

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 3 March 2005

Session 2

£5.00

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 3 March 2005

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

School Meals

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2507, in the name of Frances Curran, on school meals and our children's future.

09:30

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): Dare I say that it gives me great pleasure to come to the Scottish Parliament today to congratulate Labour councils on the action that they have taken to progress the debate on free, healthy school meals? Obesity is the health time bomb of our time. We know what the problem is; we know what the main causes are; we know that poverty and low income are factors in poor diet; and we know that, as a society, we are supporting and condoning our kids being stuffed full of over-processed food that is laden with salt, fat and sugar. We are standing by while the big multinational food companies make billions of pounds in profit while simultaneously attacking the health of our children. We need to find policies that will challenge that situation and reverse it, and we need to have the bottle to implement them. That is why I have lodged today's motion.

I congratulate councils and the National Assembly for Wales for their action on the issue. Last year, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the pioneering free healthy school meals policy in Hull. Hull City Council is the first council in England and Wales to introduce such a policy, the aims of which are to improve educational attainment, reduce levels of obesity and other health problems—particularly type 2 diabetes—and tackle poverty. The council introduced not only free school meals throughout the city but free breakfasts and free teatime snacks for after-school clubs. Last month, the final phase was rolled out throughout the city. Today, 21,000 children at primary schools in Hull will, if they choose, have a healthy, nutritious breakfast and meal at school. In Hull, processed slurry on school plates has been unceremoniously binned—and the bin is where it belongs.

Take-up has also changed. Since the introduction of the new initiative, 80 per cent more meals are being served in schools in Hull, yet every day in Scotland, 100,000 children who are classed by the Scottish Executive as living in

poverty are not entitled to a free school meal. On top of that, one in three children at schools all over Scotland who are entitled to free school meals do not claim them, mainly because of the stigma.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Does the member agree that the way to get over that problem is to use smart cards, which Highland Council has been using for the past 10 years? Smart cards remove any stigma from the child.

Frances Curran: The point about stigma is interesting. Research published two weeks ago by Dr Carlo Morelli and Dr Paul Seaman at the University of Dundee shows that means testing—whether smart cards are used or not—and targeting on this specific issue have spectacularly failed. The research also blows a hole in the claim that universal free school meals would waste money by benefiting better-off families.

Hull has a policy that is a success, but the Scottish Executive will no doubt defend in the debate a policy that is consistently failing. We welcome Glasgow City Council's initiative in providing free, healthy breakfasts and free fruit to children in primary schools throughout the city. However, that does not go far enough; it is a drop in the ocean. If we are going to argue that free, healthy breakfasts and free fruit for all primary schoolchildren will help to improve health and tackle poverty, why not extend the argument to provide free school meals throughout Glasgow? The council is in favour of that, but the question is how to implement it.

Our argument is that free, healthy school dinners should be introduced. When we discussed that issue previously, it was argued that young people will not eat healthy food and that they will take to the streets wearing placards demanding burgers, chips and Coke. I never expected Jamie Oliver to be an ally, but Essex boy—or salad boy, as anyone who has watched "Jamie's School Dinners" knows—is about to prove that argument wrong. We saw that on television last night, and we are not at the end of the series yet. If we accept the argument that kids will not eat healthy food, we accept that the multinational food companies will slowly poison a generation of Scottish children while we are mere bystanders who will pick up the bill at the end. If people think that that is far-fetched, it is already happening in America—anyone who watches "Super Size Me" will see that in technicolour.

The Scottish Socialist Party would like the Parliament to introduce free school meals and to reject a policy that is failing to reach its target. There are those who are weather vanes and those who wait to see which way the wind is blowing. Hull City Council has shown courage and vision and I call on the Scottish Executive to follow its lead.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that all serious nutritionists are predicting that obesity will double in Scotland over the next 10 years, causing a health crisis which will dramatically increase demand for health services and lower average life expectancy; therefore endorses the principle that radical action is required to tackle Scotland's diet-related health problems; believes that there can be no better use of Scotland's resources than to invest in our children's future, and congratulates the National Assembly for Wales and the city councils of Hull and Glasgow for their action in providing free breakfasts for all primary children and the councils for their further commitment to extending free, nutritious school lunches to all their primary school pupils.

09:36

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson): I welcome the opportunity to debate school meals and—more important—the health and future of Scotland's children. There can be no more important task than ensuring that our children enjoy a long and healthy life. Healthy minds and healthy bodies are at the heart of the Executive's vision for education. As we laid out in last November's "ambitious, excellent schools: our agenda for action", we are committed to ensuring that all our children are

"safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible and included."

Central to achieving that ambition is the promotion of health in Scottish schools. We have made a commitment that all schools will be health promoting by 2007 and have established the Scottish health promoting schools unit to support authorities and schools in meeting that challenging target. The unit undertakes a wide range of work to enable schools to connect their varied health activities—including work on nutrition and diet, physical activity and mental and emotional well-being—and turn them into a cohesive whole.

Important as nutrition and school food undoubtedly are, we cannot achieve long-lasting health for our children through a single means or, indeed, simply through action in schools. The Executive recognises the need for action across a wide front. On physical activity—a vital part of the equation for a healthy life—as part of the acceptance of the report of the physical education review group, the Executive will enable the deployment of an additional 400 specialist PE teachers by 2008.

We have also invested in the development, via sportscotland, of an extensive network of active schools co-ordinators throughout Scottish schools. The active schools programme aims to address low levels of physical activity through the provision of a range of opportunities to be physically active throughout the school day. Although those activities include sport and organised physical recreation, they are not limited to those areas. The

active schools programme aims to increase the activity of all pupils, rather than just those who have an interest in sport. We are serious about getting Scotland's children's active and have invested £24 million across 2003 to 2006 in that programme alone.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): While I welcome 100 per cent the wider aspects that the minister has brought to the debate, before he moves on will he let the chamber know how successful the hungry for success proposals have been, how they have been monitored and when we will be able to read about them?

Euan Robson: I am just moving on to exactly that area.

It is clear that we must take action to prevent obesity and ill health, both today and in future. Improving the nutritional content and attractiveness of school meals is key to making that culture change.

Since 2002, when we accepted all the recommendations of the expert panel on school meals, the Executive has invested heavily in improving school meals. More than £57 million has been committed through to 2006, and authorities throughout Scotland have responded well and enthusiastically to the challenge of revolutionising what our children eat in schools as well as the attractiveness and functionality of dining rooms.

I remind members that the expert panel's report, "Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland", recommended a range of changes that are vital to improving school meals. They include larger portions of more nutritious food; new nutrient standards for school meals; detailed mechanisms for monitoring those standards; nutritional analysis software to help caterers to develop balanced menus; the availability of fresh, chilled drinking water in school dining halls and throughout the school day; an improved atmosphere in dining halls; connecting school meals with the curriculum as a key aspect of health education and health promotion, which is an important point; raising awareness of entitlement to free school meals; working to eliminate stigma; and product specifications, as developed by the Food Standards Agency Scotland, that set recommended levels for fat, salt and sugar in processed food used in Scottish schools.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The minister is correct to say that we cannot consider nutrition on its own, and he made a link with physical activity. Will he assure us that the Executive will issue guidance to local education authorities that are considering public-private partnerships so that they ensure that the gym hall and the dining room are two separate places? In

some schools where that is not the case, that places restrictions on gym lessons.

Euan Robson: I will consider the point that the member raises. It is for local authorities to decide on school design, but if there are difficulties in that regard the Executive will take his point on board. His comments are welcome in that light.

The range of activity set out in "Hungry for Success" is both broad and deep, and significant progress has been made in delivery. Regular reporting through the national priorities action fund and the annual school meal census reveals good practice across Scotland on different aspects of the hungry for success programme. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education will report this summer on the progress of the programme in primary schools. We have commissioned baseline research on the whole of the hungry for success programme, as well as on key dimensions such as the free fruit scheme, to ensure that progress is carefully monitored. We will ensure that all aspects of hungry for success are fully delivered and we are confident that authorities are diligently pursuing the aims of improving food and food culture in Scottish schools.

The hungry for success programme aims to challenge and change the way pupils think about food as well as what they eat in school. We believe that such lasting change is possible only if healthy and nutritious alternatives are attractive options for children. Simply providing free school meals to all pupils will not improve their health if the food itself and the atmosphere in which it is eaten are not appetising and stimulating.

I thank and congratulate all those who have made so much effort in bringing the hungry for success programme into Scotland's schools—whether officials, teachers, school kitchen staff or the children themselves—and who have worked hard on all the aspects of the programme.

I move amendment S2M-2507.3, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"commends the work the Scottish Executive is doing to tackle childhood obesity, in particular by significantly improving the nutritional quality of school meals across Scotland; acknowledges the significant investment in children's health represented by Hungry for Success, the Executive's programme of activity around school meals and food in schools; recognises the action taken by the Executive to promote physical activity, by amongst other means, the employment of 400 additional physical education teachers and 600 active sports co-ordinators, and welcomes the Executive's commitment to continue investing in a high-quality and attractive school meals service to equip pupils with healthy eating habits for life and in initiatives to improve opportunities for physical exercise in daily life and sporting and recreational settings."

09:43

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I welcome this further opportunity to debate what is a very important issue. I particularly welcome the tone of both the motion and the Executive amendment, which focus on the health agenda, on which we can take all of Scotland with us in addressing the issues.

I recognise the developments that have taken place since we last debated the subject, such as the Dundee study. We have had several such debates: on an emergency bill from the Executive and on a member's bill from the SSP. The central issues, which we will come back to, are targeting and universality. In general, the Parliament should engage in a debate as to what is appropriate for targeting and what is appropriate for universality. There is an argument for tackling pensioner poverty through a universal pension, and as far as school meals are concerned, there is possibly an argument for universality on health grounds.

However, I wish to emphasise the factual inaccuracies in both the motion and the Executive amendment. If we are going to have a debate on such an important issue, it is vital that members who lodge motions or amendments have the correct facts.

Frances Curran's speech did not mention Glasgow City Council's commitment to extending free, nutritious school lunches to all its primary school pupils. Perhaps that is because the council is not in fact intending to do that. Euan Robson mentioned the Executive's action to promote physical activity through, among other means, the employment of 400 additional PE teachers. Employment means giving people contracts, which means getting people signed up. However, those additional teachers have not been signed up,—they do not exist, and that number merely represents an aspiration for the future.

Frances Curran: Is the member suggesting that Glasgow City Council is lying when it says that it intends to implement the proposals by 2007?

Fiona Hyslop: My understanding is that there are currently no proposals for Glasgow City Council to extend free, nutritious meals to all primary school pupils.

There is a genuine issue around what is being done here and now, and there are immediate actions and steps that could be taken. I think that we should pilot universal free school meals for primary 1 to primary 3, not least because that is deliverable; it would also address the issue of early palate formation. Anyone who has watched Jamie Oliver's programmes recently will realise that that is a critical issue to tackle. The Finnish model gives us many lessons, and the social aspects of young people sitting with teachers form

an important part of their general development and should be encouraged.

We need to consider the matter in the round and in an holistic manner. I do not think that there is a big-bang solution to childhood obesity simply through implementing universal free school meals; we have to consider the matter in the context of palate formation, health, education and sport. That is why the Scottish National Party has a constructive proposal for an action plan for fit, healthy young Scots. There need to be annual fitness checks for school pupils, we need to remove fizzy drinks and unhealthy foods from vending machines and we need to have free, nutritious school meals, which we should pilot in primaries 1 to 3 so that we can produce evidence for the sceptics and so that we can assess the practical challenges for kitchens. We also need to extend access to the children of those who claim passport benefits, as they are becoming known, so as to tackle the poverty issue. We need free fruit in primary schools and for pregnant women. If young mothers are to address the palate issue as they feed their young children, getting free fruit—in a country that produces it—is very important.

I will end on the subject of physical education. Scotland is 27th out of 29 countries in the developed world for the amount of time that we spend on compulsory PE, despite the fact that we send our children to school for longer than just about any other country in the developed world. We must address the physical education side of the issue. Together, we can comprehensively tackle the ticking time bomb of childhood obesity. I welcome this opportunity to debate the matter.

I move amendment S2M-2507.1, to leave out from “and the councils” to end and insert:

“and calls on the Scottish Executive to support the piloting of nutritious free school meals in P1 to 3 in order to provide evidence of the potential benefits of such a policy and practical evidence of delivery and as part of a comprehensive plan to tackle health and fitness in young people covering issues of palate in the early years, health, education and sport to encourage Scottish children to become fit, healthy young Scots.”

09:47

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I express my party's support for the motion. The amendment in my name does not alter the fundamental principle contained in Frances Curran's motion—namely, the recognition that poor diet is a major contributor to Scotland's poor health record and that one of the ways in which we should tackle that is through ensuring that every school pupil is offered a decent, nutritionally balanced meal on each school day. If we fail to tackle the diet-related epidemic of obesity and associated conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, then, to use an over-used yet accurate

phrase, we are sitting on a health time bomb. I fully support Frances Curran's motion.

The amendment in my name is about two things: the standards that the meals served in our schools should meet; and changing Scotland's food culture through food education. That is what the food for life initiative sets out to do. The food for life programme was established by the Soil Association in 2003, when a few pilot projects were started in primary schools in England and Wales.

In November 2004, a Scottish pilot was started, involving two schools, one of them being Strathpeffer Primary School in Highland. I should mention that the Highland Council has not been doing badly in this area in any event. Since 2002, fruit consumption in Highland schools has more than trebled and 95 per cent of all Highland schools no longer sell fizzy, sugary drinks or confectionary. It is expected that, by the end of this year, all its schools will have achieved health promoting school status. The uptake of school meals in Highland, which dipped slightly when the new hungry for success menus were introduced, has risen again and continues to increase. I recognise the potential benefits of the Scottish Executive's hungry for success programme. As Tommy Sheridan said, the programme should be formally evaluated and I look forward to seeing the results of that.

There was already an awareness of food issues and a commitment to improve the situation in Highland, which made it the ideal place for a food for life pilot. The food for life programme has five targets. The first target is good nutrition. The second is more organic food, with 30 per cent of the food served being organic. The third target is a sustainable supply chain, with 50 per cent of the food being produced locally. The fourth is less processed food, with 75 per cent of the food being unprocessed—it is not unreasonable to expect that three quarters of the food that our children eat in school should be fresh.

I particularly want to emphasise the fifth target, which is better food education. In announcing the Strathpeffer pilot scheme, Highland Council's catering manager said:

“A big part of the project will be educating pupils through their school curriculum on the value of healthy eating, cooking skills and the importance of knowing where the food on our plate comes from. This will make sure that the values of traditions and food cultures are not forgotten in our Highland communities.”

The food for life programme envisages links between schools and local farmers and producers so that food awareness becomes incorporated into the five-to-14 curriculum. If the pilot is successful, it is the intention that Highland Council will

encourage other schools to adopt the principles of the food for life programme.

It is not only the lucky pupils in the two pilot schools who should benefit from local, fresh and organic—where possible—food; that should be the birthright of all Scottish school pupils. As television chef Nick Nairn said:

“Despite Scotland having one of the most notoriously unsound diets in Western Europe, it is also the larder to some of the best and most nutritious produce in the world.”

Surely it is our children—the future of our country—who should be eating that nutritious produce.

I move amendment S2M-2507.2, to insert at end:

“further commends the Food for Life pilot programme which is delivering not only healthy, local organic school meals, but also a range of educational activities which reconnect children with a healthy food culture and with how their food is produced, and calls on the Scottish Executive to make a commitment to supporting locally-produced GM-free organic food for school meals provision in Scotland”.

09:51

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to speak in this debate. I liked my school dinners—perhaps you can tell, Presiding Officer. Sometimes, I had two school dinners in a day, one at the first sitting and another at the second sitting. People who did dinner duty and helped with the administration got a ticket for a free lunch at the second sitting, so I would have more to eat because I thought that the dinners were great. I remember fondly that, back then, I had a 28in waist. That is a long time ago, of course, but the difference is that I was extremely active in those days. I walked to and from school, played rugby and football and took advantage of every opportunity to take part in sport. Further, our school had eight floors and the lifts often broke.

Then, however, something happened: I learned to drive. Until the age of 27, I had been cycling. At that time, I was working for brewers, restaurants—mostly curry houses—wine merchants and so on and my lifestyle changed. Now, here I am with a 42in waist—honest. The difference was that my lifestyle had become more sedentary. I took less exercise.

Today, we will support the Executive's amendment because it strikes the right balance. It is not only about nutritious meals but about exercise and the level of activity in our schools. In relation to the issue that we are debating, people often talk about the example of Finland. However, we should be aware that Finland has had free school meals since 1948. What has changed in recent years in Finland is the increased amount of physical activity in schools. A 1999 survey in

Finland showed that 40 per cent of boys and 27 per cent of girls aged 12 to 18 were active enough to meet the recommended level of activity of one hour a day. In Scotland, we struggle to achieve an hour a week in many of our schools. We need to raise that level of activity.

Other factors must also be borne in mind about Finland. According to a letter in *The Scotsman* by Jane Ann Liston, a Liberal Democrat councillor in Fife, pupils in Finland

“are not allowed to leave the school premises, and they may not bring a packed lunch”

and they must eat the school dinners. The Dundee study that is eulogised by the Scottish Socialist Party comes with various health checks, one of which is that it is based on the assumption of a 100 per cent take-up of free school meals. Anyone who has sent their children off to school will know that that is unlikely to happen unless the children are locked in the school. Is that what is being proposed by the SSP? I doubt it.

When the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, of which I was a member, took evidence on Tommy Sheridan's bill in the previous session of Parliament, we visited Leith Academy and saw that, although it had a canteen that was better than either of the canteens in the Parliament, with salad bars, baked potatoes, pasta, broccoli—broccoli!—and so on, the pupils were outside the school at lunchtime. They did not want the best, nutritious meals. One cannot take a horse to water and make it drink. It was the teachers who were enjoying the broccoli.

Eleanor Scott: Will the member give way?

Mr Monteith: I am afraid that I have to finish.

It is important that we improve nutrition in our schools and that we get the balance right with regard to who should get free meals, but we also have to improve the level of physical activity. That is why we will support the Executive amendment today.

09:55

Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab): I should declare an interest as a former contributor to the school meals service as a consumer and as a producer.

My experience of school meals is varied and, in preparing for this debate, I realised that it is now in the extreme distant past. That said, I continue to have an interest in how we deliver the service to the young people of today and ensure that we deliver appropriate nutritional standards. I dismiss the hollow gestures of some parties in the chamber who use this issue to try to score political points.

The programme that is outlined in the "Hungry for Success" document, which was implemented by the Executive and has been commended by Jamie Oliver, set the scene by ensuring that nutrition is, quite rightly, central to the positive approach to a child's health. Gone are the days when the daily intake of salt, sugar and fat were not considered. It is a fact that a poor diet has an impact on a child's ability to learn and to grow. As we deliver more and more breakfast services and out-of-school services, we have a greater opportunity to influence and shape the palate of our young people. That positive influence at a young age will greatly benefit Scotland in the future by reversing the trend towards poor diets. We have not embarked on a quick-fix approach. It will take a generation before the benefit is evident.

Many school meals are produced every day in Scotland and the uptake of school meals is increasing in the schools that have positively captured the health-promotion ethos. One such school in my constituency has featured recently in the Scottish media. Hurlford Primary School has gone to the next stage by making the link between school meals and organic and local producers that support the Soil Association's food for life scheme and by reducing the use of processed foods. Since the commencement of the pilot scheme in August last year, the uptake of school meals in the school has risen by 10 per cent.

Frances Curran: Will the member give way?

Margaret Jamieson: No.

East Ayrshire Council intends to extend the pilot scheme to a further 10 schools very soon. The ingredients are sourced locally, which supports the local economy. It would be wrong to suggest that that has resulted in uninspiring menus. The variety of food on offer allows for a traditional Scottish flavour and an international flavour, which, as those who saw the clips on the news will know, was very much favoured by the young people at Hurlford.

Providing free school meals to all our young people is not the answer to the question of how to tackle the Scotland's poor diet. We also need to change the habits of parents by encouraging them to pass on healthy eating tips of the sort that are being given to young people as part of a pilot scheme that is being run in East Ayrshire at New Farm primary school.

The measures in the hungry for success programme and the Soil Association's food for life scheme, combined with an increase in physical activity in schools, will set us on the way to reducing obesity in Scotland. We have made that start with our young people. That is our radical and logical action to invest in our children's future.

Accordingly, I support the amendment in the minister's name.

The Presiding Officer: As members will be aware, I have to fit in two debates this morning. Therefore, speeches must be restricted to four minutes.

09:59

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): At the risk of being not quite politically correct, I suggest that we are having a debate about motherhood and apple pie. I do not know how apple pie fits into the school meals agenda these days, but to some extent this is an artificial debate. Is it a debate about health, or is it a debate about poverty and stigma? Is it a debate about targeting as opposed to universality? Is it a debate about whether people should be allowed to make individual choices on a voluntary basis or whether they should be compelled?

Across the board, we recognise that there are serious health problems in Scotland, which are likely to get worse if we continue to do what we are doing at the moment. The status quo is not an option. The debate is about how we make the change and about whether we compel or persuade people to do things.

There are some interesting pilots that aim to make changes. The pilot in East Ayrshire has a great deal going for it. It is important that there has been greater uptake of free school meals. The East Ayrshire pilot has been successful and deserves support.

Tommy Sheridan: I have a straightforward question for the member. Does he think that in the past four years the national wealth of Scotland has increased or decreased?

Brian Adam: What an interesting question. I intend rather to address the issue that we are debating.

The issue of school meals cannot be dealt with in isolation. Various members, including Mr Monteith, have made the point that exercise is part and parcel of what we are seeking to achieve. I would like to hear more from the Executive about whether under the new school building programme there will be separate canteens and gym halls. That should not be a matter for local authorities, because we will not be able to deliver the change that is required if the choice is between having a gym class and having lunch. People should not have to make that choice. As we refine our approach, we should be able to iron out such problems. It may cost more to have separate canteens and gym halls, but that is the kind of measure that is required if we are to deliver change.

The debate about targeting or universality is important, but it is not necessarily the key to change. Others have cast doubt on the evidence that has been advanced both by the Child Poverty Action Group and by the SSP. We must pilot free school meals to see where they should be introduced. The Scottish National Party proposals that we introduce them in primaries 1 to 3 are costed and realistic. Our focus should be on youngsters in that age group. The eating patterns of children in secondary 4, secondary 5 and secondary 6 are fairly firmly established, so introducing free school meals for those pupils is unlikely to yield the best results. Trying that approach at an early stage, when we have some chance of influencing people's eating patterns, is probably the best option.

We may be able to import measures that have been tried elsewhere in the world, which may well work. However, we have our own culture, some of which is not a healthy culture. We need to try things out here, to see what delivers best for pupils in Scotland. The introduction of universal free school meals for pupils in primaries 1 to 3 would provide us with the basis on which to assess how we may make progress and whether universality is appropriate. I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Fiona Hyslop.

10:04

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I rise to speak in support of the Executive's amendment. I do not believe that there is anyone in the chamber who does not wish to see our schoolchildren eating healthy, nutritious meals both at home and at school. However, anyone who has brought up or taught children will be under no illusion about the fact that that is easier said than done. A four-year-old who will eat only chicken dinosaurs and a 14-year-old who refuses to eat vegetables are formidable foes.

I remember my deep antipathy as a child to vegetable soup and pink cold meat. That was bad enough at home and worse still when it confronted me in the school canteen. I am sorry that Dennis Canavan is not here. He once told me that when he did not like his school dinners he put them in his trouser pocket.

I have taught pupils who lived on Mars bars and Coca-Cola. I have seen children in the school canteen choose chocolate cake and chips for their lunch, spend their dinner money at the burger van at the school gate, or walk out of the school at lunch time to go to the local chippy. For many youngsters, healthy school meals are not cool. Making them free will not stop those youngsters choosing the unhealthy option, whether in the school canteen or out of school. As Fiona Hyslop

and Margaret Jamieson said, we need to educate our children's palates.

Frances Curran: Can the member explain why in Hull there has been an 80 per cent increase in take-up since free dinners were introduced? The issue is not burgers and chips, but what is presented and the fact that it is free.

Maureen Macmillan: I have not examined what has happened in Hull. I want to speak about the initiatives in the Highland Council area, which Eleanor Scott described. Those initiatives are not based on universal free school meals. Smart cards were introduced in the area 10 years ago and there is no complaint about stigma. The cornerstone of Highland Council's policy is the local sourcing of food and the education of pupils' palates. The meat that is served is reared in the Highlands. Previously it had been sourced frozen and imported, but now it provides nutritious meals, a market for local farmers and work for local butchery workers. Eggs are sourced locally. Only organic carrots are bought and seasonality has been reintroduced to school menus. Links have been developed with farmers, the Highlands and Islands food and drink forum, the Soil Association and other bodies, to encourage small local suppliers.

As well as cutting transport costs and the food miles that are so important for the environment, the measures that I have described introduce schoolchildren to high-quality, tasty, nutritious food, which they appreciate. Eleanor Scott has already mentioned some of the excellent results that have been achieved in Highland. I will mention one or two more. There has been a 600 per cent increase in water consumption in schools. Ninety-five per cent of schools no longer sell fizzy drinks. More than 60 schools in Highland have been accredited with health promoting schools status. One of the cooks was runner-up in the competition for education supporter of the year. Several establishments have achieved healthy choices awards and chips sales are down by 50 per cent.

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the member give way?

Maureen Macmillan: No—I have already taken an intervention.

I commend the Highland Council on its policy. Last Sunday on Radio 4, "The Food Programme" held up Highland Council as a shining example of good practice. I also commend the action earth initiative by Community Service Volunteers Scotland. Recently, Eleanor Scott and I visited Fortrose Academy, where CSV is working in partnership with the school to promote vegetable growing. Eleanor presented the pupils with some seed potatoes. We are going back to the future,

because I remember a similar scheme that was run at Dingwall Academy 25 years ago. Since then, we have seen the collapse under the Tory Government of nutritional standards in schools and of the home economics department.

The SSP motion does not address fully the issue of healthy eating, so I will not support it. I commend the other initiatives that I have mentioned, which are contributing in a positive way to healthy eating. Together with the Highland schools' commitment to promoting active lifestyles, which I have not had a chance to discuss, they will counteract the insidious obesity creep.

10:08

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): This has been a good debate, with some excellent speeches. It has been historic in one respect—it is the first debate in the Parliament that I can recall in which I have agreed with most, if not all, of what Brian Monteith had to say.

The debate about school meals is important and I am grateful to the SSP for bringing it to the chamber today. As we have heard, it raises issues of child poverty, of choice for young people, of nutritional standards, of the effects of breakfast, drinking water and eating fruit on school performance, and of stigma and other possible reasons for low take-up of school meals. There are also advantages to having children sit down to a meal, at which they can learn to talk to and interact with one another—something that does not always happen at home in this frenetic age.

I have some sympathy with the case for universal free school meals, which involves a degree of administrative saving, may have an impact on stigma and could contribute to better diet. However, I do not accept the more extravagant claims that are made. It is not a particularly effective use of public finance to provide free school meals to the children of the 70 per cent of parents who can afford to pay.

The Scottish Executive's programme of practical reforms is a better way forward. Ninety-nine per cent of primary schools give free fresh fruit to P1 and P2 pupils. I am not sure whether we know how many of them eat it, which is an issue. I went to school at about the same time as Brian Monteith, and the free school milk that was a feature of my childhood was not always drunk—especially when it was lukewarm in hot weather or frozen solid in icy weather. Such issues encapsulate many of the points in this debate.

The issue of take-up is central to the argument. Ninety-two per cent of those who are entitled are registered for free school meals; indeed, the figure is 100 per cent in Glasgow, Inverclyde, Aberdeenshire and some other council areas.

Clearly, 100 per cent registration would not be impossible to achieve throughout Scotland and I think that that should be an objective of the Executive.

Fiona Hyslop: I appreciate the point that is being made, but Robert Brown should remember that only 20 per cent of children are getting free school meals although 30 per cent of Scottish children live in poverty. How do we close that gap?

Robert Brown: There are issues arising out of that, but I want to move on to a slightly different point.

Twenty per cent of those who are entitled to free school meals were not present on the day that the census took place and a further 25 per cent did not take up their entitlement. Interestingly, that percentage does not seem to vary between those schools that have an automated system—including 100 per cent of Glasgow's secondary schools—and schools that do not. I am not saying that stigma is not important. I am saying that stigma does not seem to have a particularly significant effect on take-up—the evidence does not seem to support that claim.

Much more significant is getting the children to school in the first place and interesting them in the school diet and the offerings at the school lunch in the second place. No one can deny the huge success of the schemes for free water and free fruit. Interestingly, water has become cool—not just literally, but in the fashion sense. Breakfast clubs have a more variable take-up and clearly have a contribution to make, as do the wider, radical health promotion initiatives that the minister and others have talked about.

There are some inhibiting factors. Eleanor Scott touched on an aspect of that and I very much agree with her comments. The size of school kitchens and dining rooms is an issue that needs to be resolved and I hope that the Executive will ensure that there is sufficient flexibility of provision in the new school programmes as they move forward.

Much moral indignation is expended by Frances Curran and the SSP not just in this debate, but in practically every debate in which they take part. In fact, it is the broad approach of the Scottish Executive that enables it to hold the moral high ground on the issue and that will make a difference. I beg the chamber to support the Executive's amendment.

10:12

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I am pleased, if a little disappointed, to find myself back on this familiar territory. I supported the School Meals (Scotland) Bill in the previous

session of Parliament and I am a vocal supporter of the on-going campaign. Although the defeat of the bill was disheartening for everyone who was involved, the campaign has moved on since then and has gained strength and perspective as a result.

Since 2002, the campaign, which is co-ordinated by a coalition of charities led by the Child Poverty Action Group, has continued to build on a wide range of support from individuals and organisations, including the Scottish Youth Parliament, Unison, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, NCH and the British Medical Association. There has also been an increase in the amount of research that is conducted in areas such as the extent and cost of the obesity problem in Scotland and a study was undertaken by economists at the University of Dundee on the distributional benefits of free school meals.

Similarly, some local authorities have committed themselves to the introduction of a policy of providing free nutritional meals universally. In Hull, the city council is just coming to the end of the process, as we have heard, and the initiative has been praised by the Minister of State for School Standards, Stephen Twigg MP. In Glasgow, the council has committed itself to the principle of delivering universal free provision and will do so in primary schools by 2007.

Just as the Parliament's surroundings have changed and evolved since 2002, so have the arguments surrounding the validity of the case for free school meals. In the interim period, the Executive has also taken steps that focus on child health and nutrition. Several commendable initiatives have been introduced, such as the hungry for success programme. New nutritional standards in schools, increased health education and promotion and the universal provision of free fruit for primary 1 and 2 children are just some of the measures that are beginning to make a difference for schoolchildren in Scotland.

