Young people have at least seven major intelligences that we should be developing. We cannot and should not continue to focus only on literacy and numeracy, because children also have emotional intelligence; social intelligence; musical intelligence; kinaesthetic intelligence; and artistic intelligence. Rob Gibson mentioned artistic intelligence and earlier in the debate Donald Gorrie made a speech about what could be generally described as kinaesthetic intelligence.

If one development could improve children's self-confidence, empathy with the natural

environment, social and communication skills, risk assessment and planning skills—Peter Peacock knows what is coming—it is outdoor education. Donald Gorrie referred to the work of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, Fairbridge and the John Muir Trust. Given the ample evidence of what outdoor education can do for young people, why is it not embedded in our schools curriculum? After all, it provides a way of tackling indiscipline problems. For example, Fairbridge would say, "Give the children to us. We'll take them away and hand them back changed people after two weeks." If the charity can do that time and again, why can we not do it in schools as a matter of course?

Twenty years ago, Glasgow had 16 outdoor centres; now it has only one. The minister knows what happened. At that time, HMIE said that it was not particularly interested in outdoor education, which gave all local authorities the green light to forget about it.

The minister said that he is going to provide more time for music, drama, sport, the expressive arts and environmental studies. That is all very welcome, but his document contains no guidance on what HMIE's six-point quality indicators scale should include. That is why I support Fiona Hyslop's call for an education convention. After what the inspectorate did to outdoor education, I am not prepared to leave this matter entirely up to it. I know that the organisation has changed from what it was 20 years ago and that it is doing a lot of good work, but Fiona Hyslop's suggestion of an education convention is the right way forward and would result in the most ideas and creativity. I am very happy to support her amendment.

The commitment to education for sustainability is apparent in the work that the Executive is doing through the eco-schools programme, but the programme is a patchwork as it covers only parts of Scotland. Where the programme is working it is extremely good, but I submit to the Minister for Education and Young People that we need to see a quadrupling of effort in that area over a relatively short time if the Executive wants to show real commitment to education for sustainability.

Not so long ago, I had a meeting with people who said that they were getting students at universities who had good qualifications at A level in subjects such as biology and chemistry, but who had no experience of working in their subjects in the outdoors. In other words, there were biologists, for example, who had never seen the ecology of a stream in their training at school.

The Parliament has entertained members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and members of the Scottish Children's Parliament. Those developments are to be lauded. However, there is tremendous disparity in the development of school councils. I know that good advice has been

issued, but unless the Executive is prepared to give much more secure advice to schools on the development of school councils, the crucial part that such councils can play in developing citizenship and positive attitudes to democracy will be undermined. If a school council does not have a budget and its ideas are not taken up, all that pupils will learn is that democracy does not work. School councils cannot be like that any longer.

16:12

**Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab):** I declare an interest, as I am a member of the EIS.

School reform—in particular curriculum reform—can be less than warmly received, particularly by teachers. Robin Harper perhaps alluded to that. As a former teacher and a former teacher trainer, I well remember the education policies that Michael Forsyth tried to force through in Scotland. His ideas included introducing a prescriptive approach to the five-to-14 curriculum and, of course, proposals for national testing. Thank goodness for the distinctive nature of the Scottish education system and thank goodness for the opposition from teachers and parents that prevented the worst excesses of those Tory policies from permeating north of the border. As the minister rightly pointed out, those were the dark ages for Scottish education.

The initial reactions of the EIS, businesses and academics to the Scottish Executive's proposals have so far been favourable. Details of many of the problems that schools have faced have been given in previous debates in the Scottish Parliament and in press releases from the EIS. We heard about those from Robert Brown earlier in the debate.

I will mention some of the problems and describe how I think Scottish Executive policy is addressing them. The first problem is an overloaded curriculum. The curriculum review group confirmed that there needs to be much less detailed content in the curriculum. In what the minister has told us today, he has indicated that there will be more choice and a focus on key subject areas, so we will get a less crowded curriculum.

**Mr Monteith:** How can we square reducing clutter in the curriculum by removing subjects from those that are available at higher level with providing an adequate choice of subjects?

**Dr Jackson:** As ever, Mr Monteith has got the detail wrong about highs. As I understand it, we are not removing subjects from the curriculum: we are giving more choice and we are focusing on key areas such as skills in mathematics and English, along with a science and a social subject.

Secondly, it has been pointed out that there should be more flexibility in the curriculum, not only in what is taught but in how it is taught. That is a big turning point. We are witnessing a real return to greater professional freedom for teachers, so that they can better meet the individual needs of pupils. I disagree with the SNP when it suggests that we are not promoting a pupil-centred approach; we are adopting precisely such an approach. Indeed, the EIS has some concerns about the work load that might be involved in relation to individualised learning plans for students. We will need to discuss the matter further with the EIS.

**Rob Gibson:** The member referred to choice. Does she agree that changes to the structure in schools as a result of the McCrone settlement have reduced teachers' ability to focus on individual pupils' needs, because many departments have been removed and management has moved a step further away from the subjects that are being offered?

**Dr Jackson:** No. Perhaps I will bring forward my next point to answer the member's question. A recent EIS document emphasised formative assessment. The Executive has the support of the EIS for increasing formative assessment and moving away from the dreaded national testing, which will lead to a more pupil-centred approach. The basis of the member's argument is wrong.

The additional support for learning and particularly the extra provision for the key areas of mathematics and language skills are welcome. That provision is very important. Certain areas in my constituency need more learning support teachers and I hope that the measures will free up more teacher time for those basic subjects and enable us to address such issues. We will wait to see how the proposals are implemented.

The proposals offer better links between secondary and further education and recognise the need to raise the status of vocational courses. The proposed skills-for-work courses and qualifications will help with that, and I support them. Earlier this week in the *Daily Mail*, Graham Grant made despicable comments about fears of dumbing down—Elaine Murray has referred to that. There is every reason to suppose that that newspaper will always regard vocational subjects as second rate, given that it publishes such deplorable statements.

There has been a long-standing issue about assessment and proposals on the matter have been warmly welcomed. Ronnie Smith of the EIS said:

"A regime of over-testing, National Tests and league tables has bedevilled Scottish education in recent years with little concrete benefit to educational quality. The clear recognition today that the purpose of assessment is to



support the individual child and also to ensure that the judgement of the teacher is at the heart of learning is much to be welcomed."

Teaching and learning are at the heart of the proposals, which I support. We must ensure that we continue to take teachers with us.

16:18

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** We should concentrate on how we deliver for pupils, as the SNP amendment suggests. I am particularly concerned about the 20 per cent of S4 pupils who are failing and whom the system is failing, according to the minister. I suspect that the figure is higher than that, given that 30 per cent of pupils—or slightly more—leave school with few or no qualifications.

**Peter Peacock:** Will the member give way?

**Brian Adam:** No, thank you. I have only five minutes.

Individual pupils' relationships with their teachers are the key. Although I welcome the proposal to enhance head teachers' leadership skills, we need enthusiastic teachers and enthusiastic pupils.

The McCrone settlement went some way towards addressing the feeling in the teaching profession that teachers are not valued appropriately by society. McCrone dealt with the financial side of that, but there is still a feeling that society no longer values teachers as it once did. Two points arise from that: teachers need to earn respect, because it will not be given to them as of right; and society must encourage teachers to deliver. The Executive's programme will provide training to head teachers, which is very welcome, but the programme appears against a background of teachers being expected to make significant financial contributions towards their continuing professional development. Mixed messages are being sent out. What we really want is enthusiastic pupils working with enthusiastic teachers. The way in which we try to create that environment will transform the situation for the 20 or 30 per cent that I mentioned.

I am concerned that the environment in some schools has been adversely affected by a well-meaning inclusion agenda coupled with changes in exclusion policies. In one secondary school in my constituency, 25 per cent of this year's S1 intake have—how can I put this nicely?—challenges with regard to their emotional and behavioural development. That affects not only those pupils but the other 75 per cent. While head teachers are under pressure to reduce exclusions—whether through targets or other means of persuasion—we will not have an enthusiastic learning environment.

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson):** What does Mr Adam propose doing with that 25 per cent?

**Brian Adam:** The inclusion agenda is well intentioned but we must have special arrangements to ensure that we do not have such a high level of challenging pupils in each class. If we try to include everybody just because it is a good thing to give everybody an opportunity, we will need to have places to which challenging pupils can, in difficult situations, be removed so that everybody else can get an education. We should perhaps have a greater retention of what were formerly described as special schools. We will not be able to deliver for those who are failing while we still try to have an inclusion agenda that is against exclusions, on a set of criteria, and so leaves classes with a high proportion of pupils with difficult and challenging behaviour.

