

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 8 March 2006

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 8 March 2006

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Mrs Liz Hood, who is a business education teacher at Perth academy.

Mrs Liz Hood (Perth Academy): Despite the blue sky and the strong sunshine, it was bitterly cold as I sat on the 4,700m summit. The warm glow of achievement—of reaching the top—and the exhilaration of standing higher than I had ever stood before made the previous few hours, in which the slopes had grown steeper and fear and trepidation had spread among us, suddenly insignificant. I thought of my family and friends back in Scotland: “If they could see me now!” How often have we been faced with insecurity and lack of confidence, yet found an inner strength?

This was no solo journey, but a team challenge that started as far back as two years ago, when I was asked to step in because the link teacher was unable to go. It would be wrong of me to say that I grasped the opportunity whole-heartedly. After all, I was not the climber in the family—the adventurer—but the one who stayed at home and looked after the children while my husband headed off. Would I have the confidence to test myself while remaining aware of my enormous responsibilities for the 11 teenagers in my care? Now, standing on the top of an Ecuadorian volcano and after three weeks away from my normal existence, I had answered those questions. At the same time, I had discovered a new dimension to my life, a new meaning and a world away from previous experiences.

Team challenge, which is organised by the World Challenge organisation, is a demanding four-week expedition to an exciting destination, which is preceded by an 18-month team-building and skills development programme. The expedition involves project work, trekking and cultural adventure, and it is one of the most powerful experiences in which a young person can hope to participate.

As I reflect on the month of July 2005, I think of the children and staff in the nursery school, playing in the playground and the classroom that we transformed into a bright and pleasant environment. I think of the joy on their faces as we

played games with them, humble in their acceptance of the gifts that they had received. It was hard work, but was hard work ever so appreciated? Everywhere there were signs of hope and humility.

As one who had previously lived on the flat plains of existence, my mountain-top experience has given me a very different outlook on life and a realisation that simple acts of gratitude can be rewarded far beyond the relative comprehension that they deserve. They say that life begins at 40, but for me the crossroads appeared at 50, and I followed the signs to Ecuador. I could have taken the easy decision and said no, but by saying yes I overcame my fears and apprehension and gained the rewards.

I would like to leave you with a couple of quotes to reflect on. US author Elbert Hubbard said:

“The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing that you will make one.”

The second quote is from George Eliot, who said:

“It is never too late to become what you might have been.”

Holyrood

14:33

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Before business, I would like to make a brief statement. We meet today at the Hub, not in our home at Holyrood. Since a strut came loose last Thursday, we have concentrated on a number of issues: putting public safety first; ensuring a full programme of parliamentary business; appointing independent structural engineering consultants; and providing such information as we have.

Our problem is that, as yet, we have no information on cause or remedy—we cannot give you what we do not have. However, I think that I speak for all of us in the chamber today when I say that our deep sense of frustration is tempered with our determination to get to the cause, and to the remedy, at the earliest opportunity. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has therefore written to Arup instructing it to produce a report by the end of business today. The onus is on Arup: it is up to the experts to tell us what went wrong and how to fix it. We will issue a further statement later today, once we have seen that report.

In the meantime, our business continues. Scotland's democratic process is certainly bigger than a building.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Can we hear a full statement soon from your good self or a representative of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, so that we may have the opportunity to ask questions about the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the roof beam in the chamber last Thursday? Many of the people whom we represent wonder what on earth is going on and how something like that could happen in a building for which they paid £431 million. Why were no alternative arrangements made for us to vote last Thursday, instead of our voting this afternoon on matters that were debated almost a week ago? Those are just some of the questions that must be answered. I ask for a statement soon from you or a representative of the corporate body, because this fiasco is in danger of bringing our Parliament into disrepute.

The Presiding Officer: Since I took over as Presiding Officer I have made it clear that I will be transparent about what is going on. The fullest information will be provided to members. Members will of course also have the opportunity to question SPCB members at the next SPCB question time, but I promise the fullest information.

As for the second question, alternative voting arrangements have always been in place, but

when we move away from electronic voting, we must have roll-call votes, so I must take verbal responses and work my way from Brian Adam right through to Allan Wilson. A single roll-call vote takes 12 minutes and we have another two minutes after that to verify the vote and report back. We had six votes to take last week. I gave the Parliamentary Bureau my view that, in the circumstances—there was already enough trouble in the building that day—the sensible option was to have a clear vote today. Bureau members unanimously accepted that.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Further to Mr Canavan's point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise for making this point and I appreciate that you are not yet in any position to say how much all the disruption will cost or who will pay, if any greater cost is to be incurred. I simply ask you to assure us that the cost of everything will be much more transparent than the cost of the original construction of the Parliament building was.

The Presiding Officer: I give you that guarantee.

International Women's Day

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4063, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on international women's day, 8 March 2006.

14:38

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): International women's day is an important event in our calendar and is as important today as it has ever been. It is a time to renew our solidarity on women's equality and our commitment to women's rights. It is also a time to celebrate the achievement of women worldwide and to mark out matters on which progress and change are still needed.

We intend to support the Scottish National Party's amendment. It is possible to have a debate of substance in which members of all parties to an extent agree.

This year—2006—marks an important centenary: the founding in 1906 of the Scottish Women's Suffragette Federation by Dr Elsie Maud Inglis. One hundred years later, it is fair to say that much has changed, but it is equally fair to say that we still have a long way to go to achieve full equality between women and men in Scotland. I pay tribute to Elsie Inglis and other Scottish suffragists and suffragettes and I mark this international women's day as one for celebration and acknowledgement of their achievements—and other women's achievements—in fighting for full participative rights in our democratic processes.

I started by paying tribute to a local heroine, but this is international women's day, and it is the international context that brings a stark reality to the scale of women's inequality. I know that many members are familiar with the statistics. Women constitute half the world's population, but perform nearly two thirds of its work, receive just one tenth of the world's income and own less than 1 per cent of the world's property. Research from organisations that work internationally also tells us that women remain more at risk of illiteracy—for every 100 men, only 88 women worldwide are considered literate. Only 16 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women.

The experience or threat of violence impacts on women's lives everywhere. It cuts across borders and impacts on all women regardless of social class, age, race or culture. Women are routinely beaten, raped, mutilated and killed with impunity across the world—in their homes and in their communities, in peacetime and in times of war. In fact, it is estimated that among women aged between 15 and 44, violence causes more deaths

and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war.

It is clear that women around the world do not get a fair deal. Although their contribution is immense, it is not reflected in status, reward or their position in society. Globally, nationally and locally, women are still a long way short of equality, so the need to pursue that agenda is as important as ever.

It is well worth restating the work that we have to do to achieve gender equality, because when we talk about pursuing the gender equality agenda, we often encounter the belief that it has been dealt with and is no longer an issue. However, the issue of women's equality is as important here in Scotland as it is anywhere else. In Scotland, one in five women experiences domestic abuse from a male partner in their lifetime. Women earn on average 12 per cent less than men and occupy the lowest-paid jobs in the lowest-paid occupations. We have a good record in the Scottish Parliament, but women constitute only 15 per cent of Westminster MPs and 22 per cent of local councillors. Moreover, women are massively underrepresented in boardrooms and decision-making bodies and continue to experience discrimination in employment and access to services.

As a result, although this might well be a day for celebration, we do not yet have gender equality. This is not an issue for the past; it is an issue of the past, the present and the future. It is no less important than other equality issues and continues to demand attention from every one of us. We continue to have a great deal to engage with and we should not underestimate how difficult it will be to overcome the legacy of centuries of discrimination, ingrained sexism and patriarchy that we have inherited.

Parliament's shape and conduct have been influenced by the fact that nearly 40 per cent of MSPs are women. That places us among the world's leaders with regard to women's representation. We have well-established structures for delivering on equality, and Parliament and the Executive have from the outset afforded high priority to equality work. We should remember that that level of representation did not come about by accident. If I may, I again pay tribute to the women in my party and the trade union movement, who led the charge in meeting the aspirations of women and women's organisations throughout Scotland.

I also point out that major pieces of Scottish legislation, such as the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 have contained equality provisions, and that other policies are shifting as the mainstreaming equality agenda advances across policy areas.

I do not have time today to do justice to all the work that is being done, but I will highlight some areas in which we have seen real movement—the first being equal pay, which we must nevertheless continue to address. The legislation on this is crystal clear: women are entitled to equal pay not only for carrying out work that is similar to or the same as the work that men carry out, but also for carrying out work that is of equal value. However, as the SNP amendment points out, despite 30 years of legislation, there is still a 12 per cent pay gap between men and women. Although that gap is continuing to decrease in Scotland, the fact that it still exists is unacceptable.

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):

Does the minister agree that there is also a pension gap for women? For example, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announces the next budget, he will say that the pension for men will be £X, but that women will receive only 50 per cent of that figure. When will the Labour Party start to fight for a citizen's pension that is equal for men and women?

Johann Lamont: Although pensions are Westminster's responsibility, I point out that inequality in respect of women's pensions is a reflection of their inequality in the workplace and of the child care responsibilities that they have had to take on throughout their lives. That inequality exists across the board.

A key element in addressing women's poverty is tackling low and unequal pay. We know that segregation in jobs and occupations places women in the lowest-paid jobs and that the lack of value that is attached to these jobs serves to keep the pay depressed and women poorly paid. Women make up the greatest proportion of part-time workers, so we must remember that, at 34 per cent, the pay gap for part-time workers is even starker. Pay might be structured in such a way as to disadvantage women, and skills training and promotional opportunities might not always be equally available to women. Moreover, gender stereotyping limits opportunities, and discrimination continues the inequality, so it is right that the issue remains high on the agenda.

It is right that the Equality Act 2006 legislated for a gender duty and a new commission for equality and human rights, which will transform our engagement with the equality agenda across Scotland, and it is right that the recent report and recommendations of the United Kingdom women and work commission focused on those issues. After all, they must be addressed if women are to be properly valued and paid. The Executive is therefore in the process of establishing an interdepartmental working group to address occupational segregation. It is not just that women are in low-paid jobs but that the jobs are low paid

because women do them. We must break that cycle.

Legislation has been critical in the improvement of women's lives. The advent of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and equal pay legislation were vital in signalling that it was no longer acceptable to discriminate against women. The new public sector duty to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination will also bring significant changes to the ways in which our public bodies conduct their businesses not only as employers but in terms of policy making and service delivery.

We also need a shift in practice and behaviour. Although legislation in the matter is the responsibility of the UK Government, the Scottish Executive has a crucial role to play in encouraging good practice and equal opportunities, and particularly in encouraging the observance of equal opportunities requirements. That is why we continue to work closely with a range of partners, including the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Scottish Trades Union Congress, to close the pay gap, and that is why we announced last November that the Scottish Executive would continue to fund the close the gap initiative for two more years.

Equal pay is not the only issue with which we are engaging. We accept that lack of child care can be a major barrier to women's participation in the labour market and to their accessing higher and further education. Our child care strategy is designed to provide affordable, accessible and good-quality child care that meets the needs of children and parents. Just under £73 million was made available to implement the child care strategy over the period 2004 to 06. A national child care information website has been established and there are child care information services in each local authority area in Scotland.

In addition, we have the working for families fund, which is designed to enable parents in deprived areas or groups to access education, training or employment, where lack of child care provision is a barrier to their doing so. The sum of £20 million was allocated for the period 2004 to 06 to the 10 local authorities that have the highest concentrations of children in workless households, and a further £30 million has been made available for the period between 2006 and 2008. As well as funding the availability of child care, the fund supports parents' moves towards work by providing them with a key worker who can co-ordinate child care support and give assistance in accessing financial support and information on education and training. The fund does not target only lone parents, the vast majority of whom are women; it addresses everyone's needs. A good

example of how that has benefited women can be seen in the Rosemount transitions project in Royston, Glasgow, which supports women who have caring responsibilities to make the transition from unemployment to sustainable work.

I would like briefly to mention health, because today is not just international women's day. It is also no smoking day, so I take this opportunity to talk about women's health in that context. It is right that we make the connection between health, poverty and deprivation, and it is right that we try to understand how those issues can have particular impacts on women. We know that smoking rates among young girls have remained stubbornly high while smoking rates among young men have fallen. We recognise that our smoke-free public places legislation is the most significant public health legislation for a generation and is helping the process of denormalising smoking in Scottish society. It is, however, also important that we bring a women's perspective to that initiative.

If we look at pay, occupational segregation, child care and health—to name just a few—it is clear that, despite the good progress that is being made, we cannot be complacent. That is why we provide funding to a wide range of women's organisations, such as Women onto Work, which offers 12-week pre-vocational courses for women who want to return to work. We also fund women @ work, which has been providing learning opportunities for women across the Scottish Highlands since 1997.

My predecessor, Margaret Curran, commissioned an expert group to take a strategic look at the women's agenda in Scotland. A small group of experienced women, under the chairmanship of Professor Joan Stringer, undertook that task and reported in December 2003. It was in the context of that group that we established the Scottish Women's Convention to help us to develop the women's agenda in Scotland. I know that the convention held an important conference earlier today, and I welcome members of the convention and other guests to the chamber today. We set up the convention because we want it to help us to shape public policy by working with us and engaging with us to ensure that the views of women from throughout Scotland are heard. I hope that women from throughout Scotland will continue to engage positively with the convention and to make that organisation their own.

The strategic group provided us with a cohesive strategic framework for developing the women's agenda in Scotland, and I am able to announce today that ministers have recently approved the first update on the Executive's action on the strategic group's recommendations, which should

be published on the Executive's website imminently.

It is right that we should highlight achievements on international women's day, but we must also remember that inequalities persist, and that inequality is perhaps most marked when we consider the prevalence of men's violence against women. Whether we are referring to domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault or commercial sexual exploitation, the range of abuses that are suffered by women and the level of their occurrence in Scotland continue to be sources of major concern.

Our work in that regard is crucial; it is extremely important that we continue the work that we are already doing. We have successful partnerships with women's organisations and with local authorities. That has enabled us to implement the national strategy, to improve services and to raise awareness. Our award-winning advertising campaign has helped to shift public attitudes and to create a climate in which there is no excuse for domestic abuse.

Last year we announced that the Executive would introduce a new violence against women fund that would run from April 2006 until March 2008.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): I am pleased that the minister is speaking about violence against women, which is a key concern for Scottish society. I appreciate the work that the Scottish Executive has been doing through the advertising campaign, but is the minister satisfied that our prosecution services attach the same high priority to dealing with the scourge that is violence against women that the Executive attaches to it?

The Presiding Officer: Minister, you have two minutes left.

Johann Lamont: I am acutely aware that it is important that everyone who is involved in dealing with domestic abuse and violence against women plays their part—I know that the Minister for Justice is keen that there should be close co-operation when such matters are pursued. A sheriff who sits on the national group on violence against women makes a telling contribution to the development of our work in that field, but we accept that progress has still to be made.

The new fund will replace the two previous funding streams—the domestic abuse service development fund and the violence against women service development fund. Its focus will be on providing support for local projects by delivering front-line services or by building capacity in local partnerships in order to strengthen local responses to violence against women.

We received 110 applications from around Scotland, which related to a range of activities from across the tackling violence against women agenda. I am very pleased to announce that we will be funding—either in full or in part—86 projects. It might be worth noting that one of those projects, which is based in Glasgow, will address the needs of women who are trafficked. The fund will assist a mixture of new projects and continuing work and it will play a significant role in ensuring that we continue to challenge all forms of violence against women, wherever and whenever they occur. We want to build consistent, effective and high-quality responses to support women and children who experience violence.

We also want to ensure that women in all their diversity access the best possible opportunities, make a full contribution to society and the economy and experience real improvement in their lives. The celebration of international women's day by the Executive and Parliament will end this evening with a reception in Parliament's garden lobby, at which Malcolm Chisholm will announce the name of the artist who has won the commission to make a sculpture to mark the contribution that women from the past and the present have made to advancing democracy and improving the position of women in Scotland. As I said at the start of my speech, 2006 is the Scottish Women's Suffragette Federation's centenary year: I hope that the sculpture will be a fitting tribute to the legacy of those women, from which we have all benefited.

I hope that we will celebrate international women's day collectively and that we will pledge to work together to achieve equality for women in Scotland and to work with women throughout the world. Today's debate has provided us with another great opportunity to discuss gender equality issues, but those issues are important not only on 8 March; we must commit to addressing them every day, in every community and in every workplace throughout Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the significance of 8 March 2006 as International Women's Day; endorses the role which this day plays in recognising, promoting and celebrating women's issues worldwide; congratulates the many groups and organisations which, and individuals who, strive for gender equality and to create a fairer and more equal society for women in Scotland, and, in particular, acknowledges the wide range of Scottish Executive work to advance the women's agenda in Scotland.

14:53

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the minister for accepting the Scottish National Party's amendment. I support the Executive's motion and I am glad that it supports our amendment.

International women's day is to be celebrated not just here in Scotland, but throughout the world because it represents recognition of the role that women everywhere play. In her speech, Christine Grahame will mention some facts about women in Africa and other countries. We should bear in mind that although women in Scotland have struggled on equal pay and various other issues, some women who live in Africa and other countries have a much more difficult time of it. On international women's day, it is apt that we take account of the international aspect of the difficulties that women face. That is why I refer to equal pay and sex trafficking in my amendment, which I will deal with later.

I welcome to Parliament the visiting representatives of women's groups and look forward to meeting them at tonight's reception.

We must consider the various roles that women play in today's society, as well as those that they have played in the past and those that they will play in the future. The women who keep not just families, but whole communities, together certainly deserve our praise because they often get little help. Women frequently earn low pay, work long and unsociable hours, and cannot get on the ladder of success simply because they are women.

The minister mentioned the various ways in which we have moved on over the years but, as she said, there is still much to do: we have much more to do to tackle sex discrimination, which, unfortunately, like low pay and the exploitation of women and children, is still with us.

The figures show that 47 per cent of people in the labour market are women and yet women are underrepresented in positions of power. For example, only 22 per cent of Scottish councillors, 10 per cent of senior police officers and 18 per cent of secondary school heads are women. On hearing those figures, all members will admit that we have a long way to go, but if all members of the Scottish Parliament and everyone in the country works together, I am sure we will see some movement on the issue.

I think that many members have signed Cathy Peattie's motion to mark international women's day this year. It says that

"while over thirty years have elapsed since the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, the Equal Pay Act came into force and the Equal Opportunities Commission was established, the commission reports that the gender pay gap is the worst in the European Union".

I am sure that Cathy Peattie will pick up on that in her speech. We should do everything in our power to rectify the situation. We should also put to industry the part that it has to play. It may be possible for training to be given that challenges

gender stereotyping, and for careers advice to encourage young women to take up alternative careers.

The modern apprenticeship scheme could also be used. One scheme in Glasgow now attracts a greater number of girls—it would have been unheard of in the past for girls to become apprentices. Obviously, the careers advice that those girls received led them to take up an apprenticeship, which will lead them to a good job with decent pay. We have to look at the options, such as modern apprenticeships, by which girls can gain skills for work.

It is no longer acceptable that women are expected to do certain jobs. As the minister said, women should not be directed into certain jobs just because they are thought of as women's jobs. Ultimately, those jobs are the low-paid jobs. We have to look at other ways of addressing the problem. We cannot allow the majority of the workforce to continue to be discriminated against in pay terms.

Today, a committee of the European Parliament is debating forced prostitution in the context of Germany's hosting of the world cup. I congratulate the European Parliament on bringing the issue to the fore: trafficking and prostitution are issues that we should address in the Scottish Parliament.

At the European Parliament, the motion calls on the Parliament to have regard to article 5 of the European charter of fundamental rights, which states that

"trafficking in human beings is prohibited".

The motion asks the Parliament to have regard

"to its resolution of 17 January 2006 on strategies to prevent the trafficking of women and children who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation"

and welcomes the German national council of women red card to forced prostitution campaign, which I have signed up to. I am sure that other members have also done so. The aim of the campaign is to end the practice of forced prostitution.

The motion calls for

"transnational cooperation and exchange of best practice"

and concludes by instructing the President of the European Parliament

"to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments of the member States, candidates and accession countries."

I congratulate the European Parliament on the motion. I hope that the Scottish Parliament will write to the President of the European Parliament to say that we will play our full part in the process. The world cup should not be used as a reason for increased use of trafficking and forced prostitution

in Germany. We should also raise the matter with FIFA and with those who represent Scottish football fans.

The background notes to the debate in the European Parliament include an estimate that 40,000 women will be brought into Germany to be used as prostitutes during the world cup. In the 21st century, it is an absolute disgrace that people are talking about setting up portacabin brothels in a city in Germany just because the world cup will be held there.

I hope that members agree that we should write to the European Parliament with our congratulations. There is nothing worse than the exploitation of women, except when, as has happened in this case, the media are involved in encouraging that exploitation. It is unforgivable that that can happen in this day and age, especially given that Germany now has a woman Chancellor.

We talk about celebrating women. We have much to celebrate, but if we want to get to the crux of the problem that I am describing, we must target men. We must tell men that it is unacceptable that women should be moved into a country to be used in such a disgraceful way, just because some football matches are to be held there. I hope that members will support any measure to prevent such activity. As I said, there is talk of 40,000 women—they are described as prostitutes—being taken to Germany during the world cup.

Trafficking is not new, unfortunately, but it seems to be the scourge of the 21st century. In my home town, Glasgow, and in other areas, young girls who have been trafficked have been found in saunas and sex shops that were—eventually—raided. We cannot live with such a situation, which exists not just in one city but throughout the country.

Trish Godman will probably mention trafficking, because she has lodged a motion on the trafficking of women into prostitution. The trafficking of women and young children is evil and degrading. Although we have much to celebrate on international women's day, we must all consider the unfortunate women who have been and are being trafficked and we must ask the Parliament to do everything in its power to end this degrading activity.

I thank the minister for her support for my amendment and move amendment S2M-4063.1, to insert at end:

"however, notes that 30 years after the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 came into force, the pace of change remains painfully slow; further notes with great concern the trafficking of women throughout Europe, and calls on the Executive to do all in its power to stop this horrific practice."

15:01

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I welcome the debate to mark international women's day and I am pleased that so many men have come to support the debate—including that familiar scribe, Rab McNeil, who is in the gallery. I have not seen him for some time.

This is a historic day of celebration of women's achievements and progress and as a mark of solidarity it is right and proper that we mark the event as we meet in this temporary home for the Parliament. I look forward to attending tonight's reception in the garden lobby in the Parliament's permanent home. I welcome the Executive's motion and the international perspective that the minister gave in her excellent speech. The Conservatives will support the motion and the Scottish National Party amendment.

The international women's day website—a very modern way of marking the event—says:

“International Women's Day ... is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men.”

The pursuit of gender equality and gender empowerment continues in many walks of working and public life and international women's day represents an important milestone. There is cause for optimism but, as the minister said, we still have a long way to go.

There are high-achieving women among younger generations, who are excelling in the professions and in the workplace. Some 35 per cent of female school leavers go on to higher education, compared with 27 per cent of male school leavers. Female pupils continue to achieve better results in standard and higher grade exams than do male pupils. Unfortunately, however, those achievements are not yet fully reflected in our boardrooms and throughout the professions. However, there is a wealth of policies and ideas that, if implemented, would go some way towards supporting women of all ages.

The ability of women in modern society to make unhindered choices about their lives, work and families is an essential objective if we are to achieve gender equality. Financial support and the expansion of child care options are welcome, whether they come from the public, private or voluntary sector, and my Tory colleagues in Westminster are investigating policies in that regard. To that end, we support the extension of maternity leave and maternity pay.

My work as convener of the cross-party group on fertility services has made me well aware that conditions in the world of work prevent women from starting a family when they are young and at their most fertile. Many women who make a lifestyle choice to fulfil their potential in further or

higher education and work hard to build their careers put off having children until they are financially secure and in a stable relationship, which can mean that they do not consider starting a family until they are much older. The average age of first-time mothers is 30. Unfortunately, given current provision for infertility treatment, a woman might have to face two years of unsuccessful attempts to conceive, followed by a wait for infertility treatment that could be as long as five years—that is the case in Grampian. The cut-off age for treatment is 38, which means that couples need to get serious about having children long before the woman is 32, or they might leave it too late.

As I mentioned last week—I cannot mention it often enough—I welcome the Executive's response to the infertility debate and the consultation on the issue, which ended in December. The issue is huge, for women and for men. I look forward to the Executive's response to the consultation, which I imagine will be produced soon.

As it is almost 100 years since the first international women's day, the pay gap between men and women, which the minister and Sandra White outlined, is unacceptable and morally wrong. While the single status and equal pay measures in local authorities are not specifically about tackling the gender gap, there is no doubt that they affect many thousands of women. I hope that the issue will be resolved soon. I am not proud of the fact that our local authorities, 30-odd years after the Equal Pay Act 1970, have not fully addressed gender and other inequalities in the workplace.

Tackling cultural disadvantage is one way of assisting women to break through the glass ceilings that exist in professional and economic life, as well as in the political sphere. At my party's conference at the weekend, Francis Maude, our chairman, described the need for our party to attract, support and select more female candidates.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Is he still alive?

Mary Scanlon: Alasdair Morgan is making comments from a sedentary position—I am sure that he will have the opportunity to talk about policies later on.

The problem is not with the selection process. All of us must do more to encourage more women to come forward and to raise their horizons—

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Mary Scanlon: Yes, but let me finish my point.

We need to encourage women to come not only into politics, but into all aspects of political life. At

the weekend, I was proud to meet the ladies who run the only Tory-run council in Scotland—the provost, the depute provost, the convener and various others are women and are doing an excellent job.

Cathy Peattie: I would welcome a Tory move to include more women. The party can talk about that for ever, but what action will it take to ensure that it happens? Women have come forward: it is the party machine that stops them.

Mary Scanlon: As one of four women in the Conservative group, I have never found any discrimination or bias in the selection process. However, we all need to do more and I am committed to encouraging many more women to come forward. If there is bias and discrimination in the party's selection process, we need to address that.

The minister mentioned domestic abuse. It is shocking that the latest figures on domestic abuse illustrate that the level of repeat victimisation rose from 33 per cent to 52 per cent between 1999 and 2004. The minister has done a huge amount of work on domestic abuse, but surely we must consider the rise in repeat victimisation as a priority in addressing domestic abuse, because more and more women are becoming trapped in abusive situations. I ask the minister to address that in her summing up.

15:09

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): International women's day is a valuable opportunity to take time to think about women and their lives. Last night, I reflected on recent images of women in the media: glamorous film stars lining up for the Oscars; heavily veiled women queuing up to vote in Afghanistan; women caught up in the horrors of war in Iraq and other war zones around the world; women at the limits of their endurance in Africa, cradling dying children in their arms.

It is appropriate to take some time to think about and pay tribute to women worldwide who are surviving and holding families together against all the odds and in awful circumstances. It may seem a bit selfish to move from that to gender equality issues in the context of our country, but perhaps getting it right at home, which is something we can do, is a reasonable contribution to beginning to get it right elsewhere.

Rather than plagiarise, I shall quote from the introduction to a booklet called "30 Voices", which was published in December last year by the Equal Opportunities Commission. Jenny Watson, chair of the EOC, started:

"In the last 30 years women's lives have changed beyond recognition: in 1975 a woman could be sacked for being pregnant or getting married, she had no legal protection

from sexual harassment, and without a man she could not take out a loan, or in some cases even be served in a bar ... Men's lives have also changed, in a rather quieter social revolution: in the mid 70s, fathers of children under 5 spent on average less than 15 minutes a day on child-related activities, compared to two hours per day in 1999. There are also now many more male primary school teachers, nursery nurses and midwives ... Over the years the emphasis has shifted to a recognition of the need for a real gender partnership. A transformation in the workplace is needed to allow men and women to share work and care, meeting men's desires to get out of the office to spend time with their children, and giving women the opportunity to pursue their careers. As the previously rigid social roles of breadwinner and homemaker are changing, the common ground that has been uncovered between men and women is the need for balance and choice between work and home."

However,

"there are significant problems still to be tackled ... Women's income in retirement is less than two-thirds of men's, nearly half of all pregnant women face discrimination at work, and women are approximately one in ten FTSE 100 directors, one in five MPs, one in twelve judges. Britain's 6 million carers save the economy £57 billion every year, largely unsupported, and girls and boys are still channelled into a highly segregated workforce. UK fathers work some of the longest hours in Europe, despite increasingly wanting to spend time with their family."

I could not say it better, which is why it was better to quote than to plagiarise.

I wish to comment briefly on two issues, one of which is the pay gap. The Scottish Low Pay Unit made a good point in its briefing on the topic. Equal pay is a desirable goal, but in some ways the most important issue is how jobs are valued. It is long past time that we put a realistic and much higher value on what could be described as caring and nurturing roles. I have long thought that in education for example, the status and pay accorded to primary, secondary and tertiary education is in inverse proportion to their importance. A child has to be literate, numerate and motivated to learn to benefit from secondary and tertiary education. That comes from a good start in primary or even nursery education.

It is amazing how early we can find gender stereotyping. I was talking to people in the Careers Scotland office in Inverurie a couple of weeks ago. They are trying to combat gender stereotyping in nurseries by putting the dressing-up clothes for different occupations in pink and blue bags: the girly ones in blue bags and the less girly ones in pink bags. At three years old, children are gravitating towards one or other colour: girls to pink bags and boys to blue bags. It is amazing how early we engender stereotypes in our children's minds.

The second issue I wish to refer to is gendered violence. A briefing from the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust has drawn our attention to recently published research into young people's

attitudes to gender violence. A recent study, entitled “Young People’s Attitudes Towards Gendered Violence”, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland and undertaken by the University of Glasgow, is similar to the study commissioned in 1999 by the trust, which

“documented widespread acceptance amongst young people of forced sex and other forms of violence against women.”

Although the new study is not a straight repeat of the earlier research, it allows for comparisons to be made. We can take comfort from the fact that it demonstrated a small but significant positive shift in the knowledge base and attitudes of young people. There is a long way to go, but at least we are beginning to make progress in the right direction.

I endorse all that the movers of the motion and the amendment said. I return to Jenny Watson’s introduction to “30 voices” for my final remark:

“This is ... a time to recommit ourselves to the work that lies ahead if future generations”,

particularly women,

“are to inherit a world that gives them more choice, and a fairer society, than we have today.”

15:16

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I start by thanking the Scottish Women’s Convention for its excellent conference this morning. I also welcome the release of more Scottish Executive funding through the violence against women fund, through which Falkirk groups such as Open Secret, the Forth valley domestic abuse strategy group, Falkirk Women’s Aid, Falkirk Safeguarding Communities-Reducing Offending and Falkirk’s children’s commission are all to receive funding. That is extremely welcome and I know that excellent work will be done with that money.

I will consider education, work and representation parochially, rather than internationally. Some things have changed. Thirty years ago, about 18 per cent of girls and boys left school with three or more highers. Now, 26 per cent of boys and 34 per cent of girls get the equivalent qualifications at level 6 or better. There used to be many more men than women in further and higher education. However, nowadays, the majority of students are women.

Some things have improved. Women now make up 46 per cent of the workforce but, despite higher levels of academic achievement and greater participation in employment, they still face disadvantage and significant barriers to progressing their careers. As we have heard, the full-time gender pay gap is 17.1 per cent and the part-time gender pay gap is 38.4 per cent. That is

the worst in the European Union—we have nothing to be proud of. Only one director in seven is female. Women make up only 9 per cent of the senior judiciary, 10 per cent of senior police officers and 13 per cent of national newspaper editors. In Scotland, only one secondary head teacher in five is a woman. Less than 20 per cent of members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords are women. I doubt that anyone will bet on our achieving equality by the 22nd century.

In “Sex and power: who runs Britain? 2006”, the Equal Opportunities Commission notes:

“(a third of managers and senior officials are now women). Yet, only a few have broken through the glass ceiling. Of those women who have made it to the top, it is still too often the result of their exceptional strength ... and drive”

to push past that glass ceiling. Women face significant barriers. It is not only a case of male-dominated professions giving preference to male candidates for promotion; a major barrier is the working culture that demands that staff work long and unsocial hours to get on. Work should not be incompatible with family life. EOC polling shows that six out of 10 people think that balancing work and family life is harder for working women now than it was 30 years ago. That is not progress.

Affordable child care is still a major issue. Women in families are often forced into part-time work and jobs that are below their potential. Each year, 30,000 people are sacked, made redundant or leave their jobs due to pregnancy discrimination. Almost half—45 per cent—of women who have worked while they were pregnant say that they have experienced some kind of discrimination because of their pregnancies. That has happened in a country that needs more children. It does not make sense.

The absence of flexible family-friendly working is not just a personal loss to men and women; it is a loss to the economy. Career progress and caring responsibilities should not be mutually exclusive or detrimental to each other. With an aging population, we simply cannot afford not to make the most of our potential.

The women and work commission

“estimates that removing barriers to women working in occupations traditionally done by men, and increasing women’s participation in the labour market, could be worth between £15 billion and £23 billion or 1.3 to 2 per cent of gross domestic product.”

The gender equality duty should ensure that women’s work in the public sector is properly recognised. It would be good to extend that improvement throughout employment. We must go further in all sectors to ensure that our workforce potential is being used and that it improves our social well-being. We must ensure that all

employers use family-friendly working practices—that they do not just pay lip service, but do things that actually mean that they are being family friendly.

There should be a firm commitment to progressing a meaningful programme to tackle the continuing waste of human and social capital that results from inequality. Last but not least, we need to ensure that women have equal involvement at the highest decision-making levels in the country. In local government, health boards, quangos, government organisations, non-governmental organisations, here in the Scottish Parliament, at Westminster and beyond, we need more women represented. We all have a duty to ensure that that happens. I invite everybody here today to celebrate international women's day—but do not forget tomorrow that women have a right to be represented.

15:21

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I rise with considerable trepidation, as the sixth speaker in the debate and, of course, the first man—subject to the jury's confirmation.

Nora Radcliffe: We will take it on trust.

Stewart Stevenson: I am so glad that the member trusts that verdict.

Women's one dramatic failure—the fact that they have yet to persuade men of their equal worth—rests uneasy on any thinking man's shoulder. If I may refer to Mary Scanlon's excellent speech, I will give her just a little guidance on some of the challenges that the Tory party faces. The Scottish Tories' own website, in listing those who speak for that party on the various different subjects in the Parliament, describes the three female persons as “spokesmen”. Perhaps, in this Cameronesque era, we might see rapid change on that as a result of my remarks today.

In many ways, it is interesting to note how blind we are, particularly us men, to the gaps through which women have not yet infiltrated. In preparing for the debate, I turned my mind to some of the areas in which I am not conscious of women being engaged. When I fly, for example, there is frequently an all-woman crew on the flight deck. When I travel by bus, it is not infrequent for a woman to be driving it. I also get in taxis that are driven by women. As far as I am aware, however, I have never been on a train driven by a woman.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): We have all been there. He has been on the wrong trains.

Stewart Stevenson: There we are. The point that I am making—and I blame myself for my blindness—is that, despite a comparative degree

of engagement in this issue on my part, and of course on the part of my colleague, Alasdair Morgan, who is behind me, I have never seen a woman drive a train, even though my train might have been driven by a woman.

Nora Radcliffe: The train drivers' boss is now a woman.

Stewart Stevenson: Well, I—

Christine Grahame: Stop digging.

Stewart Stevenson: Indeed—we have seen some improvements in the service since she took over. Let us absolutely accept that that is the case. Grovel, grovel, grovel.

Too many young women whom I meet and talk to when I go to schools—as we all do—are still limited in their aspirations. They still see role models who, if they follow them, will not lead them to the maximum extent of their potential. The media have a role to play in that, as do we.

I, like one or two others, remember much less-enlightened times. I remember the Equal Pay Act 1970 coming into force in 1975. At the time, I worked for the Bank of Scotland and I remember that that was the first time that women got access to the cheap mortgages that one could get when one worked at a bank. Prior to that, women had to be 25 to access them, but men had only to be 21. We were only a few years on from the time when employees had to get permission to marry from their manager. That applied to men and women, but, in practice, the women were much more likely to have permission denied.

Rape has been mentioned in the debate. Probably the biggest shame in our public system is that we have not found a way of successfully prosecuting men who inflict the horrible, sexual, violent crime of rape on women—and, for that matter, on men. I do not think that anyone has the perfect answer yet and we have to spend much more time considering that.

In the 19th century, women fought at Trafalgar and at the battle of Waterloo and qualified as doctors. However, in each case they had to do so dressed as men, denying that they were women. We have made progress, but there are still issues to address in public life. In my constituency and Mike Rumbles's constituency, NHS Grampian is seeking to close midwife-led maternity units. That is a key issue for women in our constituencies, but the decisions will be made by the male-dominated board of NHS Grampian. That is of course repeated throughout Scotland.

In politics, we in this Parliament have made substantial progress, but the Westminster Parliament stands 50th and the United States stands 69th in the list of 150 countries in relation to female representation. It is interesting that the top

13 countries, in which women are successfully breaking through the political glass ceiling, are countries with comparatively recent Parliaments that have proportional voting systems, which, to some extent, diminish the confrontational nature of the process by which people arrive in parliament. That is not in itself an argument for proportional representation, but it is an interesting test.

The key test of a society that is fair to all its members is how the strong support the weak. Therefore, in a society where the men remain strong relative to women—too strong—there is an absolute duty on all men to support the weak and promote equality actively.

15:28

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): We are definitely not weak. In celebrating international women's day, let us not forget about the struggles of the past, such as the protests that started all this off. The protests, which took place on 8 March 1857 at the clothing and textile factories in New York, were about poor working conditions and low wages. Despite the fact that the women were attacked and dispersed by the police, they went on to set up their first labour union in March two years later. The fight went on around the world.

Having returned recently from Malawi with the cross-party Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am only too well aware of the ongoing struggles of women not only in Malawi but in Africa generally. Nora Radcliffe mentioned the terrible scenes that we have seen on television. It does seem bad that we are complaining about what is happening here when we see what is happening there and see those people face to face.

In Malawi, the education system is not giving children at secondary level any chance. There is a high maternal mortality rate. However, the situation is not all black. We saw encouraging signs. Women's co-operatives are empowering women to take control of their lives, make decisions and become more self-sufficient. There is a long way to go and we must never lose sight of the needs of people in Africa, particularly the women.

What are the challenges here in Scotland? Ongoing issues to do with the abuse of women have been mentioned. Like my colleague Cathy Peattie, I welcome the funding that has just been allocated to Stirling Council's children's services, Open Secret and the Forth valley domestic abuse strategy group, which the Minister for Communities, Malcolm Chisholm, has visited more than once. I give my thanks for that money, which will be used well.

When I first became a member of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and joined the cross-party

group on women, the gender pay gap was the big issue. It still is, and it is hard to realise that we are still grappling with that issue. I welcome international women's day because it reinforces that point. Perhaps we should think about some of the structures that existed back then. There are friends of ours in the balcony with whom Cathy Peattie and I worked side by side in women's groups five or perhaps 10 years ago—time passes quickly. Perhaps we should set up some structures again to get momentum going on the issue and progress it.

I do not know how many people have read the report on the gender pay gap that has been issued in the past two days and which mentions the importance of career guidance. Nora Radcliffe said that gender stereotyping can start in nurseries and primary schools. The report says that we must get girls interested in more vocational skills, engineering and a wide array of subjects in which they are not currently interested and points out that women are crowded into a narrow range of low-paying occupations, many of which are part time. If women have full-time occupations, they will earn an average of 87p for every pound that a man will earn. That cannot continue.

We all know from the briefings that we have received from Unison and other unions that they are keen on equal pay audits. I am talking not about voluntary audits or audits only for local authorities, but about audits for all businesses that are introduced as a matter of course. EOC research from last year shows that only 10 per cent of Scotland-based organisations have completed equal pay reviews, whereas some 22 per cent of organisations in England and 15 per cent in Wales have completed such reviews. Amicus has rightly demanded compulsory audits.

Unison said in a recent briefing:

"As with other employers, local government employers have struggled to meet their binding legal obligation to introduce equal pay despite the fact that the relevant law has been in place for over 30 years. In 1999, along with the GMB and T&G unions, UNISON signed the Single Status Agreement".

We must move the agenda forward.

On Monday, I visited Govan, where I met May Nicholson, who is an amazing lady. Members may have seen the programme on the Preschal Trust that was shown on BBC2 on Sunday evening, which showed May Nicholson's work with women. Some of those women have come out of Cornton Vale, some are on drugs or alcohol and some cannot read or write. The programme showed how they had got their worlds together again after prison. One lady who appeared on the programme was called Angie; two months ago, she could not read or write. She has written this poem, which should give hope to all women who feel that they will never be part of society again:

"Govan is as cold as ice.
It is busy, noisy, has friendly people and very dirty.
You would see a shopping centre, traffic, tenements,
people, dogs and cats in the park.
Hear people shouting and singing, laughing, swearing
and birds singing.
You would taste petrol fumes, chips at the chip shop,
Chinese at the Chinese shop.
Smell the fresh air and the beer from the pubs.
I feel attached to Govan."

She feels that she belongs. Let us help other people in the same way that she has been helped.

15:34

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland)
(Con): I am happy to be a Conservative spokesman, because the title describes the position that I hold.

When I am preparing for parliamentary debates, I always learn something new; in preparing for today's debate, I was amazed to learn that the first international women's day was in 1911. It must have caused quite a stir. I can imagine my granny—if she was aware of it—being quite shocked that women could promote themselves in such a way, when they normally got on quietly with doing the bidding of their men.

My granny's life was fairly typical for the Scotland of her time. She was widowed early, lost a child in infancy and reared the other nine in a two-bedroom flat with no bath, a toilet halfway down the stairs that was shared with neighbours, and a wash-house with a stone boiler, scrubbing board and mangle. The fire was always lit, the grate was black-leaded every day, and there was always a pot of soup on the hob. Hers was a hard life that none of us would care to emulate.

My mother—a highly intelligent woman whose nose was forever in a book—had no formal education after the age of 14, when she began working to help to support her younger siblings. She and my dad skimmed and saved all their married life to ensure that I got a proper education, achieved my intellectual potential and could, therefore, expect to enjoy a more comfortable and prosperous life than they did. When my children were very young, my mum looked after them regularly for me, so that I could fulfil the part-time medical career for which I opted.

What a difference in a couple of generations. However, we all know that there is still a long way to go if the women of today are to achieve parity with their male counterparts in many spheres of life and in many parts of the world. In this country, if today's young mums want to work, they often have to juggle crèches and childminders because the grannies—women like me—are also working, and much of their salary goes to pay for the child care that they need. Many women today have had

a good education, are well qualified academically and have well-paid employment that they thoroughly enjoy. They are highly skilled managers, interweaving their professional lives with the responsibilities of running a home and rearing their children.

However, many other women work in poorly paid jobs, not because they want to but because they have to, either because they are lone parents or because of financial commitments that are too great for one wage to cover. Some are overqualified for the work that they do, perhaps because low-waged part-time work is all that they can get to fit in with their domestic commitments. Others have simply not achieved their educational potential, either through lack of ambition or through missed opportunity.

In the 21st century, it is simply not acceptable that those women are not achieving their potential; nor is it right that the average female weekly wage is only 88 per cent of the average male weekly wage. When we hear that the gender pay gap in the civil service has increased in recent years by 3 per cent to 25 per cent, it is high time that action was taken.

The professions of law, medicine, dentistry and the like have many well-qualified women in their midst; indeed, women now comprise more than 50 per cent of graduates. That brings its own problems for workforce planning because, rightly, women want to combine their professional careers with bringing up a family, and they want career breaks or part-time work to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance.

There are many other areas of employment in which women could have extremely successful careers if they thought about it. For instance, there is an enormous lack of qualified engineers in the North sea oil industry, in which the average age of the workforce is over 50 and not enough young people are coming forward to replace those who are retiring. Very few girls see that as a career possibility, because the stereotypical engineer worked in heavy industry, in a dirty and rough environment. However, many engineering jobs today involve the use of computer skills and high technology in a clean and pleasant environment, and they are highly paid. I know two girls who have trained as a plumber and an electrician. They are highly regarded by their customers and are in great demand. They take enormous pride in their work.

The multiple skills that women develop through running a home and rearing children make them excellent organisers and well positioned to set up their own businesses, which are increasingly run from home with the help of modern technology. More women should be encouraged along that route. There are great employment opportunities

for women today, but if they are to be seized, girls must be made aware of them early in their schooldays and grow up confident in the knowledge that gender stereotyping is no longer acceptable in the working world.

Of course, not every woman wants to work. No mum should feel guilty if she would rather be at home with her children. The early years are short and precious, and I am very glad that I was able to share them with my children through a combination of career break and part-time work. Families must be given support to lead the lifestyle of their choice. In the words of the shadow chancellor, George Osborne, we should be

“Providing financial support for families who use childcare”

and

“Increasing the choice of childcare available to parents.”

Parental leave, too, is important for today's often isolated families, although it is costly to employers—especially those who run small or medium-sized businesses. I am sorry that the Conservative amendment to the Work and Families Bill at Westminster was defeated, as it would have ensured that the Government would cover the cost of statutory parental leave for businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

In today's world we must strive to ensure that everyone—male or female—can achieve their potential. We cannot allow the continuation of a pay gap between men and women who do equivalent work and we must make girls aware, from an early age, of the many opportunities that are open to them. I am happy to add my support to that for the motion and the amendment.

15:40

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): First and foremost, with reference to the comments of the Deputy Minister for Communities at the beginning of the debate, I want to say briefly, without pre-empting any announcements that will be made later today or in the future, that it has been a pleasure for me, as chairperson of the art advisory group of the Scottish Parliament, to work with the Scottish Executive on the matter of the piece of sculpture that will ultimately be presented to the Scottish Parliament. One of the great things that art can do is to mark momentous events and great contributions of the past, as well as act as a pointer to the future. In a way, that is the theme of my brief speech.

The debate has been consensual and my party warmly supports both the motion and the amendment. We have heard about work in progress and the great strides that have been made. However, like others, I submit that there is more to be done.

I forget who mentioned the term “social capital”, but I like it. We have a great, untapped asset out there, which is still not being mobilised, of women who have been trained through primary and secondary education and perhaps also tertiary education. We are still not using them and they remain at home. The issue is about child care facilities, remoteness, connectivity, and realising that there is a huge asset out there that we are not using. Any tycoon or big business would soon be looking at the balance sheet and getting that lot out there working for this country. Mobilising that asset would be good for the country and for us all.

I want to refer to a notion that I think we have all heard at some stage in our job as MSPs. We go to a community council, for example, and people come to see us about housing issues. Again and again we hear something like, “That single mum got that house. It's a damn disgrace.” Where do people expect single mothers to live—on the street or in a tent? There is still a latent sexism buried deep in our society.

I have a helpful suggestion to make. Taking forward the issue of corporate social responsibility is not only about employing people with disabilities or ethnic minorities, but about mobilising women. I do not know whether we are talking about sticks or carrots for the big corporations in that respect. I suppose my view is that the carrot is better. If, using Westminster and the Scottish Executive's enterprise function, we can encourage corporations to do down that route and mobilise our assets, so much the better.

Wise mention was made of the role of education, particular at the primary stage. When the Enterprise and Culture Committee visited Finland before Christmas, we heard from the Finns how their solid investment in primary education had made a huge difference for their future and their country's economy. Such contributions are being made by women here and now in this country and they should be recognised and built upon.

I will share with members something that involves a case in my constituency and which angers me greatly. For reasons that will be obvious to all members, I cannot go into detail, but I will briefly tell a story about something that is happening right now. A female carer—if ever there was a profession in which females were not recognised or paid as they should be, that is it—went to an elderly gentleman's house to give him his bath and look after him. The elderly gentleman upped and hit her so hard that he laid her out on the deck. That woman has recently had an operation on her jaw to remove a tooth and repair an abscess. She is in great pain and is still not at work.

Now, we live within the rules of this country and rules can be frustrating. We have rules and we

must live by them, but that gentleman has never been charged—the reason is some technicality about there not being a witness. That woman is still off work and I do not know whether she will get recompense, although I will move every sinew in my body to ensure that she does. Is it not a damn disgrace that something like that can happen in this country today? Great work has been done, but more must be done. I am sorry that I speak with such passion, but it angers me hugely that that wretched woman is suffering in the way that she is.

I will rest my comments with that. Today is a great day for women. The motion and the amendment are huge steps forward in the right direction. I am proud that this Parliament and its members—of all political colours—are speaking and singing off the same sheet.

15:45

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I was inspired by this morning's excellent Scottish Women's Convention event, which was called "Transforming the Lives of Women". Bea Campbell, who was the main speaker at the event, described our Parliament as calm, industrious, businesslike and somewhat equitable. She put that down to the presence of women. She congratulated us on the fact that 37 per cent of MSPs are women, but she also challenged us to make more use of that presence to ensure that the importance of women and of their time was put at the heart of our policy-making agenda.

Today, on international women's day, we should take a lead for women around the world, given the excellent representation of women in the Scottish Parliament. We have made a lot of progress, but here in Britain we still have too many inequalities, from our lauded but skewed modern apprentice scheme to the 25 per cent gender pay gap in the civil service.

Thirty years ago, many thought that the problems of unequal pay were gone for ever. It seemed obvious then that people would no longer accept the concept that men should earn more than women who did the same job. However, it is now clear that the real problem has been hidden behind the Equal Pay Act 1970. Although clearing that first hurdle was essential, it was only the first hurdle. The act was a huge step because it meant that people who did the same job were valued equally. For example, male and female teachers deserved the same pay. The fact that equal pay sounded revolutionary in the 1960s seems outrageous now. I hope that, similarly, it will seem unbelievable in another 40 years' time that the pay gap in 2006 was so big.

We now need to address the issue of respect. Rather than aiming simply to make girls choose

careers that were previously the preserve of men, we also need to examine why careers that are traditionally attractive to women are so undervalued. Why do the caring, cashiering, catering, cleaning and clerical worlds—the five Cs—carry such low wages? We need to address that problem. Women often congregate in certain professions or jobs because of their personal attributes and choices. If women are good at caring and looking after people, we should not demean them by accepting that those jobs should be valued less and that the only way to address the pay difference is to encourage women to develop different career paths.

It is time to re-evaluate what society regards as important and to reward people accordingly. Although people die in our hospitals for many different reasons and although it is right that we purchase expensive drugs and surgical procedures, we all know that people sometimes die there because we do not place enough value on cleaning. We want a society in which everyone can contribute by using their skills in essential work, including the work of cooking good food, cleaning hospitals properly and caring for people.

I welcome the report of the women and work commission, but we should be careful about how we interpret statistics and about which measures we choose to address the inequalities that the report found. For me, one of the most shocking statistics comes from the EOC, which found that 54 per cent of pregnant women in Scotland have experienced discrimination at work. Surveys such as "Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland" show that the general public now believe that such gender discrimination has long been dealt with. However, the reality for individual women at work can still be very different.

Casting my eye down the statistics for gender equality in positions of power, I find it hard not to wonder and even despair about the rate of progress. If I may choose just one example that has been highlighted already, I point out that only 10 per cent of senior police officers are women. In spite of that, police forces throughout Scotland believe that they have in place the necessary mechanisms to redress that imbalance and that it will just take time for women to come through the ranks. I, for one, am fed up waiting for women to come through the ranks. I recognise that the general picture is improving, but for individual women the wait is just too long.

I welcome the EOC's call for all political parties to take positive action to increase the number of women who are elected. I know that—in different ways, certainly—parties are heeding that call. My party requires that local selections include action to ensure that women are chosen to stand for local

councils. I am delighted that most other parties are following suit.

The future of equalities in Scotland should now be bright with the establishment of a single commission for equality and human rights throughout Great Britain. I believe that the commission will benefit women and men who suffer from multiple discrimination. I look forward to the creation of a Scottish commissioner for human rights, to bridge the reserved-devolved gap and to ensure that human rights are effectively promoted in Scotland across all policy areas.

Although I like Lesley Riddoch's slant in *The Scotsman* today—that we have a good news story to tell—I know that Bea Campbell captured hearts and minds this morning with her call for a drive to empower women. There is an improving story to tell—especially for some of us—but we must keep pushing for an even better and more inclusive society for everyone.

15:51

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): International women's day is a time to celebrate and to recognise the contribution and achievements of women worldwide. In honouring the achievement of women in the past and present, we hope to inspire future generations of young women to reach their full potential. We all know that there has been a failure to pay public tribute to women for their achievements. The end result is that women's successes often remain invisible and their talents ignored. Last year, as part of international women's day 2005, the Executive announced that it would commission a sculpture, to be situated in the Scottish Parliament, as a tribute to the suffragette movement. I welcome the fact that progress has been made on that sculpture.

There is also an on-going campaign to erect a permanent monument on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, as a lasting memorial to the thousands of Scottish women who risked their lives to tend wounded soldiers in Europe during the first world war and, in particular, to recognise the contribution of Dr Elsie Inglis, who pioneered social medicine and founded the Scottish women's hospitals for foreign service movement. One of those hospitals remains in use in Serbia. The women's work is recognised and remembered abroad but not here in their home country. Public tribute is important, as it helps to provide a positive role model for the women of today.

Although there are achievements that we can celebrate, there are still significant barriers to women reaching their full potential. Recently we heard the Prime Minister state that a massive amount of work remains to be done to close the

pay gap between men and women. His comments were made in response to the report of the women and work commission, entitled "Shaping a Fairer Future". As we have heard, the report recognised the many advances in women's position in society and at work since the Equal Pay Act 1970 came into force. However, the report clearly outlined that women are still underpaid, are segregated into particular forms of employment and face an unfair disadvantage in the labour market at large. Tony Blair needs to address the contradictions on his doorstep. Since her appointment in May 2005, Meg Munn MP has received no salary in her role as minister with responsibility for women.

A huge culture shift is needed in order to challenge assumptions about the types of jobs, roles and responsibilities that men and women can or cannot take on. In a recent debate on enterprise, I raised concerns about that issue, using the example of the modern apprenticeship scheme. The number of women who are participating in the scheme may be increasing, but their participation is still severely segregated by gender. That is where strategic action is necessary. Such action should be about more than numbers—it should be about promoting greater gender balance and culture change.

Most of us have read the EOC's report "Who Runs Scotland 2006?". One of its top recommendations is for all political parties to take positive action before the next election to improve women's representation in politics. Perhaps the greatest need in Scotland is at local level. Only one councillor in five is a women and the proportion of female councillors has been falling. The Greens have acknowledged that political reality and have included a gender-balancing requirement in their constitution. Securing a constitutional commitment is key, so that parties need not go over the same arguments time and again to promote balanced representation of women and men in political life. If we are to have more than empty talk, the other parties must make that constitutional commitment, too.

There are challenges to achieving greater gender equality and having even more to celebrate on international women's day. I hope that future generations of young women are given the recognition and the pay that they deserve and the opportunity to fulfil their potential in public and political life.

15:55

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): Each year at this time, the Parliament gives its time to celebrate international women's day. That action is not without its critics. Some say that we should not consider women's role in society only on one day of the year but should consider how all our

business will affect women. Others question why we celebrate women; we still hear the terse question, "When is international men's day?"

However, the reality is that most, if not all, of us consider how our work affects women, not least because—I do not want to state the obvious—many of us are women. We should be proud of the number of women MSPs. As has been said, almost 40 per cent of MSPs are women. That has undoubtedly influenced the Parliament's business. We have had investigations and passed legislation on issues such as women and the justice system, employment, child care, education and, of course, domestic abuse.

I will return to domestic abuse but, like others, I will first make a couple of comments on women in the democratic process. As I said, we should be proud of the number of women MSPs. I am proud that the Labour Party held to its commitment back in 1999 to achieve gender balance. It is positive that the Parliament has a woman party leader, two women deputy leaders and a woman co-convenor. However, the situation is not all positive. I think that I am right to say that in by-elections to the Parliament since 1999, only one woman has been returned.

The biggest challenge that women face is in local government, as Shiona Baird said. Following local government reorganisation and elections in 1995, there were fewer women councillors. The number decreased further in 1999 and has not recovered since then. If we believe that democratic representation is important—given who we are and what we are, we should—and if we believe that having gender balance in that representation balances the agenda, women's position in local government must be a concern.

It has been suggested that the new local government electoral system will further squeeze the number of women and will deter some of them from standing. That is probably unnecessarily negative. I am no fan of proportional representation, but if we all take responsibility for encouraging women to put themselves forward, they will be elected and will make a difference.

As female representatives, we owe it to other women to support and encourage them to play their part. We should not be fooled into thinking that because we are where we are, everything is okay. By involving more women in the decision-making process, we can also ensure that the services that are provided truly reflect women's needs.

I will make a few comments about domestic abuse. As we are celebrating international women's day, I want to stay positive. The actions—including legislation—of the Parliament on domestic abuse are worth praising. Working in

partnership with agencies such as Scottish Women's Aid and others that support women and children, we have enabled services to improve. I am sure that I am not alone in having visited refuges that can be admired, such as the one in the Black Isle. Such refuges are purpose built and are streets ahead of the old crowded house with a single room for a family to share. I know that the staff are caring and professional and that they offer a lot of support. However, I wish that such refuges did not have to exist.

We in Scotland have made progress in providing services and support and, from my experience, people throughout the UK and internationally admire our approach. Ministers will agree that there is still more to do, particularly to support women and children who leave refuges and try to re-establish their lives in the community.

As I have said, I wish that we did not need those services, but the only way in which we can make progress is to change attitudes. Nora Radcliffe mentioned the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust briefing. When, in 1998, the trust carried out research into attitudes, many people were shocked to find a widespread acceptance among young people of forced sex and other forms of violence. However, as Nora Radcliffe pointed out, the study that NHS Health Scotland very recently commissioned the University of Glasgow to carry out on young people's attitudes towards gender violence has allowed us to make some comparisons and to reach the relatively positive conclusion that there have been some improvements. For example, young people are more informed and aware and are more critical of violence in communities. However, they still consider certain incidents of violence or abuse to be justifiable. Attitudes towards abuse and violence are complex and I am sure that the inconsistent attitudes of those young people are reflected throughout the population.

The research demonstrates the need for more work on attitudes. Like other councils, my local authority, West Lothian Council, has recently agreed to take the zero tolerance education pack, which will be useful in helping young people to gain information that challenges the view that women are responsible for provoking violence or abuse and challenges the stereotypes that restrict victims of abuse to certain kinds of households, cultures or incomes. We must all review our attitudes on this matter and challenge others' views. Educating our children and young people—both boys and girls—is one way in which we can make a difference in future.

This useful debate has covered many aspects of the agenda and I hope that we will continue to celebrate international women's day every year.

16:03

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP): I watched the news this morning, waiting patiently for international women's day to be mentioned. Of course, a few weeks ago, when it was Valentine's day, the channels were full of hearts and roses. I have to say that I was disappointed by this morning's coverage, but let us see how this evening pans out.

Today, we celebrate the struggle of our sisters, past, present and future. The speeches at this morning's event—and, indeed, during this afternoon's debate—mentioned Rosa Luxemburg, Rosa Parks and the suffragettes, and I am sure that many of us are remembering our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters and the many millions of women throughout the world who are engaged in a political struggle or who are struggling simply to survive everything from a tsunami to the poverty that exists, even in Scotland. We have watched women dealing with all those matters.

I have a lasting memory of being in the Hub when my comrade Carolyn Leckie was thrown out for sticking up for the nursery nurses who at the time were striking for better pay and a better future for women. On international women's day, we must ask ourselves how we in this chamber responded to their call.

The minister was absolutely right to say in her opening remarks that women do not get a fair deal. As this is international women's day, I want to tell the chamber about two international women in the hope that in some small way their names will find a place in history. The first is Lumila Mutalata from Uganda, who has a three-year-old child and is five months pregnant. I first met Lumila about a year ago. Three weeks ago, she called to tell me that she had been the victim of a dawn raid during which she had attempted to take her own life. At that point, Lumila's three-year-old child was taken into care by social work in Glasgow because she could not cope. She was then taken to Dungavel.

Lumila's daughter was taken into care and placed with foster parents. Lumila was on suicide watch every 15 minutes at Dungavel. Social workers to whom I spoke believed that she was not fit to have her daughter with her, but the private nursing staff at Dungavel believed that, although she was on 15-minute suicide watch, her child could be reunited with her. Social workers were forced by the Home Office to take the child from foster care and place her in detention. I last heard from Lumila yesterday, when she was in Yarl's Wood, and then last night as she was on her way to Gatwick airport. I am not sure whether Lumila, who is suicidal, and her daughter, whom she is not fit to care for, are in Uganda today, but I

hope that cabin crew have intervened. Will anybody in the chamber help?

The second woman is Maria Sokova, who is 27. I am glad that the issue of trafficking has been raised in the chamber today. Maria is from Russia. She met a man in Russia, a prominent lawyer respected in the legal profession. She fell in love and he became her boyfriend. She believed that she had a future with that man, but within months she realised that her passport was gone and that she had been controlled and manipulated to the point where she no longer owned her own life. Maria was clever and strong. She met other women whom her boyfriend was controlling and she knew what she had to do, so she managed to get hold of her passport and documents and to flee to Glasgow before she was trafficked—that was her fate. At lunch time yesterday, she was taken into Dungavel.

The problem is that Maria was not actually trafficked; she managed to pre-empt that fate and make herself safe. However, that now counts against her, because she is in Dungavel and on her way back to Russia. When she returns there—I hope that she does not—she will meet back up with the gangsters who have controlled her and will probably end up at the world cup, which Sandra White referred to, and for all the wrong reasons. I want us to think about that and wonder whether we are brave enough not to toe the party line at a time like this but to break down the barriers of the Home Office, or the barriers of reserved and devolved matters, to stick up for those women. They are our sisters and this is international women's day 2006. Historians in the future will be horrified at the treatment of those women and families.

Historians in the future will also wonder why Cornton Vale prison is filled with women who have been locked up for economic crimes. Historians will wonder why more than 99 per cent, and probably 100 per cent, of those women have been victims of abuse by men. Those women do not deserve prison. What will the Parliament do for and about those women? International women's day is a day to highlight, and to campaign, struggle and rise against, inequalities and injustices against women here in Edinburgh, throughout Scotland, and around the world. What will we do for those women who currently struggle in Glasgow to keep schools open so that they can secure the future of their children and their communities?

Today we remember all women, past, present and future. We want bread and roses—I know that Cathy Peattie could sing the song for us. We want deeds, not words. We have heard a great deal today about what is wrong. That is all right, but are

sisters willing to grasp the nettle, to take the risks, to break the barriers and to put things right?

16:09

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): I apologise to Mary Scanlon for my sedentary intervention when she was talking about listening to Francis Maude. I was not actually querying Tory policy but simply marvelling at Mr Maude's longevity.

I know that Stewart Stevenson was making the point that, because he expects to see a male train driver, he does not see female train drivers and simply sees what he expected to see. However, there are now many more female train drivers on ScotRail and on other railways. In fact, it is not unusual to have a female train driver and male guard or conductor. That is a social change of some significance, given that, in the rail hierarchy, the person at the front of the train is much higher up the pecking order than the person at the back of the train. It shows that in one small area, at least, we are moving in the right direction.

Marlyn Glen mentioned the article in today's edition of *The Scotsman* in which Lesley Riddoch considers some of the reasons why women as a whole are not equally represented or equally rewarded in many areas of society. She writes that women often think that conflict is a bad thing, but I have to say that it is no bad thing that that is what they often think. In fact, it is a pity that, as the years pass, more men do not think that way.

I will read a short extract from the article:

"Women working in what was a men's world must still spend enough time together to reinforce the life experiences that make women's outlooks different and valuable. And then bring those different insights to public life."

Surely one of the big challenges that face both men and women is to reach a position in which there is more equality between men and women without women simply having to behave in the same way as men to reach it.

Excitingly, the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Bill Committee met this morning to consider the Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament Bill at stage 2. As members probably know, the bill will create a new system to deal with the registration of members' financial and non-financial interests. One of the sets of amendments that the committee considered was about the necessity for members to register certain categories of gifts, shareholdings and so on, which is a requirement that will apply not only to members, but to their spouses or other partners. At least in the Scottish Parliament, there exists a fair—if not an equal—chance that the spouse whose interest will have to

be registered will be a man rather than, as would traditionally have been the case, a woman.

However, that does not get over the problem that some members feel to be implicit in the bill, which is that it does not treat men and women as equals because it treats one partner—which, in the majority of cases, will still be the female partner—in a patronising way as someone who is simply a useful holding vehicle for the assets of the husband or the male. During the committee's meeting, I think that it was Susan Deacon who said that it was difficult to believe that the media would have dealt with the on-going controversy at Westminster involving Tessa Jowell and her husband in the same way if the sexes of the two participants had been reversed.

Over the decades, we have moved on. It was some years ago that the Crowther report on education said that schools should prepare girls for a combination of career and marriage—it will not surprise members to learn that it did not say the same about boys—and the Newsom report said that girls would be less curious than boys in science lessons. In that context, it is interesting to note that evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, some of which has already been quoted, shows that British girls of 15 years of age are 26 per cent ahead of boys in literacy and that this year, for the first time, 50 per cent of girls in the United Kingdom will go to university, whereas only 40 per cent of boys will do so; I am sorry that I do not have the Scottish figures. It is clear that that is a major reversal of the situation that pertained only a generation ago.

Social changes of that nature cannot happen overnight and I know that for many people the pace at which they happen is deeply frustrating. I suppose that one of the big questions is whether the changes in education will percolate through without further legislation if we simply ensure that the current legislation actually works.

Finally, I emphasise that although inequality is seriously unfair and socially unacceptable, Cathy Peattie was right to point out that women underachieving is a net economic loss to all society that we can very ill afford.

16:15

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I declare my interest in Unison, as shown in my entry in the register of members' interests.

I am pleased by the Parliament's recognition this year of international women's day. Unfortunately, committee business kept me from attending the Scottish Women's Convention event that was held this morning. I was disappointed not to be able to attend. I understand that the theme was women's

representation, participation and empowerment, as my colleague Marlyn Glen outlined in her contribution. The debate gives us the welcome opportunity to reflect on whether we have maintained the momentum that was initiated in 1999 when a critical mass of female MSPs was elected to the Scottish Parliament.

The issue of women's representation and participation in the decision-making process is crucial to the entire equality agenda. Although countless studies have examined the ways in which more women can be encouraged to become involved in the political process, the situation is a fairly straightforward one. The fact is that women find it difficult to engage fully in the political process because they do not operate on a level playing field with men. For the same reason, women are underrepresented in senior positions across the public and private sector and overrepresented among the unemployed and the low paid. Women have to face up to and overcome more barriers. As the main carer in most families and as the lone parent in the majority of single-parent families, women have to prioritise their child care commitments over employment aspirations, career advancement, education, community involvement and public service.

As the deputy minister mentioned, the lack of affordable child care remains a major barrier for women. I want to take a closer look at that. The Executive's pre-school and day care census for 2005 found that most child care and pre-school education is still provided only on weekdays between 9 am and 12 noon. It also found that only 1,000 of Scotland's child care centres offer out-of-school club services and that fewer than 370 offer a breakfast club. That provision does not reflect the needs of most working women in Scotland today. A breakfast club was introduced only recently at my son's school and I know the huge difference that it has made.

Of course, the provision of part-time, free pre-school education for all three and four-year olds is a step in the right direction. We should mention that and we should welcome it. It does not provide an answer to child care requirements for many women, however. The part-time nature of that approach means that parents often have to adopt a fragmented and haphazard approach to daily child care. It can involve nursery, day care, child minders, family support—or maybe all of those—in the one day. That kind of piecemeal approach to child care is not only ineffective, but stressful and costly to parents and, from the children's point of view, confusing and disruptive.

According to the Daycare Trust, the typical cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under two in Scotland is £122 a week. That cost has increased

by 8 per cent on last year's figures whereas, in England, the increase is only 2 per cent. In allowing the child care market to run untamed, we are not only letting down women, but creating the anomalous situation whereby substantial public funding is being handed to commercial providers to provide services that could be supplied in a much more cohesive, effective and accountable way via the public sector.

I recognise and welcome the commitment that the Scottish Executive has made in financial and policy terms, which the deputy minister outlined. However, I contend that there is an overwhelming need for more extensive public provision of child care. I declared my interest in Unison because I want to mention its submission to the Education Committee's early years inquiry. Unison has called on the Scottish Executive to provide

"affordable, universal full-time child care for all ages."

I add my voice to that call. Many child care difficulties could be solved if we were to provide sufficient publicly-funded child care centres. That would not only make child care affordable for all, but recognise the importance of child care workers, who are mainly women, as Rosie Kane mentioned.

In its submission, Unison also cited examples from Europe and beyond, including Sweden and France, where the early years system is almost universally provided by the public service, and Finland, where every child has the right to a child care place from birth. What benefits would accrue to Scotland from the adoption of such provision? Enormous societal benefits could be harnessed from the provision of universal state child care. There is the potential to lift significant numbers of children out of poverty, through the widening of their parents' access to training and employment. Indeed, the Executive has recognised that in its sure start initiative. There is still a need to build on the policy, however.

If universal early years care were introduced, the economy in Scotland would greatly benefit, because more women would be empowered to make a contribution to the workforce. Communities would profit, because women would have more time to become involved in public service. Employers would gain from a lower turnover of experienced staff, reduced absences, a better return on training and better productivity, because more women could return to work without facing the catch-22 situation of needing to work to pay for child care. Most important, women in Scotland would benefit, because the introduction of universal early years care would move the equality agenda forward significantly by helping to level the playing field and allowing more women to achieve their potential. Perhaps then we might achieve the balance in women's representation

and participation in public life for which we are all striving and which the Labour Party has taken action to encourage.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared in his comprehensive spending review 2004 that the 21st century would be the era of universal child care and early years services. That must become the reality in Scotland in future. The only decision that we must make is whether we are going to drag our heels and wait for generations before introducing universal child care or whether we make it happen now, for the benefit of the women and children of Scotland.

16:21

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): It is a pleasure to speak in a debate that does not involve the usual party political yah-boo. Perhaps women have a softening effect on people—but I am not sure that that is always true. The debate has certainly been consensual, which is welcome. I am happy to support the motion and the amendment.

As members said, there are still problems. There is not just a pay gap but a status gap, which exists mainly in the minds of men, who still make many of the decisions. I know from experience that women who do well at various levels in large companies are still not taken as seriously as are men. We must educate men, which we all know is a difficult task. Women must be given equal status not just in pay, but in every way.

We face another problem, which is quite difficult to address in a mixed, multi-ethnic society such as ours. How do we deal with societies that, in our view, give far too little regard to women? That is an issue in this country and more so in other countries. Other groups have a right to their culture and society, but we must consider how tactfully to address the problem if we think that a culture denigrates and maltreats women. We must confront that issue more vigorously than we have done in the past.

Again as other members said, we must seriously tackle issues to do with the work-family balance, which affect men as much as they affect women. The option of getting out of the rat race is often not open to people, so men or women must work far too hard—being paid ridiculously high amounts—and have no satisfactory home life. Too often, the option of pulling back a gear at work does not exist, but there should be opportunities to do that. We must tackle that at all levels, for high and low flyers alike.

There are many issues that we must tackle, but there is a huge fund of talent, which is not found just among highly skilled people. When I was a member of the Westminster Parliament my

constituency included a poor part of Edinburgh, where there was a huge amount of talent among young married women whose children were growing up. Those women might not have had degrees in philosophy, but they had common sense and energy to spare. We can harness such talent and encourage women to aim higher and grow in self-confidence.

One way of giving women self-confidence is to point out the great things that women have done in the past, which have been neglected. For example, the pioneer women who went with their men to Commonwealth countries were the ones who set up home and established societies. New Zealand marked that contribution by being the first country to give women the vote. Women made a huge contribution to the Commonwealth countries as they are today. At home, women's achievements have been neglected. It is good that "The Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women" has been published today. I am sure that we can all learn a lot from the book, which celebrates many women who achieved great things, but who people in general do not know about.

About 20 years ago, when I was a councillor in Edinburgh, I did a similar thing, but in a small way, when I persuaded the council to put up about 20 plaques on the walls of appropriate buildings to commemorate women who made an important contribution to life in Edinburgh. Some of them are well known, but others are not. For example, there were plaques for the writers Naomi Mitchison, Susan Ferrier, Margaret Oliphant, Jane Carlyle and Muriel Spark; for promoters of education such as the three Stevenson sisters, Mary Erskine and Mary Crudelius; and for scientists, reformers, suffragettes and suffragists and other medical people.

I will give another plug for Elsie Inglis, not just for her personally, but because of the connection in Edinburgh between medical progress and the suffragettes' progress, which were very much intertwined. The importance of the hospitals that women produced during the first world war was that they came about entirely by female effort. The women used the suffragist-suffragette and medical networks to produce doctors, nurses, cleaners and everyone else who was required. There were a few men to carry heavy items that the women could not, but the women drove and did absolutely everything else, including raising all the money. The hospitals in France, Serbia, Romania and elsewhere showed that women could deliver successful enterprises. We should celebrate that, which is why I hope to set up a trust to collect money to build a statue of a group of nurses, to be put in the High Street near where Elsie Inglis had her hospital before she went to the war.

We can encourage women by showing them women's past achievements. We need to raise self-esteem and encourage women to aim high. There are women here who do that, but many women with talent have not yet had the flame ignited and do not believe that they can achieve more. We should all concentrate on that, as it would improve our society enormously.

16:28

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): On 8 March 2000, I spoke in the debate in the Parliament on international women's day, and I am pleased to say that I have survived long enough to do so again now. It is 95 years since the first international women's day was held in some countries in Europe. We have made a lot of progress since then. Women have been granted the vote in many countries, not least our own, and have been elected to Parliaments. The first woman to be elected to Parliament in the United Kingdom was, of course, Nancy Astor, for the Conservative party. The Conservatives have also produced the only female Prime Minister, in the shape of Margaret Thatcher, a lady who certainly did not consider that glass ceilings were a barrier to progress. As I said in the debate in March 2000, only when there is no need for an international women's day will we know that women are truly equal.

In the new developed world, the struggle for society is to try to ensure that women and men can combine having families with a fulfilling working life. It is sometimes difficult to accomplish that in a satisfactory and beneficial way for all the parties—women and men, employers and employees. Companies that have taken the leap to put in place enlightened and forward-thinking business practices reap the rewards that come through having happy and secure employees.

It is important that we support women's choices when it comes to combining family with work. Attention should be focused on issues such as pay inequality and inadequate child care provision. The creche in the Parliament could be used more to help MSPs and their staff. We should recognise that there are many ways of juggling the mix. Government should respect and facilitate women's choices. There is, after all, no best way to bring up children. Anyone who has looked after children—I have helped to look after five—will know that from one year to the next there is no agreement; the advice is always different. The Conservatives think that instead of imposing a choice on mothers, we should support the choices that they make for themselves. Mothers who work should not be made to feel guilty; nor should mothers who stay at home. Let us stop telling families how to live their lives and instead support those that get on

with their lives and bring equality between men and women.

Despite progress, we must not rest on our laurels and pat ourselves on the back, saying, "Job done." This is international women's day, and we must remember the women of the world who are not so fortunate. There are women throughout the world who have no choices about how their bodies are abused, their work or their education—if they receive an education. I share Sandra White's concern about the trafficking of women across Europe and support her call for the Executive to do everything it can to end that horrific practice, which has echoes of the worst kind of slavery.

We should also remember the women closer to home who have no choices or voices, who are mired in poverty and can see no way out for them or their children. It should be the clarion call to all politicians at every level to work towards ending poverty. We all joined together last summer to call for an end to world poverty, but we must not forget those who are suffering on our doorstep. We in the Conservative party are committed to empowering local communities and to helping them to find solutions to their problems. While the state can assist individuals and communities to combat poverty and its afflictions, it is really effective only when communities become actively involved in providing the solutions that bring real, lasting change.

Positive discrimination or affirmative action should be used only in emergencies; they should not be policy. The policy should be to grow the seed and to produce the employment and the equal opportunities that really matter.

I am glad to have spoken in this important debate to celebrate international women's day. As I said in a previous international women's day debate, when full equality has been achieved we will no longer need a special day to celebrate women. I know that the new leader of the Conservative party, David Cameron, wants more women in his shadow Cabinet, because he announced the other day that he had five Daves and only four women.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): I feel obliged to say to members that the acoustics here are much better than they are in the chamber down the road. I can hear you when you are talking to each other. It is very interesting. Two things: one, I warn you that I am listening to what you are saying; two, do not say it.

16:34

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I think that that was a shot across my bows, Presiding Officer.

My speech is a game of two halves: it addresses inequalities at home and abroad. Many members have rightly referred to the fact that glass ceilings remain for women, although I shall end with an account of a woman who did break through a glass ceiling. Regrettably, women are still stereotyped in their work opportunities. Unlike MSPs, even when women do the same job as a man, they do not always get the same pay. The jobs that women do are often undervalued, not just in pay but by society. Inequalities and injustices that start in someone's working life continue into old age.

In the Parliament, the Scottish Conservatives, the Greens, the independents and the Scottish National Party all have female leaders, which is to be commended. I look forward to the day when Margaret Curran joins those ranks.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran): I did not hear that.

Christine Grahame: It is only a rumour.

Single women are also penalised throughout their lives. Twenty per cent of single elderly women live in poverty, because they rarely had continuous work to enable them to access the basic state pension. Only 16 per cent of them qualify for a full basic state pension, compared to almost 80 per cent of men. That problem is compounded by the fact that such women often do not have company pensions, either because of the nature of the work that they did or because of their other obligations in life. Figures from 2003 show that life expectancy is nearly 80 years for women and 73 for men. It is projected that by 2031, life expectancy will have increased to 83 years for women—despite all our turmoil and strife—and 79 for men. That will make poverty among very elderly women a real issue.

It is right to refer to domestic abuse, although it is probably misnamed as domestic. Many older women live alone. Three quarters of the victims of bogus callers are women, and 90 per cent of them live alone, so they are victims again.

Because it is international women's day, I will refer to our sisters abroad. First of all, I refer to Nayeje Jekete, an extraordinary woman. She is a midwife in Malawi, where women face a one in 13 chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth. That is an horrific statistic. I will read a little quote that illustrates how she has to work:

"Behind her workplace/home, it's hard to miss the dirty well shared with animals where Jekete draws water. Every day girls scrape a layer of scum from the surface to get to the fresher liquid below and Jekete boils the water over an open fire before using it.

Her 'labour ward' is a two-roomed dilapidated house. The 'theatre' holds one wooden bed with a thin mattress. Most of her patients and newly born babies sleep on reed mats."

How many of us who have had children can imagine those circumstances and compare them to the places where we gave birth to our children?

To compound that situation, one person in 10 in Malawi is infected with AIDS. Women are often the victims of husbands' promiscuity, as it is a sign of machismo to be promiscuous and not to use contraception. The knock-on effect is that women who want to breastfeed their babies cannot do so for fear of infecting them but, because the alternative is to use dirty water from dirty wells to give them mixed and artificial feeds, the babies die anyway, so the victim chain goes on.

We had the W8 summit, which was the alterative to the G8 summit. There was hardly a woman in sight at the grand G8 summit—it was nearly all suits—but the W8 are eight wonderful women who came to the Hub and gave presentations. As a consequence of that conference, we have set up a group of W8 women in the Parliament. Each one of us from the different political parties, including the independents, shadows a different woman.

I will mention a couple of those women. The one I shadow is a lady called Hauwa Ibrahim, who made a startling speech here in the Hub—it was breathtaking, quietly delivered and meaningful. She started her life in poverty and had to walk miles and miles every day to get clean water for her brother, because the priority in the family was that the brother would wash and eat first; the girls were the workhorses. However, Hauwa Ibrahim managed to train to be a lawyer and is now a major lawyer in northern Nigeria. Using Sharia law, she defends women who face being stoned for alleged adultery. She has to tread carefully, and she takes not a penny from the west for fear that she is accused of being corrupted by it. She has had to work carefully within Sharia law—I stress that point—to prevent young men from having their hands cut off for stealing loaves of bread because they were starving. She is an extraordinary woman indeed.

Another extraordinary woman is Lornah Kiplagat. She is a world-class runner, but she did not have any fancy training. She ran miles and miles four times a day, backwards and forwards to school, and back home at lunch time to feed the cattle and back to school again. Quite through accident, it made her a world-class runner. At the first major meeting that she went to, in Nairobi, she slept in the public toilets, because there was nowhere for a female runner to sleep, and that was safer than sleeping on the streets. Now, she raises funds for young women in Africa to run. Those are two magnificent women.

I commend the W8 group. We will work for simple things: wells for clean water; mobile phones, which are essential forms of communication in emergencies, rather than for

calling or texting pals to ask, "Where are you?"; and mobile radio stations. The tools are education and communication. One of the women in the W8 group is involved in that work.

I will conclude with something that happened last night, which warmed the cockles of my heart. I was attending the Standard Life event at the Parliament, and a rather grand, stately lady approached us. I asked, "Who are you?" She replied, "I'm Ann. I run the bank." I thought, "I like the sound of that." I might be ahead of myself, but I quite like the sound of "I'm Christine. I run Scotland."

16:41

The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm): This has been an excellent and important debate. I begin by welcoming all the visitors in the public gallery. Many of them were here earlier, and some of them will be attending the events this evening. This is a very important day, and it is absolutely right, as so many members have said, that we should regard it as a day of celebration. We should celebrate the struggles of women in this country and throughout the world. Indeed, the debate has had an international dimension, with Sylvia Jackson, Rosie Kane, Christine Grahame and others referring to what is happening in other countries.

Although it is right that we should celebrate, we have not yet achieved gender equality. The main emphasis in today's debate has been on what remains to be done, rather than on what has been achieved. Having said that, several members, such as Sandra White, started their speeches by acknowledging the way in which things have moved on; Cathy Peattie also referred to various ways in which the situation of women has improved. Nora Radcliffe quoted the remarks of Jenny Watson, the chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, that

"In the last 30 years women's lives have changed beyond recognition".

We recognise that and celebrate the progress that has been made.

However, as I said, the overwhelming emphasis in the debate has been on what remains to be done. That is why the Executive is happy to support the SNP amendment. No one is more impatient than we are for the pace of progress to speed up.

I will give more detail in a moment, but there are some important developments in what we are doing in Scotland through the new gender equality duty, as well as developments that apply to the UK as a whole, including the work of the women and work commission. Those developments give us grounds for hope and belief that the pace of

progress will speed up from now on. We are impatient with what has happened—we want more to be done, and all the members who spoke in the debate echoed that.

The biggest theme that came through in the debate was that of the unacceptable pay gap and the many issues that surround it, such as occupational segregation and gender stereotyping. In the longest part of my speech, I hope to respond to those issues.

Before that, I will touch on two issues that have always been very important for the women's equality agenda. The first is child care. In her opening speech, Johann Lamont explained the significant resources that have been put into child care by the Executive, and Elaine Smith rightly said that more needs to be done. The matter is being examined on an on-going basis. Only recently, local authorities were asked to review their out-of-school provision, and they have submitted action plans to the Executive to address gaps in provision. Work is going on—including in my department, as we have responsibility for the working for families fund—to explore how we can build on the progress that has been made in child care. Child care is a good example of an area where we should, while recognising the problems that remain, celebrate how much has been achieved over a short period.

I certainly welcome the remarks made by Nanette Milne and Mary Scanlon in which they expressed their support for expanding child care and increasing choice in it. I do not want to spoil the tone of the debate too much by being partisan and party political but I remember that, when I was an MP in the 1990s, the Government of the time was a million miles away from that attitude. We should welcome the progress that has been made on that issue.

The second key issue is violence against women. Joanne Lamont quoted in her opening speech the staggering fact that it is estimated that, internationally, violence against women causes more deaths and disability among women aged 15 to 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war. It is a serious and long-standing international problem.

As Mary Mulligan said, progress has been made in the provision of services and support. The announcement that Johann Lamont made about the increased funding for the new violence against women fund has been widely welcomed throughout the chamber. We can note a small element of change in people's attitudes in the Zero Tolerance briefing, which referred to research by NHS Health Scotland and the University of Glasgow. There are grounds for hope, but it is clear that there are massive problems. Mary Scanlon said that the level of repeat victimisation

was up 19 per cent since 1999, which we have to take very seriously. The increase might be, in part, a result of increased awareness of the problem, but we certainly cannot take any comfort from that.

Stewart Stevenson talked about violence against women and referred to rape in particular. He was right to point out that we have not found an effective way of prosecuting men for rape. The Executive takes that issue very seriously, which is why the law on rape and the Crown Office's prosecution procedures are being reviewed. I am sure that those two reviews will lead to significant changes.

There are other important developments. We recently announced support for the sexual assault referral centre in Glasgow. I am glad that negotiations on that have now been finalised. We are funding rape crisis centres over and above the specific funding that we announced today. There is also the domestic abuse court. A lot of action is being taken in the areas of protection, prevention and provision, but we all know that much more needs to be done.

The SNP's amendment, which is in the name of Sandra White, highlights trafficking. One of the key reasons why we will support the amendment is that we take that issue very seriously indeed. As part of our consultation on the UK action plan on human trafficking, we are seeking views on how to strengthen investigation, enforcement and prosecution in relation to trafficking offences.

We currently support a pilot project in Glasgow, under the violence against women fund, which aims to determine the need for support for trafficked women, as there is no specialist support service in Scotland apart from that project. The project will continue to be funded under the new money announced today. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Malcolm Chisholm: As I said, two big areas of work that on the agenda give us grounds for renewed hope: the new gender equality duty; and the recent report of the women and work commission. The gender equality duty, on which members will recall that we had a Sewel motion a few months ago, will bring about huge changes in how we take forward our work to achieve gender equality in Scotland. The new duty will strengthen existing initiatives, enabling us to promote new ways of tackling gender inequality. The key point about the duty is that public authorities will be required to demonstrate outcomes—it will no longer be sufficient for them to embed their equality commitments in paperwork and processes. The gender duty has recently been the subject of consultation and the plethora of responses from throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK is under consideration.

The specific duties have not yet been finalised, but three key areas will form the core of the gender equality duty and will help us significantly to push forward our work on equality between women and men: gender equality schemes; gender impact assessments; and action on equal pay.

I will deal with equal pay first, because that issue has attracted most comment from members today. The specific duty on equal pay, as outlined in the consultation document, will not only call on public authorities to develop and publish a policy on equal pay between women and men, but include a commitment to act on the results of any review. That part of the gender equality duty will obviously build on work that we are already doing. Johann Lamont referred to the close the gap partnership, in which we have participated for the past five years and for which we recently announced renewed funding. Our work with it has focused on raising awareness and supporting equal pay audits.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. I am sorry for interrupting you, minister, but I have already said that I can hear everything that you are saying.

Malcolm Chisholm: Are you saying that you can hear what members are saying or what I am saying? I thought that you were—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can hear you, minister, but I can also hear other members.

Malcolm Chisholm: I thought that you meant that I was talking too loudly.

We intend to target large private sector employers in our future work with the close the gap partnership, and we are particularly keen to engage with organisations in which there are particularly large gender pay gaps, as the Equal Opportunities Commission has recommended. We aim to work to change organisations' attitudes from the top and to encourage pay audits and follow-up action.

Sylvia Jackson and other members referred to the work of the UK women and work commission, which last week produced an interesting and significant report. The Executive has clearly not had enough time to respond to the 40 recommendations in that report, but I have certainly been impressed by them. The report highlights the continuing waste of women's skills and potential, which is a tragedy for women in the first instance, and the negative impact on Scotland's economy, which Jamie Stone highlighted. We are determined to take action to address all the causes of the pay gap that the report highlights. Nora Radcliffe said that many jobs that women do are not sufficiently valued,

which is clearly an important part of the pay gap issue.

Occupational segregation also featured in many speeches. Recent Equal Opportunities Commission research on modern apprenticeships in Scotland has identified a complex set of factors that influence young people's career choices—Marlyn Glen and other members referred to that issue. Some progress has been made on modern apprenticeships, but much more is needed. It is clear that the gender imbalance reflects what happens in the wider labour market. We have welcomed the Equal Opportunities Commission's report on occupational segregation and have said that we will work with it and other relevant stakeholders to develop appropriate actions to address any systemic barriers that prevent people from adopting their career choice. We have also established an interdepartmental working group to consider occupational segregation and how it can be effectively tackled. We recognise that there must be concerted, joined-up action in several policy areas if the issue is to be addressed. I have been told that the commission is pleased with the approach that we have adopted in that regard.

Gender impact assessments and gender equality schemes will also help us to improve how we run our organisations. In drawing up a scheme, public authorities will have to set targets and outline how they intend to meet them.

We are already doing a great deal of work on equality proofing our policy and budgets, which will be extremely helpful to us in preparing for the new duty's impact assessment requirements. The work of the equality proofing budget and policy advisory group has been invaluable in making progress on that area. The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive have taken a great deal of interest in the matter. I know that the Equal Opportunities Committee has done work on equality proofing the budget, and the Executive has also taken the matter seriously. It has set up two pilot schemes to develop tools for gender analysis, which have achieved some recognition. I am pleased to be part of an Oxfam CD, on which I am interviewed because of what the Executive has done in that regard, although our work may not be widely known in the chamber or across Scotland.

On the smoking cessation pilot scheme, we know that young girls and boys smoke at different rates and respond to different strategies to help them to stop smoking. We need to know the extent to which policy and spend meet the different needs of boys and girls, and we must act on our findings. That is the purpose of that pilot scheme, and there is another pilot scheme in relation to sport.

Rosie Kane raised the issue of the criminal justice system. A lot of work has been carried out

with reference to women and the criminal justice system, on which the Scottish Women's Convention had a particular proposal. We recognise the problems that have been identified, and Cathy Jamieson has agreed to set up a short-life working group to consider further progress on the issue. A member of the Scottish Women's Convention has been invited to take part in that group. That builds on the work of two previous high-level groups—one at ministerial level considered the issue of female offenders and alternatives to custody—and the proposals in the reports of those groups have been followed through.

Another example of how the Executive has addressed the specific needs of women offenders is the 218 time-out centre in Glasgow, which opened three years ago. Every year, up to 500 women who are caught up in the criminal justice system are being helped to overcome their substance misuse, tackle the causes of their offending, move on and reintegrate fully into society.

I think that I have had double the length of my time, but I will try to fill in the three minutes before decision time, although that will make it a 19-minute speech.

There have been many powerful and interesting speeches, and the theme of challenging gender stereotyping has come through strongly, starting with Sandra White's speech. That is a major theme of the women and work commission, and the challenges are not just for employers, but for schools and the education system more generally. The recommendations in that area will be addressed as we consider our response to the women and work commission.

Cathy Peattie and Marlyn Glen talked about pregnancy discrimination, on which the Equal Opportunities Commission issued a report a few months ago. I spoke at the Scottish launch of the report and committed the Executive to involvement in actions to deal with the issue, on which I hope to be able to report further before too long.

Many other points were raised in the debate. Shiona Baird welcomed progress on the sculpture in memory of the suffragettes. In exactly an hour's time, I will announce who will make that sculpture. Shiona Baird also suggested that there should be a permanent monument on the Royal Mile to the thousands of women who tended wounded men during the world wars, and referred especially to Elsie Inglis. The First Minister has had a meeting about that suggestion and has considered it. We would consider an application in support of a statue, but that would have to have the support of the City of Edinburgh Council, given the proposed location of the monument.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, this is a day for celebration, and that has been the main theme. However, as Mary Mulligan said, we should deal with gender equality on not just one day of the year but every day, and it should be mainstreamed in all our work. We do not have gender equality, but I am sure that today's debate has renewed our determination to ensure that we have it before too long.

Business Motions

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-4079, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 15 March 2006

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Executive Debate: Improving the Legislative Process

followed by Members' Business: S2M-3890 Mr Kenneth Macintosh: The Importance of Play

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 16 March 2006

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Ministerial Statement: Major Public Transport Projects Update

followed by Appointment of the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner

followed by Non-Executive Business: Independents' Group

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time—
Finance and Communities;
Education and Young People,
Tourism, Culture and Sport

2.55 pm Justice 1 Committee Debate:
European Commission Green
Papers on Applicable Law in Divorce
and Succession and Wills

followed by European and External Relations
Committee Debate: 4th Report 2005,
An Inquiry into the Scottish
Executive's Fresh Talent Initiative
Examining the Problems It Aims to
Address, Its Operation, Challenges
and Prospects

followed by Company Law Reform Bill
Legislative Consent Motion – UK
Legislation

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 22 March 2006
 2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Executive Business
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 23 March 2006
 9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Executive Business
 11.40 am General Question Time
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time—
 Health and Community Care;
 Environment and Rural Development
 2.55 pm Executive Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S2M-4075 to S2M-4077, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out timetables for legislation.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 31 March 2006.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc. (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 25 May 2006.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 21 April 2006.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions S2M-4065, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, and S2M-4066, on designation of a lead committee.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2005 Amendment (No. 2) Order 2006 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be referred to the Justice 2 Committee.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

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

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are 10 questions to be put today. As previously indicated to members, decisions that were not taken last Thursday will be taken now. In relation to last Thursday's debate on Shirley McKie, if the amendment in the name of Cathy Jamieson is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Colin Fox will fall. In relation to last Thursday's debate on Scottish Water, if the amendment in the name of Ross Finnie is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser will fall.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In relation to your ruling, surely the amendments in the name of Cathy Jamieson and Colin Fox are not mutually incompatible. Why would you rule that if Cathy Jamieson's amendment is agreed to, we will be unable to vote on Colin Fox's amendment?

The Presiding Officer: Because the hook—if I can put it that way—on which it relies will have gone. It is quite simple.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-4039.2, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4039, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on Shirley McKie, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

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)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 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)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Therefore, amendment S2M-4039.1, in the name of Colin Fox, falls.

The next question is, that motion S2M-4039, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on Shirley McKie, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

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)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)

Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 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)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (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)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 66, Against 51, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament agrees that action needs to be taken to restore public and professional confidence in the Scottish Fingerprint Service; acknowledges that in 2000 the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau was the subject of an independent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC); notes that following three further inspections HMIC reported that its 25 recommendations had been fully discharged; notes that further reforms are being taken forward; that the Minister for Justice has instructed the interim Chief Executive of the Scottish Police Services Authority to bring forward, by the end of March, a comprehensive action plan drawing on the best available international scientific advice and management expertise; notes that this action plan will be reported to the Parliament; believes that a public inquiry is not appropriate; notes that it is the responsibility of the Parliament to hold the Scottish Executive to account; welcomes the work already commenced by the Justice 1 Committee, and confirms the Executive's commitment to co-operate with any inquiries that the Parliament may decide to take forward in scrutinising these reforms.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. We have reason to suspect that not all votes are being recorded. Can that be checked reasonably expeditiously without holding up proceedings? Lights have been flashing after buttons have been pressed.

The Presiding Officer: If the matter were serious, I would need to suspend the meeting, which I am reluctant to do given the fairly comfortable margin in those votes.

If Mr Aitken has doubts about whether the vote of a member of his party has registered, he should remember that a console can be used twice. In other words, once one member has cast a vote and withdrawn their card, another member can cast their vote from that console by inserting their own card. Is that acceptable?

Bill Aitken: Yes. I do not wish to protract proceedings unnecessarily, but it struck me that the number of votes for the amendment was significantly greater than it might have been. At

least two members of my party feel that their vote may not have been recorded.

The Presiding Officer: We will check that later. I am grateful to Mr Aitken for agreeing that we can proceed.

The next question is, that amendment S2M-4036.2, in the name of Ross Finnie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4036, in the name of Rob Gibson, on Scottish Water, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 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)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)

Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (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)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (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 65, Against 47, Abstentions 6.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: Therefore, amendment S2M-4036.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, falls.

The next question is, that motion S2M-4036, in the name of Rob Gibson, on Scottish Water, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (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)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (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 65, Against 47, Abstentions 6.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes that Scottish Water's draft business plan of April 2005 stated that achieving Scottish Ministers' objectives for 2006 to 2010 would require a capital investment programme of £3.7 billion and a doubling in customer charges; notes that the Water Industry Commission's determination of charges for 2006 to 2010 allowed Scottish Water a capital investment programme of £2.1 billion and charges rising by less than the rate of inflation to achieve the objectives; notes that Scottish Water accepted the determination but its plan demonstrating how it would deliver the objectives within the limits set by the determination was judged by the Executive, supported by the regulators, not to meet the requirements in a number of material aspects; notes that the Executive has required Scottish Water to produce a new plan which will command the confidence of Ministers and regulators, and considers these actions by the Executive to represent good stewardship of Scottish Water in the public and customer interest.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-4063.1, in the name of Sandra White, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4063, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on international women's day, 8 March 2006, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-4063, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on international women's day, 8 March 2006, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes the significance of 8 March 2006 as International Women's Day; endorses the role which this day plays in recognising, promoting and celebrating women's issues worldwide; congratulates the many groups and organisations which, and individuals who, strive for gender equality and to create a fairer and more equal society for women in Scotland, and, in particular, acknowledges the wide range of Scottish Executive work to advance the women's agenda in Scotland; however, notes that 30 years after the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 came into force, the pace of change remains painfully slow; further notes with great concern the trafficking of women throughout Europe, and calls on the Executive to do all in its power to stop this horrific practice.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-4065, in the name of Margaret Curran, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2005 Amendment (No. 2) Order 2006 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S2M-4066, in the name of Margaret

Curran, on designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be referred to the Justice 2 Committee.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S2M-3928, in the name of Maureen Macmillan, on the 21st anniversary of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the importance to Scotland of wild salmon conservation; further recognises the vital work undertaken by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO), the only international treaty organisation based in Scotland, and welcomes the 21st anniversary of the establishment of NASCO.

17:12

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Hang on a second; you do not have sound. If you move to the side, the illuminated microphone there is live. There has obviously been a technical glitch. Please start again.

Maureen Macmillan: I was just saying that the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation has an important role to play in sustaining the king of fish, the wild north Atlantic salmon, which brings such benefits to the economy of many parts of rural Scotland. We congratulate the organisation, albeit belatedly, on its 21st anniversary. Without NASCO, the wild salmon would be a much rarer creature than it is now.

NASCO was established under the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean, which was adopted at a diplomatic conference convened in Reykjavik in January 1982, ratified by the European Union in that year and registered in accordance with article 102 of the charter of the United Nations. NASCO is the only international treaty organisation that is based in Scotland—it has its headquarters here in Edinburgh. The parties to the convention include the USA, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Russia and the EU, representing those EU countries that have a salmon interest. Denmark represents Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

I am sure that members are aware of the challenges that the wild salmon fishery faced in the recent past, with salmon failing to return to their home rivers. In some rivers, it was possible to count the number of fish on one hand. Great efforts were made to grow smolts from rivers' brood stock—I have seen that on the Oykeill in

Sutherland—but often they did not return from their Atlantic voyage.

A number of possible causes were highlighted. On the west coast, those included sea lice infestation and escapes from salmon farms. On the east coast, seals and fishing stations were blamed. Sometimes the cause was salmon fishermen who had refused to fish sustainably. Sometimes it was riparian owners, who had allowed the river habitat to degrade.

NASCO has worked at all levels to improve the environment for wild salmon. Using the precautionary approach, it addresses issues such as acid precipitation, freshwater habitat degradation, home water fisheries management and aquaculture management.

The aquaculture issue is being addressed. I was involved in the ministerial working group on aquaculture, which will reach its conclusion with the aquaculture bill and has resulted in the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation putting in place a new code of practice. My role as reporter on aquaculture for the Transport and the Environment Committee made me interested in what was happening to wild salmon.

NASCO's principal role is to regulate the salmon sea fisheries around Greenland and the Faroe Islands and to limit matters such as the number of fishing licences, season length and the total allowable catch. Since it became evident that the recent period of low returns to salmon rivers was caused by mortality at sea, NASCO—through the establishment of the international Atlantic salmon research board and in other ways—has given a high priority to researching the bycatch of salmon in existing and new fisheries. Research projects are also being undertaken on the survival of salmon at sea in their first and second years; tagging and monitoring; catch sampling; and smolt tracking. The pioneering use of closed-circuit television in open-ended trawls for better observation is happening off Shetland and in the Minches.

Closer to home for me, three Scottish rivers have been monitored—the north Esk, part of the Dee and the Conon. Seal predation in the Cromarty firth has been examined. I hope that the seals there will not warrant the methods that were used in Maine to scare off double-crested cormorants in the estuary of the Narraguagus river. Under the heading “Research methods” in a document on that, shotguns with firecracker and screamer shells and lasers are listed. I hope that the peace of the Cromarty firth will not be so disturbed.

We are all grateful for all the work that goes on through NASCO to sustain our population of wild salmon. The wild salmon supports a small but

significant niche tourist market that provides employment and keeps small hotels going in out-of-the-way places. I have tried my hand at salmon fishing a few times on the River Cassley, with a very patient expert called Donald Morrison. I have never caught a fish, but I appreciate the attraction and peace of the activity. I just wish that the sport were not so exclusive—access to it depends largely on the depth of one's pocket. Opening up access to salmon fishing does not necessarily conflict with keeping fisheries sustainable. On rivers such as the Cassley, caught fish were returned to the river when stocks were low. From arguments a while ago over a statutory instrument in the Environment and Rural Development Committee, I seem to remember that the problem on the north Esk was that, having paid through the nose for their beat, fishermen would not put back fish that they had caught. But I digress.

It is important that wild Atlantic salmon survive, not just because of the sport and the income that they bring, but because the salmon in our rivers—each with their own discrete genetic make-up, river by river—are part of our natural heritage. I commend NASCO's work to the Parliament.

17:18

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing the debate. It is as if history were repeating itself: not only are we back in the Hub, but I recall that in my first speech on Atlantic salmon, back in 2000, my first comment was to welcome the new minister to her portfolio. The minister has been round the houses, but she is back in 2006, and we are discussing Atlantic salmon again.

I pay tribute to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation and to the Atlantic salmon, which is the king of fish and can be seen as part of Scotland's identity. That is why it is appropriate that NASCO is based in Scotland. When I visited Pictavia in Angus, I discovered that the Picts had carved salmon on 18 of their most important stones in Scotland. Of course, the salmon is also part of Glasgow's coat of arms.

The protection of salmon first appeared in legislation back in the 11th century and was first recorded by the previous Scottish Parliament in the 13th century. That is a tribute to Scotland's long association with the Atlantic salmon.

The Scottish Parliament has a responsibility to do what it can to protect our freshwater fisheries and the Atlantic salmon in our rivers and in the seas for which we are responsible, not only because of salmon's economic role—thousands of jobs depend on angling—but because of its environmental importance. Good healthy wild

salmon stocks indicate high environmental quality. Of course, the Parliament passed the Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Act 2001, and I hope that some of the measures in that legislation are partly responsible for the good news in today's press that the River Tweed has recorded its third-highest volume of salmon since records began. I should point out that the 2001 act contains other such provisions.

In the near future, the Government will introduce the long-overdue and much-called-for aquaculture and fisheries bill, which will address the important issue of non-native species in Scottish rivers. Many people have been calling for action on that matter to ensure that we protect the integrity of native Scottish stocks, such as the Atlantic salmon. The bill will also address parasite eradication although, as Maureen Macmillan pointed out, it will not deal with the antiquated dog's breakfast that is wild-stock management in our rivers. That said, the Government's consultation paper contains important and welcome suggestions, such as our taking an holistic approach to fisheries management on our rivers—including, perhaps, the introduction of whole river-system management—and bringing together the management of coarse fishing and other fishing.

I agree with Maureen Macmillan that we must drop the elitist tag that attaches to salmon fishing and that we must increase access for the people of Scotland; after all, it is their heritage and should not be the preserve of rich people who either happen to be riparian owners or who can afford permits. That has to form part of our consideration of the new management system, which must be developed as soon as possible. Many people wanted the Scottish Parliament to modernise such things: we have been around for more than six years, so we must start getting to grips with those issues.

As for NASCO, we need to work internationally because the only way to protect wild salmon is to protect migration routes. At this point, I should mention the legendary Orri Vigfússon, who is associated with the very active North Atlantic Salmon Fund. I realise that the fund itself is controversial, because its work is based on a tradition of people with lots of money buying out nets.

We welcome the limited measures that have been taken around the Faroes, Greenland and other countries to cut down on mixed fisheries, because such activity damages the Atlantic salmon that is making its way to Scotland or other countries. We must also give more attention to research to get to the bottom of the migrating salmon's marine phase and find out what influences the state of stocks.

Like other members, I pay tribute to NASCO's work. It is great that the organisation is based in Scotland; indeed, as a Scottish National Party member, I hope that one day many international treaty organisations will be based here. At least we are making a start with the king of fish—the Atlantic salmon.

17:23

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing a debate on one of Scotland's national treasures: the salmon. At this point, I declare an interest as the owner of a one-sixth share of a fishing syndicate on the River Awe.

When I joined the Scottish Parliament in 1999, there was a real fear that the Atlantic salmon was declining to the point of extinction or, at any rate, to such low numbers that wild river and loch fisheries would become unsustainable, which would have been a major disaster for rural Scotland. However, after 200 years and despite the huge catches that can be made on Russia's Kola peninsula, despite the exciting and rewarding fishing in the rivers of Iceland and despite the monstrous salmon that can sometimes be captured in Norwegian rivers, Scotland still holds the prize for being best for salmon fishing because of the quality of its expertise in practical fishing management, the romance of its beautiful scenery and the Highland hospitality that goes along with the sport. Some Scottish ghillies are the fifth generation in their families to be ghillies and have no equal in the fishing world. Their knowledge is simply huge.

Scotland and salmon are synonymous and now Scottish salmon fishing is improving once more. However, there is still much to be done. Before I say anything about NASCO, I want to pay tribute to the man who got it all going, Orri Vigfússon. This Icelander, who knew all about salmon and recognised the peril that the species was in, persuaded not only Governments to sign treaties and part with money; he also persuaded an endless list of private individuals—including me—to part with money to buy out netters and to do something practical to save the king of fish for future generations. This man has given so many hours of his life to, and done so much for, salmon. Quite frankly, he is a giant.

There have been other giants who have helped, including Lord Hunter and his colleagues, who wrote the extremely well-informed Hunter report in the 1960s, and Lord Nickson and his colleagues, who produced the salmon strategy task force report, which contained 69 sensible recommendations to help our wild stocks of salmon and sea trout. I do not know how many of those recommendations have been implemented by the Executive.

I hate to introduce a slightly sour note, but the only real blot on the landscape is Jack McConnell's refusal to add Scottish Executive money to the kitty that was used to buy out the east coast drift nets. That was a scandal, considering that most north Atlantic Governments involved—including the UK Government—and huge numbers of organisations and private individuals chipped in, and considering also that most of the fish that were saved were going to Scottish east coast rivers. I and many other Scots found it highly embarrassing that the Scottish Government failed to support that measure.

Scottish angling and tourism bring in substantial money, and can extend the tourist season in areas such as the Tweed valley, Tayside, Deeside, Helmsdale and Strathnaver, and on rivers such as the Halladale, the Borgie, the Cassley, the Oykell, the Carron and the Shin, to name but a few. A survey in the Western Isles a few years ago showed that angling brings £5 million to £6 million into the economy of that area alone. Salmon and trout fishing can greatly extend the normal tourist season, which produces a huge return for hotels, clothes shops, tackle shops and petrol stations.

Angling produces considerable sustainable employment in remote areas, so I am glad that wild-angling interests and salmon-farming interests seem to be getting closer to living together in sustainable co-existence. Many of the meetings and talks that are currently taking place between organisations such as the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards and the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts Scotland have been instigated by fish farmers who have a responsible attitude. It is important that those talks be translated into practical measures. Work on the land and the waters will improve lochs, rivers and spawning areas and a code of good fish-farming practice will help to end the scourge of sea lice and discourage diseases and escapes of farmed stock, which can harm our wild fish and their gene pools.

The Scottish Executive failed to support NASCO over the east coast drift nets, but it is not too late: it could make up for that by putting pressure on the Irish Government to stop illegal drift-netting off the Irish coast and between Ireland and Scotland, which would help our west coast rivers. The Executive could also create a single regulating body for the fish-farming industry, so that fish farmers would no longer have to be entangled by the red tape that is produced by the nine different organisations that presently regulate them. Those are measures that the Executive could take to help NASCO and to help Scotland's wild fisheries. I commend the work that has been carried out by NASCO in the past, and I wish it more success in the future.

17:28

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank Maureen Macmillan for bringing this important topic to the chamber for debate. Richard Lochhead has already reminded us of the good news that we read about in *The Scotsman* today: Tweed salmon-rod catches are at their third-highest level since records began. That is good news, but we have to contrast it with a story in *Scotland on Sunday* recently, in which we read:

“Wild Atlantic salmon stocks will be wiped out within decades because of interbreeding with escaped farmed stocks”.

It can be difficult at times to make sense of the two different pictures, but they are just two facets of a highly complex issue that we need to understand better. NASCO has a key role to play in helping us to do that.

To be honest, it is quite amazing that there are any salmon left at all, because most salmon species are in rapid decline. This anadromous fish, which makes incredible journeys from oceans to rivers, has always had the odds stacked against it, primarily because of the length of its migrations and the huge and varied predation pressures that the fish face at all stages of their life cycle. Despite that, the salmon species are incredible and have survived for millions of years until now, when many of those populations face extinction. There are many possible reasons for the decline, but I suggest that all of them are man-made. They include overexploitation of fishing, loss of habitat and the agrochemical and aquaculture industries. New research has shown that a single exposure to a commonly used agricultural chemical during the juvenile freshwater phase of the Atlantic salmon damages their gills and reduces their survival at sea by 40 per cent. Those pressures are real—they are in the environment and are affecting our salmon stocks.

Despite that, there is evidence that on the east coast the salmon stock is fighting back and returns over the past few years have been good. However, on the west coast, the wild populations are declining at an alarming rate. Unfortunately, that decline correlates well with the relentless growth of sea-cage aquaculture, which is often sited on the migratory routes of wild fish. The most significant cause of the demise of the salmon on the west coast has been the growth of parasitic sea larvae that are released from farmed salmon. Juvenile post-smolt salmon and sea trout have to swim past farmed salmon to reach the ocean. Some fish have been found weakened, with more than 1,000 lice on their bodies. If we combine that with the danger that is posed by agrochemicals and other pressures that exist in the environment, such fish have very little chance.

We must continue to acknowledge that there are problems with aquaculture, such as those of chemical and nutrient pollution. As was reported in *Scotland on Sunday*, every year millions of fish that escape from farms interbreed with wild fish, thus diluting the genetic strains that have developed over millennia. There are signs that the industry is reducing chemical inputs; I know that some companies have been co-ordinating fallow periods on some sea lochs, but we must pay attention to the industry's own code of practice, which says:

"It is important that fin fish farming continues to operate within the capacity of the receiving environment and minimises interaction between farm stocks and wild fauna."

There are ecological limits, which we ignore at our peril.

NASCO is doing its best to protect and save the salmon, but it is powerless to make its voice heard above the intensive and powerful lobbying from the agrochemical and aquaculture industries. We call on the minister and the Executive to give NASCO the resources to fund the research to provide the evidence that we need if we are to continue to save the salmon.

17:32

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): I thank Maureen Macmillan for securing the debate, which is welcome, and I extend my congratulations to NASCO on the 21st anniversary of its establishment. NASCO's work has been immensely important and I hope that the organisation goes from strength to strength in the future.

Before I proceed, I record my recent appointment as president of Kelso Angling Association. I assure members that that is a non-pecuniary appointment that cements a long-term relationship with the association. It has been mentioned that there has been a welcome increase in the number of rod catches on the Tweed—I must record that I was not responsible for any of that increase.

Angling adds value to the economy of the Scottish Borders. Other members have referred to other parts of the country, but according to the most recent estimate that I have seen, angling brings £14 million annually to the Scottish Borders' economy and is responsible for about 350 full-time equivalent jobs. That demonstrates the scale and importance of the activity, which we wish to ensure will continue in the future.

I have three specific points about salmon conservation. I understand that the fish in each river system have distinctive genetic characteristics. The work of the Tweed Foundation has shown peradventure that there is a distinctive

gene pool for the salmon that enter the Tweed. Salmon's genes allow them to find their way back to specific rivers—their gene pool is what enables salmon to understand where they must run. If we degrade the gene pool in any way, the homing instinct that is associated with a particular river will not continue in its present form. It is therefore important that we limit the number of escapees from fish farms because such fish interbreed with wild fish and degrade the gene pool.

However, we must also be extremely careful about where we locate fish farms. Not long ago, there was a proposal to locate a smolt-rearing facility in the Ettrick valley: Norwegian fish-farmed salmon smolt were to be brought over and reared in a facility adjacent to the river Tweed. The deputy minister needs to take very careful note of that proposal, although—thankfully—the development has not proceeded. The point was, and remains, that such developments adjacent to river banks bring the risk of direct escapes into the river system.

I have no doubt that the deputy minister will take away from tonight's debate all the points that members have raised. In addition to the considerations that were raised on the location of sea cages, I ask her to consider whether the Executive or local authorities need new powers to restrict the siting of smolt-rearing facilities or fish farms on land adjacent to river systems.

My second point concerns the potential threat to salmon from the parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*—those present who are anglers may be familiar with it. We need to take more measures to combat *Gyrodactylus salaris*. Thankfully, it has not yet been found in Scottish rivers, but we need nevertheless continuously to remind anglers and all those who are associated with our river systems about the danger of its reaching Scotland. If that were to happen, there would be very little that could be done to eradicate it other than to neutralise the whole river system in which it was found. It is essential that preventive work be undertaken to ensure that *Gyrodactylus salaris* never reaches these shores.

My third point concerns the important issue of investment in research. Clearly, NASCO has contributed in that regard. I commend to the chamber the work of organisations such as the Tweed Foundation, which has over a number of years studied how fish enter the Tweed river system and what they do once they are there. I commend in particular the experiments in which fish were tracked through the river system by means of radio transmitters that were inserted into them. A considerable amount was learned from that study; for example, it was found that the spring run of fish was predominantly into the Ettrick tributary. As a result, the Tweed

commissioners introduced a voluntary catch-and-release system, which has been immensely effective in ensuring the continuation of the important spring run on the Tweed. That voluntary input of the local angling associations made a considerable difference to ensuring proper management of the river.

Richard Lochhead mentioned the “dog’s breakfast” that is the existing river-management system. He was right in saying that the approach to river management should be based not on part of a river but on the whole river system. However, he was not correct to say that Scotland does not have any good models of river management; indeed, I am sure that he did not mean either to say or infer that. One of those good models is the management of the River Tweed with its distinctive cross-border history. The River Tweed Commissioners is an effective organisation that could provide a model for use elsewhere in Scotland. The commission’s membership is taken from the voluntary angling associations and proprietors. People often do not appreciate that local angling associations outnumber proprietors on the membership of the commission.

I extend my best wishes to NASCO for the next 25 years of its work. As I said at the outset, I hope that it goes from strength to strength. NASCO’s contribution is immense. It aims to do something that all of us wish to achieve, which is the conservation of salmon and, in turn, the enjoyment of the salmon for future generations.

17:39

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): Like my colleagues, I am grateful to Maureen Macmillan for lodging the motion, which I take great pleasure in supporting. We should celebrate the work of NASCO, which, as members said, is the only international treaty organisation that is based in Scotland and has its headquarters in Edinburgh.

As members said, the Atlantic salmon is very important to Scotland. Not only do we appreciate the economic importance of salmon, given that salmon anglers spend more than £70 million every year, which benefits our rural economy, but we have a well-deserved, world-wide reputation for looking after our salmon resource.

In Scotland we have had a close association with salmon, salmon fishing, and salmon conservation for many centuries, as Richard Lochhead said. The first piece of legislation on the matter for which we have documentary evidence dates from 1424. The legislation concerns the need to observe the weekly close time—it is interesting to note that some things never change.

We have not been idle in the Scottish Parliament. In the short time since devolution, we

have enacted more than 20 pieces of primary and subordinate legislation that relate to the conservation and management of salmon. During the past couple of years, the Scottish Executive and stakeholders in Scotland have worked together to develop the salmon and freshwater fisheries proposals that will be set out in the forthcoming bill on aquaculture and fisheries, which will be introduced in the Parliament in the summer.

Richard Lochhead, Maureen Macmillan and others mentioned access. I am aware that there is concern that access and fisheries management will not be dealt with in the forthcoming bill. However, when I spoke to members of the freshwater fisheries forum, which represents the vast majority of anglers in Scotland, I noted a clear view among them that more work needs to be done. That is absolutely not to say that an integrated fisheries management system will not be forthcoming; it will be. Such a system simply would not be ready in time to be included in the bill. I assure members that work is on-going and the freshwater fisheries forum will continue after the bill has been introduced.

Jamie McGrigor and others talked about regulation. The regulation of the fish farming industry will be essential if the public are to have confidence in the industry, but of course we must ensure that regulation is proportionate and does not overburden the industry. We must strike the right balance.

Mark Ruskell and others referred to escapes. There is evidence that escaped farmed salmon spawn with other farmed salmon and with wild fish and there is concern about the genetic implications of that. However, it is also acknowledged that spawning success in such circumstances is low and that the survival rates of offspring might be lower than those of wild fish. The fact that the overall effect remains a little unclear means that we must listen to the science. Several members mentioned the importance of securing accurate, up-to-date scientific evidence and the Executive has commissioned work to examine the effects of location and relocation of fish farms, to assess the impact of escapes on wild stocks.

Mr McGrigor: Does the minister agree that farmers’ use of agri-environment schemes such as the rural stewardship scheme can have a helpful impact on spawning areas? In the light of that, will she ensure that such schemes and grants are maintained?

Rhona Brankin: I agree that land managers play an important role in conserving and improving riparian habitats. We will discuss such matters as we develop work on land management contracts. I acknowledge the importance of maintaining

support for land managers who do such valuable work.

Euan Robson—I nearly said Ewan McGregor—mentioned the location and relocation of fish farms. We must closely consider that issue and assess the impact of escapes on wild stocks. NASCO, in collaboration with the Scottish and international salmon farming industries, has held workshops and symposia at which location and other issues have been addressed.

Euan Robson talked about the Tweed and several members mentioned the good figures from the Tweed and rivers in the east of Scotland. We welcome those figures, while accepting that a lot of work remains to be done. I pay tribute to the work of bodies such as the River Tweed Commissioners, which plays a hugely valuable role in conserving salmon in the Tweed. Euan Robson also mentioned *Gyrodactylus salaris*, which is an ever-present threat. The forthcoming bill on aquaculture and fisheries will deal with some of the issues, but a task force has been set up specifically to consider *Gyrodactylus salaris* and will report at the end of March.

There is a limit to what any one country can do. We must remember that salmon have a fantastic life history, involving migrations of epic proportions to places such as the west coast of Greenland. Scientists from around the north Atlantic agree that the survival rate of salmon at sea is much too low. We cannot legislate for that on our own in the Scottish Parliament, or even in the UK or EU contexts. The issue is truly one—there are others—in which international co-operation is necessary. For that, an international approach by a strong international organisation is needed.

Thankfully, such an organisation exists. I am delighted that several key players in the NASCO family are in the public gallery to listen to the debate and hear the tributes. The organisation not only exists, but is based in Edinburgh. NASCO exists as a result of the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean, an international treaty that was made under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Scotland is not a signatory to the convention, but it participates fully in the organisation's work.

NASCO has an enviable reputation among fisheries organisations for getting things done. Fishing for salmon in international waters is now a thing of the past. The Greenland fishery has been restricted to a subsistence fishery for internal use and there has been no Faroe Islands fishery for several years. NASCO's contracting parties have agreed to adopt the precautionary approach to fisheries management. NASCO has developed agreements, protocols, guidelines and resolutions to address issues such as fishery management,

habitat protection and restoration, and sustainable wild salmon fisheries and aquaculture.

NASCO has a strong working relationship with the fish farming industry in Scotland and internationally in exploring ways of ensuring sustainable wild salmon stocks and aquaculture. NASCO's international Atlantic salmon research board, in which contracting parties and non-governmental organisations work together, aims to develop research programmes that involve international co-operation. NASCO works towards international collaboration in addressing the threat to salmon by the parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*, which has been responsible for the extinction of salmon in more than 40 Norwegian rivers. Obviously, we do not want it here.

NASCO has achieved a great deal. I take this opportunity to say how pleased we are—I am sure that members agree—that NASCO chose Scotland and Edinburgh as its home. We congratulate NASCO on the fine work that it has done during its childhood and adolescence and, now that it has come of age, we wish it every success for the future.

Meeting closed at 17:48.

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