There is nothing wrong with the words of the Executive's amendment—apart, perhaps, from the fact that the Tories support them. The amendment merely points out what is being done. Nevertheless, it intrinsically alters the motion and is, basically, an amendment against the universal provision of free school meals. I have no doubt that the Executive is committed to improving the health prospects of our children; in fact, there is a general consensus in the Parliament that improving the dietary health of our children must be a priority. The question is how we can do that. The sheer scale of the challenge that we face in turning around the health prospects of our nation has convinced us that the issue needs decisive, radical and sustained action. For that reason, the Parliament should not dismiss the notion of

universally free school meals without proper scrutiny and consideration.

In saying that, I am not suggesting that the committees that were charged with scrutinising the member's bill in the previous session did not do that to the best of their ability. However, many of the arguments that were employed at that time by both sides were based on speculative evidence. The Health and Community Care Committee suggested, during stage 1, that a pilot scheme would be of benefit in gauging the merits or demerits of the proposal. I think that a pilot scheme would be a rational and pragmatic way in which to proceed, be it in Glasgow, across Scotland, or in primary 1, 2 and 3.

With recent figures suggesting that a third of 12-year-olds in Scotland are overweight and that one in five is clinically obese, there is no doubt that we are facing an obesity time bomb in this country. We must lead from the front and educate all our children about what it is to eat a healthy diet. I can see no better or more effective way of achieving that than by providing a free nutritional meal for every child on every day of their young school life. I hope that the Parliament will keep an open mind on that prospect, support further independent research and consider implementing pilot schemes. Do something about obesity we must.

10:16

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston)
(Lab): I thank Brian Monteith for giving us the first confession in the Parliament today in admitting to being the genuine Billy Bunter of Scottish politics. I want to make the second confession. When I received free school meals at secondary school in Glasgow in the 1970s, there was no sense of children being bullied because they were in receipt of free school meals. One of the key arguments that is often propounded, emotionally, in the debate is the suggestion that children have been bullied because of their entitlement to free school meals. However, that has been shown both anecdotally and evidentially not to be the case.

Members have argued passionately about what they believe would be the best ways in which to tackle obesity in Scotland. I know that there is a genuine commitment across the Parliament, among all members, to address that issue. The question that needs to be asked is whether the universal provision of free school meals is the most appropriate solution to the challenge and several members have identified reasons why that would not necessarily be the case.

Frances Curran praised Hull City Council. It is for Hull City Council and its elected members to determine how its resources are allocated. I look forward to hearing Frances Curran speak in

support of Hull City Council's efforts to ensure that its council housing stock is transferred to social ownership and its liberalisation of the socially owned telecoms company. I doubt that a motion praising those things will be put before the Parliament. We cannot pick from an à la carte menu the things that we want to have in different authorities in Scotland.

Another issue concerns how we would police the universal provision of free school meals. As members have said, there is a substantial drop-off of take-up of free school meals when children move from primary to secondary school. Anybody who understands the development of young people knows that that is about personal choice, peer group pressure and a whole range of other factors. Those factors are equally important in the debate, whether or not free school meals are available universally. We need to address those questions as well.

The Parliament has had a chance, especially in the previous session, both through the committee system and through debate in the chamber, to unpick many of the issues that have been identified. The relevant points from the Education, Culture and Sport Committee's assessment of the School Meals (Scotland) Bill in the previous session have stood the test of time. The committee said that the central objectives that we must address include the quality of food, on which the Executive has moved; the quality of the environment, which the Executive has identified ways of improving; and better targeting to make intervention more effective. The strong evidence is that intervention at an early age, especially through breakfast clubs, is markedly better than any general universal provision at lunch time for schoolchildren of all ages.

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

Mr McAveety: I am sorry, but we do not have time because the debate has been split. I want to make some points on behalf of Labour members.

The fundamental issue is how we deal with the problem. We could have food commissars patrolling the school dinner queues, perhaps led by Colin Fox—maybe Kentucky Fried Chicken, KFC, will give way to CFFC, Colin Fox's food commissars—ensuring that children eat the right food so that they develop.

The evidence is much more complex than the simplistic slogan that has been put forward. I hope that members will understand that and articulate it much more than they are doing at the moment. If we look at the real issues, we see that children are at school for 190 days of the year, which means that, even if they took up universal free school meals consistently, that would equate to 17 per

cent of their food consumption. The rest of their diet—almost nine tenths—is just as important. Education, environment and choice are critical.

In the final 25 or 30 seconds of my speech, I want to pose a question on a subject that I think Brian Monteith is exactly right to raise. If we had £170 million to spend, what would we spend it on—588 trained home economics or specialist physical education teachers, 150 new secondary school halls, a whole development of outdoor and adventure activity programmes, or resources to provide organised and supervised physical activity? A whole range of measures are markedly more important in addressing obesity in Scotland. I believe that, if we tackle those issues, we can certainly address the question that members are concerned about.

10:21

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):

This has been a good debate and the Greens are happy to support Frances Curran's motion. However, I did feel that she went a little too far yesterday when she commandeered a room that I had booked for a meeting and scoffed all the lunch. I feel that that is taking the campaign for free lunches a bit too far.

The speeches this morning have been excellent. It is important that we congratulate the National Assembly for Wales and those councils that have shown a lead. Eleanor Scott mentioned Highland Council, which has done excellent work. Margaret Jamieson mentioned East Ayrshire Council; I, too, support the developments at Hurlford Primary School, which is in my region.

Margaret Jamieson: It is not in the member's region. He should get his geography right.

Chris Ballance: I hope that Margaret Jamieson will sign the motion that I have lodged.

Euan Robson spoke of the Executive's hungry for success campaign, on which the Greens congratulate the Executive. The campaign has done a lot to raise nutritional standards, but we would like it to go further. We would like the Soil Association's food for life campaign to be incorporated into it, because that connects school meals with the curriculum. We must ensure that farmers see themselves as being important to their local community again, rather than being marginalised as they are at present. Under the Soil Association's scheme, children are encouraged to build a link with a local organic farm and to discover that apples do, in fact, grow on trees. We need to put food on to the school curriculum; it is a sign of how divorced from farming children have become that that is necessary.

Brian Monteith made an excellent paean of praise for broccoli. I suggest, however, that the problems that he described are in secondary schools. The solution is that we have to establish healthy eating habits at primary ages. That point was also made by Brian Adam.

Robert Brown highlighted breakfast clubs and the important role that they have to play. Some children eat almost nothing but factory-processed foods at home and there is a duty on Government to provide the lead and to teach children that food does not have to come out of a packet.

Ms Byrne: Does Chris Ballance agree that breakfast clubs make a huge difference to children's learning and to their health? Does he agree that it is wrong that current provision is unequal, with some areas having breakfast clubs and others not having them? Does he share my view that head teachers should not be scraping about to find funds to set them up?

Chris Ballance: I thank Rosemary Byrne for that intervention and I very much agree with her.

Jamie Oliver's recent television series showed that many children do not even know what a salad is. It is no wonder that we are seeing diseases such as diabetes and obesity at younger and younger ages. It has also been suggested that additives play a role in hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, two of the plagues of today's classrooms. Jamie Oliver's series makes a strong case for investigating the links between junk food and bad behaviour.

Fiona Hyslop talked about the need to remove fizzy drinks from vending machines. I agree that it is vital to remove fizzy brands from school. It is also important that we design communities to encourage healthy eating. Eleanor Scott's amendment calls for Scottish children to be fed the best and most nutritious food possible and to be taught that milk comes out of a cow, not a carton. That is a basic principle that the Parliament should support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): To forestall any further letters, I advise members that Hurlford Primary School is in the Central Scotland region.

Chris Ballance: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I apologise.

10:25

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): First of all, I apologise for the state of my voice. I could probably start a health scare by saying that I caught it off a seagull, but I do not think that that is true.

There is nothing very objectionable about the SSP motion. Obesity is an issue of major concern and it is extremely important to encourage a healthy diet in children, but the content of Frances Curran's speech, as other members have said, seemed to be rather different from that of the motion. We need to recognise that, as others have said, diet is only one part of the equation. As I was cooking my tea last night, I thought back to what primary school children ate when I was young. I remember being told off for not eating the fat on meat, because it was supposed to be good for us. We ate butter and we had two-course dinners with puddings. I can remember coming down the stairs and looking at the dinner table thinking, "Please let it be a pudding spoon that's on the table." Who remembers high teas, when we used to get a plate of fish and chips with bread and butter followed by a great big platter of cakes and biscuits?

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): And scones.

Dr Murray: And scones, yes. It is true that we ate more vegetables and much less in the way of additives and processed foods. The incidence of childhood obesity was very much lower then than it is now. I hate to agree with the Tories, especially so near to the possible date of a general election, but Brian Monteith is right to say that, although the Scottish lifestyle has changed, our diet essentially has not changed. I remember having a 20in waist—the only reason why I am still wearing a size 10 skirt is that a size 10 is a hell of a lot bigger today than it was 35 years ago, just like me.

The problem is common across Europe. I was sitting outside a cafe in Spain at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon during the October recess, enjoying a glass of vino blanco, when I spotted a crowd of rather sturdy young people leaving school and heading for the bus. I looked at them and thought, "Heavens! They look about the size of Scottish children." It is a problem all over Europe. The solution has to be about diet and exercise, as the Executive's amendment suggests.

Rosie Kane: Will Elaine Murray give way?

Dr Murray: I am sorry but, if Rosie Kane's party wants a debate, it should use its allotted time to hold one debate. If the SSP wants to hold two debates, it cannot have debates in which there is time for interventions. That is it. The SSP makes those decisions.

Robert Brown made an appropriate comment about school milk. I absolutely hated the stuff. I also hated school dinners and got out of them by telling my parents that everybody threw them under the table, so they allowed me to take sandwiches. I have never noticed my children being much more enthusiastic about school dinners than I was. Just getting children to eat better is not enough. We need to do that, but we

also have to establish from an early age, at pre-school, the habit of physical exercise. That is what we have lost over the past 30 or 40 years.

We cannot get away from the role of parents. There is a whole range of factors and a whole range of educational issues. There is also an issue of personal responsibility, of how we feed and exercise our children—it will not do to say that the state should do all that for people. There is also an issue of corporate responsibility. Many of the supermarkets want to say that they are socially responsible, but how do they market food? What sort of profits are they making on healthy foods? That debate has to take place.

A number of members have mentioned “Jamie’s School Dinners”. Poor Jamie Oliver was nearly in tears trying to get secondary school kids to eat a healthy diet and, in last night’s programme, he got the primary kids to do so only by encouraging them to grow the food themselves. We must not be complacent about the health of young people. It is an extremely complex issue, which the Executive is attempting to address by a number of interrelated priorities and policies. That is the best way forward. I congratulate the Executive on what it is doing, but let us not be complacent. We have a hell of a problem to tackle.

10:29

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I seek the Presiding Officer’s guidance. If, for the sake of argument, Euan Robson’s amendment were agreed to, would it be possible for the amendment by Eleanor Scott also to be called? We are minded to support both if we are given the opportunity to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will rule on that at the end of your speech, when I have had the opportunity to take advice.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am most grateful. We hope very much that the minister will, at any rate, look sympathetically not only at his own amendment but at that of Eleanor Scott.

We last debated the issue on 11 June 2003. At that time, I stated my conviction that every schoolchild in Scotland knows that he or she can get into a national team if he or she has the ability, the aptitude and the inclination. It follows that the development of potential and the passport to success must and should be through the educational system. That must include good nutrition and exercise. I also made it clear that, in our view, people who are well enough off and can afford to pay—such as MSPs—should pay and the funds that are saved should be directed to those who need them most. Universality of provision does not necessarily represent the best use of resources.

I recall that the Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Act 2003 led to a further 7,000 pupils gaining entitlement to free school meals because their families were eligible for child tax credit. That was a highly desirable move.

The argument that Maureen Macmillan touched on was entirely valid. Some schoolchildren do not take up the offer of free school meals on the ground that it stigmatises them. That situation can and should be addressed by having swipe cards made available. I understand that, in September 2003, 16,750 such cards were in use for catering and vending machines in 17 schools. I am glad that the Executive will work with councils to collate information on the uptake of smart cards. Maureen Macmillan also made the extremely important point that sufficient water must be made available to avoid dehydration. I hope that that will be acted on.

The Scottish Executive has committed considerable resources to the hungry for success scheme, the aims of which include the encouragement of the serving of larger portions of more nutritious foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables. The Executive committed £2 million over three years to provide all pupils in primaries 1 and 2 with one piece of fruit three times a week. Individual authorities are responsible for implementation and have been offered an additional £57.5 million over three years to deliver initiatives under hungry for success. We look forward to seeing, in due course, the evaluation of what we hope will be the success of that scheme.

The value of nutritious school meals is undoubted. It is important that parents are well informed. Parents who have special needs, for example those who are mentally impaired, have additional needs or are addicted to drugs, may need extra help and support. We believe that resources should be made available to help the weakest in communities and should be targeted to their needs; they should not be committed to the universal provision of free school meals.

I believe that it was Nye Bevan who said that the language of priorities was the language of socialism. Sadly, it must be the language of all who wish to achieve the most far-reaching results with finite resources. In those circumstances, we will not support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will respond to the procedural matter that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton raised. It appears—we are all agreed here, at any rate—that the Green amendment is an addendum to the motion and that it could, equally, be added to the Executive amendment if that were to become the substantive motion. We therefore think that, if Mr Robson’s amendment were agreed to, it would not pre-empt the Green

amendment, although it would appear to pre-empt the SNP amendment.

10:34

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): The SNP broadly agrees with the motion. Our amendment would both strengthen its thrust by calling on the Executive to take appropriate action and broaden it out to include the wider health and fitness agenda. The need to raise levels of physical exercise has been well expressed during the debate by, among others, Fiona Hyslop, Brian Monteith and Elaine Murray.

I will focus on the school meals issue. The time is right to revisit the matter, given the publication of the University of Dundee research that compares the impact of targeted versus universal provision of free school meals; the filtering through of some of the results from the Executive's hungry for success programme; and Jamie Oliver's fascinating television series on his quest to banish junk food from school dinners.

I will start with an appraisal of hungry for success. Margaret Jamieson, rightly, focused on successes in her constituency, as did Maureen Macmillan and Eleanor Scott in relation to the Highlands.

East Ayrshire Council is to be congratulated on the commitment and enthusiasm that it has shown in getting rid of processed foods in its primary schools and in replacing commercial vending of fizzy drinks with healthy vending in secondary schools. The organic and local sourcing pilot in Hurlford looks really exciting. However, East Ayrshire Council is the only Scottish council to have achieved commended status for all primary and secondary schools in the Scottish healthy choices award scheme. How much more could be achieved if the East Ayrshire example were to be backed up by statute or by regulation and if coverage were extended to all children who might depend on their school dinner to provide their one nutritious meal of the day?

In East Ayrshire, hungry for success has proved—in primary schools at least—that the take-up of school meals can be improved by increasing nutritional standards. Catch kids early enough and they can be weaned off junk food. As we know, all the research evidence shows that a balanced diet is essential if kids are to be fit for schools in respect of their ability to concentrate, to behave appropriately—as Chris Ballance said—and, above all, to learn. However, making school dinners nutritious is not enough: we must extend the entitlement to free school meals. As the Child Poverty Action Group points out, 100,000 children who live in poverty are not getting the benefit of a free school meal. Twenty seven per cent of

children live in poverty, but only 19 per cent are entitled to free school meals.

Not only does the current system of means testing fail to deliver to the poorest, but it creates a poverty trap. Of course, those arguments have been well rehearsed in the chamber and have always foundered on the issue of cost. The SNP offers a third way in the form of a pilot initiative for free school meals in the early primary years—an early intervention. For the Executive parties, which boast of the introduction of free personal care for the elderly and the abolition of up-front tuition fees as their main achievements, surely a free school meals initiative is not a step too far.

10:37

Euan Robson: It has been a good debate. The future of Scotland's children is of paramount importance to us all. That has come across from members throughout the chamber. There is no greater task than ensuring their health now and into adulthood.

As many members have said, it is clearly vital to promote health among Scottish children, not narrowly or in a single area, but broadly and cohesively.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the minister congratulate those on the planning committee of South Ayrshire Council, who recently took a decision that saved sports grounds that were intended to be built upon?

Euan Robson: I do not know the local circumstances as well as Mr Gallie does, but if the council has done as he says, that is obviously a worthy initiative for it to have taken.

It is important that schools are not seen as the sole forum for improving health. Progress to tackle lifestyle choices is being made throughout Scotland with partners in the NHS, local authorities, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

I will respond to some of the points that have been made in the debate. I say to Fiona Hyslop that the point about the 400 additional specialist PE teachers is that they are to be deployed by 2008. That is work in progress and I think that her comments muddled the waters a bit.

I say to Shiona Baird and Tommy Sheridan that there are various levels of assessment of hungry for success. For example, for the school itself there is the "How good is our school?" toolkit, which allows self-assessment. There are standard HMIE inspections, nutritional assessors perform a number of inspections and a full HMIE thematic report on hungry for success will be ready by 2007. There is also a school meals census in June

each year, and a separate assessment of free fruit.

I was interested in Brian Monteith's gastronomic tour of his early life. I am grateful for his support and for that of Elaine Smith. The emphasis that they put on physical exercise is clearly correct. I agreed with most of Brian Monteith's comments on Finland and the Dundee study, which indeed assumes a 100 per cent take-up of free school meals.

Margaret Jamieson mentioned Hurlford Primary School, which is an example of very good practice. I congratulate the school on its achievement, and I congratulate East Ayrshire Council on all that it is doing. I accept Margaret Jamieson's view, which she made very clear, that change may take a generation. As Elaine Smith said, we should not underestimate the scale of the challenge.

On the issue of broader experience, I say to Brian Adam that the Executive is considering European practice in some detail to see what we can learn.

Maureen Macmillan mentioned the smart cards in Highland Council and other work that the council is doing. I agree with her about the local sourcing of food, which is indeed of benefit to the local economy and local farmers. Chris Ballance mentioned that point, although I think that he is probably due back for a geography class at some point.

Frank McAveety mentioned breakfast clubs. He also listed, rightly, the uses to which £170 million could be put, other than for the universal provision of free school meals. Of course, £170 million represents the cost only of the food; peripheral costs would probably take the bill to more than £200 million.

Robert Brown said that stigma was not necessarily related to take-up. Interesting facts arise on that issue. In its free fruit initiative, Moray Council found that more than 90 per cent of the free fruit was partially or wholly eaten. The wastage rate was only about 7 or 8 per cent. I have not heard of such figures being contradicted by other councils. However, we are looking into the issue in detail.

I have visited Lawmuir Primary School, in Michael McMahon's constituency, to talk to the kitchen staff. They said that change took time and had to be worked at, and that if one is asking primary schoolchildren to think about vegetables, one has to keep at it. That is exactly the phrase that we should take from today's debate. Hungry for success is a very important initiative, but we have to keep at it. It is work in progress and there are various milestones on the way to the success that we want.

I am gratified that Jamie Oliver said recently that Scotland was light years ahead of England and Wales. I have written to thank him and to invite him to have a school dinner with me, somewhere in Scotland, in the near future.

10:43

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Today's debate should have been about the twin and related scourges of child poverty and serious obesity and health problems. However, I am afraid that the debate has served only to expose the poverty of ambition that is prevalent across the other political parties—apart from the Greens—that have taken part.

I ask members who tell us that we cannot convince children to eat a healthy and nutritious meal to consider what we are trying to do in relation to the scourge of excess drinking among adults and the scourge of excess smoking among adults. In the Parliament, we are taking measures to try to challenge and change the behaviour of adults. However, members seem to think that it is impossible to challenge and change the behaviour of children. That is ridiculous.

Phil Gallie: Mr Sheridan mentions alcohol and cigarettes, but what about drugs? Does he agree that people should be deterred from using cannabis?

Tommy Sheridan: The use of cannabis should be legalised, but it should not be encouraged. We should not encourage the use of any drugs—unlike Phil Gallie's party, which hypocritically refuses to attack the most damaging drug, which of course is alcohol.

A total of 280,000 children are brought up in poor households; among the kids in that official and shameful figure, there are 100,000 who are brought up in poor households and are also excluded from receiving free school meals. That is the proof that the current means-testing system does not work. Political parties, other than the Greens and ourselves, say that they want to continue with the means test.

Fiona Hyslop's contribution was a pity, and it was a pity that Brian Adam did not answer the question when I asked him whether Scotland was poorer today than it was four years ago. Of course, the truth is that we are not poorer today than we were four years ago. Four years ago, this Parliament had a budget of £18 billion; today we have a budget of £25 billion. Why, then, could the SNP support the provision of free school meals for every child in Scotland four years ago, when today it says that we can afford free school meals only for children in primaries 1, 2 and 3? That is poverty of ambition from the new SNP.

Frank McAveety brings his lack of football skills to the chamber. He has always lacked nimbleness on his feet, so he was not able to change his speech today. Nobody mentioned the word “bullied”, but Frank McAveety had it in his prepared speech and decided to keep it in.

Mr McAveety: Will the member give way?

Tommy Sheridan: Sorry, but the member would not give way to anybody else. He should sit down.

Frank McAveety refused to refer to the fact that the amendment that he will support today removes from the motion congratulations to Glasgow City Council—a Labour council that he used to lead and which is now committed to providing free school meals for every primary school kid in Glasgow, without means testing. The amendment also removes reference to the National Assembly for Wales, which will introduce free breakfasts for every child in Wales, without means testing. What Frank McAveety is supporting today is the removal of congratulations to a Labour council and a Labour Assembly. That shows how pathetic his contribution is, and shows how pathetic are the Labour members who will back the Executive amendment. They are not even prepared to back their own political friends when they take radical and worthwhile action on this issue.

Mr McAveety: Will Tommy Sheridan take an intervention?

Tommy Sheridan: Sit down.

On the question of independent research, the University of Dundee now tells us not only that universality is an effective mechanism for the delivery of nutritious meals to every child in Scotland, but that universality is an economically efficient method that would benefit poorer kids more than richer kids.

I look forward to next week’s debate and I hope that the Labour members who tell us that we cannot have free school meals because it would help the rich kids will back my amendment to the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill, which would remove charitable status from private schools. If Labour members are not prepared to back free school meals because they would help the rich kids, I hope that they will be prepared to remove charitable status from the private schools where the rich kids go.

The University of Dundee research opens up the whole idea of universality as a principle. It supports the idea of all children receiving free school meals.

Mr McAveety: Will Tommy Sheridan take an intervention on that specific issue?

Tommy Sheridan: Frank McAveety obviously has ants in his pants; he should just sit on those ants for a wee while.

The United Nations Children’s Fund, the international children’s charity, which over the past year has investigated the problem of child poverty in rich countries, published the results of its study only this week. UNICEF—not the Scottish Socialist Party—concluded that, in the developed world,

“benefits universally provided, though apparently more expensive, can avoid this poverty trap”.

That is what the SSP and the Greens want to do: we want to avoid the poverty trap. The other parties want to keep kids in the poverty trap; they want to means test children at the age of five.

Today’s debate is not about left and right; it is about right and wrong. It is wrong for Labour members to want to continue to means test kids at the age of five. Let us have universal provision and let us congratulate those authorities that are prepared to introduce such provision.

Dr Murray: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It is about the sound system in the chamber. I might be a little more fragile than most members today—through illness rather than alcohol—but when people shout as loudly as Mr Sheridan was doing, I find it painful. My ears are really sore. Can something be done to turn down the volume?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I cannot rule on that definitively as a point of order, but I can give the general advice that the sound systems in the chamber are quite sophisticated. The sound engineers attempt to adjust for voices that are weaker than average and for those that are stronger than average. It is just that Mr Sheridan sometimes tests the parameters. There is not much that I or anyone else on this podium can do about that.

G8 Summit (Right to Protest)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2506, in the name of Rosie Kane, on the right to protest at Gleneagles.

10:52

Colin Fox (Lothians) (SSP): I hope that this debate is as lively as the one that preceded it.

The Scottish Socialist Party looks forward very much to the G8 summit that will be held in Gleneagles in July. In particular, we look forward to welcoming the people who will join us in the protest against the G8, its agenda and its record. Motion S2M-2506 seeks to reaffirm the basic human right to protest, to dissent and to highlight our opposition. That right is in danger of being compromised.

In my opinion, the scare stories and over-zealous police preparations are creating an atmosphere of fortress Gleneagles. I wonder whether they are designed to prime the population for attempts to curtail our right to protest peacefully. In some quarters, the coverage so far has amounted to ridiculous scaremongering. Many commentators paint a crude picture that suggests that those who wish to pursue their democratic right to protest are set on violence rather than peaceful protest.

This morning, Parliament is being asked to reiterate our right to speak out against those whom we do not support. I hope that no member—regardless of their attitude towards the G8—will oppose such a basic democratic right. Such rights are not granted by the powers that be, but are fought for again and again by the people.

On Tuesday evening in the Parliament, the human rights campaigner Professor Alan Miller of the University of Strathclyde said:

“One of the most positive things coming out of the G8 is that it will internationalise civic society.”

Those words ring true. Professor Miller has sought repeatedly to put the debate in context by asking the Executive to keep its promise—made a long time ago—to deliver a Scottish human rights commission. He was quick to point out that Scotland has been condemned throughout the world for jailing children at Dungavel and for forcing prisoners to endure the degradation of slopping out.

Just this week, the Home Secretary tried to introduce house arrest—in other words, detention that is ordered by a politician rather than through the judicial process. That is an even worse blot on the landscape than the infamous Diplock courts. At Belmarsh prison in London, there has been

detention without charge. We have no right to rest on our laurels. Such repressive practices are visible throughout the G8 countries.

The counter-argument, which is that we do not have an absolute right to assemble, is never put. It is always argued that that right is to be granted only in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. That explains the compromise amendments from Labour and the Conservatives.

Why do hundreds of thousands of people want to protest against the G8? What is so dreadful about its record that makes people want to come from all over Europe to Scotland in July to protest? The group of industrialised countries that we know today as the G8 was established in 1975 by the heads of state of the leading industrialised economies to consider their shared economic and political interests and the international community. The group has consistently controlled the terms of international trade and of relations between the G8 and the developing countries. It sends out diktats on a host of issues including arms control, the information superhighway, crime and human rights. The G8 heavily loads the help that it gives to developing countries with political, economic and military influence.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has said that, as the host of the Gleneagles summit, he is entitled to highlight two issues—Africa and climate change. If history is anything to go by, many mighty promises will come out of Gleneagles and, true to form, none will be kept. The G8 has been promising to abolish world poverty, hunger, disease and war since its inception 30 years ago and its record is risible. There are more people living in poverty in Africa than at any time before. Throughout the world, 50,000 people die from tuberculosis every day, even though the cure costs just £10 per patient. There are more enslaved people in the world today than there were in the time of William Wilberforce.

In 2002, the G8 announced the heavily indebted poor countries initiative, the aim of which was to reduce the debts of African countries by \$19 billion. At the end of 2002, low-income countries in Africa and elsewhere owed the rich world \$523 billion, which is roughly half their gross national income. Each year, low-income countries pay back more in debt to the G8 than they spend on education and health. Let us be clear about the fact that the G8 and its policies are the godfathers of capitalism. Those policies are responsible for the perpetuation of inequality and injustice. People who look to the G8 for a solution to world poverty will be sadly disappointed.

The make poverty history organisation—which I know enjoys widespread support from members of all parties—argues that, above all, the

“glaringly unjust world trade system”

is at the root of the problem. That brings us to the debate's key question. What forces will be able to get the G8 to change its ways and to hold it to account?

One of the world's leading dissidents, Professor Noam Chomsky, will visit Edinburgh in the next few weeks to speak on that very subject. He has written that the neo-liberal agenda behind G8 globalisation is creating its own gravediggers in the anti-war and anti-capitalist movement. By failing to deliver on its promises to eradicate poverty and, instead, driving ahead with a nakedly imperialist agenda, the G8 is creating a huge worldwide movement of opposition, especially in the third world and the middle east. The anti-war and anti-capitalist movement is the sign of a desire to force an agenda that is entirely different to that of the G8. That is the phenomenon that we will see on the streets of Edinburgh on 2 July and at the summit in Gleneagles.

We should explain to the people of Scotland the relevance of the G8 agenda to them. The G8 is responsible for the privatisation of our public services, the globalisation of trade, the casualisation of the labour market, the low pay in our economy and the denial of basic human and trade union rights. Lest we think that poverty is found only in the third world, on Monday the United Nations Children's Fund highlighted the fact that 20 per cent of children in the United States of America live in poverty.

The G8 alternatives group is part of a vibrant, healthy movement of opposition to the G8 that is flourishing throughout the world. In Edinburgh in July, there will be a carnival of forums, discussion and debate on the theme that another world is possible and necessary. The view that another world is possible and necessary is held by the vast majority of people, who want a socialised economy—one that is run on the basis of providing benefit for the many in the world rather than for the few. That puts them at odds with the G8. We are the many; it is the few. We want a world in which the world's resources and talents are shared equally among all its peoples. We should divide up the world's wealth and, in the first instance, look after those who are in most need.

I move,

That the Parliament puts on record its support for Article 20 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association"; notes that the G8 summit will be meeting in Gleneagles in July this year, and resolves to uphold and support the right to peaceful assembly and protest in Scotland, in particular in Edinburgh at the Make Poverty History demonstration and at the summit itself in Gleneagles.

11:00

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe): This is a welcome opportunity to debate in Scotland's Parliament the contribution that Scotland and its people can make to the United Kingdom's G8 presidency in 2005.

The G8 summit at Gleneagles in July is the centrepiece of the presidency. The Executive is very proud that the Prime Minister chose Scotland to host such a prestigious event. It is a tribute to our growing stature, international presence and reputation for running events of global significance.

The Executive's objectives for the next few months are to showcase Scotland to a worldwide audience, maximise the economic benefits to Scotland, engage the Scottish public in debate on and raise awareness of the main G8 themes of Africa and climate change, and generate a sense of pride across Scotland that we are hosting the leaders of the most powerful countries in the world.

Let me also immediately put on record the Executive's commitment to facilitating peaceful and legitimate campaigning in line with the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. I know that the United Kingdom Government takes the same view. The make poverty history campaign is to be congratulated on its wide-ranging and imaginative efforts to mobilise public opinion. We are equally committed to the rule of law.

Protesters have responsibilities as well as rights: they must show proper respect to the residents of the areas in which they plan to protest. Here in Scotland, unlike in so many countries across the globe, our citizens enjoy the fruits of parliamentary democracy, which include the freedom to express our views. Men and women across Scotland have protected those rights and, just as important, they have respected those rights. The Scottish people will judge harshly anyone who does not give the proper respect to those rights. After all, we are hosting the leaders of some of the most economically successful countries as well as those of countries that are far less fortunate.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The minister may be aware of the widespread concern among property owners in Auchterarder and the surrounding area that they will not be covered by their insurance companies if protesters damage their properties. Property owners in the area have asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for indemnity. Does the Scottish Executive support those calls?

Mr McCabe: Property owners will find advice on the Foreign Office website. They have access to that advice and I am sure that they will take it. If

necessary, they can engage in discussion with the Foreign Office.