I want to refer to my professional background, just as others have referred to theirs. We must address the fact that pupils have been turned off science. Fewer pupils are taking science subjects both at school and then in higher and further education. That is bad news for our society. It is through pupils taking science subjects that we will get the work in research and development that will lead to the improvements in efficiency and gains in productivity that will help to grow our economy. We must help people to regain their enthusiasm about science and we must reach a point where science teachers and practitioners are valued professionally and financially. I welcome the fact that the Executive has acknowledged those points and that they appear—although without specific details—on its wish list for the future.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** We move to closing speeches.

16:24

**Ms Byrne:** Being ambitious and excellent is, in itself, a fair and sensible objective; I would argue that the vast majority of our schools have attained that objective already. Any changes in our system must be based on the principle of individual support.

Euan Robson asked how we could deal with the 20 to 25 per cent of young people who are not linking into our system because they are truanting, underachieving or misbehaving, and causing disruption in our schools. My answer would be that we need to give those young people individual support. We need to reduce class sizes to do that and, yes, we need an appropriate curriculum. The Executive is going some way towards that, but it is doing so in a ham-fisted manner. The proposals are not joined up and, as I said, will need a lot of explanation.

Those young people need the type of curriculum that will allow them to achieve. Robin Harper is right about the need to focus on the different kinds of intelligence and on outdoor activities, as well as on the provision of a rounded curriculum. Such young people cannot be ignored as the school failures while the high-fliers are taken on. Doing that only creates classes whose pupils feel that they are less able than others.

We know about the failed experiments in setting and streaming that we have had in Scottish schools over the past few years. I experienced that in the school that I was in. Every member of staff voted to go back to the old system, because they realised that we had created children who told us not to bother with them because they were failures. We do not want that; we must be very careful to avoid it. I am not clear about where the minister is going with his proposals.

**Peter Peacock:** I want to make it clear that we are not interested in streaming. We think that setting has a part to play in some classes, when it is handled professionally rather than in the way that the member has just described.

**Ms Byrne:** I hope that it will be handled professionally, because it is crucial that the young people who are affected do not feel that they have been marked out as failures. That will just cause more disruption and more problems. I hope that the minister will consult widely with the teaching profession before making progress on that.

Although it is right to focus more on literacy and numeracy skills, I argue that education is not just about addressing economic challenges; it is also about equipping young people with the social skills, self-esteem and confidence to move from school into the wider world. I have heard nothing from the minister on learning styles, thinking skills and the development of all seven intelligences. Robin Harper's point on that and on outdoor education was spot on. I feel that, in Scotland, we do not do enough education research. I want us to examine some of the programmes that are going on, especially the work of Tony Buzan, which is excellent. We could learn a great deal from it.

The current public-private partnership policy of building super schools of more than 1,000 pupils is bad news. Will the commercially driven consortia be able to match the rich curricular menu with a corresponding degree of architectural flexibility? The sheer size of some of those schools makes them impossible for young people to cope with. If we want to create a good ethos and confident young people, that is the wrong way to go. We should consider building smaller secondary schools that occupy smaller settings. In such schools, everyone is identified—the school forms a community that works with the community that it is in. I want the minister to provide assurances that

the disruption that is caused by failed PPP projects or badly organised refurbishments, which give rise to lots of flitting weans and teachers, will cease as soon as possible. One revolution at a time is quite sufficient.

I am glad that free school meals have been mentioned, although many schools in deprived areas still do not have breakfast clubs. One of the worst things for learning is young people coming into school with empty stomachs. Out of the five or six primary schools in my area, the majority have a breakfast club, but one of them does not. There is as much deprivation in that school as there is in the others. We should try to equalise such situations as quickly as possible.

Why is the free fruit being removed in some of our schools? Free fruit was lauded as a wonderful idea, because good diet adds to children's education. I want to know why the free fruit is being withdrawn in some of our communities. The minister is shaking his head, but I can and will give him evidence of that, as I am concerned about the situation.

I am also concerned about the social aspect of teaching children skills while they are eating their food. Last year, Finland was top of the OECD education league. In that country, free school meals are provided for all school pupils. Although the nation's health has been improved greatly, that is not the only purpose of free school meals; they are also provided to allow children to develop social skills and good eating habits. We must examine that.

Resources must be made available to bring about the proposed changes but, given the current teacher shortages, it is difficult to see how schools will manage to bring the changes about. The way forward is to put in place plans to achieve a national maximum class size of 20 pupils.

I will support the SNP amendment, as I feel that it fits in well with what I am saying, and I ask members to support the amendment in my name.

16:29

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** I am glad to present the Labour Party's case in the debate and to support the motion.

We welcome the reforms that the Minister for Education and Young People has announced because we believe that they build on the progress that has been made in Scottish education in the past five years. We took over a legacy of disruption, which was a marked feature of the structure of education in the 1980s and 1990s under Conservative Governments. We recognised that one of the key challenges was the quality of the fabric of the school estate. I do not

agree with Rosemary Byrne in the debate about public-private partnerships. In my constituency, such schemes have resulted in more than £40 million-worth of investment in the school estate, which would not have happened if we had taken Rosemary Byrne's view.

The purpose of the reforms that the minister has announced is to build on the action points that came out of the debate on education that we had in the final two years of the previous session of Parliament. We now have much more stability and more investment in the estate. Something that has been omitted in much of today's debate is our commitment to early-years education and to building opportunities for children from a young age to ensure that when they arrive in school they can maximise the opportunities there.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I agree that it has been remiss of us not to mention early-years intervention, which is desperately needed. Does not the introduction of a single curriculum from age three to 18 reinforce the need for the recognition of the important role of nursery nurses in early-years education?

**Mr McAveety:** In the debate that we had in the Parliament on that issue, the Executive identified that nursery nurses, teachers and the gamut of those who provide support for early-years education can make a contribution. That issue is not the core of today's debate, although it may well be debated in future.

One key development that I welcome is the introduction of the curriculum from age three to 18, which Fiona Hyslop mentioned. That is long overdue and it will address the links between the different age groups to ensure maximum fluidity and effectiveness. Another key development is the questioning of the legitimacy of some of the standard grades and the consideration of their relevance to the modern generation of students, who have a role in the curriculum.

I would like the minister's commitment on the role of leadership to be extended. The leadership of many head teachers has been demonstrably effective, but a number of other players in the education system provide effective leadership. I hope that the models of development will ensure that principal and subject teachers who demonstrate commitment will also benefit from the expertise of the Hunter Foundation and other benefactors.

In "Scotched", by Alexander Scott, "Scotch Education" is defined in two simple lines:

"I tellt ye  
I tellt ye."

In Glasgow, that is varied to, "I tellt ye, I tellt ye and I'm no tellin ye again." We need to move on from that and say that teaching is about one fourth

preparation and three fourths pure theatre—that was the experience when I was teaching in secondary schools in Glasgow. Excellence should permeate whether a school is in an urban, rural or island setting. It is commendable that the Executive has recognised that we should all aspire to excellence.

I am surprised by the tone and nature of what the Tories said. They have taken an idea from Sweden out of its ideological and social context, missed out one of the key elements and then omitted to mention that it does not apply to the private sector. The Tory amendment states:

"public funds must be allowed to follow the pupil to any school of the parents' choosing".

I am not so long out of education that I do not recognise that that is the assisted places scheme by another name and that it will not address the fundamental issues in many schools throughout Scotland.

We want to broaden the debate to include everyone who is involved in education. It is disappointing that some members have called for a convention given that we have already had a substantial debate on Scottish education. As Wendy Alexander mentioned in an intervention, a convention would simply delay action rather than initiate it. Given the SNP's history of participation in conventions, I wonder how long it would last within such a convention, if it was set up—we would expect more from the SNP next time round.

Members have raised fundamental and valuable questions. Robin Harper touched on the issue of outdoor education. I agree with him that we need to address that issue over the next few years. As a student in Glasgow I was a beneficiary of such investment and commitment.

On the broader issues, there should be many more of the schools of ambition that Peter Peacock touched on. I hope that that will be a rolling programme and I am sure that all my colleagues on the Labour benches would agree that as many schools as possible should benefit from it.

On free school meals, I philosophically, fundamentally and intellectually disagree with those members who said that £0.25 billion a year spent on free school meals would maximise opportunity for young people at school. A fraction of that money spent on sports, expressive arts and citizenship would radically transform young people's life experiences and there is an argument whether children from families such as mine would benefit from free school meals.

I welcome the initiatives outlined by Peter Peacock. They are part of an on-going programme of development and change. We are making a

difference in Scottish education and we will have a Scottish education system that is fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

16:36

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Before I comment on the central aspects of the debate I must again criticise in the strongest terms the failure of the Executive to make a statement to Parliament on what it calls its most significant reform of education in five years—indeed, I criticise the cowardice of the Executive in that respect. A statement allows questions to be put by members and details to be teased out, but the Executive would rather brief compliant journalists. The minister laughs, but we know that he was briefing journalists last Friday. Journalists do not necessarily have the detailed knowledge necessary to ask the searching questions that many in the chamber who are ex-teachers or who have been in education could ask him. It is important that we have ministers who come before Parliament—the Parliament that ministers fought so hard for but which they now treat with utter contempt.

I turn to the education issues at hand. The stereotype that is portrayed is that Conservatives do not send their children to state schools. In fact, I know the good and bad points of state comprehensives. I went to the largest state comprehensive in Scotland and we chose to send our children to that school—my sons are still there. Therefore, I think that I have some idea of the current situation in Scottish education. I welcome any measures introduced by the Government that empower parents, give responsibilities to schools and allow real choice. However, like Lord James Douglas-Hamilton and Murdo Fraser, I believe that the changes are not earth shattering and do not go far enough. Members will be aware that, ironically, the changes that seek to give more power to head teachers come from the same minister who took powers away from St Mary's Episcopal Primary School in Dunblane. The Conservatives said that more schools needed the responsibilities that St Mary's had. Now the minister moves our way and gives schools more responsibilities.

I have said before that the Executive is obese and bloated. That is no wonder because, time after time, ministers such as Peter Peacock gorge themselves on the humble pie of delivering Conservative policies that they have previously criticised.

**Mike Rumbles** *rose*—

**Mr Monteith:** I will let a Liberal Democrat in.

**Mike Rumbles:** The Conservative amendment says that

“public funds must be allowed to follow the pupil to any school of the parents' choosing”.

If that is the case, will the member estimate how much public funding will go into subsidising private education?

**Mr Monteith:** I will cover that point when I come to it—I have absolutely no difficulty with that. I will pick up a couple of points first, because I intend to speak about the nature of how the system would work.

The minister is on weak ground. Rather than debate the motion, he invents false facts and distorted data on which he relies. The Conservatives do not propose a £600 million cut in Scottish schools. Instead, we propose that the £600 million that councils spend on education will reach schools directly. That is not a cut by any manner of means.

**Peter Peacock:** Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said that he did not favour cutting education spending and did not care what anybody else said. However, perhaps he had better have a word with David McLetchie, who said:

“funding of Scotland's schools would cost the Scottish Executive approximately £600 million extra. That is barely one sixth of the additional funding which has been allocated”.

David McLetchie went on to say that the money was there to fund a significant cut in council tax. He made it clear that he intends to use our funding to cut council tax, but Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has thrown that into confusion, so who is telling the truth: David McLetchie or Lord James Douglas-Hamilton? Are they misleading the people about cutting education spending or about cutting the council tax?

**Mr Monteith:** The minister is in danger of showing that his arithmetic is not particularly good. The point is clear: if we choose to take the £600 million funding for councils and directly fund the schools for which the councils use that money, it will be possible for those councils to reduce their council tax.

I must move on and comment on what some other members said during the debate. Donald Gorrie claimed that league tables have been abolished, but we know that they have not, because the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 has ensured that the proposal to abolish them will not be implemented.

Sylvia Jackson declared her membership of the EIS, which was just as well because her speech was so full of the educational guff on issues such as assessment that has so damaged education in Scotland that it might as well have been written in the EIS headquarters. The SQA is reviewing subjects and is likely to consider that some exams,

such as Russian and classical Greek, will be abolished.

Elaine Murray said that she and other parents do not need choices of schools, prospectuses or performance information. Why, then, have placing requests been so popular since they were introduced? Parents want to read prospectuses, to know how schools are doing and to choose their children's schools. That is why they ask estate agents which catchment area a house is in.

The minister mentioned comparative tables, but I suggest that he look at the progress in international reading and literacy standards, because he will find that Sweden comes top. We must not be complacent, but must seek to change Scottish education for the better. We should not adopt the Swedish system, but we should learn from it and import what is best in it. That is what we recommend, and we will oppose the motion.

16:42

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):**

As other members have mentioned, Scotland was once a world leader in education. Our education system was a byword for excellence and fitted our people particularly well to take advantage of the opportunities of the industrial age back in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, we have long since slipped from our pre-eminence to the point at which one of our leading historians, T C Smout, could comment:

"It is in the history of the school more than in any other aspect of recent social history that the key lies to some of the more depressing aspects of modern Scotland. If there are in this country too many people who fear what is new, believe the difficult to be impossible, draw back from responsibility and afford established authority and tradition an exaggerated respect, we can reasonably look for an explanation in the institutions that moulded them."

If the Parliament is to be worth its salt, we must be bold in reforming our education system and turn our schools into engines for social and economic progress that do not set limits on our children's ambitions. Tom Hunter has called for the restoration of a can-do culture in Scotland and is willing to put his money where his mouth is in trying to make that happen. We welcome his contribution and agree with his belief that, if Scotland is to succeed as a leading small nation, we need political commitment to education over the long term.

**Ms Alexander:** Will Adam Ingram give way?

**Mr Ingram:** No, not at the moment.

We support Tom Hunter's call for political consensus and, importantly, evidence-based policy making for the longer term. In that context, the Executive's proposals are a genuine disappointment. They focus very much on the

processes of school systems and on administrative matters rather than on raising the quality of the educational experience for all pupils.

Why is little regard paid to, and no mention made of, the evidence that has been produced following the recent higher still evaluation? Back in 1992, the Howie committee articulated a set of nine aims to address the weaknesses of the school system and those aims were universally approved. However, it appears that only one of them—to make available recognised qualifications for all levels of ability—has been properly addressed. It is clear from respondents from throughout the system that little progress has been made on the key aim of putting in place a system that is easy to understand and use, that effectively develops a range of core skills, that encourages high standards of attainment and that encourages breadth as well as depth of study.

Surely we should be focusing on standards of literacy, which is an essential basis for both employment and lifelong learning and about which both employers and universities constantly complain.

**Dr Sylvia Jackson:** Given the type of education that the member is talking about, which policies of the Scottish Executive will not produce the results that he describes?

**Mr Ingram:** One of the areas that I will move on to address is the question of assessments, which Sylvia Jackson mentioned. The Executive talks about abolishing the national tests, and I agree with that proposal. However, I want to address a more important aspect of the assessment system in our schools: pupils are being taught for the purposes of assessments and passing exams. The bureaucracy of testing is compromising flexibility in the classroom and is helping to create a dysfunctional teaching and learning environment. The irony is that the more that testing drives the system, the less accurate the assessments become in reflecting the understanding and skills that have been acquired. That undermines the whole qualifications system in the real world—among employers and universities.

The whole area is ripe for reform, particularly the secondary school sector. Teachers need to be freed up to adapt their teaching styles to their pupils' needs. Among those needs are an appreciation on the part of pupils that their schooling actually equips them for their future beyond school. That is a very positive way to promote better behaviour.

**Peter Peacock:** I genuinely think that Adam Ingram has misunderstood the Executive's proposals; he might understand them once he has had time to read them more fully. The analysis that

he has given is exactly why we are scrapping the old five-to-14 tests. What is more, our documentation carries clear references to using formative assessment in the classroom as the right way to assess the stage that a young person's learning has reached and to help to plan the next stage of that learning. That is the central purpose of the reforms; it is not about collecting national statistics on the health of the system.

**Mr Ingram:** As I have said, I agree with the abolition of national testing; it is the volume of assessment that goes on in secondary schools and the fact that teaching is aimed at assessment and passing exams that I think are wrong. The fact is that we know that kids switch off when they cannot see the relevance of what they are being taught other than that its purpose is for them to pass exams.

As far as improving flexibility and choice is concerned, the Executive is making much of the replacement of age-and-stage regulations by guidance. How are individual pupils going to be assured of there being relevant pathways for their progression through school and beyond? Robert Brown mentioned recent research by Careers Scotland, which showed a strong correlation between educational achievement and whether pupils have clear goals for their future careers. That is surely an area that deserves considerable investment.

I agree with Brian Monteith: the minister should explain to the Parliament how improved flexibility and choice will be served by the SQA's intention to dump large numbers of highers. I trust that the minister will instruct a rethink if he genuinely believes that he is going to introduce more value into the system with his proposals.