If, during the time of the G8 presidency, people seek to abuse the privileges that we enjoy in Scotland, they should expect the authorities to deal with them appropriately. As the public in Scotland would expect, contingency plans are in place.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the minister give way?

Mr McCabe: No. I want to place on record our appreciation of the work that will be done by police forces throughout Scotland which, in this instance, will be led very ably by Tayside police. The police are already working tirelessly with numerous other agencies in planning for the summit. I am sure that their efforts will pay off and that the summit will be safe and secure and remembered for all the right reasons.

Let me stress again that there are plenty of reasons to be positive about the summit. I am sure that the thousands of delegates and journalists who will arrive in Scotland will be impressed by the facilities and infrastructure that we can offer. We should all hope that they will also leave with many other positive impressions of, for example, our friendliness—evident no doubt from the moment they set foot in Scotland—the beauty of our scenery and the dynamism of our economy. We should also hope that they leave with a good impression of contemporary Scotland and, perhaps too, with some envy of our rich traditions.

As the First Minister has said on many occasions, our aim is to be

“the best small country in the world”.

I hope that the many visitors to the summit and other people who see something of it through the worldwide media coverage will be encouraged to visit, study, do business and perhaps consider coming to live in Scotland.

I know that many people throughout Scotland—in the public, private and voluntary sectors—are working hard to make the summit a success and to take up the opportunities that it offers for the promotion of Scotland. On behalf of the Executive, I express our sincere thanks for that work and ask them to redouble their efforts in the interests of our country.

Of course, it is important that the summit goes smoothly. I want Scotland to be more than simply a beautiful and convenient backdrop to the event. The delegates will be debating massively important issues, in particular the future of Africa and climate change, both of which should be of concern to all the 5 million people who live in Scotland.

Obviously, as a devolved Government, our main focus is domestic. Scots are not parochial but have a long and proud tradition of looking outwards. We can see the big picture; after all, many of our forefathers helped to create it. We are known for our internationalism and our compassion, as can be seen by our recent reaction to the tsunami disaster in Asia.

The Executive is passionately committed to making a difference. We will do that by working with the United Kingdom Government, the non-governmental organisation community and others. Over the next few weeks, we will say much more on Africa and climate change. Indeed, as members will know, the First Minister will visit Africa in May.

Our hope is that people of all ages in Scotland, particularly young people, will become more aware of the issues that will be discussed at the summit. Many organisations are already planning events. For example, I know that the local authorities in Perth and Kinross, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling are planning to do so. The Executive hopes that others will follow suit. It is not often that Scotland plays host to the leaders of the world.

In all of this, our colleagues in the media have a critical role to play. There will be many positive stories around the G8 summit that will deserve a fair hearing. However, if some individuals try to grab their 15 minutes of fame this July by doing something silly, it is vital that the coverage is proportionate and gives them no undue encouragement.

By the end of the United Kingdom presidency, I hope that people everywhere will see that Scotland has contributed—by action as well as by word—to the great challenges of making poverty history and securing our environment for future generations. I also hope that the people of Scotland will feel proud that they hosted a G8 summit that made a difference and marked a turning point for many around the globe.

I move amendment S2M-2506.4, to insert at end:

“further recognises that protestors have responsibilities to uphold the law and deplores calls by an unrepresentative minority to use the occasion to engage in unlawful and violent activity; pledges full endorsement of the work of the Scottish Police Service to ensure public safety and order and facilitate peaceful protest; welcomes the tremendous opportunity presented by the G8 to show to a watching world everything that is good about Scotland and Scotland’s people, and acknowledges that the summit is also an opportunity to encourage debate, raise awareness and challenge people within Scotland about the key issues of poverty in Africa and climate change.”

11:07

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): I guarantee that Perthshire will provide a beautiful backdrop to the summit. That said, the concerns that I want to raise, which are germane to the debate, are both practical and political.

First I will outline my practical concerns. Right from the start, I have expressed concerns on behalf of my constituents in respect of the disruption to their lives that they will experience as a result of the summit being held in their area.

This morning, the BBC seemed to have some difficulty with the wording of my amendment. However, I have constituents who are particularly concerned that constant references to Gleneagles instead of to Gleneagles hotel will result in the variously named other Gleneagles properties in the area being targeted in error. All of us are guilty of referring simply to Gleneagles. The aim of my amendment is to get home the point that it is not just Gleneagles hotel that is at issue. The wording of the amendment also makes clear that the direct disruption that will be caused will be felt throughout a much larger area than just the immediate vicinity of the hotel. The daily lives of many of my constituents will be disrupted and to pretend otherwise is to let them down badly.

The insurance issue has been raised. There is a great deal of anger at the decision that has been taken in that respect and I hope that the Executive and the Foreign Office will review it. Equally, transport in and around the area will be seriously disrupted and to pretend otherwise is to ignore reality. After all, the area is key not just for my constituents but for people in the whole of Scotland.

So far, it is the impositions of the Government and the security services, not the actions of the protesters, that are most likely to disrupt my constituents' lives. So far, the security arrangements that will be put in place are focused entirely on the needs of summit participants and not on those of my constituents or, indeed, the many thousands of peaceful protesters whom we can expect to see in the area.

I expect that the actions of most of the protesters who will come to Scotland—and, indeed, to Perthshire—will be peaceful. The aims of the make poverty history campaign show just how peaceful their protest is likely to be. We need to uphold the tradition of peaceful protest. However, I fear that there is a danger in the way in which the police are presenting things at the moment. It is beginning to look suspiciously as if the police are saying, "Come on, if you think you're hard enough."

If there are many more alarmist security pronouncements and threats from the less

scrupulous activists about whom we are already reading, I am afraid that the world's TV cameras will be transmitting pictures from an Auchterarder High Street with its shops barricaded and closed for the duration—indeed, the possibility is already being considered by some. I am advised that even the local police are asking people to do precisely that. Among the high-profile policing and the threats of some potential demonstrators, there is a tendency to forget that there is a real community of real people in that area, who are beginning to feel that they are caught in the middle and that their concerns are being ignored.

We can accept disruption, but only if we secure from the summit the agreements that we seek in respect of trade justice, international aid and debt relief. The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive have an important role in progressing the agenda but, frankly, despite the Executive amendment, I have seen no sign that it is spearheading any such debate. I want important international meetings to be held in Scotland, but I want Scotland to take part and influence the decisions from within, not just provide the backdrop and the refreshments. When the Commonwealth heads of state came to Edinburgh in 1997, Margaret Ewing memorably said that Scotland's role was that of a tartan waitress. The First Minister would not like that description, but I hope that, when he attends functions at Gleneagles hotel in July, he will try to come across as something more than just a pin-striped sommelier. As a start, a debate on the issue in Executive time would be appropriate.

I move amendment S2M-2506.2, to leave out from "notes that the G8 summit" to end and insert:

"notes that the G8 summit will be meeting in Strathearn in July this year; resolves to uphold and support the right to peaceful assembly and protest in Scotland, in particular in Edinburgh at the Make Poverty History demonstration and at the summit itself in Strathearn; recognises, however, that those who reside close to the location of the G8 summit also have the right to privacy and to be able to pursue their lives and livelihoods free from harassment from whatever quarter, and considers that the important issues to be debated at the summit should be given as much publicity and consideration as the reported security arrangements."

11:11

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I am happy to support the SSP motion, but I qualify my support—it is dependent on acceptance of our amendment or one that is similar to ours. We must demonstrate that with the freedoms that we enjoy in Scotland come responsibilities, which our amendment would do. The lessons of the past show that the actions of bullies, anarchists and lawbreakers have disrupted and spoiled serious debate on serious issues—that must not be allowed to happen in Scotland. I disagree marginally with Roseanna Cunningham in that I

believe that it is not the police who are putting out the message that she suggests but our media. I would like our media to behave responsibly on the issue by concentrating more on the G8 principles and objectives.

The Conservative group believes that those who are involved in organisations such as the Jubilee Scotland coalition, Oxfam, Edinburgh Direct Aid, Christian Aid and other faith movements, which are all associated in one way or another with the make poverty history campaign, have a right to highlight their concerns and we will support them to the full in that. When the eyes of the world are on Scotland, the dignity that will be displayed during the mass turnout of people from those organisations in the streets of Edinburgh will demonstrate their sincerity to those who are most in need. That is the most important point that those who wish to demonstrate can make.

Tommy Sheridan: Will the member put on record his support for the right to peaceful protest, given that none of the 250 protesters who were arrested during the G8 summit in Genoa has been found guilty of a crime? Does the member believe that it is important that protesters are not arrested just for being there?

Phil Gallie: I am content that, overall, the United Kingdom justice system is fair and humane. I am sure that individuals who attempt to disrupt proceedings will be dealt with fairly and appropriately.

We need to take protective measures to uphold the interests not only of property owners but of those who wish to protest. Mr McCabe's amendment is in line with our thoughts—it is perhaps slightly more expansive—and we will therefore have no difficulty whatever in supporting it. Given that, it is likely that we will not press our amendment.

The G8 summit will deliberate important issues. Scotland has already played a major part in relation to global warming by reducing CO₂ and other emissions in recent years. Scotland has supported successive UK Government Chancellors of the Exchequer in promoting world debt relief. The Conservatives want that relief to progress apace. Wherever natural disasters or man-made emergencies occur, Scots are there to help through our armed forces or civil groups. I hope that the G8 summit will prove to be extremely successful and that the objectives that are set will be attained.

I move amendment S2M-2506.1, to insert at end:

"and calls on the Scottish Executive to ensure that suitable measures are taken to deter those who seek to abuse such rights through disorderly behaviour and by causing damage to property as well as thwarting the

peaceful expression of views by those who attend in good faith."

11:15

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(LD): A Scottish proverb states, "You can either make a kirk or a mill of it," which indicates that when an opportunity arises, it is up to us how we shape it. The saying may not be true of Spanish architects—who can make a kirk and a mill at the same time—but, in relation to the G8 summit, Scotland can go down one of two routes. The first would be one in which the conference is ruined by civil disobedience and protest; the alternative and preferable route would be one in which we bask in the economic benefits that the summit brings. I fully support the right to peaceful protest and the make poverty history campaign, which will link into the G8 meeting. However, I am afraid that too much emphasis on the protest, demonstrations and security that will surround the summit will ensure only that Scotland loses out on a major opportunity to present itself on the world stage.

Nowadays, we may not make either kirks or mills, but if we make a mess of the Gleneagles hotel meeting, which provides Scotland with an opportunity, we will have only ourselves to blame and we will deserve fully the consequential bad publicity.

Colin Fox: The member seems to miss the point. The reason why there will be a protest outside the hotel is that representatives of the make poverty history campaign have not been invited in. The protesters will not get the chance to make their point to the G8 summit.

Mr Arbuckle: With respect, I have not missed the point. I hope that if the situation is handled properly, the peaceful demonstration can be encompassed, but my fear is that the peaceful protest may disintegrate.

A number of events will take place in Mid Scotland and Fife this summer during which the eyes of the world will be on the area. In politics and economics, we will have the G8; in sport, we will have the open golf championship; and in pop music, we will have T in the Park. With the right publicity and weather for those events, they will have a tremendous spin-off benefit for tourism. We must remember that, with the demise of Scotland's traditional industries, tourism is now our number 1 earner. If, in the run-up to the Gleneagles hotel meeting, potential visitors hear only tales of possible civil disobedience, they will be driven away and Scotland will derive no benefit from the meeting.

We must make a plea to those who are coming to Scotland and Perthshire that they use their visit to show peacefully that they have a different

philosophical view from that held by the leaders of the countries that are meeting. Equally, we must also plead with those people not to come to Scotland or Perthshire if their only intention is to use the G8 meeting as a physical battlefield. Those who live in the area around Gleneagles hotel are not concerned by the thought of Government leaders coming to the area—they have many decades of experience of so-called famous people arriving by train, road or rail—but by the thought of large numbers of protesters coming to rural Perthshire. Those with whom I have discussed the matter support fully the police control plans but, as Roseanna Cunningham said, they would like their concerns to be taken on board.

I ask for peaceful demonstrations and the chance to maximise the economic spin-off benefits that could arise from having the meeting in our country.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): We now move to the open debate, during which we will have speeches of four minutes.

11:19

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): It will be almost impossible to cover all the important issues in my four minutes. The good news is that the minister has said that there will be opportunities to discuss the issues further in the next few weeks. Certainly, the European and External Relations Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the opportunities that the G8 summit and the UK presidency of the Council of the European Union provide.

There is no doubt that 2005 will give the people of Scotland two unprecedented opportunities. The first will be the opportunity to showcase Scotland, which the minister spoke about in detail; the second, which is as important, will be the chance for the Scottish people to show their support for the developing world.

In Scotland, we have a proud history of internationalism and our support for just causes is well documented. For example, the Scottish trade union movement and the Scottish churches linked up to peacefully express our support for the just cause of democracy in South Africa and our opposition to apartheid. The G8 and the UK presidency of the EU present real opportunities to influence an important world agenda. I will speak about trade justice, through which we can make a perceivable difference to the lives of those in the third world who need our help.

I have spoken before about the unfairness of the effect of current trade regimes—in particular, sugar and tobacco production under the common

agricultural policy—on the developing world. It is clear that EU sugar prices and policies hamper global efforts to reduce poverty. Export subsidies are used to dump 5 million tonnes of sugar annually on world markets, which destroys opportunities for exporters in developing countries. Meanwhile, producers in Africa have limited access to EU markets. With the hosting of the G8 and the UK presidency of the EU, we are uniquely placed to lead on that issue, and I hope that the minister will confirm in his closing speech that the UK, which has previously been supportive of reform on sugar, will continue to take a tough approach to delivering real results.

There is a similar situation with tobacco. Under the common agricultural policy, millions of euros per annum in tobacco subsidies are given to farmers to grow substandard tobacco, which is considered unfit for human consumption in Europe—Europeans would not smoke it even if we gave it to them for free—but is dumped on the third world. Given the Parliament's public health agenda and our stance on passive smoking, we have not only an opportunity but a moral responsibility to lead the way on tobacco subsidies. Such action would give tangible expression to the values that we hold as well as benefiting the health of the third world.

Another major issue that the third world faces is the AIDS epidemic. Unfair trade rules mean that drug prices are set too high for communities to afford vital medicines which, combined with the fact that massive debt repayments mean that poorer countries do not have the finances to build up health systems, is a recipe for a humanitarian crisis. That crisis is avoidable. We are taking steps to address it, and we must welcome the moves that the chancellor has made in that direction. A solution is tantalisingly within our grasp, but we must not take our eyes off the ball.

I said that there would not be enough time for my speech and I can see that I am way short of time. We have a unique opportunity on the world stage. We must showcase Scotland and the infrastructure that we have to host an event of such magnitude. It is important to note that the G8 summit is an opportunity for the people of Scotland to uphold our history of peaceful protest and unite against poverty by reaching out to our neighbours in the developing world in a show of solidarity. That is the nature of democracy and we must express it clearly. As with all events that bring people together in mass numbers, it is important to ensure that safety and law and order are maintained, not least for the protesters and the people of Perthshire.

I want the summit to be remembered not for violence and unrest but for the progress that it can bring about and the changes that it can make to

the lives of those in Africa and elsewhere in the third world who suffer from poverty and ill health.

I support the amendment in the name of Tom McCabe.

11:24

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I welcome the chance for us to debate matters surrounding the G8's visit to Scotland and in particular those matters on which we can, as the Executive's amendment suggests,

"raise awareness and challenge people".

Also, as Roseanna Cunningham says in the SNP amendment, we must ensure that

"the important issues to be debated at the summit"

are

"given as much publicity and consideration as the reported security arrangements."

Strathearn is not in the middle of the Rocky mountains; it is not far from communities in the heart of Scotland where people work and live peacefully every day. Tony Blair has chosen it as a prestigious site for the G8 summit. He did not ask us; he thought that he could use Scotland in his interest as the base for the expedition. Jack McConnell did not ask us and he was probably not asked by Tony Blair.

Mr McCabe: Will Rob Gibson give way?

Rob Gibson: No, I will not.

As far as the SNP is concerned, it is important to consider how, with the powers that the Parliament and Executive have, we give practical help to people in Africa. The Executive makes much of challenging people, but when it is challenged to say what Scotland can do, it fails to answer the questions. That is enough for a full debate, which ought to be an Executive debate so that the Opposition has a chance to talk about the issues.

Between now and July, much of the coverage in the newspapers and the media—whose proprietors are in bed with those at the G8 summit's top table—will, unfortunately, not reflect the debate that we can have with our people about what we can achieve in Scotland. It was interesting and refreshing that, in *The Herald*—yesterday, I think—Lesley Riddoch suggested many things that a small country with small resources could do to ensure that it helped to make a difference in some part of the world. At root, it is about giving people power over their own lives at the most local level. It is about using our skills to enhance others' ability to make their own power, grow their own food, provide themselves with communications and form Governments that will be able to take their countries forwards.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Will Rob Gibson give way?

Rob Gibson: No, I will not.

If we were to have such a debate at the G8 summit, I would welcome the event, but we are dealing with people who are interested in issues such as power security and fuel security—that is, international wars to secure gas from the centre of Asia—not empowering local communities to create their own power, for example. The Executive is caught in the middle and is failing to make the point that a Scottish Government must lead by expressing ideas that can be of practical help to people in Africa. If we do not hear of many such ideas before July, we will know that our suspicions were correct: the Executive is prepared to be wallpaper but is not prepared to take a lead proportionate to what we, as a small country with limited legislative powers, can do.

If life-changing events are going to take place, that will happen not in confrontations between demonstrators and the police but through our bringing on board as many as possible of those who want peaceful change and giving them a means to express that wish. I do not see that emerging from the preparations that are being made for the G8 summit.

11:28

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): In only four months' time, we have a crucial opportunity to show Scotland off to the world, not with shortbread-tin cameos, but with the vision of a country where progressive debate thrives and innovation and compassion combine to show leadership to the rest of the world in tackling the big issues of our time—global poverty and climate change. We also have the opportunity to redefine the G8 summit and make it reflect the founding principles and practices of the Parliament, such as the right of people to engage directly with politicians and their democracies.

When the Dalai Lama visited Scotland last year, he talked about the insecurity of the Chinese officials who rule Tibet. He talked about their hiding in blacked-out motorcades and their fear of dissent and protest from different views and diverse voices. Do we want to send out a message of fear to the rest of the world, or do we want to show that we are aa—even George W Bush—Jock Tamson's bairns?

I pay tribute to peaceful protest movements. If it was not for them, we would not be discussing the crucial issues of debt, climate change and unfair trade at the G8 summit this year. Inspiration for the future political agenda will be drawn from the fringe of the summit. Scotland is hosting that fringe in the events, debates, rallies and protests that will

be held throughout Edinburgh and Perthshire before, during and after the summit.

We all want the summit to be peaceful and we all want to see real debate. In recent weeks, even the First Minister has thrown down the gauntlet to George Bush on climate change. Thousands of people agree with the First Minister and want to come here to voice their concerns by protesting, but they also want to engage in discussion with one another and with the global media. Will they come to Gleneagles in tens or hundreds of small groups, all looking for a focus for their protest, or will they be allowed to join others at a safe location, somewhere between Dunblane and Perth, where there can be sensitive policing and where the overriding peaceful nature of the different groups can create a strong consensus against violent protest?

I saw the results of insensitive policing on the streets of London during the demonstrations against the Criminal Justice Bill in the 1990s, when a tiny minority of hardline protestors goaded the police. The police turned on a crowd of thousands, causing chaos and raising anger and anxiety. Thousands of people were caught on the edge of the violence, unable to leave the protest or get to their friends, and were trapped and frightened. That was also the story of recent G8 protests after Birmingham. It must not be the story of Gleneagles. Inappropriate policing will not help the summit's participants, the protesters, the police or local residents who live in the wider area, as I do.

Those who live in the wider area of Strathearn and Strathallan also need our consideration. After the strong statement from the Parliament last week against identity cards, it is clear that they will be in force at the summit, with local residents carrying cards within the vicinity and, potentially, further afield. What will be the sanctions and penalties for failing to carry an ID card to get to one's home?

I hope that local people will engage with the summit. I know that many people from the area will add their voice and join the protesters. Local people did not ask for the summit to come to their area so it is only just that Westminster should offer compensation in the event that policing goes belly up and damage is inflicted.

The summit is a one-off opportunity for either massive international success or massive international failure. Let us not toss the coin to choose which it is. Let us put in place now the right conditions to make the summit a success, for freedom of speech, for the global environment and for those who suffer poverty in all its forms throughout the world.

11:32

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I did not intend to speak in the debate, but a number of contributions have brought me to my feet. I fully accept that people have a right to peaceful protest. However, we are where we are and the experience of previous G8 summits shows that some people are determined to exercise not the right to peaceful protest, but violent and intimidating protest. The police in Scotland will have to be able to respond to that to protect the rights of those who are protesting peacefully.

Secondly, I turn to an issue that Rob Gibson raised. I was slightly confused by his contribution, because he seemed to suggest that debt relief should not be on the agenda. I have just returned from a visit to Africa. Yes, there are things that we can do as a Parliament and yes, they will help people in countries such as Malawi by increasing their capacity to build their economy. However, the clear message that I received was that unless we deal with debt, addressing those capacity-building issues will merely be tinkering at the edges. The key issue for the people there is enabling them to build their economy. If we do not deal with debt relief, they will never be able to do that, because a vast amount of their gross domestic product is spent on repaying debt.

The G8 summit gives the country, the Executive and the UK Government a tremendous responsibility to ensure that people know where Scotland stands on debt relief. It is one of the issues that have dominated my postbag since I became an MSP, it is one of the issues that people want to confront and the summit gives us an opportunity to say that Scotland stands four square with those who want to make poverty history. The summit should be the vehicle for us to try to do that. Anybody who does not see the summit as an opportunity is not living in the real world and should consider carefully what they are trying to achieve.

11:35

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I apologise for being absent from the chamber for the past few minutes; I had to make an urgent telephone call.

The debate has been interesting and, to be fair, Colin Fox, who is not with us just now, expounded his party's position and philosophy—it is not one with which I agree, but he was honest and put it out there in the open.

Tom McCabe was correct to say that people had the right to demonstrate, but to demonstrate peacefully. In a way, he agreed with Colin Fox. He mentioned the role of the police forces, which is connected to what Roseanna Cunningham said.

There is no doubt that additional burdens will be placed on Tayside police as a result of the G8 summit. I remember that when the Tory party conference was held in Inverness some years ago, Northern Constabulary had to pick up a big bill. I seek an assurance from the minister that the policing bill will be settled by either the UK Government or the Scottish Executive, because I would hate to see Tayside police's budget being overstretched. Let us face it; those of us who have been involved in local government will know that it is not easy to balance that sort of budget.

We know that the delegates will discuss the future of Africa and climate change. Of course it is right and proper that we make poverty history and that will be flagged up. However, where I live in the Highlands it is evident that climate change is upon us. In my lifetime—indeed in the past few years—things have changed dramatically on the moorland where I live in my wee croft house. Things that previously did not fly in the air or grow in the ground now do so. The Greens are correct to say that we have a big problem with climate change. In my book it is good that that is on the G8 agenda and that the delegates will spend half their time discussing it. This is the real world and we cannot get round the fact of climate change, but at least it is on the agenda for the G8 summit with the people who can hit and score.

It is completely understandable that Roseanna Cunningham talked about protecting her constituents' interests. I hope that the summit will not lead to shops being boarded up in Auchterarder. That is not the intention at all. The lesson is that it must be managed properly and the Scottish Executive, UK leaders and the police must work with residents of places such as Auchterarder to ensure that rather than boarded-up shops we showcase what we can do, what we can sell and what such a nice village can look like.

Phil Gallie was correct to mention the justice system and I endorse what he said. My colleague Andrew Arbuckle—who was making one of his first speeches in the Parliament—mentioned showcasing Scotland and getting in on the back of the success of the G8 summit. I have mentioned Skibo Castle in my constituency before and members all have equivalents in their constituencies. We are absolutely delighted if we get a big name or politician to come to our constituencies. To do anything other than welcome the G8 leaders to Scotland would be to sell ourselves short. Yes, there can be demonstrations and yes, they can and must be peaceful. If we are British, it is written right through our hearts that we accept that. Some of the most powerful people in the world will be here and the summit is a chance for us to say, "This is Scotland. This is what we can do. This is our beautiful country and this is what we produce." We

cannot help but achieve success if we go down that route.

I note what the SSP is saying, but for heaven's sake, we must not sell ourselves short as a country, because that is what we are in danger of doing. If the summit is going to be about demonstrations and bricks flying, that is absolutely crazy and we would be shooting ourselves in the foot. It should be about saying, "This is our country and we are proud of it."

11:39

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

The Scottish Conservatives warmly welcomed the announcement that the G8 summit is coming to the Gleneagles hotel in Perthshire. I have no doubt that it will bring tremendous economic benefits to Perthshire both during the conference and, more important, in years to come as a result of spin-off publicity. The conference will put Gleneagles, Perthshire and Scotland on the world map and we should celebrate that fact universally.

We should also acknowledge that people have a legitimate right to protest. We have heard reference to the make poverty history campaign and other similar campaigns. Of course people have the right to gather to make known their views, provided that they do so peacefully. It is important to remember that people live and work in Perthshire—I refer to towns such as Auchterarder in particular—and that they also have a right to get on with their lives with the minimum of disruption. Some disruption will be inevitable when there is an international summit at which there are world leaders, but it is essential that the whole community is not brought to a standstill—those remarks apply to protesters as much as to the organisers of the conference. Large groups of protesters cannot roam at random across roads and fields in rural Perthshire. I have discussed those issues with Tayside police, who have assured me that they have plans in hand adequately to deal with policing. I believe that Tayside police will take a measured approach and I hope that protesters will listen to the legitimate requests of the police so that the summit can pass off without major disruption.

Mr Ruskell: Does the member support the establishment of a single, safe location in southern Perthshire for protesters to gather at, rather than a free-for-all approach, which, as he suggests, could be a problem?

Murdo Fraser: I am grateful to the member for intervening, as he makes a sensible suggestion to which I hope Tayside police will listen.

We should be absolutely clear. If protesters are intent on causing disruption—and perhaps even violence and damage to property—the police must

have the resources to deal with them swiftly and effectively. The people whom I represent in Perthshire do not want their homes and property put at risk of damage and destruction. Tayside police have rightly put in place robust plans to deal with such protesters and they should have our full support. I am sorry that Roseanna Cunningham is not in the chamber because I thought that her argument that having robust plans in place would somehow provoke protesters to violent reaction was rather bizarre. Her constituents would want proper plans in place to protect their livelihoods and property.

I am principally concerned about the local communities and in my remaining time I want to touch on two issues, the first of which is information for people in Auchterarder. Tayside police have been very proactive in communicating with people. They have had a presence at many local meetings, including the community council, but residents still say to me that they find out about what will happen in July only through what they read in the newspapers. More must be done to tell local people about the practical impact that the G8 summit will have on them.

Secondly, I return to insurance, which I raised with the minister earlier. People are concerned. Auchterarder community council is concerned that some insurance companies are saying that they will not pay out for any damages that are caused as a result of civil disobedience, which means that local residents may have to foot the bill themselves. Local farmers have also contacted me and said that they may be left out of pocket if there is damage to fields and crops. There is a serious case for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to say that proper compensation will be paid to people who suffer such damage as a result of the summit. I am serious in saying that I believe that the Scottish Executive should take this up with the FCO on behalf of the residents of Perthshire and that it should get a definitive answer from the FCO.

The G8 summit in Perthshire represents a tremendous opportunity for the local economy and for Scotland as a whole to present itself to the world. I hope that local residents' legitimate concerns can be addressed to ensure that they do not suffer as a result of the summit. I also hope that legitimate peaceful protest will be allowed, but that the necessary contingencies are provided, so that those who come and seek to cause damage and destruction are dealt with robustly with the full force of the law.

11:43

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Roseanna Cunningham, who is absent

from the chamber because of media commitments, rather than because she seeks to show discourtesy to members who are participating in the debate. That may explain the absence of other members too.

Karen Gillon protested rather too much about what my colleague Rob Gibson said. Nobody disputes that a major part of the agenda on addressing poverty in Africa will relate to debt, but it should equally relate to trade and fair trade. I do not seek to make any political comment on that matter, as only last night I supported the debate that was instigated by Karen Gillon's colleague Christine May. We should ensure that the issues of access to trade for African and other nations that suffer from global poverty, as well as the debt that straddles and restricts them, are addressed.

Karen Gillon said that

"we are where we are".

That is important. We are where we are and we should have seen it coming. The minister implied that the summit will be a great bounty—indeed, Murdo Fraser went on about the great benefits that will accrue. However, every G8 summit has caused significant difficulties for the area in which it takes place. There is not a problem only for Gleneagles hotel—there are problems for Gleneagles village, as my colleague has said, and for the city of Edinburgh. The summit will involve not only Gleneagles hotel—it is likely that the media centre will be the Edinburgh International Conference Centre. It has already been indicated that the Sheraton hotel has been block booked for the Japanese delegation and that the Hilton hotel has been block booked for the Chinese delegation. There is an idea that the summit will be a magnificent bounty for the city of Edinburgh, but it may come as a surprise to the minister and to the Executive that Edinburgh hotels are usually quite busy in July. Simply replacing tourists with visiting delegations may not add any value, but may diminish the number of people who would have come anyway. We welcome the delegations and appreciate that they will contribute to the economy—

Karen Gillon: Is Mr MacAskill suggesting that we should simply tell people not to bother coming?

Mr MacAskill: That is a rather silly thing to say. I am saying that the suggestion has been made that there will be a contribution to the greater good of the hotel business in Edinburgh by bringing in delegates, but our hotels are substantially busy in July. If we wished to add value to Edinburgh hotels, we would have picked a period in the year in which hotels are looking for business. Given that the Parliament is in recess in July and that members have gone elsewhere, it may come as a

shock to some that the city is remarkably busy with visitors then.

I move on to the right to protest. The right to protest exists, as Colin Fox said, but it must be balanced with the right of society and communities to ensure that behaviour is appropriate and that points are made without disruption—I think that all members have commented on that. We have had to contend with that issue not simply with respect to a coming demonstration on making poverty history—which is something that all members support, I think—but with respect to other aspects of our society. I refer to Orange walks and other things.

How can we balance the rights of people who wish to make a valid point—irrespective of whether we agree or disagree with what they say—with the rights of the community? To date, we have been well served by the police in Scotland, but my colleague was right to draw to our attention that any form of machismo policing could work to the detriment of areas. In the 1980s, there were confrontations during the miners' strike, but we did not see anything akin to Orgreave north of the border because policing in Scotland has always been from the community and has always served the community. We must ensure that policing will not be based on riot squads moving in or on attitudes that are more prevalent elsewhere, whether in the United Kingdom or on the continent. We do not want tactical support groups undermining the relationship between our community and our police force and we must address the potential difficulties presented by those who seek to cause mischief and mayhem. The police are right to prepare for such difficulties, but they must do so in a proportionate manner and bear in mind how the police have always policed in Scotland and how we want policing to remain.