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

**Mr Ingram:** I will wind up.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are well over time.

**Mr Ingram:** I had a few more remarks to make, Presiding Officer, but I will wind up.

Overall, I believe that the debate has highlighted the weakness of the Executive's proposals for Scotland's schools and exposed the hype, no more so than in relation to the Executive's claims for the schools of ambition programme. I am afraid that ministers have failed the test of developing strong, evidence-based education to meet the challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is, as our American cousins might say, "too much motherhood and apple pie". I ask the minister: where's the beef?

16:50

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson):** I listened with great interest to the points that were made during the debate. The debate has been interesting, with much to follow up, and it has flushed out some of the poverty of thinking that exists in certain quarters.

The Scottish Executive is determined to build on the solid foundation and the successes that have already been achieved through the commitments in "Educating for Excellence" and "A Partnership for a Better Scotland". Even with the sound achievements of our schools at present, more still needs to be done and the pace of change needs to be accelerated.

I will take a brief look back. Parliament will remember that we took action to enhance teachers' pay and modernise their conditions of service. One important and telling area that has not been mentioned today is the 35 hours per year of continuing professional development, which provides the opportunity to improve practice and build greater skills in the classroom. Robert Brown and others mentioned the £2 billion programme of investment in school buildings, which will deliver 300 new and refurbished schools by 2009, and improvements in traditional capital procurement by local authorities will extend that number. Indeed, this week's package was launched at the new Gracemount High School in Edinburgh and anyone who visits that school cannot fail to be impressed by the quality of the learning environment. I record our thanks for the school's hospitality.

Peter Peacock mentioned pre-school education and it is worth while to remind ourselves of the figures. At the latest count, just about 100 per cent of four-year-olds and 85 per cent of three-year-olds have a pre-school place. In addition, the partnership Executive took the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill through Parliament. I want to highlight the sea change that that legislation will bring about when it is fully implemented. For the first time, every education authority must make adequate and efficient provision for such additional support as is required by each child or young person with additional support needs. The full effect and impact of that change is perhaps not yet fully understood.

The reforms that we announced this week come against that background and grew out of the conclusions of the national debate and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. In broad terms, the reforms improve the curriculum for children and young people, increasing its relevance and widening choice. For the first time, we will have a three-to-18 curriculum. The

transition between nursery school and primary 1 will change. There will be more choice, more opportunity and greater stimulation for pupils in secondary 1 and 2 and during a young person's secondary school years they will have a chance to study academic subjects, to undertake vocational or skills learning and to experience the world of work as we strengthen and widen the bridges between schools and colleges. We will develop that further in our 14-plus review. As Iain McMillan of the Confederation of British Industry said this week:

"This is good for young people but also for employers, particularly as some time in the new curriculum will be freed up to learn about the world of work and enterprise."

There will be greater freedom for teachers to meet the needs of individual pupils, based on sensible judgments of how they are doing and when they are ready to be assessed. For head teachers and their management teams, there will be improved support and training for their vital leadership role and greater responsibility in terms of devolved school management over a three-year period.

The changes will be evaluated and assessed. As Peter Peacock made clear at the start of the debate, there will be more international comparisons between Scotland's education performance and that of other countries—I am pleased that Alex Neil welcomed that. There will be a new survey of achievement to ensure that the best possible information is available on schools' performance and a new round of local authority inspections to ensure that they get the best performance from their schools and head teachers.

Why do we do all that? Everyone, of course, deserves the best possible start in life and the chance to develop their talents and interests as fully as possible to the best of their ability, but there is an overwhelming medium and long-term necessity for Scotland. With our declining population, there are fewer young people and more people in older age groups. Scotland needs a highly skilled and highly educated population.

In that context, the passage on school rolls in the SNP's amendment is incredible in the true sense of the word. Of course, current figures are projections and may alter over time, but there is no escaping the imperative of upskilling when by 2013 67,000 fewer children will enter primary school and 49,000 fewer pupils will enter S1. I pay tribute to Fiona Hyslop for doing her bit to alter that trend and I congratulate Ken Macintosh, for whom I understand a son arrived yesterday.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I thank the minister for his tribute. Some of us are doing our bit to reverse falling school rolls. If we have the scale of population reduction that has been projected, the problem of the 20 per cent of S4 pupils who are underachieving will be exacerbated.

**Euan Robson:** Addressing that problem is precisely what the curriculum review is all about.

In the few moments that are left, I will deal with one or two points that members made. Fiona Hyslop referred to the burden of assessment. We are running a new qualifications subject review process that is stripping out unnecessary assessment and proving successful. That process is being undertaken in conjunction with teachers, the SQA, Learning and Teaching Scotland and other key stakeholders.

I will address a point that Brian Adam made, because some confusion seems to exist. He said that a third of school leavers had no standard grades or other qualifications. In fact, our figures show that about 5.5 per cent of school leavers are in that situation.

Donald Gorrie made an important point about bureaucracy and pieces of paper. Having visited several schools and been shown the amount of paper that they must consider, I share some of his views. Some of that is a result of education authorities not weeding out information.

Rosemary Byrne made several comments. As Peter Peacock said, we say yes to setting but no to streaming. We will consult widely on standard grades; teachers, parents and pupils will be involved. Early intervention has been a success of Scottish education. Results are feeding through in improved attainment by younger children in literacy and numeracy. The next step is to bring together the three-to-five curriculum and the five-to-14 curriculum to smooth progression into primary school.

Scott Barrie said that the educational attainment of looked-after children was not good enough. I agree that outcomes for such children and young people have not been good enough for many years. Just this week, we announced investment in innovative work to develop pilots on that.

Robin Harper made a fair point about outdoor education. We will return to that soon when we publish guidance. He also talked about pupil councils and the Scottish Youth Parliament. I agree that more needs to be done to develop those institutions, which have worked well.

Rob Gibson highlighted the importance of the arts. A project that starts in 2005 will support pilots in six local authority areas that involve artists working in school clusters. Teachers from subjects throughout the curriculum will be involved in that.

While the Opposition parties are stuck debating structures—their amendments show that—everyone else has moved on to develop and take action on what happens in schools. As page 12 of "a curriculum for excellence" makes clear, the purpose of the three-to-18 curriculum is to ensure

that

“all children and ... every young person ... should be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors”.

That is the aspiration of Liberal Democrats and Labour in the partnership Government. Our aspirations focus on children and young people. They should be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

In the Executive, the people of Scotland have a Government that is committed to every community and every pupil and which has the ambition and policies to deliver ever-improving education. The 12 key action points that Peter Peacock outlined help to drive the further actions and commitments that are set out in “ambitious, excellent schools” and will deliver just that: ambitious, excellent schools.

I commend the motion to Parliament.

## Business Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-1939, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

16:59

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran):** I inform members, as I have informed business managers this afternoon, that the Executive business next week will be a ministerial statement on smoking, followed by a debate on smoking on Wednesday afternoon, and a debate on fostering on Thursday morning.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 10 November 2004

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Executive Business
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motion
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Thursday 11 November 2004

9.30 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Executive Business
12 noon	First Minister's Question Time
2.00 pm	Question Time— Education and Young People, Tourism, Culture and Sport; Finance and Public Services and Communities; General Questions
3.00 pm	Procedures Committee Debate on its 6th Report 2004: A New Procedure for Members' Bills and on its 7th Report 2004: Timescales and Stages of Bills
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Wednesday 17 November 2004

2.30 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Stage 1 Debate on the Water Services etc. (Scotland) Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Financial Resolution in respect of the Water Services etc. (Scotland) Bill



*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 Thursday 18 November 2004  
 9.30 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate on the Fire (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Financial Resolution in respect of the Fire (Scotland) Bill  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.00 pm Question Time—  
 Environment and Rural Development;  
 Health and Community Care;  
 General Questions  
 3.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 3 of the Breastfeeding etc. (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of 10 Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Margaret Curran to move motion S2M-1928, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 2004 be approved.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** I ask Margaret Curran to move motions S2M-1929 to S2M-1933, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (East Coast) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/435) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning) (East Coast) (No.3) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/436) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.4) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/417) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/418) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.12) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/447) be approved.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

17:01

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** I remind members of our consistent approach on the matter. We oppose the five SSIs relating to amnesic shellfish poisoning for reasons that we have already stated. I ask any minister who responds—although I do not see a health minister present—to confirm what I was told by the Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care at the Health Committee around two weeks ago about a move by the Executive to end-product testing, which was confirmed by the Food Standards Agency at its open evening the other night. In confirming that, the minister should say when that will be implemented.

**The Presiding Officer:** The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, Rhona Brankin, is present.

17:02

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin):** I am delighted to be able to give that information. I do not for one moment underestimate the effect of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 orders on the livelihoods of fishermen in Scotland but, as we all know, they are a requirement under current European Community legislation and are, of course, necessary to protect public health.

Members should be aware that the food safety authority in the Republic of Ireland does not rely entirely on end-product testing. In fact, it carries out a sampling and monitoring programme that is similar to that which is operated in Scotland. It is important to put that in the *Official Report*. The sampling and monitoring programme that results in the imposition of these orders will continue until 1 January 2006, at which time the emphasis for official controls will move to a system of checks on land, as required by Community legislation.

I say to Mr Davidson that it is important that industry will always have a duty—as it has now—to carry out its own end-product testing in order to ensure the safety of its products. The Food Standards Agency carries out the sampling at the moment because there is currently not the capacity to do that adequately. To be sure that we are protecting people, the Food Standards Agency currently undertakes sampling and monitoring. Our priority is always public health.

**The Presiding Officer:** I ask Margaret Curran to move motion S2M-1934, on a committee substitution, and motions S2M-1935 to S2M-1937, on the designation of lead committees.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that Eleanor Scott be appointed to replace Mr Mark Ruskell as the Green Party substitute on the Environment and Rural Development Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as lead committee and the Enterprise and Culture Committee be designated as secondary committee in consideration of the Transport (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Equal Opportunities Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

17:03

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** There are 14 questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-1925.2, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. [*Interruption.*]

**Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I do not think that my vote registered.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. I cannot take a point of order during a division. We will run to the end. Members should bear with us.

I have 111 votes showing on my screen. That feels to me, looking around the chamber, to be about right. However, I do not know whether Mr Neil is on the list. I propose, therefore, to suspend the meeting for about two minutes while we get a print-out of the vote. We will check it and then we can continue.

17:05

*Meeting suspended.*

17:10

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We have run a fairly thorough check. The votes of Alex Neil and Trish Godman were recorded, but the vote of at least one member who claims to have voted was not recorded. For the sake of accuracy, I propose to rerun the vote. Before doing so, I ask all members to remove their cards. After the card is reinserted, the screen should show the message "Identification confirmed". Any member who does not see that message should shout "Order" so that I can carry out a check.

Here we go again then. The question is, that amendment S2M-1925.2, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**AGAINST**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is, For 34, Against 81, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that amendment S2M-1925.1, in the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)

Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 18, Against 95, Abstentions 2.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The third question is, that amendment S2M-1925.3, in the name of Rosemary Byrne, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

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

#### 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)  
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
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)  
Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
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)  
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 11, Against 81, Abstentions 23.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The fourth question is, that motion S2M-1925, in the name of Peter Peacock, on ambitious, excellent schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
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)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 69, Against 20, Abstentions 26.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's agenda for the most comprehensive modernisation programme in Scottish schools for a generation, as described in *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*, which builds on the investment and success in education over recent years and sets out plans to bring a transformation in ambition and achievement through higher expectations for schools and school leadership, greater freedom for teachers and schools, more choice for pupils and better support for learning so that the individual needs of young people can be better met, and tough, intelligent accountabilities to drive improvement.

**The Presiding Officer:** The fifth question is, that motion S2M-1928, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 2004 be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to put a single question on motions S2M-1929 to S2M-1933, on the approval of SSIs. Is that agreed?

#### *Members indicated agreement.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The sixth question is, that motions S2M-1929 to S2M-1933, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary

Bureau, on the approval of SSIs, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

**AGAINST**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 72, Against 18, Abstentions 25.

*Motions agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (East Coast) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/435) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Diarrhetic Shellfish Poisoning) (East Coast) (No.3) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/436) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (Orkney) (No.4) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/417) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.11) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/418) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning) (West Coast) (No.12) (Scotland) Order 2004 (SSI 2004/447) be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-1934, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on committee substitutes, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that Eleanor Scott be appointed to replace Mr Mark Ruskell as the Green Party substitute on the Environment and Rural Development Committee.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-1935, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as lead committee and the Enterprise and Culture Committee be designated as secondary committee in consideration of the Transport (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-1936, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Equal Opportunities Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S2M-1937, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

## Renewable Energy (Highlands and Islands)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S2M-1674, in the name of Maureen Macmillan, on the development and manufacture of renewable energy.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament congratulates Highlands and Islands Renewable Energy Group and the trade union Amicus on their initiative to promote the development and manufacture of renewable energy structures, whether for wind, wave or tidal power, in the Highlands and Islands; recognises that there is a skilled engineering workforce available locally; further recognises the considerable socio-economic benefits that would flow from this work to the nearby communities; believes that renewable energy infrastructure would be better supported by these communities if they perceived that it was bringing local economic benefit, and therefore believes that the Scottish Executive should do all it can to support Highland-based companies in bidding for renewables contracts in Scotland and elsewhere.

17:19

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Before the recess, we had an excellent debate on the Enterprise and Culture Committee's report on renewable energy and I indicated then that I felt that we needed to explore in more depth how we can best capitalise on the growth of renewables in terms of the employment that can be created in Scotland in the engineering, construction and assembly of turbines, whether wind or marine. There are particular opportunities for the Highlands and Islands, which is the region that I represent. There is already a success story at Vestas-Celtic Wind Technology Ltd in Kintyre.

I am grateful to all who signed my motion and to those who are attending the debate. I thank Amicus and the Highland renewable energy group, which gave a presentation in the Parliament at lunch time today.

The renewables revolution has enormous potential to bring benefits to Scotland, particularly to the Highlands and Islands, but jobs will not be handed to us on a plate. It will require a concerted effort and close partnership working among the Executive, the Department of Trade and Industry, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and businesses themselves to ensure that our engineering firms have every possible chance of gaining contracts.

Five years ago, around 5,000 people in the fabrication yards at Nigg and Ardersier were working on a gas platform for Elf Oil and a subsea structure for Texaco. Those were the last orders that the yards received and their closure was a severe blow to the communities around the Moray



firth, because two thirds of the work force was based in the region.

HIE is to be congratulated on its efforts to attract new employment to the area, but the fact remains that there are under-used engineering facilities on the sites, while riggers fill shelves in Tesco or work overseas because there is no local work that requires their skills. The skills that were used to build oil-production platforms are more than adequate for building, erecting and installing wind, wave or tidal turbines. That has been pointed out time and again by Amicus, which has lobbied ministers over the past six months, at the Scottish Parliament and at the Scottish Trades Union Congress conference, to make them aware of the skills and facilities on offer.

The Highlands renewable energy group, which is a consortium of engineering firms in the Moray firth area, has also been active. For example, Mike Kidd of Isleburn, Mackay & Macleod Ltd gave a presentation to a joint meeting of the cross-party group on renewable energy and the cross-party group on oil and gas on the urgent need for Government support to bring renewables engineering work to the Highlands, where most of the projects will be sited.

At the beginning of September, I attended the Highland renewables expertise exhibition at the Nigg yard and was encouraged by the diverse local engineering skills on offer to the renewables industry, from a firm from Glenelg in Lochalsh that provides anemometers for testing the suitability of sites for wind farms, to large, Scotland-wide firms that have interests all round the country and are particularly interested in marine energy.

The engineering shed and dry dock at Nigg are huge assets that we need to utilise. Is the Executive engaging with the current American owners to secure the shed's future use? At present, it is possible to obtain only a six-month lease of the shed, which hardly gives stability to a fledgling industry. Are local firms being given a chance to bid, or are they being shut out from already established supply chains? Isleburn, Mackay & Macleod has expertise in wind turbines, having worked on the Scroby sands development. However, Mike Kidd told the cross-party group on renewable energy that, as newcomers compared with the Danes or the Germans, it is difficult to break into the magic circle.

Surely there are European Union rules that should give us a level playing field. Just as some community gain is expected from the revenue from wind farms, so it should be expected that engineering firms in the area will be able to bid for the work. Alasdair Morrison will know that that is being achieved in the Western Isles.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP):** Maureen Macmillan mentioned Alasdair Morrison's constituency, the Western Isles. Does she agree that the recent comment by Angus Graham that RSPB Scotland's objection to the substantial proposed development in the Western Isles is not something that we should welcome? Does she also agree that we should invite RSPB Scotland to explain why it has decided to object in that case but not, apparently, to other wind turbines in Scotland as well as its criteria for saying that some projects are bad but others are not?

**Maureen Macmillan:** I want to get on. I understand that there must be a balance between the environmental concerns of organisations such as RSPB Scotland and the needs of communities.

I want to talk more about the European procurement rules, because they seem to allow countries such as Spain to have all manufacturing for renewables in Spain based in Spain. Why cannot we do the same? There is a strong feeling in the local industry that the Executive and the DTI are not supporting its bids for work in the way that their counterparts in other countries do. Other European countries have remarked on the lack of lobbying by the Government.