That said, it is clear that the right to protest is important. There are no bigger issues in the world today than making poverty history and—to be fair to what Mr Stone said—climate change. Given the scandalous situation in the 21st century, many members fully support making poverty history. I will be happy to participate in what happens and hope that the First Minister will be prepared to consider supporting the demonstration when it takes place, as opposed simply to visiting Malawi.

11:48

Mr McCabe: I will try to respond to points that have been made.

Colin Fox expressed concern about our freedoms, but our freedoms will be compromised only by those who consider illegal acts. Every member in every party in the Parliament should

condemn any organisation or individual who considers such acts.

Mr Fox is right to say that we should not rest on our laurels with regard to our democratic freedoms, but he is wrong to portray our dynamic economy and democracy in such disparaging terms. He and his party have a distorted view of the G8's performance and refuse to recognise that people in Scotland now enjoy unprecedented economic opportunities to make their own life choices.

I say to Roseanna Cunningham that Scotland's police have a proud record in dealing with sensitive situations—I am glad that Kenny MacAskill recognises that. It is inappropriate and demeaning to suggest that the police would incite disruptive behaviour through their plans. There is not one shred of evidence to support that, and I strongly suggest that the SNP withdraws such remarks.

I hear Mr MacAskill's concerns about Edinburgh hotels. The SNP can be rather parochial on occasions, but Scotland is a bit bigger than simply Edinburgh. The opportunities that come from the summit will extend far beyond the boundaries of our capital city.

To Rob Gibson, I say that the SNP should say whether it is opposed to the summit and say so plainly. Just for once, the nationalists should stop carping and play some part in harnessing the opportunities that the summit will produce for Scotland and for the world.

I fully recognise the points that Murdo Fraser and Roseanna Cunningham made about the disruption that will be caused to residents. We will work with Perth and Kinross Council and the local community to address those concerns. In my visit to the area next week, I will discuss those and other matters with the local council. I assure members that we will engage in those discussions in a meaningful way.

Mr Ruskell: Will the minister answer the question that I asked earlier? What sanctions or fines will be imposed on people if they resist the introduction of identity cards within the wider Gleneagles and Strathearn area?

Mr McCabe: That is exactly the kind of exaggerated language that draws a veil over what should be a great opportunity for Scotland. The reality is that a small number of people who live within the cordon have been asked, and have agreed, to minimise any disruption to their own lives by wearing security access passes. They have agreed to that measure. That is the important point. There is no question of sanctions and fines.

To Jamie Stone, I can offer the assurance that we will discuss the cost implications of the entire summit with Tayside police.

Let me underline the Executive's priorities for the next few months. We will support the United Kingdom Government's desire to tackle global poverty, especially in Africa, and the Government's commitment to reverse climate change. Work on both those areas will continue well beyond the summit, but the Gleneagles summit rightly provides a focal point for those issues. It provides a tremendous opportunity to generate momentum for lasting change. The Scottish Executive and the United Kingdom Government support the right of people to lobby, in a peaceful way, the world leaders who will visit Scotland. We will be pleased to welcome legitimate campaigners to our country and to allow them the facility to express their views. We will support the many organisations that are planning to use the summit as an opportunity to showcase all that is good about our country. We want people here and elsewhere to recognise that Scotland is "the best small country in the world".

We want people to be inspired to visit Scotland, to come here to do business or to study and to live here, too.

I hope that members of all parties in the Parliament will stand with us as we work to ensure that the Gleneagles summit brings lasting benefits to the people of Scotland and to those people across the world who experience far more challenging situations than we could ever imagine.

11:52

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): In July this year, the G8 summit will be held in Scotland. Personally, I am happy about that, not only because the world will get to see how beautiful Scotland is, but because the people of Scotland will be able to show the world what they think of the leaders who make up the G8. The First Minister, Jack McConnell, once described G8 members as "the top table". He was not far wrong. These jokers get to sit at the world's top table and feast, while the rest of the world sits below the table waiting for the crumbs to fall and hoping to receive some sustenance.

At this year's summit, there will be a high-profile make poverty history campaign, which we all support. The summit will follow on from the terrible, devastating effects of the south-east Asian tsunami, which has focused the eyes of the world on our so-called leaders. Ordinary people have dug deep to help their sisters and brothers throughout the world. The focus will be on Africa, on civil war, on starvation, on war in Iraq, on weapons of mass destruction, on environmental destruction—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Rosie Kane: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

On all those fronts, the vulnerable on this planet have taken the brunt.

Under such very current pressures, the G8 public relations machine will no doubt tell us how the G8 leaders will deal with those issues. They will claim that the G8 will make poverty history. Many folk out there who want a better, healthier world might want to feel reassured. However, poverty is not a new phenomenon and nor is the G8, so why is our world spiralling deeper and deeper into disaster despite the fact that these geezers have been meeting for years? What have they done for the world so far?

I will tell members what the G8 leaders have done. The socialists are here for today's debate to highlight how some world leaders have acted in tandem with the multinationals. The world has been raped and pillaged of everything, from oil to diamonds, so that those at the top table—and their buddies—can prop another cushion under their gold-plated, fat backsides. Let us not kid ourselves that G8 members are caring and compassionate. The folk who dug deep for the tsunami or who drew attention to, and collected money for, the relief of poverty across the globe are the ones whom we should celebrate.

Let us take a look at who these G8 leaders are. Japan's Koizumi is pro-business and pro-privatisation—[*Interruption.*] Members on the Tory benches may well cheer. At least they align themselves honestly; this lot on the Executive benches pretend.

Germany's Schröder is for big business and is pro-war. France's Chirac is pro-nuclear weapons, pro-big business, anti-trade union and pro-privatisation. Russia's Putin is pro-war, anti-human rights, anti-free speech and anti-democracy. He presides over hideous and continuing brutality in Chechnya. He is corrupt to the core. Canada's Martin is a multimillionaire tax avoider, union buster, environmental lawbreaker, social services cutter, private finance champion—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Rosie Kane: Italy's Berlusconi is a multimillionaire and flogger of public services. He has been under investigation for everything from fraud to corruption and bribery, but has got out of it by changing the law to protect himself. America's Bush is pro-war, pro-big business, anti-environment, anti-gay, anti-women, anti-trade unions, pro-nuclear weapons and pro-death sentence.

Britain's Blair is pro-war, pro-big business, anti-environment—[*Interruption.*] Presiding Officer, do you mind?

Blair is anti-environment, anti-trade union and a liar. *[Interruption.]* Presiding Officer, I must complain about the decibel levels.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Rosie Kane: The whole lot of G8 leaders are out for themselves and out for their pals. It is not in their best interests to eradicate poverty. They have blood on their hands. They know that, members know that and those who will converge around Gleneagles know that. It bothers me that many politicians and less responsible sections of the media have set their focus on riots and violence. If they want violence, they will find it not in the minds of protesters but in the actions of the G8 and their big-business pals who attack the planet, push people aside and put greed before need. The talk of water cannons, rubber bullets and even ground-to-air missiles is a diversion. A frenzy has been whooped up to divert attention from the real issues. The First Minister should not kid himself or the public that the G8 will end poverty. The G8 is the problem, not the solution.

As a child, when I was fed my dinner at night with my brothers, my mother or father would tell me, "If you don't eat your dinner, you're wasting it, when there are children starving across the world." In my childlike mind, I imagined how I who had enough could send that food to all those children. It turns out that, for every £1 that we send in aid, £3 is owed in debt repayments. Under those circumstances, had I sent my dinner across the world, the child in Africa who received it would have had to put gravy on it, put silver service with it, give me a tip and send it straight back. That is what the G8 has done for us. It was like that then, and it is like that now.

If the G8 is so good, so kind and so righteous, why must it meet behind a security shield? When the G8 leaders say that they will make poverty history, they lie and millions die. As Martin Luther King said, a lie cannot last for ever. I hope that the G8 cannot last for ever. I hope that protest worldwide will expose the G8 and bring about its downfall, rather than the downfall of the planet.

I ask that members support the motion in my name, support the right to protest and reject the G8.

First Minister's Question Time

11:59

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Before First Minister's question time, I ask members to join me in welcoming to the public gallery His Excellency Abdelwahad Radi, the president of the Parliament of Morocco, who is accompanied by a delegation of members from that Parliament. *[Applause.]*

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-1481)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): At the next Cabinet meeting we will discuss our progress towards building a better Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon: That will not take long.

I draw the First Minister's attention to the fact that, today, Tony Blair is making one of his rare visits to Scotland—indeed, they are almost as rare as the First Minister's visits to hospitals. *[Interruption.]* The First Minister is motioning that he cannae hear me, and I want him to hear what I have to say.

On the assumption that Mr Blair agrees to give him an audience, I want to suggest some issues that the First Minister might like to raise. The First Minister will recall that, just a few weeks ago, Parliament voted to retain all six Scottish regiments. Will he act on that decision, raise the issue with the Prime Minister in the strongest possible terms and, on our behalf, demand that all six regiments be retained?

The First Minister: I have already made those points publicly and privately. I will also point out to the Prime Minister the absolute hypocrisy of a Scottish National Party that claims to defend the regiments when it wants to disband all the regiments and the whole of the British Army.

Nicola Sturgeon: I asked the First Minister a simple question: will he today represent to the Prime Minister the clear views of this Parliament, to which he is accountable? However, he failed to answer that question, so I will ask him another one.

Does the First Minister recall that, just last week, Parliament voted to reject Tony Blair's plans for identity cards? Everyone in Scotland will have to fork out at least £85 for those useless bits of plastic when what communities really need to make them safer is more police on the streets. Will the First Minister act on that decision of

Parliament, raise that issue with the Prime Minister and tell him in no uncertain terms that his ID cards are not wanted in Scotland?

The First Minister: I could have done so, if the SNP had voted for the Liberal Democrat amendment, which sought to reject ID cards, instead of voting for a motion that noted them. I disagree with the Liberal Democrats on this matter, but at least they voted for their policy. The SNP was more interested in making a political point.

I assure Nicola Sturgeon that, if I have a chance to raise those issues with the Prime Minister tomorrow, I will make two things clear to him. First, I support his attempts to ensure that the United Kingdom is as secure as it possibly can be. Secondly, I will remind him that the partnership Government in Scotland has increased police numbers in Scotland to record levels and has ensured that more police officers are out on the street on operational duties than there have been for years. I will also point out to him that the SNP and others opposed the very reforms in our courts and prisons that have allowed those police officers to get out from behind their desks and back on to the streets.

Nicola Sturgeon: The First Minister can twist and turn, but he has yet again failed to answer a simple question. Will he represent this Parliament's democratic decisions to the Prime Minister? I think that the people of Scotland will begin to wonder which side he is on. Is not it the case that Tony Blair is out of touch with, does not listen to and is not trusted by the people of Scotland? All he needs is a handbag and he would be a dead ringer for another Prime Minister who failed to take heed of the Scottish people's wishes.

The real question is this: should the First Minister, instead of kowtowing to the Prime Minister, not put forward the Scottish Parliament's democratic decisions and stand up for the Scottish people's interests?

The First Minister: I will be very happy to let the Prime Minister know that, last week, the so-called revolutionary SNP that is going to transform Scotland managed to vote for a motion that noted his ID card scheme.

However, I will also ensure that the Prime Minister knows that, because of this Parliament and devolved Government, Scotland now has more police officers than we have ever had before; that they are clearing up crimes at a record rate; and that that is happening because the reforms that we introduced but which the SNP opposed mean that more of them are on operational duties and are out there doing the work that they signed up to do.

Nicola Sturgeon: Perhaps the First Minister might answer my question this time. This Parliament has voted to save the Scottish regiments and to reject ID cards. Will he represent to the Prime Minister the clear democratic views of the Parliament to which he is accountable or will he simply kowtow to him as he always does?

The First Minister: Miss Sturgeon's question is not even accurate. I repeat that it is all very well to come along here and vote for motions and ask questions about regiments, but she wants to disband those regiments and the whole British Army. The Scottish National Party wants to break up the British Army, take Britain and Scotland out of NATO and ensure that we are left defenceless as a result. For the SNP to say that it stands up for the Scottish regiments is simply untrue. Nicola Sturgeon should be honest enough to admit it and have enough principles to stand up for what her party really believes, instead of coming along here to make political points when she is hiding the policies of her party that she will have to stand on at an election, whenever it comes this year.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)
(Con): I think we know the answer to my question already.

To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues will be discussed. (S2F-1482)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I might also take the chance to mention to the Prime Minister that the Conservative party—the great defender of Britain's security down through the ages—also decided on a matter of real principle last Thursday to note the fact that he has an identity card scheme.

David McLetchie: I would be delighted if the First Minister did so. He might suggest that some of the money that will be wasted on the scheme could be applied to far better effect in Scotland and the rest of the country. In particular, he might examine some of the issues to do with our education system, which I will ask the First Minister about.

In the light of yesterday's report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, which shows that more than half the schools in Scotland have discipline problems, does the First Minister accept that his previous policy of reducing exclusions and keeping troublemakers in the classroom has comprehensively failed? Does he accept that if we are to tackle that serious problem in our schools, we need to know their extent? Accordingly, will he instruct the Minister for Education and Young People to reinstate publication of annual statistics on incidents of indiscipline in Scotland's schools?

The First Minister: I absolutely support the Minister for Education and Young People in his decision to ensure that in Scotland we have more accurate information on violence and discipline in schools than we had previously. I absolutely support the Minister for Education and Young People in his decision to ensure that head teachers use exclusions more effectively and more regularly, if they are required, than they have done in recent years.

However, I also absolutely support the Minister for Education and Young People in taking forward our policy on school discipline which, I remind Mr McLetchie, is trying to reverse years and years of poor discipline, social deprivation and the difficulties in our society that have led to a decline in young people's behaviour and attitudes, and to the breakdown of families. That has led to the situation in our schools, which has been tackled in recent years by a discipline policy that is thorough and which is hard on people who misbehave in our schools, but which also ensures that those people have a chance to reform their behaviour and to participate in our society. That is the challenge that faces this devolved Government and which we have taken up, but which was ignored in every single year of the Conservative Governments of the 1980s and 1990s. We are now acting on that and starting to make a difference.

David McLetchie: It is a long time since the First Minister was in a classroom. According to the statistics that his Government used to publish, there were about 1,000 violent attacks on teachers in our schools seven years ago, but in 2004—the last time figures were published—there were 7,000. This is not about years and years of neglect by the Tories; it is about years and years of neglect by the Scottish Executive.

The fact is that we used to have all the figures every year from every school, but now the Minister for Education and Young People is giving us a survey every three years. It is a fact that the latest figures we have—from 2004—show that there was an attack on a member of staff in a Scottish school every 12 minutes of the school day. However, the Scottish Executive is refusing to update those figures. Is not it the case that parents and teachers need to know, but the Scottish Executive does not want to know? Is not it the case that we do not have a Peacock but an ostrich running education in Scotland?

The First Minister: We used to have a Government of ostriches in this country.

When I was Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs in 2001, we examined school discipline and pulled together all the different interests in Scottish education and united them around a plan to tackle it. We were trying to turn around years and years of neglect—years and

years of Government policies that did not tackle school discipline but imposed bureaucracy on teachers and reduced the impact that they were able to make in the classroom. The reforms of the Conservatives in the 1980s reduced the authority of head teachers, cut back budgets, reduced the use of school uniform and did away with school award ceremonies and celebrations of pupils' success. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: All those policies were implemented under the Conservative Government in the 1980s and 1990s and are now being tackled and reversed by the partnership Government in a Scottish Parliament that we are proud of and which is now making a difference.

David McLetchie: This is truly incredible. The Government that did not tackle discipline in our schools is the Scottish Executive. It is the Scottish Executive's policy of having a target to reduce the number of exclusions that has tied the hands of our teachers and second-guessed their judgment. That is the First Minister's policy. Does he agree that we need to give power back to head teachers and our schools so that they can make the decisions that are necessary to maintain discipline without having constantly to look over their shoulders to local authorities or ministers? We should let them do the job. Would not that be a much more effective way to tackle the problem?

The First Minister: The Minister for Education and Young People has made it absolutely clear that head teachers should do their jobs and should be backed up not only by the Government but by local authorities. We also need to ensure that we tackle school discipline across the board, not only by ensuring that head teachers use their authority and the policies that they can implement but by making sure that the whole school takes the matter seriously and that parents accept their responsibilities, too.

Not that long ago, Mr McLetchie voted against a bill that allows us to place orders on parents to ensure that they accept their responsibilities. The problem is not all the fault of the teachers in our schools and it is not all the fault of our head teachers. Parents must also accept some responsibility. If Mr McLetchie had voted for the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill, he could perhaps—

David McLetchie: We did.

The First Minister: You did not vote for the bill all the way through its various stages.

David McLetchie: We did.

The First Minister: No you did not.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): We did.

The First Minister: No you did not.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): We did.

The First Minister: You did not, and we will remind Mr McLetchie every single week of his attitude to those measures, because they are measures that will make a wider difference.

The Presiding Officer: I call Richard Baker, who has a supplementary question on a constituency matter.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the First Minister join me in congratulating Grampian police on their use of the new powers of dispersal to tackle antisocial behaviour by a minority of the drivers who congregate on Aberdeen's Beach Boulevard? Does he share my surprise at comments by Mike Rumbles in yesterday's *Evening Express*, in which he described the measure as "bordering on illegality"? His comments will perplex and upset residents of the area who met police—

The Presiding Officer: Question.

Richard Baker: Residents overwhelmingly back the proposals to tackle the behaviour of boy racers that is wrecking the peace of their community.

The First Minister: My support for dispersal orders is on the record and I am proud that Parliament has passed them into law so that they can be used by Grampian police and others throughout Scotland. This week, Grampian police have led the way and I hope that elsewhere in Scotland people who need the peace and security that dispersal orders can bring will see the police and local authorities using them to good effect.

Identity Card Scheme

3. Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive will respond to the Scottish Parliament's decision in respect of the ID card scheme proposed by the UK Government. (S2F-1492)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The identity card scheme is being introduced by the United Kingdom Government throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. When the legislation has been fully enacted, Scots who apply for designated services that are the responsibility of the UK Government, such as passports or social security benefits, will face the same requirements as other UK residents. They will not need their ID cards to access devolved services unless the Scottish Parliament decides otherwise.

Shiona Baird: I remind the First Minister that Parliament has instructed the Scottish Executive to make a full statement on the intended use of the identity database by devolved institutions—it is the database that we are talking about. The Home

Secretary intends to force the Identity Cards Bill through before the general election, so we need a statement before the Easter recess. When will we receive such a statement?

The First Minister: I have just made a statement about access to devolved services. Whether to allow wider access to the database is a decision for the Home Secretary. I hope that that is the clarification that Shiona Baird was looking for. If she wants more precise information, she has only to ask.

Shiona Baird: I am disappointed that the First Minister cannot make a commitment. The rushed process at Westminster creates urgency not only for a statement from the Executive, but for scrutiny of the issues that affect Parliament's powers. Is the First Minister aware that clauses 17(6) and 18(4) of the bill will confer new powers on the Scottish Parliament to create enactments to require identity checks? Surely that will require a Sewel motion. When will we have that motion?

The First Minister: Those clauses will not do what is suggested—Shiona Baird's interpretation is wrong. She has the absolute guarantee from me that a Sewel motion will not be required.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Is the First Minister aware that Home Office minister Hazel Blears told the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee this week that

"some of our counter-terrorism powers will be disproportionately experienced by the Muslim community"

and that it is a reality that Muslims will be stopped and searched by the police more often than the rest of the public?

The Presiding Officer: I do not think that that relates to the question. Please come to the point.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the First Minister ensure that Scottish police forces are not party to such behaviour as part of a flawed and highly expensive ID card system? Will he confirm that only the Liberal Democrats in this Parliament and in the House of Commons have consistently opposed ID cards and not feebly noted them as the Greens, the nats and the Tories have?

The First Minister: I agree with Jeremy Purvis that the Liberal Democrats have a principled position on the matter, but I disagree strongly with that position. I will stand by the agreement on devolved services, but I believe that we must protect the security of the United Kingdom and of the people who live in it and that the proposal will contribute to that. At the same time, I want to ensure—as I am sure Hazel Blears does—that our police forces treat every section of the community with due respect and that every section of the community is involved in positively preserving

community security. In my discussions with Scotland's chief constables, I will ensure that that continues to be the case.

Sectarianism

4. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action is being taken to address sectarianism among Celtic and Rangers football supporters. (S2F-1493)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Representatives from Celtic and Rangers and their supporters' organisations were involved in the summit that we held in Glasgow on 14 February. They gave a clear commitment to playing their part in getting rid of bigoted behaviour from all parts of Scottish society.

Pauline McNeill: Does the First Minister agree that we should have a realistic expectation of what football clubs can do to tackle sectarianism? They can do more—for instance, they can identify and exclude fans who offend. Does he agree that the strategy will not succeed unless we acknowledge that sectarianism is a wider problem in Scottish society than the notion of the 90-minute bigot and that the agenda concerns tolerance and understanding of the history and culture of all Scotland's communities?

The First Minister: It is precisely because we want to provide additional powers in football grounds to ban people who are involved in sectarian and other behaviour that we are pursuing banning orders for football fans in our proposed police bill, which is now the subject of consultation.

We recognise that the problem of sectarianism goes far wider than football grounds and football clubs. We acknowledge the action that football clubs have taken and we support them in that and urge them to do more.

We will act on marches and parades and, with councils, on registration of people who sell paraphernalia outside football grounds. We will also act through, for example, the pack that we will produce this month for Scottish schools, to educate the next generation in the principles of respect and tolerance that we hope will underpin their behaviour.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): In his letter of 10 February to me, the First Minister rejected my proposal for an award along the lines of investors in people to recognise football clubs' good efforts to tackle sectarianism. Will the First Minister explain why he has rejected such a proposal in favour of one that regulates through licensing and does not incentivise clubs—using the stick and not the carrot—when the majority of Scottish Premier League clubs, including Celtic and Rangers, have supported my scheme?

The First Minister: It would be crazy to duplicate a scheme and the Scottish Football Association, which is the body that is responsible for the management of football clubs in Scotland, gave strong support to our initiative at the summit against sectarianism. The SFA licenses clubs and includes within those licences very strict conditions on clubs' approaches to sectarianism and related issues. The SFA has the best people to implement such a scheme and to ensure that clubs meet high standards and are recognised and rewarded for that.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): Since it is generally acknowledged that misuse of alcohol plays a major part in the most violent aspects of sectarian misbehaviour, does the First Minister think that the new Licensing (Scotland) Bill will help to deal with football hooliganism in general, and particularly sectarian hooliganism at football matches?

The First Minister: A major purpose of the Licensing (Scotland) Bill is to tackle the binge drinking and abuse of alcohol that takes place in Scotland, and which occasionally has an impact in and around football matches and on football supporters as well in other areas. The Licensing (Scotland) Bill, which was introduced this week, will give us the opportunity to put in place a tougher regime for those who abuse alcohol. As a result, I hope that it will reduce violence, intimidation and disorder around football matches and other major events.

The Presiding Officer: Question 5 has been withdrawn. The member is ill.

Fresh Talent Initiative

6. Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what contingency plans the Scottish Executive has devised in the event of failure of the fresh talent initiative. (S2F-1491)

The First Minister: I should thank Sandra White for her positive and confident statement about Scotland's future. I think that it is representative of the Scottish National Party today.

I can think of only one initiative to attract fresh talent back to Scotland that has failed in the past year and that was the leadership election of the Scottish National Party.

Ms White: I cannot say that I thank the First Minister for his reply, although it was what I expected. Perhaps I can give him some ideas on how we can attract to, or keep fresh talent in, Scotland; it would certainly happen with independence.

Does the First Minister agree that many skilled Scots leave the country each year because of the lack of opportunities and the lack of financial

incentives from a Government that is more used to rhetoric than to action? What does the First Minister propose to do to keep the young talent we already have in Scotland? How does he propose to support working Scots couples who wish to have more children but are prevented from doing so by a Government that has failed to implement the right set of economic incentives that would allow them to have a family and to stay in and belong to Scotland?

The First Minister: As this is the day before my party conference starts, I do not think I will have a better opportunity to explain to Sandra White the benefits that our Government has managed to bring in during the past eight years at Westminster. First of all, we have some of the best child care provision that Scotland has ever seen; that will be expanded after the general election should the Government be re-elected. Secondly, Scotland also has a better system of benefits than ever, including maternity and paternity benefits.

However, those are not solutions to Scotland's depopulation. We need to ensure that people in Scotland stay in Scotland. I welcome young Scots experiencing the rest of the world, but I also hope that many more of them will choose to stay here. They will do so because our economy is growing, because there are more jobs in Scotland than in any other European country apart from Denmark and because, as we saw in yesterday's survey, we in Scotland have some of the best cities in the whole United Kingdom; cities where people enjoy an exciting, modern and dynamic lifestyle.

We will also attract fresh talent from elsewhere. We will not do that through the girning and moaning of a Scottish National Party that does not believe in its country and which does not believe Scotland is worth living in. I believe that Scotland is the best small country in the world and I believe that Scotland is worth living in. People will want to come here and when they do, they will get a welcome from this partnership Government.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): People do want to come here and in my constituency we have a large and growing number of citizens from eastern Europe—Poland, in particular. However, I tell the First Minister that we have a problem with their knowledge of the English language. Those people are often highly qualified, but because of their lack of English, they are doing fairly menial jobs. Does the First Minister agree that we must try to co-ordinate efforts among councils, enterprise agencies and the Scottish Executive to ensure that those welcome workers are taught English as quickly as possible?

The First Minister: There are a number of schemes in our colleges and elsewhere to encourage people who come to this country to

learn English or to improve their skills in English. Those are good schemes, but we are currently committed to a review of them following a request from the Scottish Refugee Council. We will look to improve the schemes further in the years to come.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Listening to the First Minister today, one would not think that population decline was a serious issue in Scotland. The First Minister will be aware that more than 600 million European Union citizens currently have a right to live and work in Scotland without recourse to any fresh talent schemes. Why does the First Minister think that so few of those 600 million EU citizens currently exercise that right?

The First Minister: That is yet another distortion of the facts from the Conservative party. The number of people who come to Scotland from elsewhere in the EU as a percentage of the overall numbers of people who come to Britain has increased dramatically since the fresh talent initiative began. That is a good sign that we are sending out the right signal to Europe that we are a welcoming country that wants to attract people to come and make a contribution to our society and economy. When they do that, we ensure that we have a strong economy with more jobs in Scotland than we have ever had. Those people can make their contribution to a growing economy that would not exist if the Conservatives were to get back into power.

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Why, if everything is so rosy in our country, are so many people leaving?

The First Minister: Yet again, we have that constant refrain from the SNP that is not true. Scotland has been a country of out-migration for at least one century if not for two. Now, at the start of the 21st century, the balance between in-migration and out-migration in Scotland is level for the first time in a very long time. In any other country in the world, nationalist parties would celebrate that rather than try to run it down. The only people in Scotland today who are running down this country and who do not believe that it is the best small country in the world are in the Scottish National Party and the Conservatives. Both parties should be ashamed of that.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Given all that the First Minister has said and given his best intentions, which he has related to us, will he tell me why—if all that he has said is true—top scientists are leaving the Hannah Research Institute in Ayrshire? Why has Britain's probably most-respected diabetes expert had to move south of the border? If all that the First Minister said is true, that would not happen, so why is it happening?

The First Minister: It is happening because we do not lock people up in this country and refuse them opportunities to move around and develop their scientific skills elsewhere. Actually, that is exactly what the SNP wants to do—it wants to hold people in. We used to think that it wanted border guards to keep people out, but now it wants them to keep people in. That party gets more ridiculous all the time.

I tell Mr Gallie that scientists are coming to this country all the time. It will always be the case that some will choose to move and to develop their research skills elsewhere. Last year I spoke to David Lane from the University of Dundee, who has gone to Singapore. He will return to Scotland, but he has gone to stretch his mind, to develop his knowledge and to make contacts for Scotland while he is there. He will continue to manage his unit in Dundee while he is abroad. There are many other people like him, but there are also many others who are coming to this country. One of the reasons—

Phil Gallie: Look at the Hannah Research Institute.

The First Minister: Wait for it. One of the reasons why so many people are coming here, and why so many more will come here, is that Scottish higher education is about to get the biggest-ever level of investment in one, two or three years of investment over the course of the current spending review. That is in stark contrast to the cuts that would exist in the budget were the Conservatives to win any general election this year.

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:00.

14:00

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Environment and Rural Development

Food Self-sufficiency

1. Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will take any action to counteract the decline in food self-sufficiency. (S2O-5626)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): Self-sufficiency is not an explicit objective of agriculture or food policy. Scotland cannot be fully self-sufficient in the range of food products that consumers now demand. However, the Executive encourages exporting, supports local food initiatives and prioritises the use of local and home-grown produce in its support for processing and marketing.

Mr Arbuckle: I raised my question because United Kingdom self-sufficiency has dropped 12 per cent in the past decade and within Scotland we have lost 1 million sheep, a third of our pig herd and 20,000 suckler cows.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): Is there a question, Mr Arbuckle?

Mr Arbuckle: Yes. With the removal of production subsidies, will the Scottish Executive increase support for Scottish food producers?

Ross Finnie: I am sure, as Alasdair Morgan observed while Mr Arbuckle was asking his question, that he did not mean that we have lost those sheep—that might be carelessness, rather than a permanent decline in production.

The issue is how we promote Scottish food and how we ensure that there are markets for it. As I said in my first answer, I am not wholly persuaded that we can simply ignore the different foods that consumers demand. We have to support indigenous development. In Mr Arbuckle's constituency, problems were faced in the fruit sector, given the narrow window for production. The use of grant and support expanded production, particularly of strawberries. Production was also increased in Scotland as a whole.

I am anxious that we should take every opportunity to use existing mechanisms to promote the market for Scottish food and to ensure that we react to the market by raising quality, so that when we say that Scottish food is a quality product, that is not just a slogan, but is

supported by the serious standards that we set in Scotland. That is the only way in which we can persuade the consumer at home and abroad to buy increasing amounts of Scottish produce.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): One of the Executive's key targets on food self-sufficiency is in the organic action plan, which aims to increase organic production in Scotland to supply at least 70 per cent of the Scottish demand for organic products that can be produced here. Is not the fact that spending on the organic aid scheme will drop off dramatically in the next year an indication that the action plan is failing to encourage farmers to supply organic produce for consumption at home?

Ross Finnie: No, I do not agree. The notion that a product will succeed only if Government subsidises it is the wrong way of looking at the issue. In addition to our whole-hearted support for the organic plan and the food strategy to which I referred in my answer to Andrew Arbuckle, we are pointing out that we have not only quality food, but a range of organic produce for which we want to expand the market. We can supply that market within the limitations of climatic conditions in Scotland, which do not enable us to produce the full range of product. However, the issue is not necessarily about subsidy, although I accept what might have been an implicit criticism of how we have projected our wish to supply the market. We remain wholly committed to the organic action plan.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): To pick up the point that the minister made about stimulating demand for local produce, far too often public bodies use the excuse of compulsory competitive tendering not to use local products. What steps have the minister and his department taken to advise public bodies so that they can observe the law in as creative a fashion as possible in sourcing local products while still following all European Union regulations on tendering?