I have concentrated on the assembly of wind turbines because it is onshore wind farms that are being developed.

People in the Highlands need to receive genuine local benefits, by which I mean not just income for a particular community but benefits to the local work force. Although local authorities cannot set such planning conditions, they can surely be encouraged to make generating companies aware of their concern that work is not going to local companies.

Further into the future, wave and tidal devices that are still at the research stage will be manufactured. Wavegen Projects Ltd is well established at Inverness; the Pelamis wave machine is being developed at the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney; and the Archimedes wave swing is being tested in Portugal and will finish its trials in the northern isles. Those emerging technologies must be supported until they are commercially viable. I welcome the recent creation of AWS Ocean Energy Ltd, a partnership between a Highland company and a Dutch company, which could herald a breakthrough in bringing significant renewable energy manufacturing to the Highlands.

We also look forward to the development of offshore wind power, particularly Talisman Energy (UK) Ltd's Beatrice field project, which will provide another opportunity—albeit some years away—to

establish marine-related renewables work in Scotland.

Our communities are hungry for this work and feel that they should not have to experience downsides, such as having to extend the grid, which is what all forms of renewables entail, and the intrusion—as some would see it—of wind farms into the countryside, without benefiting from substantial revenue and the prospect that a substantial number of jobs will be created as a result of the manufacture and assembly of wind, wave or tide turbines. Scottish and Southern Energy has identified that all forms of renewables have the potential to create 6,000MW of renewable energy in the Highlands and Islands, and there has been a steady stream of inquiries from marine energy turbine developers seeking a foothold in the area.

Vestas-Celtic Wind Technology Ltd in Argyll stands as an example of what can be achieved. Its work force is 85 per cent local, which has halved the unemployment rate in Campbeltown. As the onshore wind energy market steadies, more Danish and German companies will follow Vestas and seek bases in Scotland. If the support is right, they will work in partnership with local companies.

I urge the Executive to do all that it can to encourage that stability and to work closely with the DTI, the trade unions and our large and small engineering companies to ensure that opportunities in all forms of renewables are maximised and that skills and yards that have lain dormant are used again to benefit a new generation. The marine energy sub-group of the forum for renewable energy development in Scotland predicts that between 5,000 and 7,000 jobs could be created through marine energy. Although we should work towards that aim, we should also see what we can do now to deliver wind turbine work to our communities.

17:27

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I thank Maureen Macmillan for securing the debate. It has found wide support in the Highlands, where the population has been far too quiet about its belief in using local manufacturing bases in the development of wind, wave and tidal power. A small number of people have written a plethora of letters to the papers, opposing such developments; however, many in the Highlands and Islands want the Government in Scotland to give a lead to ensure that local people benefit in the long term from the manufacture of renewables.

I welcome the Highlands and Islands renewable energy group's attempts to focus on how locally available skills can be applied. In fact, any local benefits could be enhanced if local people owned

more of these schemes. Given that many locally based industrialists and trade unionists are involved in the group, I hope that they will seek out people in local communities for that very purpose.

In Caithness, one applicant who is developing a project on his father's farm in Stirkoke has brought the neighbours and the local community on board, which shows that a small, locally owned wind farm can have wide support. At the same time, at our surgeries, we are inundated by the many people who do not want to be surrounded by wind farms, especially those that have been developed by incoming companies. As a result, it is important that the debate focuses on how local people, particularly those who are already based in the Highlands, can own and develop such schemes. Maureen Macmillan's point is well taken.

We need to establish a clearer picture of the work that the Scottish Executive will do to allow that to happen, because it has an influence over HIE, which is somewhat late in the game in backing much of this kind of work. The wind farm in our community in Evanton has been bringing a benefit to the community for six years, but HIE has had a strategy in this respect for only two years. I believe that the new chairman of HIE might well want to adopt a more proactive position on the matter. The cross-party group of MSPs who will meet him soon will want to emphasise that.

On the potential to develop expertise, it would be useful to know whether we could construct underground lines that could in some places replace the pylons and overhead lines that are so contentious. It would be interesting to know whether, as my colleague Jean Urquhart has suggested, we could use Norwegian technology to much reduce the cost of undergrounding that Scottish and Southern Energy has suggested.

Biomass projects were not deliberately missed in the motion; biomass could be added to the list of renewables in which we could be involved and which could provide much local work and income.

**Maureen Macmillan:** Will the member give way?

**Rob Gibson:** Sorry. I am at the end of my speech.

Biomass projects were mentioned in the previous debate on renewable energy and could operate at a very local level. I hope that we can find a mechanism to do that.

Finally, as far as I am concerned, the DTI and the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets must not only give the north of Scotland the opportunity to produce schemes for local use, but allow us into the grid on favourable terms. We look forward to hearing what the Scottish Executive has to say on that issue.

17:31

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

I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing the debate. I recognise that the issue is extremely important, but I have not signed the motion. When Mary Scanlon and I discussed it, one or two aspects of it made us unsure whether we could support it. Nevertheless, I am prepared to support the motion in principle and discuss some aspects of it.

Looking at the issue as an outsider from the north-east, the first point to make is that if employment is to be generated through renewable energy in Scotland, the north-east would also like some. I ask the Highlands not to be too selfish in attracting such employment.

It is important to remember that huge inward investment in the Highlands has previously resulted in an economic boom for a while, but in disaster when the investment is withdrawn. I remember being told when I was at school about the aluminium smelter and the pulp mill. We have since seen the development of the fabrication yards, which are probably a key part of the Executive's strategy. They have also run on a boom and bust cycle over a considerable time.

When we consider the development of wind energy—onshore wind energy is currently the key element of renewables—I still think that the Conservative demand for a strategic policy from the Executive on where wind farms should be sited would be the key to the sustainable development of renewable energy in the Highlands at this early stage. I encourage the minister to consider giving that strategic guidance in the not too distant future.

**Fergus Ewing:** Does Alex Johnstone agree with the SNP that part of that strategic approach should be for community benefit? Does he agree with the SNP that a far smaller amount of money should be paid to landowners for rental of the land and that that money would be put to far better use if it was paid to the communities by way of community benefit?

**Alex Johnstone:** I do not think that the role of Government or Parliament is to lay down that kind of strict guideline. If genuine commercial benefit and economic advantage are to accrue, the opportunity should be taken to negotiate good deals for all the people who are involved. We should not dictate the balance at this stage.

In the limited time that is available to me I want to look further ahead. One of the pieces of information that I have been given is that if people think that the wind energy that is available in the Highlands is significant, wait until we find ways of harnessing the currents and tides up there. That is why I think that it is important that we plan

infrastructure in such a way that it can be used not only for the wind energy that may be harvested in the next five or 10 years, but for the harvesting of sea currents in the longer term. We know that that would be beneficial and that it would be likely to produce more consistent and more regularly available energy.

It is important that the Executive should continue to foster the development of the next generation of environmentally based technologies. In recent weeks I criticised the intermediary technology institute in Aberdeen, because although we welcomed the institute's establishment there does not seem to have been much development.

We must learn from the fact that wind energy technology was developed in Scotland in its early stages but then exported to become a success in other countries. We must develop ways of effectively harnessing the wind and the sea currents in Scotland. Scottish companies must develop in the field, so that when the major fabrication yards of the Highlands become involved in constructing the devices that will be needed to produce that energy, Scottish companies—or companies that are partly Scottish—will place orders and reap the benefits in the long term. We must consider what happened with wind power and ensure that when we move on to other methods of generation, we maximise the benefit to the Scottish economy.

17:36

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):**

I am pleased that my colleague Eleanor Scott, member for the Highlands and Islands, managed to get here in time for the debate. She has been away all day on a toxic tour. We both congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing the debate and welcome the cross-party support that the motion received. I think that all members recognise that renewables offer a major opportunity for Scottish businesses and will be good for the economy and the environment. That is the sort of growth that Greens like.

Members have acknowledged that many parts of Scotland have a skilled work force and suitable sites. Since the decline in the fortunes of North sea oil, those sites and work forces are operating at a fraction of their capacity. Many of the skills and techniques are highly transferable. The heavy engineering that was used to build and fit drilling rigs and production platforms could readily be turned to the manufacture of offshore wind, wave and tidal power devices and infrastructure. I was appalled to hear at this morning's briefing that some developers are bringing in—

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

**Shiona Baird:** I must make this point, which is important. Some developers often bring in their own riggers and cranes—they do not even hire Scottish cranes. We must address such issues.