Ross Finnie: As Alasdair Morgan may be aware, we have issued guidance on healthy and wholesome food. The most recent guidance came from my colleague Rhona Brankin. The area in which we can most easily place some emphasis on local produce is seasonal produce. There is nothing in the regulations that prevents us from stipulating a requirement for wholesome food on a seasonal basis. We have issued that instruction to the relevant public bodies—particularly health and education authorities—to alert them to the fact that they can take that direction in their specifications. We hope that that will be helpful in relation to sourcing local produce.

Waste Services (Efficiencies)

2. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures its Environment and Rural Affairs Department will take to help local authorities to deliver efficiency gains in waste services. (S2O-5667)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): We encourage all local authorities in the implementation of the national waste strategy to share best practice and to work together to achieve economies of scale when developing waste treatment infrastructure.

Scott Barrie: The minister will be aware of the huge improvements that have been made by the local authority in my area in relation to recycling and waste services. Fife Council has gone from second bottom to the top of the national league. Will the sums that are available not only to Fife Council but to other local authorities continue so that those improvements can be encouraged and maintained?

Ross Finnie: I join Scott Barrie in congratulating Fife Council on the efforts that it has made so far. I remind him and everyone else in the chamber that we built up the national waste strategy on an area basis to encourage efficiency, which is the issue that Scott Barrie raises in his question. We did not want every local authority to invest in expensive capital infrastructure for waste processing, because that would have led to duplication within areas. The area waste plans were designed not just to encourage a sense of momentum but to ensure that we achieve best value by sharing facilities and building a network of capital infrastructure to deliver on the national waste plan.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): At a recent briefing that West Lothian Council held for me and my colleague Bristow Muldoon, the council raised a particular problem that it has encountered in developing the waste strategy. The minister referred to the fact that the strategy is being implemented on an area basis, but West Lothian Council is experiencing difficulties with bringing local authorities together because they are at different stages. The requirement to submit a plan within three months is causing them some difficulties. Will the minister comment on that?

Ross Finnie: The basic framework should be in existence already. The area waste plans were developed by grouping the local authorities into eight area structures, which then came forward with their plans to meet the targets that the Executive has set. It is the aggregation of the eight area waste plans that makes up the national waste strategy. I am disappointed if difficulties are arising in a particular area because of the different rates of progress that the respective local authorities are making, but I hope that because the area waste

plan was produced at the outset by the authorities there will be some means of resolving any difficulties. I will be happy to have my department, which is overseeing the allocation of funding for the national waste strategy, engage with the member's local authority to try to resolve the matter.

Waste Water Treatment (Odours)

3. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to reduce offensive odours at waste water treatment works. (S2O-5655)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Lewis Macdonald): We will publish a voluntary code of practice on odour control in April and we will consult on a statutory code in the autumn with the intention of bringing it into force in April 2006 in line with the provisions of the Water Services etc (Scotland) Bill. As I said in my statement to Parliament on 9 February, I have set Scottish Water the objective of minimising odour nuisance at 35 waste water treatment works as part of the quality and standards III investment programme, pending the implementation of the statutory code.

Des McNulty: As the minister may know, my constituency is doubly blighted by waste water treatment plants. On the one hand we have Dalmuir sewage works, which takes the effluent from Clydebank and the west side of Glasgow, and on the other we are about to have the delight of the Renfrewshire plant on the shore opposite Clydebank. Given the experience in Dalmuir of offensive odours that continued for a considerable period—much of that has now been corrected—will he ensure that the regulator is making sufficient provision for the appropriate shedding and guarding of offensive odours and for containment in plants to prevent odours from affecting nearby communities and in particular my community in Clydebank?

Lewis Macdonald: I am pleased to hear that matters at Dalmuir have improved. The intention behind introducing the code is to tackle existing problems and to give developers guidance on the measures that they need to put in place when developing new plant. I am happy to assure Des McNulty that I expect the regulator, Scottish Water and its contractors to ensure that any new plant is constructed with that in mind and that necessary mitigating action is taken at existing plant.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The minister will be aware from previous questions that Scottish Water's new waterworks have produced particularly offensive odours in the Argyll towns of Inverary and Campbeltown. Does he realise the effect that that can have on tourism, on which those towns rely? What will he do to

prevent such a situation from happening again? What will he do about the places that are in that situation?

Lewis Macdonald: If Mr McGrigor reflects on my initial answer, he will recognise that the introduction of a statutory code of practice and the instruction to Scottish Water to minimise odour nuisance at several existing plants are intended to tackle existing problems and to put in place guidance to prevent such problems from arising at new plant.

Calf Registration

4. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it will take to address the backlog of cattle that have missed the 27-day calf registration period. (S2O-5612)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): It will come as no surprise to Alex Johnstone that the issue is complex. As he knows, animals that miss the European Union legislative deadline of 27 days are registered on the database and issued with a notice of registration. Such animals can be bred from but can move only direct to a knacker's yard and must not enter the food chain.

Since full compliance with the deadline, the number of late registrations has fallen by 85 per cent to just under 1 per cent of the total cattle registered. We continue to work closely with the industry to reduce that further. That work includes a high-profile joint industry publicity campaign to remind keepers to register animals on time and provision of a fast-track last-minute registration process, in addition to online registration. We are reviewing the appeals procedure to reflect better the problems that the industry is experiencing.

Alex Johnstone: I thank the minister for that answer, but that still leaves us with the problem of the backlog. Has he considered employing genetic sequencing to identify calves correctly and match them to their mothers so that they can be added to the register with full status?

Ross Finnie: As the member is fully aware, the difficulties arise from the very different interpretation that we originally placed on the 27-day rule. At the outset, my department was relaxed about giving reasonable leeway when interpreting the 27-day rule, in the knowledge that the movement of an animal without a full passport was restricted. The issue is not necessarily matching the animal. The issuing of a notice of registration means that we know where an animal is and that it has missed the deadline.

I deeply regret that, as a result of abuses throughout the European Union, the EU auditors interpreted the provision narrowly. Although it is of

no comfort to the member, we received a letter recently that said that the much stricter interpretation that we are now applying is wholly in line with the auditors' view of how the rule should be applied.

I remain concerned about the backlog to which the member refers. We continue to work with the industry and the European Commission to resolve the matter. Historically, that was a question of interpretation. I hope that we can continue to raise the issue with the Commission and to seek a resolution. However, I point out that notices of registration are now being issued for less than 1 per cent of total registrations.

Climate Change Programme

5. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in reviewing the Scottish climate change programme. (S2O-5652)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): We continue to make progress. Since the review of the Scottish climate change programme got under way last autumn, we have made progress in several areas. Our evaluation of the impact of key Executive policies is well under way. The work to project Scottish greenhouse gas emissions and, separately, carbon dioxide emissions to 2020 is progressing well. We have some base information on our assessment of the practicability of introducing Scottish climate change targets and we are making progress on that. We are now reviewing the responses to our public consultation with a view to publishing an analysis of the revised Scottish climate change programme later this year.

Christine May: A major part of the climate change programme is about encouraging industry to use greener fuels. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that industry has access to more environmentally friendly and less polluting fuel sources such as—he will not be surprised to hear me saying this—biomass in co-firing and biofuels for use in road transport?

Ross Finnie: The Executive requires to work on its response to the climate change programme to highlight the issues that the member has just raised. We also have to work very closely with the United Kingdom Government to ensure that the respective taxation regimes that have been adjusted continue to act as an incentive to people to use those fuels or to convert to using them. Even within agriculture policy, there is a range of issues around utilising certain energy crops, biofuels, short rotation and coppice crops. There is a range of options, all of which will require to be worked up and incorporated into the revised climate change programme.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): Following the motion on energy efficiency that was passed by the Parliament last week, there is a clear consensus that tackling climate change and fuel poverty can be done not only by changing energy sources, but by reducing energy use through increasing energy efficiency. Does the minister accept that the Scottish Executive now has a real mandate for an ambitious national programme of energy efficiency? Will he accept that there is a need for energy efficiency targets such as those that my colleague Shiona Baird suggests in her member's bill, so that we can drive the process towards energy efficiency?

Ross Finnie: In launching the review of the climate change programme, we made it clear that the development of an energy efficiency strategy was central and we welcome the additional, valuable contribution that the debates in the chamber and in parliamentary committees have made to that process. Part of the process will involve arriving at the policy instruments and deciding what the objectives, targets and outcomes should be. We will consider whether there are appropriate areas where targets are meaningful and can be achieved; there are some areas where that is the case. That is all part of the process in which we are currently engaged. I stress that energy efficiency is and has been accepted as key to the climate change programme.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Most members will have received today a flyer from the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, which tells us, among other information, that renewables plants in the north-west Highlands will have to pay an extra 9p per megawatt to transmit their electricity compared with installations elsewhere in the country. How will that 9p extra charge in the areas that are most suitable for many sources of renewables generation help the Executive to meet its targets?

Ross Finnie: As the member is aware, the Executive continues to hold discussions with Ofgem and the energy companies. On the face of it, there could be a conflict with the pricing mechanisms, although we have to read carefully about the costings of access to the grid and transmission across the grid. The issue is not quite as simple as even I thought; I thought that we were dealing simply with an increased cost of access to the grid, whereas we are talking about transmission costs. We are reviewing the matter because we are committed to ensuring that renewable energy can be developed and sourced anywhere in Scotland without commercial disadvantage. My colleague the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning is in discussions with Ofgem on that subject.

Climate Change (Energy Saving)

6. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it will take to ensure that it makes an equitable contribution to addressing climate change, for example, by introducing energy-saving measures in buildings for which it has responsibility. (S2O-5615)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): Our on-going review of the Scottish climate change programme is considering the scope for strengthening existing measures and introducing new ones, which will take account of responses received to our public consultation. As I made clear in answers to earlier questions, energy efficiency, including of Executive buildings, will continue to be a key part of our climate change programme. Our revised programme will also set out how we see the contribution of the building element to our overall climate change programme.

Donald Gorrie: The Executive indirectly funds a wide range of buildings, from large ones such as prisons to housing association houses. Will the minister ensure that proper attention is paid to measures such as the use of solar and wind power? We sit in a building that failed notably to take advantage of those opportunities.

Ross Finnie: Donald Gorrie makes a valid point. In discussions about our review of the climate change programme and in discussions about public procurement, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform was alert to the need—for both environmental and value-for-money reasons—to include such considerations in the Executive procurement of the large range of buildings over which we have control, as Donald Gorrie made clear.

Health and Community Care

Terrestrial Trunked Radio (Health Effects)

1. Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive whether any studies on the health effects of the Airwave police communications system, TETRA, are being undertaken by the national health service. (S2O-5619)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin): No such studies are being undertaken by the NHS in Scotland. However, the issue of possible health effects caused by signals from terrestrial trunked radio equipment was comprehensively addressed by the National Radiological Protection Board's independent advisory group on non-ionising radiations in its report "Possible Health Effects from Terrestrial Trunked Radio" in 2001. The advisory group concluded that it is unlikely that

TETRA could pose a risk to health, but made eight recommendations for future research to address the remaining areas of uncertainty. Those recommendations have been pursued in comprehensive research studies funded by the Home Office. No new evidence has emerged from those studies to challenge the advisory group's view.

Mr Ruskell: Claims have been made in Fife about a potential correlation between the increasing incidence of motor neurone disease and the operation since 1997 of TETRA technology by Dolphin Telecom UK Ltd. Certain communities have already been exposed to TETRA emissions from Dolphin masts for up to eight years. Does the minister agree that there is a strong case for using the eight years of TETRA experience in Scotland to examine communities close to Dolphin's sites throughout the country to determine with as much certainty as possible whether there is a correlation between the incidence of motor neurone disease and the operation of TETRA and that such a study should be completed before the roll-out and activation of the Airwave police system?

Rhona Brankin: I am aware of the allegations of a cluster of motor neurone disease cases in the proximity of the TETRA mast in Fife. We are aware that the matter has been raised in both the Scottish and Westminster Parliaments and highlighted in the media. Indeed, officials have been in contact with the director of public health in Fife to confirm what action Fife NHS Board has taken to investigate those allegations.

The board has taken action and an environmental hazard investigation team has been set up with a remit to look at allegations of ill health in the Drumcarrow area of north-east Fife. That includes representation from the public health department, councillors, community councillors, local pressure groups, Health Protection Scotland, Fife Council and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. A separate technical sub-group has been set up to plan and supervise the information-seeking stage of the investigation. Of course, the Home Office's position is wholly in keeping with the approach taken by the Scottish Executive Health Department on a public health issue of that nature.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Does the minister recall that much of the concern that campaigners have expressed is about electrical oscillations in the frequency range 15Hz to 25Hz? With that in mind, if the Executive has further contact with people who are doing research on the matter, will it consider research into the cathode ray tubes that are used in televisions in homes, the signal strength of which is 40 times greater than that of any of the mobile

communications systems that are used? Might we have the benefit of real science, rather than spoof science and speculation on the matter?

Rhona Brankin: I am reassured that more than adequate research is going on and I will be more than happy to provide Stewart Stevenson with details about the various research projects that are being undertaken and to address any concerns that he might still have.

Accident and Emergency Services (Glasgow)

2. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will review the provision of accident and emergency services in the Greater Glasgow NHS Board area. (S2O-5593)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): In the debate on the Glasgow acute services review that took place on 12 September 2002, Malcolm Chisholm, the then Minister for Health and Community Care, recognised the particular concerns that had been expressed about the proposed number of A and E units in Glasgow. He went on to say that he supported a review of the planning assumptions that underpinned the decision to have two major A and E units, at Glasgow royal infirmary and at the Southern general hospital. NHS Greater Glasgow gave a commitment to undertake such a review and carried out the review during the summer and autumn of 2004. I understand that the board considered a report on the outcome of the review on 22 February and I expect to receive that report and notification of the board's deliberations soon.

Pauline McNeill: Will the minister carefully consider the implications for greater Glasgow of endorsing the move to two units? I am pleased that the approach is being reviewed. Will he further consider the view of the accident and emergency sub-committee of NHS Greater Glasgow, which is that it is not acceptable for the 999 service to refer patients to units such as the proposed unit at Gartnavel hospital, which would have no accident and emergency service or consultants? Does he agree that the way forward and the best option for Glasgow is to have three A and E units, which would ensure that the service has the capacity and the resilience to deal with all aspects of accidents and ill health?

Mr Kerr: I fully expect the board's proposals to fulfil those obligations. In relation to emergency care, we are trying to ensure that minor as well as major injuries are dealt with more sensitively and that patients are streamed to the most appropriate level of care. I understand that the Glasgow plan proposes that there should be two full A and E units and three emergency receiving units, which would mean that general practitioners would be able to refer patients directly to hospital without

their first having to go to A and E and wait there to see a consultant. Minor injury units would be provided in all five acute sites and a system of streaming patients would ensure that patients with minor injuries did not have to wait beside people who had suffered major trauma, such as road accident victims. The strategy that is being adopted is consistent with the idea of streaming patients into the most appropriate care in the service.

Allied to that is the role of the Scottish Ambulance Service. The number of paramedics in Glasgow has increased from 78 in 2002 to 143. From this month, there will be a paramedic in every front-line ambulance in Glasgow. The approach will ensure that people receive the right care at the right location and I hope that it will improve the quality of care and reduce the time that people must wait for care. I await the review document, but on the general approach to A and E services it is right and sensible to stream patients to the most appropriate level of care in our health services.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Will the minister actively encourage NHS Greater Glasgow and Argyll and Clyde NHS Board to work together? When we add the statistics for A and E attendance in my constituency to the statistics for the north-west corridor of Glasgow, it becomes clear that the argument for a third A and E unit at Gartnavel hospital is entirely justified.

Mr Kerr: Patient flows are an interesting area that needs to be examined and the boards are working together on the matter. The GP receiving unit at Gartnavel might be enhanced and developed as a result of that work, but I have not yet seen the reports that will indicate what the thinking is in Glasgow. We must ensure that people get access, in time, to the right location and the right care. That is what the strategy is about throughout Scotland. I will certainly look out for the issue that the member raises about NHS Argyll and Clyde and NHS Greater Glasgow working together. I await the report, which will come to me in due course.

Dental Services (Grampian)

3. Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when the Minister or Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care will visit Grampian to gather information on the region's dental services. (S2O-5598)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin): I will visit the Grampian NHS Board area in April and the Minister for Health and Community Care was there on 16 February.

Richard Lochhead: I am delighted to hear that the minister will visit the region in April. She will find that national health service dental services are imploding and are facing a state of crisis, although the Minister for Health and Community Care appeared to deny that when he visited the area a couple of weeks ago.

I say to the minister that dentists in Grampian are paying close attention to Scotland's two dental schools. They are very concerned by the situation at Glasgow dental school, as the General Dental Council has just released a report that is quite scathing and refers to "fundamental and ongoing problems". Will she use this opportunity to respond to that report and outline the steps that she intends to take to ensure that both of Scotland's dental schools can continue, so that the current shortage of dentists elsewhere in the country can be addressed?

Rhona Brankin: I am fully aware of the General Dental Council's report. I met the GDC in December and discussed its concerns. I have already asked officials to arrange a meeting with Muir Russell to ensure that the relevant changes have been made and that the issues that are raised in the report are being dealt with.

In December, I instructed my officials to liaise with Glasgow dental school and the University of Glasgow to ensure that progress was being made, and I am confident that progress has been and is being made. The report was of an inspection in 2003 and much has changed since then. The purpose of the inspections is to drive up standards—it is no surprise that the report was critical, given that that is what the inspection aims to do. However, I am confident that Professor Jeremy Bagg, who is the new head of the dental school, has taken timely and effective action with Greater Glasgow NHS Board to ensure that sterilisation, for example, is of the highest standard. I have been assured by the chief dental officer that patient safety has never been in question.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Does the minister agree that she does not need to visit Grampian to gather information on the region's dental crisis? The Executive is fully aware of the extent of the problem. Does she also agree that the situation is so acute in Scotland that the Executive needs to announce its plans within the month, rather than wait for developments south of the border? Scottish solutions are needed to solve a dental crisis that is particularly acute in the north-east.

Rhona Brankin: We are conscious of the challenges that face dental services throughout Scotland, particularly in the north-east. That is why we will announce plans for dental services in the very near future.

National Health Service (Technology)

4. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it plans to use technology to cut waiting times, improve efficiency and increase access to services in the NHS. (S2O-5585)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): We are committed to modernising the NHS and to reducing waiting for patients further. Last week we announced record levels of capital investment over the next three years. That will help to ensure that NHS Scotland is better equipped and resourced than ever before to modernise services and improve the quality and responsiveness of care for patients. We have allocated £125 million specifically for the provision of medical equipment, including centrally directed resources for diagnostic equipment such as linear accelerators.

Mr McNeil: When I visited Aberdeen's Robert Gordon University during the February recess, top researchers there showed me an array of innovations that could revolutionise the running of the national health service. If the technology to manage bed allocations better, to streamline administration of drugs and to do much more already exists, how can we make it easier and faster to get those developments out of the labs and into the wards?

Mr Andy Kerr: The member and I must have nearly crossed paths. I also visited the Robert Gordon University to see the excellent facilities for nurse training within the university campus. Work is already going on within our health service to ensure that modern information technology systems support the efficiency to which he refers. We certainly want to ensure that IT is used to integrate service delivery, cut out unwanted and unnecessary effort and make information available. I am focused, through our e-health team in the Executive, on ensuring that that happens.

We have some good innovations. For instance, all general practitioners in Scotland can now access test results from hospitals and 40 per cent of referral letters go directly from the GP's computer to the hospital, without the need for snail mail, as it is described these days. I recently heard about systems at the Townhead GP practice in Irvine that allow patients to log on to find out information about themselves, to book appointments, to renew prescriptions and to access their test results with their GP's comments attached.

I reassure the member that we are doing our best with regard to technology. It is not a question of resources but a question of choices—of choosing the best pathways to take with information technology.

Our e-health programme board has a research and development group that is looking at some of the fantastic innovations throughout Scotland. I am sure that we will want to develop some of them in future. Indeed, I want to bring ideas from the lab into the practice, for the benefit of patients. I would argue that, to an extent, that is happening already, but there is clearly room for improvement. I assure the member that that will be my direction of travel over the next few months.

NHS 24

5. Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has conducted a review of NHS 24. (S2O-5596)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Rhona Brankin): The Executive announced last week that an independent review group is being established to identify performance improvements that should be implemented by NHS 24.

Rob Gibson: What prominence will be given to evidence of misdiagnosis by NHS 24 staff, such as was alleged by a patient in Caithness earlier this year? She was told that she was suffering from constipation, but four hours later, through her own initiative, she was operated on for acute appendicitis in a hospital 20 miles away.

Rhona Brankin: A total of 31,000 calls are handled by NHS 24 every month. Of the calls received, 24,800—80 per cent—are answered within 30 seconds of the end of the welcome message. Around 18,000 are dealt with straight away without the need for a call-back and, of the balance, more than 90 per cent of those assessed as priority 1 calls are returned within the one-hour call-back target. That is not to say that I do not express concern at particular cases such as the one that Mr Gibson raises. I acknowledge that there seems to have been a particular problem in that case. That is exactly why we have asked for a review of NHS 24.

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I have visited NHS 24 as recently as last evening, and it is clear to me that, apart from staff shortages, the greatest strain on the service has come about as a result of general practitioners opting out of out-of-hours care, especially at weekends, coupled with some lack of understanding by callers of how the out-of-hours system operates.

The Executive has left the publicising of new out-of-hours provision to individual health boards, with variable effectiveness. Does the minister agree that, with hindsight, it might have been better for the Executive to run a public awareness campaign about the changes to out-of-hours provision? After the review has taken place, and

after the current problems have, I hope, been ironed out, will she consider such a campaign for NHS 24 to raise awareness and restore public confidence in the system?

Rhona Brankin: Mrs Milne may not know this, but we have already run a public information campaign about NHS 24. If the review reveals a need to provide more public information, ministers will look into that.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I ask the minister to ensure that the NHS 24 review considers the particular issues faced by rural communities such as Killin and Crianlarich in my constituency, so that—as the out-of-hours local GP service is phased out and ambulance rapid response service with medical cover is phased in—NHS 24 will interface effectively with the new services. The nearest doctor may be one and a half hours away.

Rhona Brankin: NHS 24 is already very aware of issues to do with remote and rural areas, where people have particular needs. NHS 24 is listening to the views of local communities and acting on them. It will have to take the views of those communities into account when it further develops its services.

Some of the ideas that NHS 24 is currently exploring include the possibility of setting up a dedicated team of front-line staff to support the provision of care in remote and rural communities, and an investigation of how to make the best use of NHS 24's local knowledge databases and local NHS partners such as GPs and nurses, who have a wealth of in-depth local knowledge and expertise.

General Questions

European Union Constitutional Treaty

1. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Her Majesty's Government regarding the referendum on the European Union constitutional treaty. (S2O-5649)

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe): Although the referendum is a reserved matter, the Scottish Executive is in close touch with the United Kingdom Government to ensure that Scottish interests are properly reflected.

Irene Oldfather: I do not know whether the minister has had the opportunity to read through the new constitution that has been published—I am sure that Mr Gallie will have done—but does he agree that the clear expression of competencies that is set out in title III—in particular, in paragraph 2 of article I-11—is to be

welcomed? Given that he knows about the clear benefits that membership of the EU has for Scotland, will he, along with me, be campaigning for a yes vote in the referendum?

Mr McCabe: We have always been enthusiastic members of the EU. We think that the new constitution promotes the kind of Europe that we are comfortable with, which is a wider, more flexible, more streamlined Europe that allows regional legislative bodies such as ours to have a greater say. That increases our ability to influence the member state and the member state's engagement with the EU. We regard all those things as being highly positive and in the best interests of Scotland.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Is the minister aware that the finalisation of the EU constitution has been a principal objective of successive EU presidencies? Is he aware that the Tory UK presidency that will commence this year will ensure the immediate implementation of a referendum on the constitution? If the Tory Government that emerges from the general election does not have an outright majority, will he urge his colleagues at Westminster to support the idea of holding an early referendum?

Mr McCabe: We are dealing with hypothetical situations that are extremely unlikely to arise, to say the least. There will be many developments in the new Europe before the European delegation from this country is again Tory led.

We look forward to continuing our engagement in the process and to the UK Government extending its influence within the new Europe, making known its point of view and making our views more relevant to and more accepted by other member states. Through that process, we will gain a wider acceptance of the benefits of the EU for all inhabitants of the UK.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Is the minister aware that many people in the Labour and trade union movement will oppose the EU constitutional treaty on the grounds that it will move Europe in the wrong direction by binding us to free-market economics, further privatisation of public services and less accountability to the electorate? Does he share my concern about the proposed change in the rules that will make it far easier for the EU to take areas such as health and education into the general agreement on trade in services, which could ultimately mean the end of publicly owned and publicly accountable health and education systems?

Mr McCabe: I am aware that many members of the Labour and trade union movement regard the EU as a bastion for the improvement of working conditions. They view the EU as a positive organisation from the point of view of social

cohesion and the numerous benefits that it has brought to people in this country. As with any organisation, there are different views on different aspects of it, but no single point of view should detract from the fact that the EU has brought considerable benefits to ordinary, hard-working families here in Scotland and throughout the UK.

Elaine Smith: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My question was about the EU constitutional treaty, not the EU. The minister perhaps made a mistake in the answer that he gave.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order. That is a matter for the minister.

Mr McCabe *rose—*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is all right, minister. You can sit down because you have answered the question.

Sale of Sports Facilities

2. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Executive what recent representations it has received regarding the sale of playing fields and other sports facilities. (S20-5581)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): The Executive has not received any representations recently on the sale of playing fields and other sports facilities.

Dennis Canavan: Is the minister aware of the concern about big business interests targeting sports clubs and trying to bribe members to sell off their premises and facilities for projects such as housing and other developments, thereby depriving communities of much-needed sports opportunities? Will the Executive respond positively to the petitions on the matter that were presented to the Parliament earlier this week, so that valuable sports facilities that were founded and paid for by previous generations are not sold off simply to line the pockets of a few greedy individuals?

Patricia Ferguson: I am aware of some cases that are similar to those to which Dennis Canavan referred. Obviously, where such facilities are in private ownership, it is entirely up to the owners as to how they dispose of their assets. That said, planning regulations could be used to mitigate against such loss. None of us wants to see facilities lost where that can be avoided. I will look at the petitions with a great deal of interest.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I welcome what the minister said about the planning system. Those of us who will scrutinise the forthcoming planning bill will bear that in mind. Is there anything that the Executive can do in the meantime to stop the loss of those facilities to

communities in the name of shameless profiteering? Also, would it be appropriate for a duty to be placed on sports clubs—similar to that which is placed on charities—to hand on their assets to an organisation that has similar objectives to their own when clubs are dissolved?

Patricia Ferguson: As I indicated, the matter is in the hands of those who are in ownership of the facilities. I assume that, if someone takes the opportunity of joining such a club, they should have an interest in the aims and objectives of the club. If so, surely they look to protect those aims and objectives.

The Executive's intention is to try to ensure that, wherever possible, we retain playing fields for public use. There have been occasions in the past, in cases involving schools in particular, when sportscotland has been able to enter into negotiations and to provide, or help to influence the provision of, improved facilities. In those cases, other uses have been found for the less satisfactory facilities that the improved facilities replaced.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Should the judgment be that there is no opportunity to tackle the issue under the charities reform legislation that is currently before the Parliament, will the minister consider discussing with Westminster colleagues changes to the Companies Act 1989 in respect of community interest companies? Will she raise the question whether it should be mandatory for such facilities to be designated as CICs, as that would bring them under the kind of controls to which my colleague Patrick Harvie made reference?

Patricia Ferguson: I am always willing to look at any opportunity that might arise to protect playing fields and open spaces in this country. The question whether the route that Mr Stevenson suggests is one that would be appropriate is another matter, but I am more than happy to look at his suggestion.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): John Gold of the Scottish Schools Football Association has said that

"The greatest frustration for those who are trying to provide football and develop the game at grass-roots level is the lack of suitable playing fields."

How can the minister justify the sale of sports pitches and other sports facilities when, in 2002, the New Opportunities Fund for physical education and sport allocated £52 million to local authorities to develop sports facilities for school and community use?

Patricia Ferguson: Nothing that I said justifies the accusation that Mr McGrigor has made. From 1996, when national planning policy guideline 11 came into place, to March of last year, some 397

planning applications for the development of playing fields were made. As a result, the overall net loss of playing fields in Scotland is some 115, a figure that should be compared with the 6,000 playing fields that are still in use.

The majority of pitches that were lost were blaes or ash—facilities that we are trying to phase out—and many of those that were lost were converted to grass. The figure for the net loss of blaes and ash pitches was 137 and the figure for grass pitches was 37. The figure for replacements includes some 59 synthetic turf pitches, which, unlike the blaes and ash pitches about which I have just spoken, are available for use throughout the year. On many occasions, the other knock-on effect was that better changing facilities were provided, thereby giving the people who use the facilities a quality experience. It is not all doom and gloom as the member tried to suggest.

Workplace Segregation

3. Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to encourage the end of segregation of men and women in the workplace. (S2O-5578)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson): The Executive, in partnership with a range of other organisations in the close the gap project, continues to raise awareness about occupational segregation and other reasons for the gender pay gap. We also continue to encourage employers and employees in Scotland to take action to close that gap.

We have been contributing to related United Kingdom work on the proposed duty on public bodies to promote equality between women and men and in relation to the Women and Work Commission. Within the Executive, we are also doing work in several areas to encourage women into traditionally male-dominated occupations and vice versa. Work to date has been focused on the police, child care, construction, teacher education and gender stereotyping in schools.

Ms White: I thank the minister for that detailed reply. I presume that he is aware of the findings of a recent study by the University of Glasgow, which highlighted that Scotland is blighted by discrimination in the workplace, where the outdated stereotypes in relation to men's and women's jobs are as prevalent as ever, regardless of what the Executive has done. Is he concerned by those findings? Does he agree that segregation at the level shown in the report has a deeply damaging impact on the Scottish economy, because it means that we do not make full use of men and women in different jobs?

Allan Wilson: I am not familiar with the details of the report to which the member refers, but I will try to get up to speed with it. I accept the basic premise that the gender gap in pay is damaging to the economy and to individuals, which is why we are involved in many initiatives to try to close the gap. However, in comparison to the rest of the UK, Scotland is closing the gap more quickly, of which we can be justifiably proud. I hope that, by working on the initiatives and in co-operation with the UK Government to build on Barbara Castle's historic Equal Pay Act 1970, we will make more progress.

G8 Summit (Tourism)

4. Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will exploit the tourism potential for Perthshire and Scotland of Gleneagles hosting the G8 summit. (S2O-5625)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): The G8 summit, coming as it does just before the Scottish open at Loch Lomond and the open championship at St Andrews, gives Scotland an unparalleled opportunity to promote itself on the world stage during July. We intend to take full advantage of that unique marketing opportunity.

Mr Arbuckle: Will the Scottish Executive provide one-off additional funding to local tourist boards to help to maximise the potential?

Patricia Ferguson: The Executive is working hard with Scottish Enterprise, VisitScotland, Perth and Kinross Council, business organisations and others to ensure that we maximise the publicity that Scotland will get throughout the world before, during and after the G8 summit. In particular, VisitScotland is exploring a number of highly visible means of attracting the attention of the huge number of international media representatives who will attend the event. I suspect that we will not give individual funding to tourist boards, but an unparalleled level of marketing money has been given to VisitScotland. In addition, we may well get a great deal of free publicity from the various events, compared to a cost of about £300,000 for a television or movie theatre advertisement.

Schools (Discipline)

5. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to improve discipline in schools. (S2O-5653)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): As yesterday's report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education on behaviour in schools said,

"most schools are succeeding well in maintaining good discipline".

However, I will continue to work in partnership with education authorities and other stakeholders to ensure that the approaches and resources that are making a difference in most schools extend to all schools over time.

Michael McMahon: As the minister will know, recently published figures show that the number of exclusions in schools has risen by 7 per cent and that male pupils account for nearly 80 per cent of exclusions. Does he think that that is a result of teaching styles in schools that alienate boys and increase boredom and confusion, or of the invisibility of bullying among girls, which tends to be less physical and less immediately noticeable? What steps, if any, have been taken to address the issue?

Peter Peacock: The immediate reason for the rise in the number of exclusions is that I have made it clear to head teachers that we will not have artificial targets to reduce exclusions and that, if they believe that a pupil should be excluded, they should exclude that pupil. The authority is vested in head teachers: if they believe that a child should be excluded, that is their decision and I will back it. That said, we know that there are challenging issues in our schools, particularly among boys, who are disengaging from learning in a way that we do not want, primarily between years 1 and 3 in secondary school and principally because our curriculum has not been challenging or engaging enough for those young people. Everything that we are doing about curriculum reform in our schools is designed to ensure that boys and girls engage much more actively in education, feel enthused and motivated by it and gain something from it. As a consequence, discipline will improve.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Is the minister aware that the HMIE review that was published yesterday stated that the guidance that the Executive had issued on procedures for monitoring exclusions and attendance

"had yet to be fully and rigorously implemented"?

As the Executive has ceased to publish the statistical bulletin on incidents of violence and anti-social behaviour against local authority school staff, and as schools are not recording such incidents consistently, how does the minister propose to monitor the incidence of indiscipline in Scotland's schools?

Peter Peacock: I have made it clear that I intend to monitor that closely. I will do so by talking to teachers and directly surveying teacher opinion and experience regularly so that we can adjust and adapt policy. That is the right way to monitor

indiscipline, but we will also interview pupils to find out their daily experience. That way, we can ensure that our policy approaches are tailored to suit the circumstances in our schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton must have been reading *The Daily Mail* version of the HMIE report, not the report itself, because the report points to the fact that

"The great majority of pupils took pride in their schools and ... were open, courteous and well behaved"

and that

"most schools are succeeding well in maintaining good discipline".

Contrary to what Lord James implies, although we will collect teacher opinion on those matters, when the Tories were in office not so many years ago, they declined to do so. They would not fund a survey in the mid 1990s and it was left to the teacher unions to expose what was happening. We have rectified that problem. We will not hide from the issues that confront our schools; we will face them straight on and provide the resources and support that schools need to be able to tackle challenging situations.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): Will the minister take the opportunity to pay tribute to the vast majority of pupils, who behave well in school? Will he also acknowledge the low-level, constant, daily disruption that many teachers experience? Does he acknowledge that, like it or not, the Executive's social inclusion and mainstreaming policy, however desirable it is, is having a negative impact? Will he face up to that fact and listen to the teachers' concerns about that issue?

Peter Peacock: Of course I applaud the vast majority of pupils, who are well-behaved, and the vast majority of teachers, who do a stunningly good job day in, day out in contending with the difficult pupils who cause particular problems in our schools.

Social inclusion is a challenge, but we must dispel the myth that we are somehow importing children from another planet and depositing them in local schools, because the children concerned are local children who are going to their local schools. We want to keep those kids in those schools for as long as we can, because we know that, if we can do that, their life chances will be much greater. If we do not do that effectively, those kids will be condemned to a life in which they are less likely to be in employment, are in poorer health and have poorer housing conditions. That is why social inclusion is important. However, it should not be at any price, which is why we have empowered head teachers to exclude pupils from school whenever that is appropriate. It is also why we are investing in special units in and just beyond our schools so that we can keep our classrooms

freer from disruption and our young people learning.

Energy-related Jobs (Transfer)

6. Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions have taken place with the Department of Trade and Industry in London regarding the transfer of energy-related civil service jobs to Aberdeen. (S2O-5607)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace): Scottish Development International met the Department of Trade and Industry on 8 February 2005 as part of its on-going discussions with a range of United Kingdom Government departments aimed at seeking to attract high-quality jobs and investment to Scotland.

Richard Lochhead: I ask the Deputy First Minister to meet the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in London to discuss the transfer of energy-related civil service jobs from London to Aberdeen, as it remains the case that a number of jobs that relate to offshore industry are based in London. Although the 55 jobs concerned were earmarked for relocation to Aberdeen, the DTI took a last-minute decision late last year, despite the fact that it had reserved office space in Aberdeen, to pull the plug on that relocation, to the huge disappointment of the people of Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland, who want the city to be seen as Europe's energy capital. Will the Deputy First Minister acknowledge that that is a serious issue? Under the Lyons review, those jobs belong to Aberdeen, not London, so will he intervene to ensure that they are transferred as soon as possible?

Mr Wallace: It is worth putting on record the fact that the DTI currently has 82 energy-related jobs in Aberdeen and 52 in London and that, although the number of staff in London has fallen by around 40 over the past 10 years, there has been no equivalent reduction in jobs in Aberdeen.

Mr Lochhead is misrepresenting the position. The Lyons review considered a number of possibilities. However, the DTI indicated that although the jobs to which Mr Lochhead is referring, along with others in different areas of the DTI, were considered as part of the review, relocation of the energy resources and development unit would not be the best option on the grounds of cost and business efficiency.

Nevertheless SDI continues to hold discussions with a wide range of Government departments on the advantages of locating jobs in Scotland. It should be put on record that the Scottish Executive set up our intermediary technology institute, ITI Energy, in Aberdeen, which brought a number of quality jobs to the city.

Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-2350, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, that the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill.

15:01

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): I apologise to members in advance because—as I think you have been made aware, Presiding Officer—I have to leave the chamber at some point during the afternoon to videolink to a conference. I made that commitment before I knew this debate was scheduled.

I will start by putting on record the words of a young woman who was describing her experience when she suffered female genital mutilation at the age of 5. The description is graphic and I hope that members will listen carefully to it.

"Mama positioned me on the rock. She sat behind me and pulled my head against her chest, her legs straddling my body. I circled my arms around her thighs. ...Mama leaned over and whispered, 'Try to be a good girl, baby. Be brave for Mama, and it'll go fast.'

The gypsy... fished out a broken razor blade. I saw dried blood on the jagged edge.

The next thing I felt was my flesh being cut away. I heard the blade sawing back and forth through my skin. The feeling was indescribable. ...I prayed, Please, God, let it be over quickly. Soon it was, because I passed out.

When I woke up ... my legs were completely numb, but the pain between them was so intense that I wished I would die. ... My legs had been tied together with strips of cloth binding me from my ankles to my hips so I couldn't move. I turned my head toward the rock; it was drenched with blood as if an animal had been slaughtered there. Pieces of my flesh lay on top, drying in the sun ... After the gypsy sewed me up, the only opening left for urine—and later for menstrual blood—was a minuscule hole the diameter of a matchstick.

I could do nothing but wonder, why? What was it all for? All I knew was that I had been butchered with my mother's permission.

I suffered as a result of my circumcision, but I was lucky. Many girls die from bleeding to death, shock, infection or tetanus. Considering the conditions in which the procedure is performed, it's surprising that any of us survive."

Those are the words of Waris Dirie, a Somalian nomad who later became a supermodel and who now uses her fame to tell the world about the horrors of female genital mutilation as the United Nations's special ambassador on the issue. She suffered infibulation, the most severe type of FGM, but the story is not confined to Africa. It is the type of female genital mutilation that Somalian women now living in Glasgow have experienced. It is the

female genital mutilation that still causes them severe pain and health problems today. It is a practice that we have to condemn roundly.

I put on the record my thanks to those women, to the Somali women's action group, the African Caribbean women's network and, in particular, Khadija Coll for helping me and the rest of us in Parliament to understand more about female genital mutilation and for telling us about the problems that they face. It cannot have been easy and I am very grateful to them.

I turn to what the bill will do. We want to ensure that no woman or child in Scotland suffers the horrific experiences that those women have had to live with. The bill will do three things. First, it will make it unlawful to take or send a United Kingdom national or permanent UK resident abroad for female genital mutilation. Those words might sound fairly cold and clinical, but we should think back to the words of the young woman who suffered. It will also make it unlawful for a UK national or permanent UK resident to perform female genital mutilation abroad. Those acts will be unlawful regardless of whether they are permitted in the country where they take place. Female genital mutilation has been unlawful in the United Kingdom since 1985; indeed, before then it could have been prosecuted under common law assault in some cases. However, there was a suspicion that some people were evading the law by taking their daughters to other countries to have female genital mutilation performed. So-called holidays resulted in girls suffering for the rest of their lives. The bill will make such actions unlawful.

Secondly, the bill will increase the maximum penalty for female genital mutilation from five years to 14 years, which is the maximum penalty that our courts can impose short of a life sentence. One estimate is that more than a quarter of women who suffer FGM die as a result. Therefore, we think that it is absolutely right that FGM should be seen as an extremely serious offence against vulnerable women and children. The penalty makes it clear that female genital mutilation is simply not acceptable in Scotland and sends out a strong signal to those who are considering putting their daughters through such an ordeal.

Finally, the bill will change the terminology from that which was used in the previous statute. The bill uses the phrase "female genital mutilation" rather than "female circumcision". Circumcision implies an analogy with male circumcision, which is simply not a true analogy. The male equivalent of clitoridectomy, or type 1 female genital mutilation, would be amputation of most of the penis. Mutilation is the right word to use.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has carefully gathered a great deal of important

evidence on this harrowing subject. I congratulate that committee on its report, which is before members, and would like to deal with some issues that the committee has raised about the bill. The committee recommends more specific definitions of what constitutes female genital mutilation and of which procedures are lawful. I make it clear that we are not changing the procedures that are outlawed; our approach has been to continue with a broad definition of what is understood by female genital mutilation and to be clear that any procedure that falls within that definition is unlawful.

We have done so for a number of reasons. First, the more specific a definition is, the harder it can be to prove in court that a particular act falls within that definition. I understand that the committee is uncomfortable with what it might see as a lack of precision, but with our traditions of common law, our courts are well used to dealing with such broad definitions in practice. I am confident that the offence in section 1 of the bill is sufficiently precise to allow a court to consider from the facts and circumstances of a case whether a particular procedure is unlawful.

We are concerned that specific exclusions could be exploited by those who wish to carry out female genital mutilation, particularly in relation to cosmetic surgery, because some such procedures may be similar to some forms of female genital mutilation. Protection of children who are at risk of female genital mutilation must remain our priority. The definition of the offence of female genital mutilation is the same as that of the current offence and we should not weaken the legislative protection.

We do not intend to catch procedures such as piercing or tattooing—in our view, the bill does not catch those activities. Our using the same definition as the rest of the UK also means that we can be certain that we are not creating a loophole whereby a girl could be sent here to suffer a procedure that is illegal in England. That would be unacceptable. However, we are carefully considering the evidence that the Equal Opportunities Committee has gathered to find out whether we can clarify the definition without weakening the protection that is offered to girls.

The committee rightly focused much of its attention on the position of those who are most at risk of female genital mutilation. In particular, it focused on asylum-seeker communities and the extent to which we can provide them with protection. There should be no doubt that everyone in Scotland—regardless of their status—will be protected from female genital mutilation, but I recognise that there are difficult issues in relation to women and children who are not UK nationals or permanent residents and who have

the procedure performed on them outside the UK. Our absolute priority is to protect as many girls as we can but, of course, we must work within the framework of international law. We have already taken extraterritorial jurisdiction, which is extremely wide in respect of international law. In doing so, we are greatly strengthening the protection that the law provides, but we must recognise that there are practical and legal limits to the jurisdiction of our courts. We are continuing to examine the complex issues relating to international law and how far our jurisdiction can extend, and we are doing so with the aim of ensuring that we provide the maximum possible protection, which I mentioned.

The committee's report also makes recommendations on the need for guidance, education and training. We recognise that much must be done to educate communities and to provide women with the support that they need to openly oppose this barbaric practice. Many of those communities are relatively new to Scotland and have been established here for perhaps only four years or so. We plan to learn from the expertise and good practice that has been developed in more established communities in London and other parts of the UK. Of course, we are also always open to learning from international examples of good practice.

For the record, let me state clearly that we will not tolerate female genital mutilation in Scotland. That is why the bill provides a framework for other measures against FGM. We hope that it will raise awareness, both in communities that might practise FGM and among the professionals who work with them, that FGM is not acceptable. We also hope that the bill will help parents to resist pressure from their families and communities because we recognise how strong that pressure might be. Above all, the bill is intended to improve the legal protection that we offer girls and women in Scotland from this horrific and dangerous practice.

I hope that this afternoon's debate will be useful. I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill.

15:11

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the minister for picking up on and answering some of the questions that I had.

I thank fellow members and the clerks of the Equal Opportunities Committee for their tireless work in scrutinising the bill and in producing the recommendations in our stage 1 report. The report notes that, as the minister said, the bill's intention is to ensure continuity throughout the UK in

respect of legislation on female genital mutilation. It also notes the determination of everyone involved to highlight and publicise that distressing practice.

Despite the minister's comments, I believe that the committee's recommendations would strengthen the bill rather than weaken it. Perhaps Westminster and the rest of the UK could look to change the existing legislation to make it as strong as the bill would be under those recommendations. We should not simply step aside from the committee's recommendations.

When we took evidence from the Minister for Communities at stage 1, we put it to him that the committee had worked hard on the issue in a non-party political fashion. I believe that our recommendations, which were agreed by all committee members, are in the best interests of women who have come to this country from other parts of the UK and from throughout the world. That is why I ask the minister to take the recommendations on board. The SNP will support the bill at stage 1, but we reserve the right to amend the bill at stage 2 if amendments are not forthcoming from the Executive.

Female genital mutilation is just as it sounds. It is not, as it was previously widely known, female circumcision. FGM is the deliberate mutilation of the external female genitalia, comprising all procedures that involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia.

The health consequences of FGM can be life threatening, both immediately and in the long term. For example, the immediate effects include severe pain, shock and bleeding, fatal haemorrhaging, prolonged bleeding that can lead to anaemia and septicaemia which can result from use—which the minister cited—of unsterilised cutting equipment. The long-term health consequences include cysts, abscesses, urinary tract infections, chronic pelvic infections that can lead to infertility, painful sexual intercourse and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. For a woman, all those effects can have psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, negative feelings, low self-esteem, poor self-identity and suppressed feelings of anger and betrayal. All those conditions have been, and are, experienced by women who have undergone female genital mutilation.

I ask that any press coverage of the issue refers to the practice as "female genital mutilation". At one committee meeting, we were told not by the committee clerks but by a television company that we could not talk about female genital mutilation because it did not like the term. I am sorry, but that is what it is and that is what we shall call it.

Although we should use the term female genital mutilation, we must be careful with the other language that we use on this matter and we must realise that, in certain cultures, the parents believe that they are acting in their daughters' best interests. However abhorrent the practice appears to be—it is absolutely abhorrent—we must use the proposed legislation not only to stamp it out but to educate the people of those communities and protect the girls who might be subjected to the practice in all its forms. We do not want to drive the practice underground. The matter must be out in the open, which is why many of the committee's recommendations on education and other issues are so necessary. I know that my fellow committee members will cover specific aspects of the bill, but I shall do my best to provide an overview.

Because of FGM's immediate and long-term effects, it is extremely important to include in the bill the World Health Organisation's entire classification system, which divides FGM into four classes, as a reference point to specify procedures that will be unlawful under the proposed legislation. We must also ensure that communities are adequately informed about any guidance, education and training. In that respect, the minister mentioned the Somali women's action group in Glasgow. I know that Elaine Smith will speak of her experiences with that group.

We must ensure that communities and individuals are aware of the various agencies and organisations that have the expertise to advise and help without stigmatising the people in question. Although I welcome the minister's assurance that the Executive will look at other publications and materials that are available in the UK and abroad, I ask that she take on board the point that was made by the Somali women's action group and other organisations that it is not always possible to put the spoken word into a leaflet; the information must be available in other forms. For example, visual material could be made available or someone in the community could speak to women on the matter. Moreover, suitable resources must be made available to the communities. The Executive has not yet said whether it will make those resources available, but it must do so if it plans to push the legislation out.

We must also remember that men are sometimes the heads of the communities and that we must educate them as well as the women by reminding them that FGM is not an essential cultural element that must be preserved. Our society and Parliament must bring the matter to the fore.

One issue that emerged from our evidence taking was that health professionals must be aware of FGM. Comfort Momoh, who is an FGM-specialist midwife, has based an excellent booklet

on research that she conducted into the subject in London. Some of her findings are very disturbing: for example, some health professionals said that FGM was not a big problem in their area and some midwives and doctors made comments such as "I've been working in this hospital for the past 20 years and I've only seen two cases of FGM".

That evidence is backed up by personal experience of members of the Somali women's action group. For example, one of its members in Glasgow was fortunate to survive the birth of her baby in very difficult and dangerous conditions. She needed two operations. The first, which was meant to undo the FGM, failed and she had to undergo a caesarean section to give birth. Furthermore, two pregnant women were automatically given caesareans because the doctors were totally unfamiliar with FGM procedures and practices. We must ensure that health professionals are educated on the matter. As those women go through horrific and traumatic experiences, education, awareness raising and on-going support must be provided to all professionals who come into contact with women who have suffered FGM.

The minister touched on asylum seekers, who were mentioned both by committee members and by groups that gave evidence. Although I accept the minister's comment that the proposed legislation will create extraterritorial offences that will prevent UK nationals in permanent UK residence from being taken abroad to have FGM performed on them, it will do nothing for the kids of asylum seekers. For example, Councillor Irene Graham of Glasgow City Council has done a lot of work on this matter. She says:

"We cannot assume that children will never be taken out of the country by any other family or community member. We are concerned that the bill should contain additional protection."

The minister has described the steps that she will take, but they do not go far enough. Something should be done to extend the provisions of the bill to provide further protection for the children of asylum seekers, should they be taken from Scotland. I hear what the minister is saying and the assurances that she has given, but we have to consider that particular aspect as well.

I cannot see the clock but I think that I have time to wind up.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Just about. You are two minutes over.

Ms White: I am sorry.

I fully support the bill, but with the recommendations that have been made by the Equal Opportunities Committee. I will be adding further recommendations. We must eradicate this terrible practice and protect vulnerable young

women, not only in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom but throughout the world. The bill will contribute to that, although, with the recommendations, it would be a much stronger bill. Thank you for your indulgence, Presiding Officer.

15:21

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak in the debate, having left the Equal Opportunities Committee just as it finished taking evidence on the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill. I acknowledge the valuable work that has been done by that committee in the interests of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The procedures that come under female genital mutilation were outlawed in this country by the most recent Conservative Government in 1985, and my party is fully in support of the measures that are proposed in the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill, which will reinforce and extend the scope of the earlier legislation. The Conservatives share the concerns that have been expressed by the committee in its stage 1 report, but overall we welcome the bill and will support its progress through Parliament.

Initially, I was disappointed that because of the pre-election dissolution of Parliament, the legislation was not enacted at the same time as the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 in the rest of the United Kingdom. However, as we have heard, our pre-legislative scrutiny of the proposed legislation has led to a few recommendations from the committee which, if they are accepted, will in my opinion lead to an improved version of the 2003 act. What is important, however, is that the legal protection that is offered south of the border becomes available in Scotland with the minimum delay.

Although section 1 of the bill is, in effect, a restatement of the provisions of the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, in that it states that anyone who carries out FGM in Scotland commits an offence, the replacement of the euphemistic term "circumcision" with "female genital mutilation"—which much more accurately describes the barbaric procedures that are being outlawed—is to be welcomed. The creation of extraterritorial offences that will make it unlawful to send someone abroad to have FGM carried out, or for a UK national to perform FGM outside the United Kingdom, together with increased penalties for committing those offences will—we hope—help in the long term to eradicate the mutilating practices carried out on girls and young women that are expected within some ethnic communities.

The practice of FGM has been established for very many years in several African countries, as well as in the middle east and Asia, and it is increasingly found in the western world, usually among immigrant and refugee populations. It is deeply embedded in the cultures of practising communities not because of religion—it is not a requirement of any religion—but it is a rite of passage to womanhood and a requirement for acceptability as a wife. The custom is frequently perpetuated by the older women in a community, who have undergone FGM themselves and see it as a necessary—indeed, a loving—ritual that will secure the best future for their daughters and granddaughters. Such deep-seated cultural practice can be eradicated only by education and reinforced by law, probably over generations.

The practice is kept very private within communities, and because relatives are often involved, statistics are hard to come by. Since 1985, there have been no prosecutions in the UK. It is unlikely that the new law will lead to many prosecutions, but it should raise awareness in the communities that are affected. Coupled with education in those communities and among health, education and social work professionals, FGM may be recognised more widely than it is at present and the perpetrators dealt with accordingly.

FGM can be described only as an act of violence against women and children. As we have heard movingly and graphically from the minister, it is often performed without anaesthetic and with dirty, makeshift and shared implements. It can lead to immediate and long-term health consequences. The severe shock, pain and bleeding can be fatal and urine retention and localised infection are common. Long-term obstetric and gynaecological problems, urinary tract infections and incontinence also cause suffering and the psychological consequences ruin the lives of many victims.

As we have heard, the bill covers three types of FGM, ranging from excision of the prepuce or clitoris, with or without excision of the labia minora, right through to infibulation, which means excision of part or all of the external genitalia and narrowing of the vaginal orifice. It excludes type IV in the World Health Organisation's classification, which is

"pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; stretching of the clitoris and/or labia"

and other acts of cutting, cautery or corrosion around the vaginal orifice. I agree with the committee's recommendation that the entire WHO classification is used to specify procedures that are unlawful under the legislation.

There could be some doubt about whether certain cosmetic procedures, which are increasingly common in this country, constitute FGM. In the interest of clarity, it is appropriate for the bill to specify which procedures remain outwith the scope of the legislation, such as decorative piercing and tattooing. It is clear that certain procedures that are recommended for medical reasons should also be exempt from the legislation. However, the committee thinks—again, I agree—that it is appropriate to require the consent of two medical practitioners to such procedures, as is the case in abortion law, rather than just one, as is proposed in the bill.

The issues that I have touched on will be debated further at stages 2 and 3 of the parliamentary process, but there is no disagreement in this part of the chamber about the general principles of the bill. I hope that the bill will be enacted speedily so that the small number of vulnerable people in some of Scotland's ethnic communities who are at risk of FGM receive the protection that they deserve under the law of our land.

15:27

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): Female genital mutilation is not a comfortable issue to deal with but it must be confronted. Cathy Jamieson was quite right to open her speech as she did. The previously accepted description of the practices that we are legislating to help to prevent as "female circumcision" is totally inadequate. "Female genital mutilation" is a much more accurate description.

I will use my time to comment on the consultation and, in particular, on one of the recommendations in the Equal Opportunities Committee's report. The time that was allowed for the consultation was shorter than the time that is specified in the Executive's guidelines. That is especially regrettable given that the consultation was conducted during the summer holiday period, when it is more difficult for organisations to undertake wider consultation among their membership. Not much thought or effort seems to have been put into making the consultation inclusive by providing material in different languages or in formats that are suitable for people who cannot read, or who cannot read English, or by targeting it at communities in which female genital mutilation is most likely to be an issue.

The bill is intended to bring the law in Scotland into line with legislation that has been enacted in England and Wales. It could be seen as a formality, but there are two reasons why such an attitude is unacceptable. First, on a general point, it would be contrary to the founding principles of

the Scottish Parliament. Secondly and more specifically, the bill will not become successful legislation if people are prosecuted under its terms, but rather if it deters anyone and everyone in Scotland from carrying out the practices that are outlined in it or from sending children or women abroad to have those practices carried out. The legislation will have that deterrent effect only if people know about it. A full and wide consultation process would not only have helped us to get the letter of the law right but would have publicised the legislation to the people whom it is designed to protect, to front-line health and community workers and to the people whom we seek to deter. For the same reasons, I welcome the minister's comments on the guidance that the Scottish Executive intends to put in place following enactment of the bill.

As with any legislation, attention must be paid to the danger of unintended consequences—in this case, to the fact that individuals may require surgical procedures that could fall within a definition of female genital mutilation but for which there is a reasonable case for performing them. Some such procedures are elective and the committee felt that they should be fairly strictly defined, although that approach has pros and cons, as the minister said. Whether procedures that are required for the physical or mental welfare of the person concerned should be exempt from the bill is a matter of clinical judgment.

For reasons that the committee's report outlines, concern has been widespread that the exemption on mental health grounds could provide a loophole. The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh suggested that requiring a second medical opinion to allow any procedure to proceed would be a realistic and effective way to close the loophole. That safeguard would be reasonable and has a precedent in respect of other procedures, such as termination of pregnancies.

In subsequent discussions of the matter with representatives of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, I was warned of the possibility of another layer of unintended consequences for people who wish to undergo gender reassignment, which would depend on how the requirement for a second medical opinion was framed. Such consequences could be avoided if the potential problem was known about. In the committee, I pressed the minister hard on the suggestion that two medically qualified practitioners should be required to agree that a procedure for an individual was acceptable on mental health grounds and it was agreed that he would reconsider the matter. I hope that he will be persuaded to amend the bill to include that.

The committee has made several recommendations to focus the bill and make it

more effective. I hope that the Scottish Executive will accept those recommendations.

15:31

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I will speak to the Equal Opportunities Committee's report, but I start by thanking the minister for her moving speech and her commitment to getting rid of FGM in Scotland. I also thank my fellow committee members, the committee clerks and the witnesses who gave evidence during our stage 1 scrutiny of this important bill.

Female genital mutilation is a difficult and upsetting subject and can have tragic consequences for those who undergo the procedures involved. If they manage to survive the procedures' immediate impact, they often face lifelong health complications as a result of the mutilation that has been inflicted on them. However, the subject's sensitivity should not prevent us from discussing it openly or from carefully scrutinising all aspects of the bill.

I welcome the bill's aim of increasing protection against FGM in Scotland to the level that applies in the rest of the UK. The bill should send out the crucial messages that FGM is unacceptable, that taking people out of the country to have the procedure performed elsewhere is unacceptable and that offences under the bill merit severe penalties.

In its stage 1 consideration, the Equal Opportunities Committee took evidence from a range of people over five meetings and supplemented that formal evidence with two meetings between the committee's gender reporter, Elaine Smith, and the Glasgow Somali women's action group. We took evidence from the international perspectives of such organisations as the World Health Organisation, Amnesty International, Save the Children and the Scottish Refugee Council. We also took evidence from specialist midwives, gynaecologists and other medical personnel who have direct experience of the procedures in question. We heard from Glasgow City Council—the local authority that is most likely to deal with people who have been victims of FGM—and we received written evidence from several organisations, which included a poem that I hope Shiona Baird will read to us later.

The committee was keen to understand not only the bill's stated intentions, but its likely impact. The committee welcomes the bill, but it has identified concerns while scrutinising it. One main concern is the short timescale that was allowed for consultation; Nora Radcliffe touched on that. The committee was not convinced that sufficient effort had been made to reach affected groups, to consult them in suitable formats and in languages

that they would understand and in a reasonable timescale.

The committee found a lack of clarity in the bill with regard to the procedures that are to be made unlawful, such as the increasingly common elective cosmetic surgical procedures. Those procedures are not the target of the legislation, and it is bad legislation that creates unintended offences in that way. The committee's view is that we are accountable to the people who will work within the confines of the legislation to ensure that that legislation is clear and sufficient to meet the complexities of today's world. Medical practitioners will have to live with the reality of the FGM legislation and we must be clear about what we declare to be unlawful.

The most important issue is the definition of FGM. Section 1 gives a definition of the procedures that will constitute an offence under the bill. However, the World Health Organisation has produced an internationally recognised definition of FGM that is much wider in scope and which we recommend should be used as a reference point for the bill. The inclusion of a suitable definition in the bill, together with specific exceptions, would provide far greater clarity and would ensure that other procedures were not included unintentionally. I welcome the minister's assurance that that issue will be considered.

The committee was not convinced by the Deputy Minister for Justice's argument that the legislation must be consistent with that which covers the rest of the UK. We should not aim for consistency at the expense of clarity and effectiveness. On a further point regarding clarity, section 1(2)(a) makes provision for exceptions on the basis of physical and mental health. However, concerns were raised with the committee that the mental health exception could be open to abuse. The committee will therefore welcome a strengthening of that provision to make it robust enough to ensure that such abuse does not happen. The committee supports the suggestion that a second specialist medical opinion would reduce the potential for abuse of the provision.

There was a clear understanding in the evidence, which was supported by the deputy minister, that if the legislation is to be effective in the long run, the bill needs to be part of an integrated approach that includes provision of guidance, training and information for the relevant professionals as well as awareness-raising activities in target communities.

It is crucial that affected communities understand not only the risks to the victims, but the nature of the offences that are committed in relation to the practice of FGM. It is also crucial that our services are sufficient to meet the needs of people who are faced with the damaging impact

of female genital mutilation. It is worrying that, although FGM has been unlawful in the UK since 1985, and although guidance and information are available, evidence shows that there is still a lack of understanding and expertise among the professionals who are confronted with FGM and its consequences. The committee therefore urges the Scottish Executive to review and update guidance, education and training materials and to use effective partnerships to work at local level to ensure that affected communities are reached and assisted. That will have a cost impact and we look forward to hearing clarification on funding from the Executive.

The committee warmly welcomes the bill and we support its general principles. I hope that the deputy minister will address some of our key concerns when he winds up. We look forward to appropriate amendments being lodged at stage 2.

15:39

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):

I, too, add my thanks, particularly to the committee clerks for their sterling work in guiding and assisting members through the scrutiny of the bill. The dedication of the team has been quite remarkable.

The committee's work has been difficult and, at times, harrowing. However, I am glad that the bill was brought to the committee. It has raised awareness of an issue that few people knew about and emphasised the commitment and support that we must offer to women who seek safety and security in our country.

Our support for the bill will help the many workers in this field, here and abroad, who want to see an end to the barbaric practice that has a devastating impact on the lives of many girls and young women.

It is very important that we ensure that the bill encompasses the concerns that witnesses highlighted and which committee members included in our report.