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

**Shiona Baird:** I am sorry, but I do not have enough time.

Ocean Power Delivery Ltd built its prototype by using its skills and facilities, much of which came straight from the oil industry. However, it is a private company and if it does not receive the support and commitment of the Scottish Executive and the DTI, it will have to go to Portugal, where support exists. We cannot let that happen. Like Maureen Macmillan, I was pleased to learn that the Highlands-based firm, AWS Ocean Energy Ltd, is testing its machine. However, that testing is taking place in Portugal. We must ensure that the company is given all the support and assistance that it needs to bring the device back to Scotland for testing and commercial development. There are facilities in the Highlands and in north-east Scotland, but they will not be there for ever.

I feel for the work force at NOI Scotland Ltd in Fife. The workers have considerable expertise in making turbine blades, but they have been made redundant because of a lack of orders. They will have to watch the development of the nearby Clatto wind farm, knowing that they had no input into it.

We must give full support to a commitment to local content in planning applications. We gold-plate the procurement rules in a way that no other European country does. By supporting smaller, community-owned schemes we might encourage much more community content, which is the right approach.

I want to tell members about my visit to siGEN Ltd, which produces hydrogen fuel cells in Aberdeen, to see the company's model of the Unst project. I was impressed by the wind turbines, which were supplied by Provan Engineering Products Ltd. The turbines are small, but they have been designed to be sited downwind in a strong wind. As the wind strength increases, the spring-loaded blades move inwards and can keep turning in 75mph winds. That is ingenious—and it is Scottish ingenuity.

We have to consider appropriate and adequate funding. The climate change levy is a valuable tool in encouraging energy efficiency and promoting green energy. However, I am concerned that—although the levy raises almost £2 billion a year—it appears that the bulk of the money goes back across the board as a revenue-neutral device to reduce employers' national insurance contributions. Only £50 million is used to support the renewables industry and energy efficiency

measures. Bearing in mind the huge economic gain that could result from the investment of that levy, I believe that much more of the money must be allocated to renewables. In addition, the remainder could be better targeted as an incentive to all households and businesses to reduce their energy demands.

I urge the Scottish Executive to discuss this issue with its colleagues at Westminster. Climate change is a major threat to us all. We need the income from the levy to be invested in the most productive areas.

17:40

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I, too, welcome this evening's debate and I thank Maureen Macmillan for lodging the motion. Unlike others, I had no problem whatsoever in supporting it—because I recognise that the potential in the Highlands for jobs in fabrication and engineering is likely to be such that it will also benefit other areas, including my own. Members will be well aware of my interest in the support systems for renewable energy because of the fabrication yard at Methil in my constituency, which we are working to turn into a renewable energy business park. I look forward to the day—soon, I hope—when we can announce that that project is on its way.

I am slightly disappointed that Scottish Engineering has not been as proactive as it might have been in pushing the case for the engineering and fabrication jobs that will result from investment in renewable energy. I hope that the minister will take that point up in his next discussions with Scottish Engineering.

As well as the traditional welding, fabrication and engineering jobs, there will be opportunities in the further-from-market technologies—in the development of, and research into, better turbines, better blades and better gears that are made for the more hostile environments in which we will have to plant these things. There will also be opportunities in developing better diagnostic systems and equipment and in developing better maintenance systems. If a machine is out in 40m of very cold water, one does not want to be going out to it twice a week. One will want a machine that needs maintenance only once a month, with some faults being able to be fixed from the shore.

I would like the minister to consider—and perhaps he will refer to this in his summing up—sustaining the current system of renewables obligation certificates, because that system gives stability to the market and any tinkering with it would be a retrograde step. However, he should also consider the development of new support mechanisms to give comfort to firms when they are making investment decisions on particular

initiatives or research projects. He should consider support for training—not only in engineering but in allied skills.

Picking up on an earlier point, I would ask the minister to consider community support for projects in renewable energy. At lunch time today, I had an interesting meeting with my fellow Labour and Co-operative Party MSPs at which we heard from representatives of Energy4All Ltd. They talked about their development of community businesses—in which communities took ownership of part or all of renewable energy facilities. That model—much more than direct Executive support for communities—is the one that we should follow. It helps communities to be sustainable in their own right, and to have a business in which they have a stake and which may return a capital gain to the area in 25 years' time.

I turn finally to the issue of local content, which is becoming more problematic as the number of applications for developments increases. I ask the minister, in his current review of planning legislation, to take account of the real strength of feeling that something could be done—within current European procurement and competition rules—to support that local content. Perhaps the definition of “local” could be broadened so that planning authorities can take account of an economic benefit that is wider than just the benefit to their own area. I urge the minister to give serious consideration to that.

17:45

**John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** Like earlier speakers, I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on bringing the debate to the Parliament.

As we have heard, there is little doubt that renewable energy offers Scotland major employment opportunities in manufacturing. There are already some 1,200 jobs in manufacturing and the construction industry that are related to operations around wind farms, and the development of new sources of renewable energy such as tidal and wave energy could create many more jobs. In that regard, there is a tremendous marine resource off the west coast that has yet to be tapped. However, we must ensure that in tapping such resources we do not inadvertently destroy other jobs. Although I do not belong to the luddite camp that believes that the tapping of resources will destroy the Highlands, I think that we need to be sensitive in how we tap resources and ensure that some special areas that are vital for tourism or which are genuine wildernesses are not developed in a manner that is unsympathetic to the natural environment.

The transmission problems that previous speakers have mentioned represent our biggest difficulty in advancing renewable technology. I want to raise the example of the proposed overhead power line from Beaully to Ullapool in my constituency. There are significant concerns because the pylons would follow a main tourist route and the communities that would be affected have strongly suggested that the visual impact would damage tourism. Those concerns must be taken seriously. If the power line is to be built, it must be shown that there is no practical alternative.

I believe that there are two possible alternative solutions that must be investigated before the Executive and Scottish and Southern Energy take the drastic step of allowing the pylons to be built. The first option is the development down the west coast of a major grid of sub-sea cables, which could tap into the area's vast power resources and deliver the power that is produced to the central belt. The second option is to stick with the route of the proposed overhead line, but to use underground direct current cabling. I am advised that such cabling can be buried without the need to create a motorway-wide excavation, which is what would be necessary for underground alternating current cabling.

An independent assessment should be carried out to compare the true cost of overhead transmission with the cost of underground transmission. Expert advice now suggests that it would be perfectly possible to transmit the power underground using direct current cabling and that that would cost considerably less than the proposed pylon line. We must question Scottish and Southern Energy's figures, which are being used at present.

Until the problems of transmission are resolved, I am sure that investors and developers will be reluctant to engage enthusiastically in a welcome and worthwhile initiative that will undoubtedly bring financial benefits to many of our rural communities.

17:49

**Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I join other members in commending Maureen Macmillan for securing the debate and for the points that she and others have made, which I expect will contribute to the achievement of a valuable outcome.

I commend the work of the Highlands and Islands renewable energy group, which Jimmy Gray and Bill McAllister represented effectively today. They have shown a healthy national and local economic self-interest and are committed to maximising Highland, Scottish and United

Kingdom added value in the sector. Their ambitions are to create local globally competitive companies, to learn the lessons of the past by creating a sustainable industry with sustainable jobs, to create a renewable research and development centre that is based north of the Highland line and to establish the Highlands as the marine and hydrogen capital of the world. Those are not shoddy ambitions; they are great, strong ones. However, Mr Gray and Mr McAllister are realists. They focused on the constraints, such as the availability and scope of the transmission line.

I pause to commend Councillor Jean Urquhart, who is calling for Norwegian experience to help in the investigation of the cost of underground transmission lines, which is entirely sensible.

Another constraint is public opinion—hearts and minds need to be won and the underground transmission line would go some way towards doing that.

The key point is the strength of the case behind Maureen Macmillan's motion. As she said, the facilities exist, we have a virtually unequalled, bottomless local reservoir of renewable energy sources, we have local skills and a strong work ethic and we have suitable transmission potential. The matter must be resolved. Community participation and benefit are strong and Highland Council has provided good leadership. It is self-evident that many people desire to live and work in the Highlands. There is enthusiasm among talented engineers to return to the area and do engineering work locally.

It is clear that HIREG has taken on a big burden. Sound progress has been made and the case for local content is compelling. There are good European and other role models to bolster HIREG's argument and, on today's showing, the people involved are highly motivated. However, they need help and support. HIREG's case is so strong that it could and should be at the heart of any national or pan-Highlands and Islands renewables strategy. UK and Scottish support is needed for the many stakeholders involved in HIREG. The list of real and potential stakeholders is impressive and includes the DTI, the Scottish Executive, the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on renewable energy, the Scottish Renewables Forum, Highland Council and other proactive local authorities, representatives of local communities, local, national and international manufacturing and engineering firms, the owners of the Nigg and Ardersier yards, UK and Scottish universities, venture capitalists, our Scottish banks, the oil and gas industry, Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern Energy. The list includes many people and organisations with vested interests.