I beg the indulgence of the chamber to allow me to read a poem that illustrates graphically why the bill is important in going some way to help remove this unacceptable practice from the countries in which it is still practised. The poem is called "Feminine Pain" and it is by Dahabo Ali Muse from Somalia:

"And if I may speak of my wedding night:
I had expected caresses. Sweet kisses. Hugging and love.
No. Never!

Awaiting me was pain. Suffering and sadness.
I lay in my wedding bed, groaning like a wounded animal,
a victim of feminine pain.
At dawn, ridicule awaited me. My mother announced:

Yes, she is a virgin.

When fear gets hold of me.
When anger seizes my body.
When hate becomes my companion, then I get feminine advice,
because it is only feminine pain. And I am told feminine pain perishes like all feminine things.

The journey continues. Or the struggle continues.
As modern historians say, as the good tie of marriage matures.
As I submit and sorrow subsides, my belly becomes like a balloon.
A glimpse of happiness shows, a hope. A new baby. A new life!

But a new life endangers my life.
A baby's birth is death and destruction for me!
It is what my grandmother called the three feminine sorrows.
She said that the day of circumcision, the wedding night and the birth of a baby are the triple feminine sorrows.

As the birth bursts, I cry for help, when the battered flesh tears.
No mercy. Push! they say. It is only feminine pain!

And now I appeal:
I appeal for love lost, for dreams broken,
for the right to live as a whole human being.
I appeal to all peace loving people to protect, to support and give a hand to innocent little girls who do no harm.
Obedient to their parents and elders, all they know is only smiles.
Initiate them to the world of love, not the world of feminine sorrows."

15:43

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): I cannot overstate the impact that that poem had on us when it was first presented to the committee. It brought home the reality of what women in our communities are suffering on a daily basis.

I add my thanks to the committee clerks, who helped us through the sometimes difficult process of evidence taking, my fellow committee members and the witnesses whose invaluable evidence allowed us to reach our recommendations in the stage 1 report on the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill.

Some of my colleagues have made specific reference to groups such as the Somali women's action group and I thank those women very much. If we think that the committee's work has been harrowing, we can only imagine how it has been for them.

Female genital mutilation has been a specific criminal offence in the UK since the passage of the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985. The policy intention of our bill is to ensure that the legal protection that is afforded in Scotland is equal to that in the rest of the UK since the passage of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. I am pleased that the legislation now uses

the World Health Organisation's definition and clearly describes the practice for what it is.

The Executive has made it abundantly clear that no one in Scotland should live in fear of violence, abuse or prejudice and that we must all work together towards the elimination of violence against women, whatever form it takes—we must never forget that—and aspire to a Scotland that promotes equality, tolerance and understanding of the different cultures, religions and races that make up our multicultural society. However, we must have a wider aim: to create safer communities and a socially just and inclusive society. The bill represents an integral part of those objectives.

In the short time that is available to me, I will highlight the issues of age and consent and then concentrate on guidance, education and training. My colleagues on the committee have addressed and will address other relevant issues.

The Equal Opportunities Committee recommended that there should be no age limit in the bill. All the evidence that we heard suggested that the inclusion of any age limit would be detrimental and would allow societal pressure, especially on the most vulnerable women, thereby undermining the message that the bill intends to send. In the light of the evidence that we heard, I am convinced that we must close any loopholes that would allow an appalling practice, which is condemned by medical practitioners, to take place. FGM is extremely dangerous and harmful, as the minister said and as the poem that Shiona Baird read made clear. The practice cannot be justified and I hope that members will unanimously support the committee's recommendation.

In tandem with the legislation, there must be effective guidance, education and training. We must raise awareness across the board. The committee's stage 1 report urged the Scottish Executive to carry out

"an immediate review of the guidance, education and training currently available for the full range of professionals who are likely to have to deal with instances of FGM and its consequences, assess its effectiveness and develop a plan to ensure the availability and effective implementation of suitable, updated and appropriate material."

Like Cathy Peattie, I was impressed by the evidence that the committee received from Glasgow City Council, Dr Buck from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and Comfort Momoh from the Royal College of Midwives, who was mentioned by Sandra White. Comfort Momoh stressed the importance of breaking down communication barriers in the community and of spreading information on the illegality of FGM. However, as members said, such information must be put across in a way that

will be understood by the communities that we are trying to reach. Comfort Momoh said:

"the law on its own will not put an end to FGM ... the community must be involved."—[*Official Report, Equal Opportunities Committee*, 18 January 2005; c 794.]

It is crucial that affected communities understand not only the risks to the victims who undergo FGM, but the nature of the offences that are committed in relation to the practice. It is also crucial that our services are sufficient to meet the needs of people who are faced with the damaging impact of female genital mutilation.

As Cathy Peattie said, it is worrying that although FGM has been unlawful in the UK since 1985 and although information is available, the evidence is that there remains a lack of understanding and expertise among the professionals. Dr Buck agreed that the law would be effective only if it was combined with education. The committee's report therefore acknowledged that

"awareness raising and confidence building in communities"—

which is equally important—

"will entail a range of different actions by various organisations and agencies as well as the effective deployment of suitable resources."

The implementation of the law will require improvements to awareness and training for a variety of professionals, as members have explained.

We have a responsibility to protect the physical and mental health of women and children in Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament has the opportunity to learn from other countries. I was pleased to hear the minister say that she would consider best practice. I recommend to the ministerial team a leaflet that Comfort Momoh circulated to committee members, which is an exemplar of best practice.

In the light of the information that the committee gathered, I urge members to support the bill and I stress the importance of the committee's recommendations, particularly on the age limit and the need to improve training, awareness and education and to treat with care and compassion women who have suffered as a result of undergoing FGM. The Executive must commit itself to increasing community awareness and it must encourage community leaders to continue to speak out against an unlawful practice. Concern and compassion will continue to be of the utmost importance. The Scottish Parliament will and must maintain its commitment to protect fundamental human rights and the bill and the committee's recommendations represent an integral part of that commitment. I urge members to support the general principles of the bill.

15:50

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston)

(Lab): I am pleased to speak in support of the Equal Opportunities Committee's recommendation that Parliament agrees the general principles of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill. Like other committee members, I thank the clerks.

The bill extends the provisions of the existing legislation, which makes it an offence to carry out FGM in Scotland. It increases the maximum penalty and changes the terminology that is employed from "circumcision" to "mutilation". The latter change is particularly important to ensure that the horrors of the procedure are not hidden by softer terms. The Somali women's action group was clear that circumcision was the wrong definition for what is performed.

The minister has indicated that were it not for the coincidence with the Scottish Parliament elections, the bill would have been dealt with via the Sewel route when the similar legislation was progressing through the UK Parliament in 2003. Although that might have been an acceptable route, it has been useful to undertake our own legislative process. That has allowed us to make some recommendations that differ from the Westminster bill, which I hope will be accepted by the Executive as improvements.

Aside from the reasonable changes that are proposed, undertaking our own legislative process has permitted us to have a better understanding of the matter. It has allowed for awareness raising and for the identification of potential gaps in service provision, education and training. During stage 1, it became clear to the committee that despite legislation having been in place since 1985, there is a worrying lack of understanding of FGM among health professionals and others and that little, if any, support is available. That has led to alarming situations, such as the one that was described to me during evidence taking, in which a Somali woman last year underwent a caesarean section, against what she would have wanted, due to a lack of knowledge about FGM among staff.

FGM is not widely known about in Scotland and it is unlikely to be particularly widespread. It is most commonly practised in African countries, as well as in the middle east and Asia. However, its prevalence has been increasing in western Europe, Australia, Canada, the USA and New Zealand. It is estimated that around the world more than 100 million girls and women have undergone FGM and that every year a further 2 million girls are estimated to be at risk. Scottish legislation will not eradicate the practice worldwide, but it will send a strong signal that FGM is unacceptable. By addressing cultural attitudes among the affected communities in this

country, it will undoubtedly have some effect on attitudes elsewhere.

I believe that FGM should be a legitimate reason for granting asylum. However, during evidence taking I found that women might not volunteer FGM as a reason for seeking asylum due to its personal and sensitive nature, which might result in a refusal decision. I know that that is not part of the report, but it is important to take the opportunity to urge immigration officials to take the lead and sensitively ask questions to elicit a response. The Somali women also explained to me the pressure from family to have FGM carried out on their children and to return them to Somalia to have it done.

As we have heard, the process of FGM can involve different types of mutilation. According to the World Health Organisation, the most common is type II. The most extreme form is infibulation, which involves cutting out the genitalia and stitching up of most of the vaginal opening. To put that in context—it goes further than what the minister described—the male equivalent would be the removal of the penis. The process tends to be carried out on girls between the ages of four and 13. Short and long-term health consequences include death from haemorrhaging or septicaemia and, in later years, sexual dysfunction and childbirth complications. There can also be psychological consequences, such as anxiety and depression.

We must be clear that FGM is part of the spectrum of male violence against women and children. Although women physically do the cutting, the process is based on a culture of patriarchy, which ensures chastity and virginity before marriage and fidelity thereafter. Type III is a hellish form of flesh chastity belt. Ultimately, it dictates the matrimonial potential of women. In many cultures in which FGM is prevalent, a girl who remains un mutilated will not be a suitable candidate for marriage. Therefore, parents view the process as a necessary “act of love” to gain a secure future for their daughters.

In my first meeting with the Somali women, they made it clear that

“There is intensive pressure within the Somali community to carry out this procedure on girls. One of the group explained that in the minds of every female there is the thought that they are required to arrange this procedure for their daughter.”

They also

“indicated that men instructed their wives to ensure that this procedure was carried out on their daughters.”

Changing such in-built cultural influences is no easy task. It involves education and awareness raising for all in the community of the dangers of the practice. I think that that is particularly true for

the males—because when men start demanding un mutilated brides, FGM will come to an end.

I have a previous interest in this subject; I questioned the Minister for Health and Community Care during a ministerial statement in 2003. However, my recent knowledge has come primarily from contact with the Somali women’s action group. I want to take this opportunity to thank those women for their full and frank discussions with me and for appearing at the Equal Opportunities Committee, albeit anonymously. It was brave of them to speak about such a personal and distressing issue to a stranger, and giving oral evidence to the committee must have been even more daunting.

All the evidence that we took was extremely helpful. However, the most compelling evidence came from the Somali women who had direct experience and who were determined to protect their daughters from such mutilation. Their courage and resolve were admirable and inspiring. Reports of my meetings with them are available within the stage 1 report. It is worrying that those women became involved in the process by sheer luck. The Executive seemed to be unaware of their existence. I hope that ministers will reflect on that point when considering consultation processes in the future.

Ministers might also consider the barriers—such as language barriers—that people face when they respond to consultations. When we were taking oral evidence from representatives of the Somali women’s action group, we had some problems with interpretation. As a result, there was some dubiety over whether the witnesses considered it appropriate that the bill should include a cut-off age. That prompted the committee to ask me to meet the group a second time. At that meeting, the group was quite clear that FGM was wrong and should not be legally permitted whatever the age of the woman. That opinion coincided with all the other evidence that the committee had heard.

Very little service provision exists with regard to FGM. Legislation is welcome, but it must be accompanied by support services, which should be centrally driven and resourced by the Executive. It should include assistance for groups such as the Somali women, to allow them to educate their communities. The women particularly asked me about resources to help them to do positive work to raise awareness about FGM. They are asylum seekers and have little funding of their own.

The women asked whether a mother could be prosecuted for having FGM carried out on a daughter if she was not aware that it was illegal. When they were told that that would probably not be an acceptable defence, they pointed out the importance of education for their community,

because of the impact that the law would have on their lives.

I congratulate the Executive on this piece of legislation, and I congratulate the minister on her moving speech, which made the horrors real for us here in the chamber. I commend the Equal Opportunities Committee's recommendations to the Parliament, and I hope that the legislation, alongside appropriately resourced service provision, will help to eradicate the horrendous practice of mutilating girls and women.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): We come to the closing speeches. We are approximately 32 minutes ahead of the clock.

15:58

Nora Radcliffe: My comments will be fairly brief. Liberal Democrats fully support this bill. Although the bill is intended to bring the law in Scotland in line with that in England and Wales, it presents us with the opportunity to improve and strengthen that law. I firmly believe that that opportunity should be taken.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has made a number of recommendations that we feel will improve the bill and make it better focused and more effective. I endorse all that colleagues have said during the debate to illustrate and emphasise why the legislation is important, and I endorse all that has been said in support of the recommendations in the stage 1 report. I hope that the Executive will take those recommendations on board, on the basis of the evidence that we have taken.

I would like to add my thanks to all those who gave evidence—written, oral and through meetings with the committee's gender reporter, Elaine Smith.

As a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee, I look forward to working through the stage 2 amendments with the Executive, to deliver the best legislation that we can to discourage, and contribute to eliminating, female genital mutilation.

15:59

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): On behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I too am pleased to support the bill. As Nanette Milne has said, the bill updates and extends the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, which was one of the many excellent pieces of legislation that were passed by the Conservative Government.

The contents of the bill have been outlined very well by all speakers today, with the broad consensus that female genital mutilation is a form of violence against women and children that

should be eradicated internationally. I will highlight just one of the many short and long-term health problems that are a consequence of the procedure—chronic pelvic infection. That can lead to infertility, which is tragic in itself. In many of the cultures in which FGM occurs, infertility in women is not always viewed sympathetically. In that regard, I endorse everything that has been said about the need to improve communication, awareness and training.

It is a matter of concern that in 20 years there have been no prosecutions under the 1985 act, although the General Medical Council has struck off two doctors, one of whom performed FGM and one who offered to carry out the procedure. There have been several prosecutions relating to FGM in France where, although there is no background law on the matter, there is a penal code that punishes those who perpetrate physical harm. The lack of prosecutions in this country raises concerns not only about the effectiveness of the legislation but about awareness of the prohibition of FGM.

In that context, the Equal Opportunities Committee's stage 1 report is right to recommend that the Executive take steps to develop methods of collecting data and to review the guidance, education and training that are available for the full range of professionals who are likely to have to deal with the consequences of FGM. I note that the committee also recommends that the relevant penalties should be given prominence in information and guidance material that is circulated to communities that are likely to be affected. Elaine Smith raised that point.

Elaine Smith: Mary Scanlon mentioned the lack of prosecutions under the existing legislation. I asked the Somali women why they believed that there had been no prosecutions in Scotland and they said that that was because of the fear of prosecution. They were quite clear that there could be cases of children being sent abroad to have FGM carried out. Does she agree that the passing of the bill may have a deterrent effect? That said, it is important that we consider education, training and so on.

Mary Scanlon: That is an excellent point to make.

It is essential that the relevant penalties are highlighted if both the current and the new legislation are to be effective.

As a relatively new Parliament, we can learn from the problems that can occur during dissolution. Although the 1985 act was repealed in 2003, that did not extend to Scotland. In other words, the matter was not Sewelled, as the Scottish Parliament had been dissolved ahead of the 2003 elections. I hope that in future the

Parliament will examine the legislation that passes through Westminster during dissolution and, if appropriate, have it brought before the Parliament without delay. That said, having listened to Nanette Milne and Elaine Smith, I realise that we have had the opportunity not only to carry out further scrutiny but to strengthen the legislation. In this case, the fact that the Parliament had been dissolved may have been an advantage.

I hope that the bill will be effective in meeting the aims that it sets out to meet. That can be done only if there is greater communication with the communities that carry out the practice. My concern is that FGM will continue and I hope that women who need help—medical or otherwise—following the procedure will not be frightened to come forward to receive it for fear of being seen to be disloyal to their own community. That would be most regrettable.

As has been mentioned, for many women the reporting of FGM would result in a prosecution being brought against a member of their family or their community. The young woman whose experience the minister described in her opening speech said:

"I had been butchered with my mother's permission."

The Scottish Conservatives share the concerns that the Equal Opportunities Committee has raised and will support the progress of the bill through Parliament.

16:04

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Some years ago, I read an Alice Walker novel about female genital mutilation. It was a story about a girl in Africa who was mutilated in that way; at that time, the procedure was not given the name of FGM. Although I remember being horrified when I read it, at the back of my mind was the thought that that sort of practice does not happen; I thought that it was just one of those things that is put into a story. However, when I was elected to the Parliament, I started to learn more about FGM.

I was pleased when I heard that the Equal Opportunities Committee was to scrutinise the bill. As much as anything, the scrutiny has been an awareness-raising exercise for people in Scotland, with Elaine Smith as reporter meeting the Somali women's action group and reports coming out from the committee. We should all know about a practice that is likely to become more prevalent in our society, as the world moves and immigrants and asylum seekers come to Scotland, many from the countries where FGM is still carried out.

I have followed with interest what happened at the committee and Sandra White has also kept me informed. I was therefore interested to read the

committee's report and will take a personal look at some of its recommendations.

The first recommendation about which I feel strongly is recommendation 12, which says that the World Health Organisation classification system should be adopted in the bill. Type IV FGM, as defined by the WHO, is mutilation. It might not involve someone taking a knife and cutting to the same extent as under other definitions, but

"the introduction of corrosive substances ... into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it"

is surely mutilation—there are no two ways about it. I ask the Executive to reconsider the definitions that it is using in the bill.

I agree with the committee recommendation that the Executive should specifically exclude reduction labioplasty, which is a practice that is happening across western society.

Recommendation 14 says that the Executive

"should specify in the Bill the particular procedures which it wishes to remain outwith the scope of the Bill".

Although I agree with what Sandra White said earlier on the subject, as the debate has moved on, I also have sympathy for the minister's view that that might cause problems. I am open-minded on the subject. If an amendment is lodged to address the recommendation, the debate can only be healthy and all of us will learn more from it.

I agree whole-heartedly that there should be no age limit in the bill. I also agree that reinfibulation should be defined. I note that, in evidence to the committee, the minister said that he felt that the definition was implicit in the bill. I am not sure that that is enough; the definition should be stated explicitly in the bill.

I turn to the crucial question of information dissemination both to the professionals who require it and to the communities that are affected. The people we are dealing with in those communities are coming to Scotland from countries where 98 to 99 per cent of the women are mutilated in this way. There is a strength of culture in those communities about FGM, that transcends religion and country boundaries. We are talking not about mothers who want to be cruel to their children but about mothers and other women in a society—and even men—who believe that FGM is in the interest of the young girl. That is a very hard cultural barrier to get over and it is crucial that we get information into communities that the practice is wrong.

We also need to tell young women and girls how they can get help if they suspect that FGM is going to be done to them. A 12, 13 or 14-year-old has to know where to go if her parents tell her suddenly

that she is to go to Somalia for a two-week holiday. If the girl fears that the reason for the visit is to have FGM done to her, she should know where to go to get the visit stopped.

With the honourable exception of the minister, it is interesting to note that no men have taken part in the debate. Also, with very few exceptions, no men have been in the chamber to listen to the debate. I do not want to have a go at the guys, cross party, but issues that affect women or involve violence towards women are often seen as women's issues. However, FGM is not a women's issue; it is a human rights issue that is about people in our society who are forcibly mutilated.

Nora Radcliffe: Does the member agree with Elaine Smith's point that FGM is not a women's issue, but a men's issue, because it is men's expectations and what they see as a desirable bride that drive the practice?

Linda Fabiani: I agree with the thrust of what Elaine Smith said, but the issues should transcend gender. All issues are women's issues and men's issues, especially when they involve abuse of human rights.

In educating communities that carry out the practice, which they see as the cultural norm, we must involve men. Given that such communities are often patriarchal, no matter how many educated women say that the practice is not right and that people should not put up with it, the prominent men in those societies need to say that, too, before it is taken seriously. Education must first be disseminated to the males; they must be taught that the practice is completely unacceptable, which will then pass through families to the women, after which we can start to move on. Nora Radcliffe mentioned Elaine Smith's comments about men. One crucial point that Elaine made was that we will make progress only when men stop demanding mutilated brides. We must push for education for men.

As Sandra White said, the Executive might be worried that cross-border issues may arise if we use different definitions from those used at Westminster and expand the scope of our bill beyond that of the legislation at Westminster. I agree with Sandra that we should get the bill right. If Westminster wants to amend its legislation to bring it up to the same standard as ours and if that is better for the people who are affected, that is fine. We should care not about the ease of legislating but about what is best for the communities that are involved.

One crucial issue is information for medical staff. A few members have mentioned the booklet by the specialist midwife Comfort Momoh, who came to the committee. Like Marilyn Livingstone, I urge the Executive to take on board the issues that are

raised in the booklet, which is well written and informative. I would like to hear from the minister what resources will be put in place to ensure that health professionals know exactly how to deal with people who come forward after suffering such abuse.

Like the committee, I am worried that the fact that only one doctor will be able to decide whether a procedure is valid as an exception under the mental health provision could be abused. The Executive should take on board the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh's point that two doctors should give an opinion on such matters. The committee's report states that the Deputy Minister for Justice

"did not think that there was a loophole and that the requirement for two medical practitioners to agree on a procedure would ... 'introduce unnecessary complications, and ... unnecessary delays.'"

However, complications are not unnecessary if we are making absolutely sure on a matter as crucial as mutilating someone's genitalia. Further, it would not involve a particularly long delay to get a second opinion from a doctor. I urge the Executive to rethink its view on that issue.

Like Elaine Smith, I would like asylum seekers in our country to be afforded the same protection as everyone else and think that they should not be discriminated against in any way.

I give absolute support to what we are trying to do, which is to firm up and make clearer the law that was made in 1985. I am sure that all members will work positively towards getting the bill through the Parliament as quickly as possible.

16:15

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): Towards the end of her speech, Linda Fabiani raised a pertinent issue, which echoed points that other members made: female genital mutilation is not an issue for women alone; it is also an issue for men in a number of respects. It is a shame that, when the bill has been considered at committee meetings and in the Parliament, it has been left mainly to women to talk about the issue. Until men are confronted with the implications and consequences for women of the way in which our society and other societies are structured, we will continue to have problems.

Female genital mutilation is an extreme example of the problem that is caused by a lack of equality and fairness, and I do not think that any member—or, I hope, anyone in Scotland—could object in any way to the passing of the bill. Although there might be some differences of emphasis or interpretation at stage 2, from what I have heard today, it seems that any argument will not be party political but will be about what each of us thinks is

the most effective and appropriate way of creating appropriate legislation.

There is no doubt that we should protect our girls and women from the horrendous procedure of female genital mutilation. I am encouraged by the comments that members of all parties have made and I will emphasise the reasons why we have introduced the bill and explain its effect.

The bill will extend the legal protection that we can offer against female genital mutilation by taking extraterritorial jurisdiction in respect of female genital mutilation carried out overseas in certain cases. That is to ensure that the current law cannot be evaded by taking a girl out of the United Kingdom to have female genital mutilation performed. Under the bill, it will be unlawful for a UK national or permanent UK resident to carry out female genital mutilation outside the UK, or to aid and abet female genital mutilation of a UK national or permanent UK resident.

The bill extends the maximum penalty for offences relating to female genital mutilation from five years to 14 years. There are three reasons for that: to send a strong message that female genital mutilation is unacceptable; to deter those who might be likely to practise female genital mutilation; and to signal to professionals the importance of protecting girls who may be at risk of female genital mutilation. The bill also changes the terminology used from circumcision to, more appropriately, female genital mutilation.

A number of points were raised in the debate. I accept that there is a need for education. Education was not required during the consultation stage and it is not required as the bill progresses; it is what is needed in the aftermath of an act coming into force. We need to consider how we get the message across and ensure that no one in this country or associated with this country is engaged in the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation. I hope that anything that we can do in this country to educate people might influence what happens in the societies from which people in this country came and with which they still have links. What we do here might well produce some benefit in societies elsewhere in the world.

I note the comments that were made about the consultation process. I accept that the process was not as long as it would normally have been, but we were anxious to ensure that we took advantage of the opportunity to get a slot in the legislative programme. I argue strongly that getting that slot was the right thing to do although, unfortunately, a number of things happened as a result. The consultation period was not the time to consider deterrent effects but the time to ensure that we got the process moving. Considering the deterrent effects and ensuring that people understand what the act is about will come

thereafter. In the consultation period we could not have told people what the act would do, because at that stage we did not know what its final shape would be.

Comments have been made about the WHO guidelines and whether we should include them in the bill. My advice is that the WHO is considering redefining its guidelines and that it could create problems if we put in the bill guidelines that could be changed.

Cathy Peattie: I understand that the Executive wants legislation that is watertight and which it does not have to go back and change. Surely our saying that we support the WHO definition would be enough, because if it changed, the world perception of female genital mutilation would change too, so it would not be necessary to revisit the bill.

Hugh Henry: I understand Cathy Peattie's point, but there could be problems in making the definition in the bill the definition in the WHO guidelines, breach of which will be a criminal act, when we do not know what the guidelines might be in the future. I do not think that causing further problems in legislation by being loose in our definitions is the best way forward. I will re-examine whether we can incorporate in the bill something more specific, something wider or something that embraces the spirit of what the WHO is attempting to do. If more information from the WHO comes to us in time, we will certainly consider it.

Issues have been raised and comments have been made about asylum seekers. In the bill we have gone further than many might have expected, because we are attempting, where we can, to protect asylum seekers in this country. If we tried to legislate for what might happen elsewhere in the world, that would raise issues of legislative competence that might affect our ability to enact the legislation. We will do what we can within our legislative competence, but protecting asylum seekers might not always be entirely possible.

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): The minister said earlier that female genital mutilation was not a matter for women but a matter for all of us. Does he agree that it is a human rights issue and therefore a matter for all of us and that nothing should stand in the way of protecting the human rights of people in this country who might be sent back to other countries for genital mutilation?

Hugh Henry: Nothing that Rosie Kane says contradicts what I have said. We will protect asylum seekers within the law in our country, but there are issues to do with how we can enforce our law in other countries for people who currently have no legal definition or rights in this country. A

complicated issue is involved, but we will seek to do what we can within our legislative competence.

I understand the issue relating to a requirement for two medical practitioners, which we will consider, but the proposals cannot be directly compared with what the Abortion Act 1967 says in that respect. There is also the possibility that if two medical practitioners are required and there is no potential to resort to a court challenge on a medical practitioner's decision, practitioners who are in favour of female genital mutilation might use the law to make a determination and deny an opportunity in court to challenge that determination. We will consider that matter, but we do not want to introduce complexities that could work to the disadvantage of women who are faced with this horrendous practice. However, I will reflect on the points that have been made.

I understand the point that has been made about cosmetic procedures, but there are two concerns about what the committee has said. First, making another exception in the bill could create a loophole. Some cosmetic procedures are similar—if not identical to—various types of female mutilation. We want to ensure that there is no weakening of the protection that the law offers against female genital mutilation by permitting a procedure that cannot be easily distinguished from female genital mutilation. Secondly, we must ensure that we do not discriminate by permitting surgery that is requested for western cultural reasons while making procedures that are requested for African cultural reasons unlawful. We must dwell on that matter.

We agree that there should be no age limit and we did not propose one in the bill—that point has been well made.

I have been advised that the Somali women's action group, which responded to the consultation, was set up only in July, so we were unable to contact it before then.

On how the bill compares with UK legislation, we have already sought improvement. For example, we have made our bill gender neutral, so we are not simply proposing what was passed at Westminster. We have no problem with improving on what has been passed at Westminster, but we do not want to create loopholes or problems by having acts that are so different that they could be exploited in either direction. The issue is not only about consistency—it is about seeking to protect those who are most vulnerable.

The debate has been good, well informed and emotional. It has reflected well on the work of the Equal Opportunities Committee, which carried out its task on behalf of the Parliament.

Any reason that we need to explain to people why we want to pass the bill and to justify why we

are spending time considering it will be provided by the graphic description that the minister read out earlier, which justifies what we are attempting to do.

As more members are present in the chamber now than were earlier, it might be useful for all members to have the opportunity to hear what the Minister for Justice said about why the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill is being debated in the Scottish Parliament. She cited the experience of someone who underwent the procedure when she was five years old:

"Mama positioned me on the rock. She sat behind me and pulled my head against her chest, her legs straddling my body. I circled my arms around her thighs. ... Mama leaned over and whispered, 'Try to be a good girl, baby. Be brave for Mama, and it'll go fast.'

The gypsy... fished out a broken razor blade. I saw dried blood on the jagged edge.

The next thing I felt was my flesh being cut away. I heard the blade sawing back and forth through my skin. The feeling was indescribable. ...I prayed, Please, God, let it be over quickly. Soon it was, because I passed out.

When I woke up ... my legs were completely numb, but the pain between them was so intense that I wished I would die. ... My legs had been tied together with strips of cloth binding me from my ankles to my hips so I couldn't move. I turned my head toward the rock; it was drenched with blood as if an animal had been slaughtered there. Pieces of my flesh lay on top, drying in the sun. ... After the gypsy sewed me up, the only opening left for urine—and later for menstrual blood—was a minuscule hole the diameter of a matchstick.

I could do nothing but wonder, why? What was it all for? All I knew was that I had been butchered with my mother's permission.

I suffered as a result of my circumcision, but I was lucky. Many girls die from bleeding to death, shock, infection or tetanus. Considering the conditions in which the procedure is performed, it's surprising that any of us survive."

Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill: Financial Resolution

Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill: Financial Resolution

16:31

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of two financial resolutions.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.—[*Mr Tom McCabe.*]

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

I am concerned that the current mechanisms for dealing with private bills may not necessarily deliver consistent analysis of the financial aspects when significant contributions from the Scottish consolidated fund are involved. My comments should in no sense be taken as a criticism of either of the two tramline bill committees.

The Arup report, which was commissioned by the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee, raised several issues concerning the promoter's assumptions, the evidence base for those and the possibility of a significant shortfall in the available funding. I hope that the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform will assure the Parliament that, before the Executive agrees to commit its agreed share of the overall cost, it will ensure that the business case for both tramline proposals is robust and fully supported by evidence, that the cost estimates are well founded and that the promoter is able to meet its financial obligations.

Because of the remit of each of the two tramline bill committees, it is not possible for either bill committee to consider the overall financial implications of the two schemes taken together. Given that the two schemes could involve the expenditure of £375 million by the Executive, that seems anomalous.

More generally, we need to ensure that there is a consistent standard of scrutiny for current and future schemes. The consideration of schemes that are legislated for through private bills needs to link in with wider budget scrutiny. As convener of the Finance Committee, I wish to be involved in

discussions on the financial scrutiny aspects under the review of private bills. Urgent consideration must be given to the financial scrutiny of private bills that are likely to lead to significant expenditure from the consolidated fund.

Given Lord Fraser of Carmyllie's findings, I am sure that members will agree that we do not want to be in a position in which financial scrutiny has not been seen to be consistently applied.

The Presiding Officer: The convener of the Finance Committee has raised an important issue, of which I am grateful that I received advance notice. I must advise that the matter is best raised with the Procedures Committee, which is currently in the midst of an inquiry into private bill procedures.

Mr McNulty seeks ministerial assurances on the business case concerned, but that is not directly a matter for the Executive. More properly, the matter is for the private bill committees to investigate. However, I remind Mr McNulty that the minister gave assurances in the chamber during both tramline bill debates that the Executive's financial commitments were conditional on robust business cases being presented.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer.

I want to clarify the role of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill Committee. As members will be aware, the process of consideration for private bills is contained within one committee, with no role for secondary committees. Our committee employed Arup, which is an expert in the field, to provide us with a robust and independent analysis of the promoter's business case, which was subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the committee. In reality, that process provides much more detail than the financial memoranda that the Finance Committee ordinarily receives. In fact, my colleague Des McNulty agrees that that scrutiny has been robust and I note that, in the opinion of our expert advisers, the promoter's financial information is as robust as could reasonably be expected at this stage. The committee will of course return to the business case before the conclusion of stage 3.

It is the case that the terms of any financial resolution are a matter for the Executive and I am sure that the Executive will want to consider the funds that it has agreed to commit. That said, I very much support the need to review the private bills process. In that context, I also support the contention that there might be a need for consistent scrutiny across bills whose provisions might make substantial claims on the consolidated fund.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you for that helpful comment. I do not think that I need to add to my response to Mr McNulty's point of order.

Points of Order

16:35

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. As you are aware, last week this Parliament agreed a motion on identity cards that called

"on the Executive to make a full statement on the intended use of the identity database by devolved institutions".

During First Minister's question time, the First Minister implied that his response to my Green colleague Shiona Baird's question was his "full statement" on the matter. As you are aware, rule 13.2.1 of the standing orders states:

"Where a member of the Scottish Executive or junior Scottish Minister wishes to make a statement to a meeting of the Parliament ... notice shall be given to the Presiding Officer."

Was such notice given to you by the First Minister?

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): A number of members wish to make points of order, so I will take them all now.

First, in reply to Mr Ballard, I have to say that no such request has been received. With regard to a statement or something similar, that is of course entirely a matter for the Executive, not for me as Presiding Officer. However, I am sure that you have made your point on this occasion.

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I think that a wee bit of banter in the chamber is necessary, even healthy. Indeed, I indulge in a wee bit of banter myself most days. For example, David McLetchie said today that the members of the Executive were ostriches and I pointed out that they were in fact chickens. I am no shrinking violet in this respect.

However, during my closing remarks in the G8 debate, what can be described only as a rammie was taking place on the right hand side of the chamber. If I behave in that way at the G8 summit, I am likely to be done for a breach of the peace. Such prolonged and cumulative noise during a member's closing remarks is disrespectful to the Parliament and the member in question—*[Interruption.]* They are doing it again. I am raising this point of order because a member of the public asked me to do so.

Presiding Officer, will you reiterate the need for members to keep their responses under control when they might have a cumulative effect? Moreover, will you ensure that measures are implemented to deal with the matter?

The Presiding Officer: The degree of banter or heckling in the chamber is largely a matter for me.

If members give out, they must expect to take back. [*Applause.*] Nevertheless, I should remind members that they have an obligation to be respectful and courteous to each other on all occasions.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. At First Minister's question time, the First Minister repeatedly asserted that the Conservative party voted against the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill. I have no doubt that he sincerely believes that assertion, but I wish in the interests of accuracy to point out that the Conservative party voted in favour of the bill at stage 1 and voted in favour of passing the bill at stage 3. I simply want the Presiding Officer to affirm that, even in the heat of political debate, accuracy is important.

The Presiding Officer: By making that point of order, you have placed your point on the record. However, I have to say that this is a matter for the Scottish ministerial code, not for me, and if you wish to pursue it, you should take it up directly with the First Minister.

There are no more points of order.

Members: Hooray!

Business Motion

16:39

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-2493, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee report to the Justice 2 Committee by 1 April 2005 on the Police (Retention and Disposal of Motor Vehicles) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (SSI 2005/80).—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

Motion agreed to.

Motion without Notice

16:40

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I want a motion without notice from Ms Curran, if at all possible, to bring decision time forward to now.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran): If members promise to behave in future, I am prepared to say, "Formally moved."

Motion moved,

That Decision Time on Thursday 3 March 2005 be taken at 4.40 pm.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

16:40

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Before we move to today's questions, Phil Gallie has indicated that he wishes to seek Parliament's permission to withdraw amendment S2M-2506.1, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2506, in the name of Rosie Kane, on the right to protest at Gleneagles. Mr Gallie, do you wish formally to withdraw amendment S2M-2506.1?

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Yes. I wish to do so in line with comments that I made in my speech this morning, to the effect that the Executive's amendment covers and perhaps expands upon mine.

Amendment, by agreement, withdrawn.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if amendment S2M-2507.3, in the name of Euan Robson, is agreed to, amendment S2M-2507.1, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-2507.3, in the name of Euan Robson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2507, in the name of Frances Curran, on school meals and our children's future, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (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)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 77, Against 31, Abstentions 6.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Amendment S2M-2507.1, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, falls.

The next question is, that amendment 2507.2, in the name of Eleanor Scott, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2507, in the name of Frances Curran, on school meals and our children's future, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)

McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 52, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S2M-2507, in the name of Frances Curran, on school meals and our children's future, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)

McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 79, Against 1, Abstentions 34.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament commends the work the Scottish Executive is doing to tackle childhood obesity, in particular by significantly improving the nutritional quality of school meals across Scotland; acknowledges the significant investment in children's health represented by Hungry for Success, the Executive's programme of activity around school meals and food in schools; recognises the action taken by the Executive to promote physical activity, by amongst other means, the employment of 400 additional physical education teachers and 600 active sports co-ordinators, and welcomes the Executive's commitment to continue investing in a high-quality and attractive school meals service to equip pupils with healthy eating habits for life and in initiatives to improve opportunities for physical exercise in daily life and sporting and recreational settings.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-2506.4, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2506, in the name of Rosie Kane, on the right to protest at Gleneagles, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 103, Against 5, Abstentions 6.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-2506.2, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, which seeks to amend motion S2M-2506, in the name of Rosie Kane, on the right to protest at Gleneagles, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 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)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)

Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 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 37, Against 77, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-2506, in the name of Rosie Kane, on the right to protest at Gleneagles, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, 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)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (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)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 103, Against 1, Abstentions 10.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament puts on record its support for Article 20 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association"; notes that the G8 summit will be meeting in Gleneagles in July this year, and resolves to uphold and support the right to peaceful assembly and protest in Scotland, in particular in Edinburgh at the Make Poverty History demonstration and at the summit itself in Gleneagles; further recognises that protestors have responsibilities to uphold the law and deplores calls by an unrepresentative minority to use the occasion to engage in unlawful and violent activity; pledges full endorsement of the work of the Scottish Police Service to ensure public safety and order and facilitate peaceful protest; welcomes the tremendous opportunity presented by the G8 to show to a watching world everything that is good about Scotland and Scotland's people, and acknowledges that the summit is also an opportunity to encourage debate, raise awareness and challenge people within Scotland about the key issues of poverty in Africa and climate change.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-2350, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on the general principles of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-2455, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe, on the financial resolution in respect of the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

The Presiding Officer: The final question tonight is, that motion S2M-2456, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe, on the financial resolution in respect of the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

Lapwing Lodge

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-2225, in the name of Bruce McFee, on Renfrew and Inverclyde scout association's Lapwing Lodge. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. Now that the last members who were leaving the chamber have gone through the door, I call Bruce McFee to open the debate.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the good works carried out by voluntary organisations in Scotland; notes that Renfrew and Inverclyde Scout Association, supported by East Renfrewshire Council, has made a funding application to the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund – Local Capital Grants Scheme for the modernisation of facilities at Lapwing Lodge, Renfrewshire, to increase the flexibility of the facility and allow a wider range of groups to access Lapwing, beyond the 40% usage currently enjoyed by community groups, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of this outdoor centre for the next 25 years and beyond; recognises the value of such centres, and consequently wishes Renfrew and Inverclyde Scout Association every success in its funding application.

16:51

Mr Bruce McFee (West of Scotland) (SNP):

I take the opportunity to thank all those who signed my motion and who have turned out for the debate. More important, I thank the many thousands of people throughout Scotland who give up their time and spend their money to provide services in our voluntary sector.

"Volunteering represents a huge investment of time, energy and commitment by individuals who want to improve the lives of those around them, close the opportunity gap and help make their communities a better place.

Most importantly, volunteering inspires the volunteers of tomorrow.

The young people who will come behind you,
They will see the work you do.
They will witness and benefit from the difference you make.

They are our future community leaders and you are their role models."

Those are not my words, but the words of Jack McConnell during volunteers week in June 2002.

I am sure that members will forgive me if I devote most of my time to Renfrew and Inverclyde scouts and to the facility at Lapwing Lodge, which was known locally for many years as the Peesweep. Lapwing Lodge is a former tuberculosis hospital that was built for Coats of Paisley in about 1910. It was built as a fresh-air hospital, which even a short visit to the 25 acres that surround the buildings or a tour inside will make more than obvious. I extend an invitation

from Renfrew and Inverclyde scouts to the minister to visit Lapwing Lodge, if he has the time to do so.

The scouts have used the grounds since the early 1960s and they took out a 25-year lease in 1963. In 1988, they purchased outright the buildings and grounds. They are a valuable resource that the scouts paid for and the community uses. The scouts also lease and maintain the adjoining Caplaw dam, where a range of water sports is provided. That is another valuable resource that the scouts pay for and the community uses.

Since 1988, about £500,000 has been spent on improving, repairing and maintaining Lapwing Lodge and its surrounds. With the exception of a one-off grant of £100,000 from the former Strathclyde Regional Council, that funding has been a further resource that the scouts pay for and the community uses.

In the 1960s, the facility could correctly have been described as a scout venue, but the situation has changed dramatically, to the extent that about 40 per cent of all stays are by community groups. The growth in that figure is not an accident and was achieved by Lapwing's present management.

To allow that figure to grow further and to make the facility more attractive to other disadvantaged groups in our community, Lapwing Lodge requires investment. It requires extra activity areas, renovated kitchens and improved and accessible toilet facilities. The available accommodation needs to be broken into smaller units to adapt to community groups' demands for small and secure accommodation facilities, particularly on weekdays. Without the necessary changes, many groups will be deprived of the use of this wonderful facility.

Last year, Renfrew and Inverclyde scout association applied for Scottish rural partnership funding to help with the cost of some of those works. The application was facilitated by East Renfrewshire Council and supported by Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils. They were turned down due to the project being

"purely a scout group"

and because

"The centre is not used by a broad range of community groups."

The centre is used by a broad range of community groups involving a wide age range of participants. There are uniformed organisations, church groups, the Red Cross, youth groups, youth services and special educational needs groups. There are theatre groups and the Salvation Army. It is used by the James Watt College of Further and Higher Education and the

Disability Resource Centre at Love Street in Paisley. Of course, it is also used by local authorities and community groups from the six adjacent local authorities. Even HM Customs and Excise and Strathclyde police's dog branch use the centre. From six-year-olds to old age pensioners, they have all been to Lapwing Lodge.

Lapwing Lodge is not exclusively a scout venue. It is not even a venue for the exclusive use of uniformed organisations. There are community groups on the management board of Lapwing Lodge. It is a true community facility that wishes to increase further its use by the community but it has been held back through lack of funding. Much has been heard over the years on television, in newspapers and in the chamber about youth crime and the involvement of a minority of youths in antisocial behaviour. Millions of pounds are spent every year to repair the results of that antisocial behaviour and millions more are spent on trying to provide diversionary activities and to give children recreational activities and better alternatives. This is a facility that does exactly that.

The volunteers who run Lapwing Lodge want to maintain and improve it for all in our community. They have proposed a visionary but realistic plan to secure its future for the next 25 years. They have worked hard to secure their share of the cash. Despite their vision and commitment and all that hard work over many decades, Lapwing Lodge's future is under threat. Make no mistake about it: without considerable investment, Lapwing Lodge will in the next few years reach a point at which it will be unable to continue.

On Community Service Volunteers make a difference day, the First Minister said:

"Volunteering is central to our vision of a Scotland with a stronger sense of 'society'. I want volunteers to be welcomed and valued wherever they make a contribution, and more people to be encouraged to volunteer."

I agree with that. We have listened to the fine words. It is now time to turn that rhetoric into reality. I hope that, in the coming days and weeks, the minister will be able to show—not just with warm words, but with cold hard cash—that the Parliament values the contribution made by the organisation.

16:58

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I thank Bruce McFee for lodging the motion. I was pleased to sign it and I wish the bid from Lapwing Lodge well.

I do not want to start on an overly critical note, but I worried when I saw what had been drawn for members' business and I wondered about the benefits of such a debate. I know that the motion has been lodged with the best of intentions, but I

worry that it might be counterproductive. I will wait to see what the minister has to say, but he has to assess all bids impartially and fairly and I cannot imagine that he will be in a position to comment in any way. I know that I would be aggrieved if a bid from another area of Scotland were approved and I felt that that was in response to political pressure rather than the bid being judged on its merits.

Just as I hope that the minister will listen impartially to the arguments, I hope that he will not hold this debate against what I believe is a very strong bid indeed. Lapwing Lodge is in my constituency, although it is used by people from all over Renfrewshire and beyond and not predominantly by residents of East Renfrewshire.

Lapwing Lodge was a former sanatorium and it is now owned by Renfrewshire and Inverclyde scouts as a camping and outdoor centre for scouts, and for many other voluntary and youth groups. Although the sums of money involved in keeping the centre going as a viable concern and upgrading it so that it can be sustained are substantial, it is not a luxury facility—far from it. It is run by volunteers for volunteers. Like many outdoor centres in Scotland, camping at Lapwing in good weather must be a delight, but for much of the rest of the time it would probably leave people with a sense of achievement as much as unadulterated pleasure.

I stayed in campsites in France last summer. Lapwing is not that sort of facility. I do not say that to put people off—far from it—but to give members and the minister an appreciation of the sort of facility it provides. It is for people who want to experience the outdoors and who enjoy building the sense of self-reliance, independence and community spirit that camping and scouting lend themselves to.

Lapwing is run by volunteers who give up a great deal of their time for the benefit of others. On that note, I welcome Bill McCallum and, I think, Jerry to the public gallery today and thank them for publicising the work of Lapwing Lodge.

Not only scouts are able to use Lapwing: the lodge is reaching out to the wider community to ensure that more local organisations are aware of the facility on their doorstep. That is an important point because meeting the users criteria to qualify for Executive or national lottery support has clearly been a difficulty for Lapwing. That should not be the case. It is clear that Lapwing runs on a break-even basis and that users come from throughout the community. They are certainly not from predominantly better-off sections of society. I challenge any member to say that Lapwing is not exactly the kind of site and organisation that the Government and the Parliament would wish to support, but the volunteers behind the centre appear to have been stymied at every turn in

applying for a grant from the lottery or national Government.

There is an issue here not so much for the minister as for the lottery administrators. Uniformed organisations make a huge contribution to our society, to our young people's sense of citizenship, to their involvement with those around them and, as I have already suggested, in building self-reliance and self-confidence. In this case, the volunteers have been left with a sense of grievance that other less established, more transient organisations qualify for funding when the scouts and others sometimes struggle to get by.

East Renfrewshire Council has been very supportive. If it is successful in its application to the rural partnership fund, that council is willing to provide further funds. That is both a tribute to my colleagues on East Renfrewshire Council and to the strength of the bid from Lapwing.

I only hope that whatever the minister says this evening, he will look at the Lapwing bid fairly and objectively. I am sure that he will identify its clear merits. As he knows, I wrote to him to give the project my endorsement. I also hope that he will look at the situation that faces local scouts organisations such as that in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, with a view to clarifying the criteria that they have to satisfy in applying for grant support.

On that note, I am happy to endorse Bruce McFee's motion and to wish Lapwing Lodge well in its application.

17:02

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I, too, welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate and add my voice to the support for voluntary organisations in Scotland. I hope that our visitors in the public gallery this evening will take some succour from the record of the Parliament in being prepared to speak up for the voluntary sector and, in fairness to the Executive, doing so with some positive responses. It is only right that we acknowledge that.

I declare a note of interest with reference to scouting and guiding in Scotland—I am an ambassador for the guides and I had the pleasure of receiving the hospitality of the Scout Association at its Burns supper this year when I replied to a toast to the lassies.

I too defer to and am aware of the sensitivity of the minister's position. It is only right to acknowledge that: it would be inappropriate to expect the minister to make any specific commitment this evening. However, I hope that the debate will provide an opportunity for those of us who, like Bruce McFee, are aware of what our

scouting movement achieves in the Renfrewshire area, and particularly what the Lapwing Lodge facility provides in the pursuit of that endeavour, to tease out some issues that the minister will find informative.

Bruce McFee referred to the exemplary definition of voluntary activity given by the First Minister on 7 June 2002. It is against that encouraging backdrop that I make the following observations. Where we have such a reservoir of good will, commitment and community public-spiritedness as we find among those who work with our scouts, the Scottish Executive's providing some help would be a gilt-edged investment: the Scottish Executive would be adding to a proven investment of worth and achievement.

I am also aware, from meetings with representatives of the Scout Association in the Renfrew and Inverclyde area and from a voluminous exchange of correspondence with Mr McCallum, who is a veritable latter-day Pepys when it comes to communicating with members of the Scottish Parliament and keeping them aware of the details, that there is genuine frustration about how resource can be accessed for such worthy projects as Lapwing Lodge in Renfrewshire.

I met officials from the national lottery community fund in Glasgow. It appears that there is a certain rigidity in how lottery funding is to be made available, which has the very undesirable consequence that excellent projects such as the modernisation and expansion of the facilities at Lapwing Lodge might not have a clear application path to follow.

The Scottish rural partnership fund, which is responsible for the local capital grants scheme, is a desirable and necessary source of provision, but whether it offers the best way of dealing with funding for a volunteer community project is perhaps another matter. However, it seems to be the only game in town. I know from parliamentary questions and correspondence with the minister and his predecessor that ministers are confronted with genuine technical difficulties. In June, I received a letter from Mr Allan Wilson in which he said, in reference to an unsuccessful application for help:

"Projects which are solely or predominantly for the benefit of one organisation or group within a community, e.g. young people or older people, are not eligible for LCGS funding."

I reiterate the point that Bruce McFee made about the organisations other than the Scout Association that use Lapwing Lodge. According to the information that I have, 22 uniformed organisations, 56 community organisations and seven international organisations use the facility. I hope that those figures give the Executive a

measure of comfort that the facility is not supported just by a unilateral, self-interested, small group of people who seek money to pursue a particular pet scheme. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I urge the Executive to demonstrate what I know to be its high regard for an organisation such as the Scout Association and to give a fair wind to assisting with capital funding for the project. In doing so, the Executive would not only take forward a very important community facility but send out the strongest possible message of support and encouragement to the dedicated people who make scouting the tremendous advertisement that it is for the development and guidance of young people. Such an approach would also give substance to the First Minister's proclamation of 7 June 2002. I support Mr McFee's motion.

17:07

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I too welcome the debate and I congratulate Bruce McFee on securing it. I was pleased to sign the motion.

As Bruce McFee and others said, Lapwing Lodge—or Peesweep, as it is known—is an excellent outdoor facility that serves many people in the Renfrewshire area. I have perhaps special affection for a building that was built by Coats in 1910, because my office in Paisley is also in a former mill building. However, there is another reason for me to have some affection for Peesweep. Although the facility has been owned by the Scout Association for 40 years, I am sad to say that 30 years ago, when I was a Bishopton guide, Peesweep was a facility only for scouts and not for the local girl guides. I will not be so indelicate as to inquire whether the scouts owned the facility when Annabel Goldie was a Bishopton guide, although I had rather hoped that she would enlighten us.

Miss Goldie: Will the member take an intervention?

Ms Alexander: I would be delighted to do so.

Miss Goldie: In the interests of accuracy, I confess with some shame that I have never been a Bishopton guide, or any other kind of guide.

Ms Alexander: As ever, Annabel Goldie is a model of candour. As a patrol leader of the swallows and a guiding ambassador, I hope that she does not feel that her life was blighted by not being a Bishopton girl guide.

I was making the point that much has changed. A number of members have dwelt on the fact that the facility is used by a range of community organisations. I was impressed to learn not just

that 50 or so organisations use Lapwing Lodge but that more than 10,000 people use the facility annually.

That said, we must commend the Renfrew and Inverclyde scouts, as owners and managers of the facility, and be candid in recognising that the consequences of keeping the charges affordable over the years were that they were able to cover only the recurrent costs and not the capital costs that are once in a while necessary to maintain a facility to the necessary standards. There is recognition that it is time for a step change in the quality of the facilities. As has been mentioned, I and many other members have written to the minister responsible, Ross Finnie, to ask him whether he will look sympathetically on the case. The minister has confirmed in writing to many of us that he is considering the matter. I share the concerns that members have expressed that it is important that due process is observed in those matters.

Other members have recognised that this is an opportunity for us to reflect on the role of youth organisations, both uniformed and non-uniformed. There are considerable pressures on youth organisations, not necessarily because of the actions of Government but owing to societal trends that go far beyond Government yet nevertheless bring severe pressures to bear. It is unarguable that it is now much harder for people to commit to be a scout leader, a guide leader or any youth leader than it was a number of years ago when people worked more fixed hours and could be more certain about the commitment that they could give. I spent last Sunday morning at Paisley YMCA, at its annual conference. It is one of the many organisations that has made use of the facility in the past year.

I will end by reflecting on the symmetry of a day in Parliament that ends with a discussion of this matter and began, at 9.30 this morning, with a discussion of school meals, nutrition and the importance of physical activity for the health of the nation and the health of our young people in particular.

We should ask the minister and his officials that over the coming weeks, as they reflect on the options available to them, they consider the totality of the contribution that Lapwing Lodge makes to so many important objectives, whether that be introducing young people to the environment, providing an opportunity for physical activity, creating a space for friendship and fellowship, or providing an opportunity for training the new generation of youth leaders of tomorrow. The facility carries out those many roles, which spread across many Executive departments. As the due process of consideration goes on, I hope that we

are beginning to develop structures that allow the totality of that contribution to be recognised.

17:13

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I cannot join in the banter about guides and I have to confess that it is, on a quick calculation, 58 years since I was in the scouts. That is my background interest. It is good to have a debate on the issue, although I recognise the concerns that other members have expressed because we cannot be too specific.

I will make three points. First, we must make a serious effort to educate people in Scotland about how to apply for funds. The issue is not only about applying for the funds in question in this matter, but about applying for a range of funding. To get grants it is necessary for people to fill in 30 pages, which is difficult enough, but they also have to know the right phrases. If applicants press the right buttons and make the right noises they are much more likely to get the money. People need to be educated in the process.

I took the opportunity to have a very helpful first meeting with Mr Dharmendra Kanani, who is the new boss of the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland. The existence of that fund is very good news and I think that Mr Kanani is also good news—he seems to be an excellent man. At that meeting I took the opportunity, because of correspondence about Lapwing Lodge, to raise the issue because a predecessor fund had turned Lapwing down. Lapwing felt that it had been turned down unfairly, so it was interesting to see the notes from the lottery people, who felt that Lapwing had not really made the right case for funding.

We provide interpreters for minority ethnic groups who cannot speak English very well; in the same way, we must do much better in providing interpreters for perfectly good Scots of great vintage—with backgrounds of any nationality—who are trying to apply for grants but cannot understand how to do it. I am sure that the new lottery fund has people who are specifically trained to try to help applicants. The Executive should take up the issue of how to explain things to people.

My second point—out of three—relates to residential accommodation, of which we have lost a lot. For many councils—particularly in Strathclyde—the demise of the regional councils has meant the demise of many outdoor education facilities. Other organisations such as Scottish Centres—formerly known as the Scottish National Camps Association—are affected. The group has four or so premises in different parts of Scotland which, rather like Lapwing Lodge, need improvement and modernisation. That would

enable the group to do even more good work than it does at the moment.

However, it is difficult for people to get funding from whatever source for residential accommodation. As other speakers have said, there is a great deal of good—in socialising and education of all sorts—in getting people away from home for a day or two, or a week, and allowing them to meet people from other areas. The Executive has to address the residential accommodation issue in order to ensure that it has adequate funding.

Thirdly, there must be a coherent policy for funding voluntary organisations in general. We still do not have enough core funding or enough funding for facilities—especially national facilities. We still fund far too many organisations only for particular projects, with the result that they lead a hand-to-mouth existence. We have to get together the Executive, the lottery, councils, and the trusts that support such organisations. We had a sectarian summit; I think we also need a voluntary organisation funding summit, so that we can try to get a more coherent policy on how to fund all the bodies that play such a huge part in our life.

There are lessons to be drawn from this debate. I hope that the minister will ponder them.

17:18

Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): I first met Bill McCallum three years ago in Inchinnan church, when we were both visiting the Renfrewshire open day facilities. He told me about Lapwing Lodge. I visited it last Monday—deliberately when there was nobody there—because I wanted to get a feel for what it was like. It reminded me of a hospital that my mother had been in. She had tuberculosis. When I spoke to Bill yesterday he confirmed that the hospitals had been built to allow the air to blow through. In those days, people did not know what caused TB.

When I spoke to Bill McCallum three years ago, he told me about the difficulties that he was having with funding. We discussed which community groups used the facility—from the scouts to the girl guides to all the other groups that have been mentioned this evening. At the moment, I know of an orchestra that is visiting this country that is looking for accommodation near Paisley. The orchestra will be performing in Paisley town hall and is looking for somewhere cheap to practice to their heart's content. They have taken a look at Lapwing Lodge.

As members know, 40 per cent of usage of the lodge is by groups other than the scouts. The building can cope with four different groups pursuing their own activities at one time. For example, Renfrewshire Council, through its

flexicare project, is sending young people and adults with learning difficulties to Lapwing Lodge at the same time as the scouts and the guides are there. If such diverse groups are there together, it makes me think how much they must learn from one another. It also makes me think about the lessons that a person with full faculties can learn from watching a young adult with learning difficulties cope with daily life.

It is right that Parliament spends much time discussing and reviewing support for kids who display what we term "antisocial behaviour". Our surgeries are full of people who complain that they suffer as a result of antisocial behaviour, under-age drinking, knife crime and drugs. It is right that we address those issues, but what about the kids who do not display such behaviour and who make up the vast majority?

As Donald Gorrie said, it seems that the relevant funding streams are extremely difficult to access. What criteria are used? Too often, voluntary organisations seem to be passed from one department to another because they do not fit the first department's criteria but might fit those of the second.

One of the problems that Lapwing Lodge allegedly faces is its ownership. The scouts are sometimes told that because they own the lodge, it does not fit the criteria. Even though the scouts own the lodge, it is clear that it is a community asset. From listening to the radio in the morning when I am getting ready for work, I have no evidence that the scouts are listed in the Financial Times Stock Exchange index; I have never heard that they are making massive profits from renting out properties such as Lapwing Lodge.

We support commercial ventures. We have a system that allows people who want to start a business to go along to Scottish Enterprise, which will provide support by telling them what they can do and where they can get money. Why is it so difficult to find an easy way to support facilities such as Lapwing Lodge? Donald Gorrie spoke about that problem. The Executive needs to produce clear guidelines on funding criteria.

Many groups that seek funding experience the same frustration, but I do not believe that a members' business debate is the right forum for discussing the challenging issues that an individual organisation faces. The debate should be much wider. I believe that we need a comprehensive review of all funding streams, including the lottery, so that the people who are involved in organisations that support young people, adults and people with disabilities find the process much easier. This is not the first time that I have dealt with that point in a speech.

Like other members, I recognise the value of centres such as Lapwing Lodge and believe that we should support its long-term sustainability. I know that constituents of mine in Renfrewshire and Port Glasgow have benefited from spending time there learning about one another and their communities and reflecting on their lives. I shall visit the lodge again when there are visitors there—I am sure that Bill McCallum will invite me. He knows that I support the scouts' application for funding although, as I have said, a members' business debate does not allow us to go into the issue in as much detail as is necessary. I note that the Deputy Presiding Officer supports the motion because he signed it.

The service that Lapwing Lodge provides is very worth while; long may that continue. I invite the minister to listen to some of the things that Donald Gorrie and I have said about the need for a comprehensive review of how voluntary organisations are funded and how they can get through the mire of funding that the Executive offers.

17:23

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Lewis Macdonald): It is encouraging that members have acknowledged that there are limitations on what I can say in response to Bruce McFee's motion, largely because of the central place in that motion of reference to a funding application that has not yet been determined. Trish Godman is, of course, far better placed than I am to comment on what is an appropriate motion for a members' business debate.

I note that members have indicated their support for Lapwing Lodge in the context of the Renfrew and Inverclyde scout association's application to the local capital grants scheme of the Scottish rural partnership fund. I have received and replied to letters that have been written in support of that application by members who have spoken in the debate and by my colleague Hugh Henry, so I am obviously aware that an application has been made. However, I should inform members that a total of 48 applications to the scheme from 22 council areas throughout Scotland have been received for the 2005-06 round. It is a requirement that all applications receive support from their local authority. In that context, it would be invidious of me to comment on the Lapwing Lodge application or on any other application for funding at this stage. An announcement on the outcome of the round will be made as soon as that can be done.

I want to say something about the aims of the local capital grants scheme to which the motion refers. It is a competitive scheme that is aimed at funding projects where it is clear that communities

will derive benefits through providing or improving a facility that would otherwise not be available locally. Schemes must be accessible to all ages and interest groups in the community. Projects in rural and urban areas are eligible for funding. That said, because of the location of the scheme in the Scottish rural partnership fund, the presumption is in favour of rural projects. In all other respects, however, projects are assessed on a fair and equal basis. The local capital grants scheme is one element of our Scottish rural partnership fund, which is a fund that we put in place to support development of rural communities.

A number of members asked questions about access to funding and the appropriateness of the mechanisms for obtaining access. The Executive carried out a consultation last year not just on the local capital grants scheme but on the whole Scottish rural partnership fund. The aim of the consultation was to identify whether the fund is delivering its objectives and whether it is doing so in a way that applicants can access. We acknowledge that there are areas in the fund as a whole that merit re-examination. We want to simplify its structure and provide better support to applicants. Ministers are collectively considering the results of the consultation and I expect to announce the results later this year.

Of course, we recognise the important role of voluntary organisations in Scotland. As members have said, significant sums of money go to the voluntary sector from rural development funds and from other parts of the Scottish Executive. We recognise the particular role that the voluntary sector plays in supporting youth projects. The sector has an important part to play in encouraging more active involvement of young people in their communities.

Groups such as the scouts and guides play a valuable role in helping young people to develop their personal and social potential through active citizenship and social engagement. That is why the Executive provides support, for example, to the Scout Association through support for its core costs in Scotland. Clearly that funding has benefits for all the association's activities across the board.

In looking at the future of the Scottish rural partnership fund and how it should be reformed, the Executive wants to see whether we are doing what we ought to be doing in enabling communities to address their local needs. Our review has made it clear that community-led rural development is valuable, which is also the case in urban areas. We want to ensure that the benefits are built on and sustained through continued improvements to the fund. I hope that that work will help to address some of the wider funding issues that members have mentioned in the debate.

Meeting closed at 17:27.

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