I therefore ask the Scottish Executive to help to run a strategy planning event or events and to encourage the organisations that I named—all of them—to attend, through a plan to produce a product and services strategy that meets the objective of maximising national and local content and the gross value added that can be derived from the sector. No doubt that event would also help to inform and flesh out an overarching Executive strategy. With such pragmatism at that level, we would have a hope of identifying viable products and services and competitive roles and niches for Scottish suppliers. We would also have a mechanism through which that consolidated community could focus on carrying out the commercial analysis to identify clearly where the opportunities lie, find international partners and enable Scottish firms to succeed and compete through the huge opportunity that renewables present.

17:53

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands (Con):** I was slightly surprised by the Green member's remarks about the decline of the oil industry because, with oil at more than \$50 a barrel, the industry is doing pretty well at the moment. Maybe that was just wishful thinking on behalf of the Green party.

As an Argyll resident, I am fully aware of the importance to Campbeltown of the Vestas factory at Machrihanish. I am glad that the company's aim seems to be to make more turbines for the offshore wind farm industry. It is up to the Scottish Executive to find opportunities to facilitate more sites for offshore wind farms, which may take the pressure off some of the great beauty spots in Scotland. Such beauty spots might not be helped by having a wind farm on their doorstep because that would hurt tourism. A sensible compromise is needed and it is up to the Scottish Executive to work that out. After all, it is in a position to do so.

I agree with what John Farquhar Munro had to say about the importance of burying cables if possible. I know that underground cabling has been used a great deal in France. I am told that it can be as much as 30 times more expensive, but surely there is an opportunity for our industries to look into methods of burying the cables. That would be a clever thing to do.

One has to remember that all those wind farms have to be backed up by conventional methods of generation—one must never forget that fact. I would like to ask the minister whether, following the forestry debate that we had the other day, he will say a little bit more about the possibility of actually doing something about using biomass, rather than just talking about it.

I end by agreeing with Fergus Ewing's remark about the RSPB. I often cannot quite understand why the RSPB complains so much about the death of the occasional raptor when it seems to have no compassion whatsoever for the hundreds of small birds that the raptors kill.

17:56

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** I join other members who have spoken tonight in congratulating Maureen Macmillan on securing the debate. As you know, Presiding Officer, I delight in debating this subject and I, too, commend the Highlands and Islands renewable energy group and Amicus for their initiative to promote the development of renewable energy in the Highlands and Islands. Such initiatives make an important contribution to the development of renewable energy and to the achievement of our fairly ambitious renewables targets.

As the motion says, it is very important that as much benefit as possible from renewables development comes to local communities. I assure Maureen Macmillan and Christine May, with whom I discussed the issue recently, that HIE is working with companies to bring new firms to Nigg, to Arnish in Stornoway and to other fabrication yards across the Highlands, so that we can maximise the local community benefit. Of course, it is not possible for us to prescribe that developers should use only components that are manufactured locally. I understood that that would bring us into conflict with competition law. However, I have discussed the matter with Christine May and it is something that I am taking up with ministerial colleagues at Westminster, to see precisely what we can and cannot do to stimulate local procurement in that context.

What we can do, and are doing, is to facilitate engagement between developers and potential local suppliers, so that suppliers can be informed about what exactly developers are looking for and so that developers in turn can be made aware of the products and services that are on offer locally. That work is being led by Renewables UK, which is based in Scotland, and fully involves our enterprise networks, including, of course, Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The Executive is also working with Renewables UK, with Scottish Development International, and with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to persuade overseas manufacturers and companies to establish facilities here in Scotland. There is a specific opportunity for Scotland in the area of marine renewables. That, as we all know, is a new industry. We have some of the best wave and tidal resources in the world here in Scotland—that has

been mentioned by most members—and we must pull out all the stops to ensure not only that developers bring their devices to Scotland for testing but that they subsequently manufacture them in Scotland, too. I was therefore delighted to note that Isleburn, Mackay & Macleod, based at Evanton, announced last week that it has signed a joint deal with a Netherlands company, AWS, and that it will develop marine energy technology at Nigg. I reassure Shiona Baird that although the first prototype of the AWS machine has been tested in Portugal, the second prototype will be built, tested and, I hope, manufactured here in Scotland. That will represent Scotland overtaking Portugal.

**Shiona Baird:** I will be the first to congratulate the minister.

**Allan Wilson:** I thank Shiona Baird.

Isleburn, Mackay & Macleod is a good example of a Scottish manufacturing company that is already engaged in renewable energy. It was successful in its bid for part of a Vestas contract to produce monopiles and platforms for the Scroby sands offshore wind development to which Maureen Macmillan and others referred.

Groups such as HIREG also have an important part to play in energising companies in their area and bringing them together with developers, as Christine May said. In many ways, HIREG is a model that can be replicated in other parts of Scotland. In that context, I was interested in Jim Mather's speech.

**Mr McGrigor:** On Vestas at Campbeltown, can the minister tell me whether there has been any progress in improving the pier facilities to allow more of the equipment to be carried by sea? Is anything happening regarding the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry, which could also be used by the industry?

**Allan Wilson:** I have of late been engaged with officials and with colleagues in other divisions—notably the transport division, which has an obvious interest in the matter—to ensure that the tendering process for the Ballycastle to Campbeltown ferry takes account of those factors. I look forward to commercial organisations that bid for that tender helping manufacturers such as Vestas in those areas.

We need to ensure that we make maximum use of the skilled engineering work force that is available in Scotland. That will bring with it the socioeconomic benefits to which Maureen Macmillan referred, not only in the Highlands and Islands—I understand the interests of the audience—but throughout Scotland.

I firmly believe that the policy that we have in place can deliver the benefits that Maureen

Macmillan and others have talked about today. Developers and investors alike have reacted positively to the targets that we have set, and I have no doubt that the industry is set to grow considerably in the years ahead. We granted consent last month for two new major wind developments, which I announced in a debate in the Parliament. That is a strong signal that the potential for development and manufacturing in Scotland remains strong.

As I made clear during that debate, we are determined to support the development of as wide a range of renewable sources as possible, including wave and tidal power. We are investing seriously in offshore wind power. We are investing £3 million in the proposed deepwater demonstration turbines in the Moray firth, the components for which will, I hope, be largely manufactured in Scotland. If that project is successful, it could create hundreds of jobs over the coming years.

Our forum for renewable energy development in Scotland underpins the drive for economic development. It continues to produce results. In FREDS, the Executive, the renewables industry and academia work side by side to promote the renewables agenda, particularly the emerging technologies that I have described, and we have begun to implement the recommendations of the FREDS marine energy report. The report on biomass, which is probably better left to another night, will be published before the end of the year. I give Jamie McGrigor my commitment that I will carry on the work that I did with the Forestry Commission, among others, to promote biomass as a sound renewable energy source and to exploit its potential for creating employment in Scotland. FREDS is also working on recommendations for the development of the hydrogen economy and what needs to be done to improve training and skills in the renewables sector.

This short debate has offered another valuable opportunity—which I always welcome—to underline the importance of renewables for economic prosperity not only in the Highlands and Islands but throughout Scotland. I remain committed—as must we all—to supporting renewables, not least because they help to protect our environment for future generations. With regard to my new job, they create new jobs and economic activity and opportunity and lead Scotland towards a much more sustainable energy future. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

*Meeting closed at 18:05.*



Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

**Wednesday 10 November 2004**

Members who want reprints of their speeches (within one month of the date of publication) may obtain request forms and further details from the Astron Print Room, the Document Supply Centre or the Official Report.

#### PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

##### OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

*Single copies: £5.00*

*Meetings of the Parliament and annual subscriptions: £350.00*

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

##### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

*Single copies: £3.75*

*Annual subscriptions: £150.00*

Standing orders will be accepted at the Astron Print Room.

Published in Edinburgh by Astron and available from:

**Blackwell's Bookshop**  
53 South Bridge  
Edinburgh EH1 1YS  
0131 622 8222

**Blackwell's Bookshops:**  
243-244 High Holborn  
London WC1 7DZ  
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh

**Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation**  
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

**Telephone orders and inquiries**  
0131 622 8283 or  
0131 622 8258

**Fax orders**  
0131 557 8149

**E-mail orders**  
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

**Subscriptions & Standing Orders**  
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

**RNID Typetalk calls welcome on**  
18001 0131 348 5412  
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

**Accredited Agents**  
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers