

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 28 September 2006

Session 2

£5.00

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## Scottish Parliament

*Thursday 28 September 2006*

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

### Trident

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion number S2M-4864, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Trident.

09:15

**Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** It is just a little more than 50 years since we entered the nuclear age and, in those 50 years, the world has become more rather than less committed to nuclear weapons. Two such weapons were exploded in anger half a century ago but, luckily, although vast amounts of money have been spent buying and stockpiling nuclear weapons, we have held back from using them again—so far.

If we are not using nuclear weapons, why do we continue to buy them? If we continue to buy and stockpile them, why do we believe that we can continue to tell others that they should not do the same? Fifty years ago, only one country had them, but how many have them now? In truth, who knows? Currently, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China are the official nuclear weapon states because they have all signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, while India, Pakistan and Israel are unofficial nuclear weapon states because they have not signed the treaty—and that list should now probably include North Korea.

To put it crudely, the previous justification for spending money on nuclear weapons was: if we did not, they would and they might use them, so we better have them too because that might put them off. It was a small club that only a few could afford to join. The bombs got bigger, better and more expensive. They could kill more or, better still, kill lots and perhaps leave buildings standing.

If deterrence was the justification, it was a dangerous one. After all, any state could make the same argument and, if one concedes the logic, one can hardly say that it should apply only to those and such as those. However, that is, in effect, exactly what we have been saying.

That was then; where are we now? The UK Government invested heavily in Trident as a replacement for the old Polaris and what changed? The protest songs and banners had to,

but little else did. Trident has already cost the UK dear. The strategic defence review of 2004 estimated that the total cost of acquiring the Trident system was about £12.5 billion, almost all of which had already been spent by 2004. It also stated that the running cost of the Trident submarine force would average some £280 million a year over its lifetime and the then annual cost of the warhead and fissile material programme was some £400 million. About one third of that programme was directly related to Trident, while almost a third was related to costs that arose from previous nuclear weapons.

Until recently, the estimated cost of Trident's replacement was £15 billion to £25 billion. Apparently, the annual maintenance costs over the weapons system's expected 30-year lifespan were left out of the calculation of that figure. If we factor those in, it seems that the son of Trident will cost the UK something in the region of £76 billion. We never used Polaris, we never used Trident and we will never use the son of Trident, but it looks like we will buy it, despite being signed up to the non-proliferation treaty.

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** Roseanna Cunningham says that we never used Trident, but we used it as a deterrent and it worked. There were no major wars between the major countries, and Russia collapsed because of the arms race. Surely it was a success.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I apply that logic to buying shoes that then sit in the wardrobe and never get worn. I consider it a waste of money.

I want to know why we are contemplating spending such vast amounts of money on the son of Trident when we will not use it. Other members will talk about the better uses to which that money could be put, and they will be right to do so. If the Government can afford £76 billion for missiles, it can afford a few bob for job creation and diversification.

Opposition to nuclear weapons in general, and to Trident and its replacement in particular, goes far beyond any financial considerations. At its heart, the argument is a moral and ethical one. That is why the Scottish National Party motion is shorn of any sub-clauses that might cloud the issue. If members believe nuclear weapons to be wrong, they must vote for the motion, but I see from the amendments that Labour and the Liberal Democrats appear to be in favour of nuclear weapons. I say to Jackie Baillie in particular that it seems craven and cowardly to state the obvious point that nuclear weapons are a reserved matter, with the implied criticism that we should not be debating the issue despite her call for "the widest possible debate" in the country. If Jack McConnell really wants to end the cringe factor in Scottish

life, he would do well to start with his own back benchers.

With respect to those who try to have it every which way, there is no place to hide on the matter. Either the Parliament is part of the national debate or it is not, and that national debate is profoundly moral. Whom do we contemplate using the weapons against? It is surely not enough to say that we must have them as a deterrent. During the cold war, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was the target of choice. Which nation or nations now fulfil that role for the UK, or is an independent UK nuclear capability simply to be seen as part and parcel of the USA's nuclear capability at one remove? Recent international events might lead us to that conclusion, so is our target really whoever the USA decides is its target? Are we to spend £76 billion on weapons that really only exist to fit into the USA's strategic interests? Alternatively, are we really going to spend that much money to obtain a bargaining chip to use against Iran's future disarmament—assuming that Iran goes on to become another of the unofficial nuclear states—all the time arguing that Iran has no right to nuclear weapons but we do?

During the cold war, there was a deterrence doctrine known as mutually assured destruction—or MAD for short—and learning about it was like slipping into some perverse Alice-in-Wonderland world. The acronym gave away the truth of the matter. When we brandish weapons whose only purpose is mass and indiscriminate slaughter, we give up all right to preach to others about the morality of the choices that they make. I ask the Parliament to keep faith with the marchers on the long walk for peace. In particular, I ask the Labour members who had the unbelievable effrontery to go out and greet the marchers last week to keep faith with them. I ask the Parliament to keep faith with the church leaders who are calling for us to turn our faces away from Trident. I ask that we keep faith with our consciences, and I ask the Parliament to support the motion.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that there is no justification for the renewal or replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system.

09:22

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I approach the debate with a sense of déjà vu: another SNP debate, another reserved matter. I will digress for a second to point out to the SNP that, in a seminal piece of work, the Electoral Commission identified that almost 60 per cent of people in Scotland were critical of the Parliament because it spent too much time talking about issues over which it has no power. The SNP might want to reflect on that.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No. I will give a friendly warning to the SNP: the people of Scotland will soon begin to wonder whether there is any point in having SNP MPs at Westminster. Are the sorrowful six incapable of making the case there, where—let us not forget this point—the decision will be made? Let us consider that for a minute. I looked back at *Hansard* and found that Angus Robertson asked a question in December 2005. That was nine months ago. There was also a question in June 2005, six months earlier, but I had to look back to 2002 before I found anything else.

Perhaps my research is not that great, but it is interesting that, in the place where the SNP can influence matters and argue for change, it just does not bother. It prefers instead to work through this Parliament, which is not the body that will be responsible for the decision. Of course—wait for it—the SNP believes that independence is the answer to all ills.

**Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** Hear, hear.

**Jackie Baillie:** I say to Nicola Sturgeon that I am genuinely curious to know whether, in a brave new independent Scotland, the SNP would view Trident as an asset or a liability in its negotiations with Westminster? Would it hang on to it for a bit in order to barter it away and trade it for something else? What would its approach be? We deserve to know, because I am not convinced that Nicola Sturgeon has thought that through. In that policy vacuum lie uncertainty and instability.

**Bruce Crawford:** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No, I will only give way to Nicola Sturgeon if she wants to answer the point.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I will ask Jackie Baillie a simple question: are weapons of mass destruction right or wrong?

**Jackie Baillie:** The point is simple: I posed Nicola Sturgeon a question but she is unable to answer it, and the record will reflect that.

I pay a genuine tribute to the many people who marched from Faslane to Edinburgh last week. Many are from my constituency and, indeed, many are party colleagues of mine. I respect their commitment to the issue. It is fair to say that many people have campaigned for nuclear disarmament over the years. I acknowledge in particular the contribution of the churches, the trade unions and many communities besides. A nuclear-free world and achieving world peace are aspirations that we all share. We may differ on how to achieve those aims, but I know of no sane person, inside or outside the chamber, who wants nuclear weapons ever to be used anywhere in the world.



It is right that there should be the fullest public debate about Trident. There are questions that need to be answered, but I make no apology for commenting about the economic impact of Faslane. *[Interruption.]* The SNP may scorn, but it is important. The 7,000 direct jobs and 4,000 further jobs in the supply chain represent one quarter of the total workforce in the Dumbarton constituency. That is a staggering number of jobs. I have been accused—*[Interruption.]* Kindly listen. I have been accused in the past of using that as an excuse for keeping nuclear weapons. Far from it—those are the facts; they might be uncomfortable to the SNP, but they are real and must be addressed. Hard politics is about having the maturity to get beyond the rhetoric and accept our responsibility to the people who work in the defence industry.

Roseanna Cunningham and Bruce Crawford are very quick to defend Ministry of Defence jobs in their constituencies, and rightly so. However, they would pull us out of NATO and throw our defence workers in Faslane and Coulport on the dole. Oh yes, I almost forgot—there is also Alex Salmond's wee, pretendy Scottish navy. It has been promised to Rosyth, but when the SNP thinks that we are not looking, it promises it to Faslane in the west. There would be only a handful of jobs.

In concluding, let me congratulate the Greens. At least they have started to recognise our responsibility to the workforce. However, their scorecard reads six out of 10, as they make the mistake of letting Westminster off the hook. I do not understand why we constantly seek to use MSPs as messengers when we have members of Parliament whom we can lobby directly. After all, it will be their decision.

I respect all views expressed in the chamber, but I will continue to argue that if we truly want to rid the United Kingdom of nuclear weapons, we have to mitigate the consequences of so doing. I will not take lessons in morals or ethics from the SNP, because people expect real action, not rhetoric and most certainly not the empty posturing of the SNP.

I move amendment S2M-4864.5, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"notes that decisions pertaining to national defence, such as any future replacement of Trident, are reserved to the Westminster parliament; notes that the United Nations Security Council plays a vital role in working for peace and security on a global basis; welcomes the United Kingdom's role within both the United Nations and NATO; notes that the General Election manifestos for 2005 of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties called for the retention of an independent nuclear deterrent; believes that there should be the widest possible debate on the future security of Scotland, the United Kingdom and the wider world, covering all options on Trident, including non-replacement; notes the comments of the UK Government that no decisions on replacing Trident have yet been taken;

welcomes the significant reductions in the UK's nuclear weapons arsenal; is committed to the goal of the global elimination of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and wishes to see the United Kingdom continue to work both bilaterally and through the United Nations to urge states not yet party to non-proliferation instruments to become so, to remain committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and to make further progress toward significant reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the major nuclear powers."

09:27

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Liberal Democrats north and south of the border have a long-standing commitment to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons on a multilateral basis while retaining the UK's current nuclear deterrent until progress has been made to that end.

Replacing the Trident system is clearly a reserved decision for Westminster, but the Liberal Democrats believe that it is vital for a properly informed public debate to take place.

**Bruce Crawford:** Including in this place?

**Mike Rumbles:** Yes, including in this place, and throughout the United Kingdom. At the end of the public debate, there must be a vote in the House of Commons on any decision made by the UK Government on whether to replace the Trident system.

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** Does the member agree that, even if we accept the distinction between reserved and devolved matters, one problem is that votes in the House of Commons are determined by members elected on the first-past-the-post system rather than any kind of proportional representation?

**Mike Rumbles:** That is the democratic system that we have. We are a democracy and must abide by its results. I know that we would all like to see proportional representation throughout the United Kingdom.

In the aftermath of last year's failure of both the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference and the United Nations summit to make any meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament, the Liberal Democrats are continuing to press the UK Government to initiate arms reduction talks. To say the least, it is hugely disappointing that, although the Prime Minister said that there would be the fullest possible debate, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, has pre-empted the debate with his recent statement making a clear commitment to replacing the Trident system.

Liberal Democrats believe that the chancellor's commitment to replacing our strategic nuclear arsenal is a huge mistake. It makes a mockery of the call for a full and inclusive debate. What is the

point of initiating debate if the Government has already made a decision? My personal view is straightforward. The UK Government should be taking real steps to initiate the removal of strategic nuclear weapons systems from the world's arsenals. What is the point of the UK spending billions of pounds on a system that could not possibly be used?

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** What is the Liberal position? Will Mr Rumbles encourage his Liberal Democrat Westminster colleagues to vote against the replacement of Trident when it comes to the debate in the House of Commons?

**Mike Rumbles:** Yes.

What sane Prime Minister would ever launch an intercontinental nuclear missile attack on another country aimed at destroying civilian population centres? That is what the weapons system is for. Mutually assured destruction always was a mad concept when it held sway between NATO and the Warsaw pact countries in the days of the cold war. It is equally mad in today's world. What sort of chancellor on the one hand condemns weapons of mass destruction held by other countries while on the other hand plans to update, improve and replace our own weapons of mass destruction?

I can envisage no circumstances—no circumstances at all—in which a so-called strategic nuclear deterrent such as Trident or a replacement for it could possibly be used. I look forward to hearing other contributors to the debate, but I have yet to hear anyone who can outline a scenario in which they would advocate the use of the Trident missile system. If the replacement for Trident is to cost the British people billions of pounds but is of no military value whatsoever, what is its purpose?

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** If Mike Rumbles does not believe that there is any conceivable military use for the replacement of Trident, why does he want to retain Trident or any other nuclear deterrent? The same criticism applies to our current deterrent as would apply to one that will not deter in the future.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Rumbles, you have one minute.

**Mike Rumbles:** Mark Ballard should pay attention to what I am saying. We believe in multilateral nuclear disarmament. We want the Government to take the initiative and use our weapons systems to convince other countries to move down the path that we want to move down.

I am running out of time, so I will close. I ask myself what Trident's purpose is, because it does not have any military value. It seems to me to be a very expensive status symbol for Gordon Brown,

who sees himself as the future Prime Minister of Great Britain.

In the great debate on the issue, which should be taking place across the length and breadth of the country, I hope that our MPs will listen to the moral lead given by the heads of the Christian churches in Scotland. I have heard criticisms of them, but this is exactly the lead that our religious leaders should be giving the nation. There can be no moral justification for the use of Trident or its successor. When the decision is taken by MPs in Westminster, I hope that our own phalanx of Scots MPs from all parties make the right decision.

I move amendment S2M-4864.3, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"wishes to see the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons; notes the UK Government's commitment, made in June 2005, to reach a decision on the replacement of the Trident system by the end of the current Westminster Parliament; further notes that the Secretary of State for Defence stated in June 2005 that 'no decision on any replacement for Trident has been taken, either in principle or otherwise'; calls on the UK Government to ensure that there is a full public debate on the issue; further calls on the UK Government to press for a new round of multilateral arms reduction talks, and believes that the United Kingdom's current minimum nuclear deterrent should be retained for the foreseeable future until sufficient progress has been made towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons."

**The Presiding Officer:** I am sorry to rush members, but we have only an hour and a quarter for the debate, and I am anxious to get everyone in.

09:33

**Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** Nuclear weapons are immoral, illegal and should have no future here.

Jack McConnell said in the chamber two weeks ago that Trident should be included in international disarmament negotiations. Jackie Baillie, the Lib Dems and the Tories also say that multilateral disarmament works. If it works, Trident will be negotiated away, so where is their plan to provide alternative employment to those who will lose their jobs, or is that they do not have a plan, because they know that their policy has failed over 50 years, is failing and will continue to fail? They do not plan for a non-nuclear future because they do not believe that multilateralism will succeed in our time.

I am old enough to remember the excitement generated by the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards' plan to guarantee jobs by phasing out that company's involvement in military production. The trade unions at Lucas spent two years consulting the entire workforce, from engineers to secretaries. The eventual plan that they produced was a response to employees' wish to spend their

time working on socially useful goods rather than bigger ways of killing people. It was based on the company's skills and equipment and on market research.

The unions took their plan to the Labour Government for support—what a waste of time. What did Labour do? Nothing. What did we lose as a result? Instead of more killing machines, the workforce suggested diversification into medical equipment, aids for disabled people, portable kidney dialysis machines, wind turbines, solar cells, heat pumps, small-scale electricity generation, energy conservation, hybrid electric cars and a road-rail vehicle. That was all back in 1976. If the Labour Government had listened 30 years ago, Britain would now be a world leader in renewable energy and not frantically playing catch-up and having to buy all its wind turbines from Denmark or Germany.

The Lucas Aerospace trade unionists were visionaries. We need some of that vision now. That is why my amendment says that we should look to the future. Let us stop throwing tens of billions of pounds into a weapons system that is aimed at a Soviet Union that does not exist. Instead, let us consider the skills at Faslane and Coulport and what future markets will need in the age of peak oil and climate change. Let us stop pouring money into misery and plan for the socially useful alternatives that a nuclear-free Scotland could produce.

Both member parties of the coalition claim to believe that multilateral talks will rid Scotland of nuclear weapons. Where is their plan for how that will happen? Where is their plan for the workforce? They should prove that their commitment is more than just mealy-mouthed words to disguise a central promise to follow the US Government across the world and to house whatever weapons of mass destruction it tells us to. If members believe that a non-nuclear future is possible, let us plan for it now.

I move amendment S2M-4864.4, to insert at end:

"but also recognises the concerns of workforce unions, such as the GMB, and therefore calls on the Scottish Executive to prepare Scotland for a weapons of mass destruction-free future by producing a plan for the redeployment of workers, such as at Faslane and Coulport, for peaceful purposes."

09:37

**Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** In presenting the motion, the SNP has hit the nail on the head. The motion makes it clear that people are either for or against unilateral disarmament. The Conservative party definitely stands in the against section. One reason why we did not lodge an amendment to the motion was that we felt that

it would be nice to have a clear debate on the issue and to consider the merits.

When I listened to Roseanna Cunningham's speech, I felt that we were revisiting old arguments that I heard in the 1990s and 1980s and back in the 1970s. I picked up an election leaflet from Sedgefield in 1983 by no less than Tony Blair, in which he condemned the Tories for considering spending £10 billion on Trident. The one difference between Roseanna Cunningham and Tony Blair is that he now has responsibility for the government of this country and for protecting its citizens. He has governmental responsibility, which Roseanna Cunningham has never tasted. Tony Blair has recognised the reality.

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

**Phil Gallie:** I am sorry, but I have only four minutes for my speech.

I have no difficulty with going along with the Labour amendment, but I will make one point to Jackie Baillie. The Government promised a debate on the issue in this session of the Parliament and I eagerly await its committing to that debate.

In her amendment, Jackie Baillie refers to "reductions in the ... nuclear weapons arsenal".

Such reductions have happened since the early 1990s. In 1993, the Tory Government got rid of the battlefield armaments, and the strategic defence review of 1998 further diminished our nuclear strike power. All that is welcome and it would be nice to think that those changes had some payback multilaterally.

One point that worries me about Jackie Baillie's amendment, and the Labour Party's commitment when it says that no decisions have been made, is that, in recent years, the budget for nuclear weaponry research at Aldermaston has flatlined. However, in the next couple of years, that budget will escalate greatly. I make no criticism of that. The Government would not be doing its job if it did not ensure that we were in a fit state to make the major decision on whether Trident is continued when the time comes. It is right that investment should be made, but we should not hide behind words.

The Liberal amendment is a bit woolly. We would all like all nations to get rid of nuclear weapons and we all wish that nuclear weapons had never been invented, but they were invented and they exist. People who say that they have not worked as a deterrent ignore the facts of history. The fact is that nuclear weapons have worked as a deterrent and have kept the major nations apart.

**Bruce Crawford rose—**

**Phil Gallie:** I am sorry; I have no time to give way as I am just about finished—I had only four minutes.

When people such as John Reid—a former communist, former supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and recently the Secretary of State for Defence—recognise the importance of nuclear weaponry to the country, everyone in the chamber should sit up and take notice.

I congratulate the Greens on their comments on economic development. I only wish that a minister with economic development responsibility were here to respond, because that would have interested the chamber. I also wish that the debate could go on longer, but it cannot, and my time has run out.

**The Presiding Officer:** Indeed, the debate cannot go on longer, but if everyone sticks to four minutes plus bonus time for one intervention each, we should—just—be able to fit everyone in.

09:42

**Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the debate. The subject may be a reserved matter, but the vote at the end of the day will clearly show Scottish voters where the current crop of MSPs stands on the issue.

Jackie Baillie's amendment is a typical fudge. Her hypocrisy beggars belief. Her speech was full of nice, soppy words, but nobody was fooled. Labour here and in the other place is morally bankrupt. After hearing Jackie Baillie's speech, I doubt whether she would recognise a moral or an ethic if it hit her in the face.

**Bill Butler:** Will the member give way?

**Ms Watt:** The outcome of the debate will be of particular interest to people who participated in the long walk for peace, whom I had the privilege of joining for part of the way. Those people were from all walks of life and backgrounds and were of all ages. They will watch the vote at 5 pm carefully.

The motion is clear and unequivocal: people are either for or agin Trident, now and in the future. There will be no hiding place, particularly for members who displayed a big flurry of support in front of the TV cameras outside the Parliament last Tuesday, one of whom hinted that she had been sent there by the First Minister.

**Bill Butler:** Will the member give way?

**Ms Watt:** Where are Margaret Curran and Cathy Peattie today? All those—except the Greens—who vote for any amendment will be seen as worms wriggling to get off the hook.

**Bill Butler:** Will the member give way?

**Ms Watt:** No, thank you.

Few dispute that the nature of world security has changed from the situation half a century ago. We have gone from superpowers and cold wars to intrastate rather than interstate conflict and from cross-border disputes to no-borders terrorism. In such situations, nuclear weapons are useless. Only Bush, Blair and their followers believe that they can bomb their beliefs on the world. Such ideologies fuel international terrorism rather than placate it. The international warfare that is perpetrated by fearless suicide bombers will be defeated not by nuclear weapons but by superior intelligence and diplomacy.

Nobody has suggested that Iran and North Korea seek to develop weapons with a wish to attack us, yet Britain—at the same time as keeping and even talking about replacing Trident nuclear weapons—tells us that those countries should not develop their own arsenal. What blinds the politicians who tell us that with their attitude of do as I say, not as I do? They must be persuaded that that superior and patronising attitude has no place in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Blair and Brown have said that they want Trident to be replaced. The First Minister's idea of using Britain's nuclear deterrent as a bargaining chip in international negotiations has been described by British officials close to the talks with Iran as stupid and completely ridiculous.

The SNP's stance on Trident has been clear and unequivocal for as long as I can remember. It is to scrap Trident and to make Scotland nuclear free. The money saved could be put to much better use. The estimated cost of replacing Trident is £25 billion—about £2.1 billion for Scotland. That could pay for new secondary schools, five new hospitals, 30 new community sport centres, 100 new doctors, 100 dentists and 200 teachers—the list goes on. The money would be much better spent in that way.

The choice next May is clear—between those who strut the international stage, increasing international terrorism with their blind arrogance, and the chance to use our resources to change Scotland for the better and to make it a haven of peace, rather than a home for nuclear weapons.

09:46

**Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP):** Never mind that it is “unacceptably expensive” at between £25 billion and £40 billion; that it is “economically wasteful” at a time when the national health service is being drained of its life blood, state education is wearing out at the knees and elbows, the building of social housing is almost at a standstill and one in three children is born into poverty; and that its presence on the Clyde makes

us one of the world's number 1 targets for terrorist attack—Trident is “militarily unsound”. Those are the words of Gordon Brown in 1984. Nothing that he said then could not be said today. The only difference between now and then is that the price has gone up, the weapons have become more dangerous and he and the Labour Party have sold their jerseys.

It is to the shame of the Parliament that the Executive refuses to turn its back on weapons of mass destruction. The minister and others may argue today that Trident is a deterrent. Is that right? If it is, why is the planet ravaged by war? If Trident is a deterrent, can other countries have it? Is it a deterrent when we have it, but a weapon when they have it, as a friend pointed out last week? As Gordon Brown pointed out—in those days, he at least looked as if he had principles—weapons of mass destruction make us a target and not a haven for peace.

The minister and others may also point to Trident as a source of employment. Jackie Baillie is wrong to make that point. As has been said, there is a multitude of areas in which workers' time, energy and skills could be redeployed. Does Jackie Baillie know that if we paid every worker at the Faslane base £40,000 per year to stay at home, that would be a lot cheaper than replacing Trident? The Executive sat back while workers in the public sector—hospital workers, civil servants and council workers—lost their jobs, but there was no rush to plough millions into it to create and protect jobs. Is that not hypocrisy?

A couple of weeks ago, Carolyn Leckie, Frances Curran and I spent hours—in some cases, days—on the long walk for peace, which was an amazing event. I congratulate the event's organisers and participants, some of whom are here today. The walk took us through housing schemes and communities. Anyone who took part in it will have noted people's warm response, their understanding of the issue and their desperation to get rid of nuclear weapons. On housing schemes up and down Scotland, people are making the connection. They understand that they do not have new housing, but they do have weapons of mass destruction.

The Parliament needs to speak out. It is no excuse to say that this is a reserved matter and that the big boys did it and ran away. The Executive could speak up if it had the will to do so. Perhaps the First Minister could write a reference for those of us who are arrested for protesting against the war and WMDs when we next appear in court.

**Phil Gallie:** Will the member give way?

**Rosie Kane:** I am sorry, but I am in my last minute. The member did not give way during his speech.

If he had the will, the Minister for Transport could bar the supply of parts for and the maintenance of new weapons via our roads and railways. He has the power to do that. If the Parliament wanted to respond to the needs and demands of the people of Scotland, it would speak up and show courage, to make this country a place in which we understand peace and not weapons. Why is it that when anyone else has something like Trident it is a weapon, but when we have it it is a deterrent? Let us scrap Trident and make this country a place where we talk about peace, not war.

09:50

**Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It strikes me that the length of the Labour amendment is in proportion to Labour's embarrassment on the issue. I congratulate Phil Gallie on his honesty—at least the Tories do not hide behind half a page of verbiage.

During the cold war, there were two positions—pro-nuclear, because nuclear weapons were a deterrent, and anti-nuclear, for all the reasons that Roseanna Cunningham has laid out. It is not provable which theory was right, although Phil Gallie thinks that it is. Those of us who were teenagers during the Cuban missile crisis remember spending an anxious couple of days waiting to find out which theory was right. However, at least during the cold war our conditions for using the deterrent were clear—once the Russian tanks crossed the West German border, the clock had begun to tick. Now they are not clear. The Trident boats still patrol the oceans, although we are told that launch directions are not programmed into them. As Mike Rumbles asked, when would we use them? Whom do they deter by sailing the oceans? No one dares say.

We are informed that we are in the midst of a war on terror, but what act of terrorism has Trident ever stopped or will it ever stop? The previous deterrent strategy was dependent on rationality—the idea that both we and the Soviets would act rationally. However, even if nuclear weapons could ever work as a deterrent, they do not work with those who do not act rationally, such as rogue states. When did North Korea last act rationally? Terrorists who obtain nuclear weapons—suicide bombers writ large—will not act rationally. The deterrent argument simply does not work for the most likely source of a nuclear attack in this day and age.

Faced with that unpalatable fact, the Government must come up with another argument to justify spending £25 billion on replacing Trident. As the First Minister said at First Minister's question time a couple of weeks ago, Trident is now a negotiating tool. If it were brand spanking

new, were just out of the showroom and had a lifetime of 30 years in front of it, one might be able to argue—although I would not agree—that it could be used in negotiations. However, it is not—it is obsolescent. The submarines are almost past the end of their useful life. If we keep Trident, it will have to be replaced and the decision to replace it will have to be taken this year, because of the lead time for such orders. If members were on the other side of putative negotiations and knew that their opponent's bargaining chips were literally wasting away on the table in front of them, what would they do? They would sit tight and call their opponent's bluff. They would tell them to spend £25 billion on renewing their deterrent—and defence programmes never come in on budget—before agreeing to negotiate. Obsolescent Trident is not a negotiating tool.

What about a new Trident? I do not subscribe to the notion that it would be an efficient bargaining tool anyway, but are we really going to spend £25 billion or more on a new bargaining tool? Is that really the First Minister's position? Is that the best thing that we can do in Scotland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with our share of £25 billion? I presume that even Labour members do not sign up to the idea that all the money comes from England to subsidise the valuable nuclear deterrent that we have on the Scottish coast. I do not believe that the people of Scotland think that that is a good use of our share of the money or of the United Kingdom's expenditure of £25 billion. We should not go down that road.

09:54

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (Sol):** As has been outlined, the arguments against nuclear weapons are both numerous and compelling. There is not just the moral argument that it is absolutely repulsive for us to have a weapons system that literally can destroy the lives of millions of ordinary citizens; there is also the fact that nuclear weapons do not discriminate between combatants and non-combatants in any dispute and destroy those lives in an indiscriminate manner, which makes them illegal. That is why the International Court of Justice declared that nuclear weapons—not just their use but their possession—are illegal and why the continuing protests against the Trident weapons on the Clyde are justified.

There is also the financial argument. Members mentioned the figures only a couple of times, but it is important that we do so more often. The replacement of Trident would not cost £25,000 million; there would be a commitment of £76,000 million to replace and maintain Trident over the next 30 years, according to figures from the House of Commons. The choices that must be put to the

people of England, Wales and Scotland during the next six to 12 months are, "Do you want to commit £76,000 million to improving pensions and removing the means test? Do you want to commit £76,000 million to uprating the minimum wage to make it a decent living wage? Do you want to spend £76,000 million over the next 30 years on a return to free education and grants for people who study, or do you want to invest £76,000 million in the most expensive scrap metal in the world?" Let us make no bones about it: the use of nuclear weapons would signal the end of our planet. Let us use the economic argument and spend the money on improving the quality of life and living standards of all our citizens, not on nuclear weapons.

The debate is more and more tied up with the movement for independence. Jackie Baillie and others say that the weakness in our argument is the fact that decisions are reserved to Westminster, but that is the strength of our argument. As we approach the historic 2007 Scottish Parliament elections, people who are committed to peace and want nuclear weapons to be removed from Scotland must realise that all the political parties in Scotland that are committed to independence are also committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. In other words, if people want to vote for peace next May, they must vote for a party of independence. The movement for peace and the movement for independence are more integrally linked than they have ever been.

Instead of a planet that spends £561 billion on weapons and only £32 billion on feeding the world, let us have a planet that spends money on feeding the world. Let us have a planet that spends money on creation, not destruction.

09:58

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):** I am privileged to take part in the debate.

Where do the Russians, the Americans, the French or the Israelis keep their nuclear weapons? Ours are in Faslane. During the cold war, I was terrified to death to think that everyone knew that our weapons were housed at Faslane. Russian nuclear weapons were targeted on Faslane 365 days a year.

After the first world war, people talked about lions led by donkeys. The MOD is the ministry of donkeys—I am talking not about the politicians but about the civil servants and the military people who drive them on and tell them what to say. The civil servants are so thick that they cannot face the reality that the cold war is over. It is a dead cold war. It no longer exists. In a pathetic attempt to put down an uprising of terrorists, the MOD has sent troops to Afghanistan, where 250,000 Russian

troops tried and failed for 20 years. So much for the ministry of donkeys.

I will tell members why we will renew Trident. We will do so because our good Prime Minister, Mr Blair, said to George Bush, "George, you might not have peerages to sell for your election funds, but you can recompense manufacturers of weapons of mass destruction." Do members remember talk of weapons of mass destruction and the untimely death of Dr Kelly and all the rest of it? The threat of WMDs was laid out daily by the Prime Minister, but there turned out to be no such weapons in Iraq. However, there are weapons of mass destruction at Faslane, which are a constant threat to us.

I have said before in the Parliament that an attack on Faslane by terrorists would wipe out the central belt of Scotland. If three or four lady pensioners can make their way into Faslane and wander about for four hours, we can imagine what the security must be like down there. However, the ministry of donkeys seems not to worry about that sort of thing; it just ploughs on.

I grew up in a world that was free of nuclear weapons. I was 15 in 1945 when the bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. During the war, we thought that that was great, but as I grew up and understood the damage that the nuclear weapons had caused when they wiped out two conurbations in Japan, it made me a convert to and a great believer in CND.

I am appalled by the absence of Labour Party members in the chamber. I did not leave the Labour Party; the Labour Party left me. The Labour Party that I knew was strongly in favour of doing away with weapons of mass destruction. It is a sad indictment of the party that its members are not present to stand up for what is right, in the way that they were brought up to do, and call for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We must not renew Trident; it is a farce.

**The Presiding Officer:** We are back on time. We move to wind-up speeches.

10:02

**Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green):** Roseanna Cunningham opened the debate by saying that the motion gives members no place to hide. She was wrong, which is sad, because we have witnessed a desperate attempt by the Labour Party and in particular the Liberal Democrats to find a place to hide, although they have been presented with a clear moral choice: should we replace Trident or not?

Phil Gallie made his position clear. He is an old cold warrior who believes in the nuclear deterrent and would like to retain nuclear weapons. His

moral position is unambiguous and I respect it. However, from Jackie Baillie, and in particular from Mike Rumbles, we heard a lot of words about the long walk for peace and the people throughout Scotland from religious communities and every walk of life who oppose nuclear weapons. Mike Rumbles talked about the immorality of nuclear weapons and the nonsense of using them in any military context. However, the Liberal Democrat amendment states:

"the United Kingdom's current minimum nuclear deterrent should be retained for the foreseeable future until sufficient progress has been made towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons."

The Liberal Democrats propose that we wait until everyone else has given up their nuclear weapons before we get rid of ours. They cannot foresee a future without nuclear weapons.

**Mike Rumbles:** That is a travesty of what I said. It is obvious that the member was not listening. Our amendment refers to the current system; it does not talk about replacing the system. That is absolutely clear, as is my position. I will vote for the SNP's motion—if we ever get there and the Tories and the Labour Party do not combine to defeat it.

**Mark Ballard:** However hard Mike Rumbles tries to hide, the Liberal Democrat amendment is clear: it does not foresee a future without nuclear weapons and it wants to retain them, despite all of Mike Rumbles's good, strong arguments that they make no sense.

Alasdair Morgan laid out clearly why the negotiating strategy of Mike Rumbles and others who support the notion of multilateral disarmament simply will not work in practice.

**Bill Butler:** Does the member accept that thousands of Labour Party members and trade unionists are against the renewal of Trident? The way to convince Westminster MPs is by persuasion—as in the Greens' logical amendment—rather than by the abuse that is coming from some members of the SNP. Party-political sectarianism will not work.

**Mark Ballard:** I am not going to respond to any party-political sectarianism, but I respect Bill Butler and many people in the Labour Party and the trade union movement who have been unequivocal in retaining their opposition to nuclear weapons and supporting nuclear disarmament—unlike the First Minister.

Chris Ballance was right: if people believe in multilateralism and doing away with these illegal and immoral weapons, they should be planning a future for Scotland that is without weapons of mass destruction. The fact that the people who promote this multilateral nonsense do not believe

it in their heart of hearts is indicated by their failure to plan in that way.

Multilateralism has not worked for the past 50 years, but South Africa has unilaterally disarmed and Ukraine has unilaterally disarmed. I look forward to a future in which the UK and Scotland join that list. Unilateral disarmament is the only way we will be able to get rid of these illegal and immoral weapons. Let us take that step. I urge members to support the SNP motion and the Green amendment.

10:07

**Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD):** I am pleased to restate Liberal Democrats' views on the Trident missile system: we believe in the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons and we are clear that the Trident system must form a part of multilateral arms reduction talks. As Mike Rumbles said, we see a key role for the UK Government in bringing about such talks.

Last year, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference failed. We believe that that was the cue for leadership on the international stage by the UK Government. Instead, what we got was a series of mixed messages from the UK Government. In June 2005, the Secretary of State for Defence said that no decision had been taken on the replacement for the Trident missile system. In February, the Prime Minister told the Liaison Committee of the House of Commons that there would be the "fullest possible parliamentary debate". However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer then appeared to pre-empt such a debate by saying that Trident was to be replaced.

**Bruce Crawford:** Will the member confirm that the Liberal party will vote in favour of the SNP motion, if we reach a vote on that motion?

**Euan Robson:** Mr Rumbles made his own position clear.

It is hard to understand the haste with which the UK Government seems to wish to proceed to a decision on replacement. In June 2006, a House of Commons Defence Committee report on the future of the UK strategic nuclear deterrent apparently stated that no binding decision needs to be made before 2014. Alasdair Morgan's point that the obsolescence of the system degrades its potential within multilateral talks is not as strong as he believes.

**Bill Butler:** When the debate occurs in the House of Commons, will Euan Robson take the opportunity to persuade his Liberal Democrat colleagues to vote against the renewal of Trident? Yes or no?

**Euan Robson:** Yes, I will certainly take that posture and seek to persuade my colleagues, as Bill Butler will hear.

It would be entirely acceptable for this Parliament to be involved in a national debate; I see no reason why we should not be. The debate would inform the public of the key questions. Precisely against whom is the current system targeted or would a replacement system be targeted? I find it impossible to answer that question. Is the current system truly and fully independent, and would a replacement system be? The current system is clearly not truly and fully independent. Does the public really want a system that is dependent largely on the involvement of the United States?

What will be the impact on jobs and what are the alternative plans if there is to be no replacement? Those questions will need to be addressed.

What about the cost of a replacement system? Many members have referred to a range of uses for the sums of money involved. Of course, one can extrapolate over a period of time and say how many hospitals, teachers and so on could be funded with the resources. However, the figure is not the £15 billion to £25 billion of the initial cost; as Mr Sheridan has said—and the figure comes from the House of Commons itself—the figure is £75 billion or £76 billion over a 30-year period. That is the true cost, and there would have to be a public debate on how the British people want to spend it. I think the answer would be that they would not wish to spend that sum of money on a replacement system.

One alternative has not been discussed in this debate: there are alternative military uses to which the resources released could be put. For example, the United Nations is failing to respond to the crisis in Darfur. The money to replace the Trident system could be devoted to a far more comprehensive and outstanding peacekeeping effort around the world.

10:12

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** This is our second debate on Trident within a relatively short period of time. We have heard many good speeches this morning, displaying passion, commitment and principles. This is an issue on which individual views must be respected and properly understood. The existence of these hideous weapons of destruction is a matter of disquiet to those who wish to keep them as well as to those who do not. Safety issues—let alone all the others—are of enormous importance.

It is of considerable interest that, at one time, Mr Tony Blair, Mr Gordon Brown and Mr John Reid were all believed to be strong supporters of the



Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but no longer. I note in particular a speech from Gordon Brown on June 21. As he may be Prime Minister-in-waiting, the Parliament is entitled to know what he said. He supported

“a stability founded on our strength to make the right long-term decisions, a sense of national purpose in protecting our security in this Parliament and in the long term—strong in defence, in fighting terrorism, upholding NATO, supporting our armed forces at home and abroad, and retaining our independent nuclear deterrent. In an insecure world we must and will always have the strength to take all necessary long-term decisions for stability and security.”

That implies a presumption, at least on the part of the chancellor, that Trident will be renewed or replaced.

Unfortunately, we cannot destroy the knowledge that led to the production of nuclear weapons. However, we can and do support multilateral disarmament. That is why we supported a test ban, the non-proliferation treaties and other policies to that end, all with a view to reducing tension in the world.

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I am interested in the member's comments. Is he aware that the technology to turn Trident into a coercive weapon with warheads capable of accuracy within metres is already being pursued by the US and UK Governments? That would make Trident a first-strike weapon. I ask whether the member supports that, because he will be supporting it if he supports replacement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am totally opposed to the idea of a first strike in any context. I am well aware that technology has marched on a great deal, as the member says. However, it should be borne in mind that the existence of the Trident deterrent during the cold war meant that there was no hot war between Russia and western nations and led to a considerable reduction in the number of nuclear bombs in America and Russia.

I am extremely surprised that the First Minister has suggested that Trident should be used as a negotiating pawn in discussions between Britain and Iran. That is especially surprising, given that Labour's defence white paper stated:

“the continuing risk from the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the certainty that a number of ... countries will retain substantial nuclear arsenals, mean that our minimum nuclear deterrent capability ... represented by Trident, is likely to remain a necessary element”.

I suggest that such a complex issue will not be resolved by a knee-jerk reaction to a current problem. If the First Minister cannot persuade the British Government on that point, he is unlikely to persuade us.

As I said in the debate on 4 May, I challenge those people who wish us to give up our nuclear

weapons unilaterally with an unanswerable question: who would follow our example?

I have two final points. To eliminate wars, the participation of our country and others in the work of the United Nations will be invaluable, because at the United Nations countries that are in dispute can back off without losing face. If Trident has to be renewed, as I suspect it will, it should be done on the ground that it is a regrettable necessity. We support the Labour amendment.

10:16

**Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** Unlike some people in Scotland, whom Jackie Baillie referred to in her speech, I welcome the opportunities that the Parliament has to discuss non-devolved issues. Some of the best debates that we have had have been on matters on which we cannot legislate, but on which we have the right to express our views. The potential replacement of the Trident nuclear missile system is one such issue. It is just a pity that the Scottish National Party would rather play cheap politics with the subject than give us the opportunity to express our views on it properly. It is an absolute joke that the SNP believes that an issue of such magnitude can be reduced to a discussion of little more than an hour.

Although I recognise that small businesses deserve to have issues that affect them debated in the Parliament, I must ask how the SNP expects us and the Scottish public to believe that it considers nuclear proliferation to be a matter of vital importance when it splits its debating time between consideration of the threat of world obliteration and discussion of strategies for the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises. However, we know that rather than being about ensuring that we have a debate about nuclear missile replacement, this morning's charade is about cheap point scoring and trying to shut down such debate.

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Michael McMahon:** I will not take any interventions from the SNP because it has not given us enough time to discuss the subject, although I am happy to indulge in point scoring.

I ask the SNP what we would spend the money that we would save from scrapping nuclear missiles on. The party's spokespeople have a wish list of spending commitments that would make Santa Claus despair. Alex Salmond tells us that he would have the money spent on eradicating world poverty. One would think that, after that, there would not be much change left from the £2 billion that is Scotland's pro rata share of the cost of Trident replacement, but not a bit of it. From press

releases, we know that the SNP wants the money to be spent on saving the Scottish regiments, diversifying defence, investing in raising benefits, ending pensioner poverty, improving the national health service, investing in Scotland's children, improving our water system and building new roads. *[Interruption.]* SNP members can clap, but they cannot spend the money more than once. Once the money has been spent, it is gone—that is basic economics. The SNP does not understand that that is an important part of the debate on Trident.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Does the member not agree that £76,000 million might just cover spending on the items on the wish list that he has just read out?

**Michael McMahon:** We are talking about what we could spend in Scotland, which is not £76,000 million. That is the amount that the SNP would require to spend to meet all its commitments.

The problem with the SNP is that in spite of its constant demands that there should be a debate, it wants us to agree to motions that would prevent us from taking part in such a debate. According to the SNP, we can discuss the issue only so that we end up agreeing with it and then end the debate there. I want nuclear disarmament. I want the threat of nuclear annihilation to be removed from our planet as soon as possible but, unlike the SNP, I want to consider frankly all the options that would allow us to get to that position, which include bilateral and multilateral disarmament.

I moved from a unilateralist to a multilateralist position during the 1990s. I remember from the debate that took place at that time the old adage that those who want to go alone can always start today, but those who wish to travel with others must wait until the others are ready. That strategy led to nuclear weapons reduction and was successful.

As we look ahead to whether we should replace Trident, I am once again inclined towards unilateralism, but the issue is not as simple as the SNP would have us believe. I want to engage with others in an honest debate and to take on board arguments both for and against unilateralism. I do not want such an important issue to be treated with the contempt that the SNP has shown for it in this morning's truncated debate, which is not about preventing the replacement of Trident, but about headline grabbing and constitutional wrangling. I want a genuine debate—that is why I support Labour's amendment, which seeks to allow that legitimate debate to begin.

10:21

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Last week, we witnessed the culmination of a fantastic effort by everyone who was involved

in the long walk for peace. Like other members, I thank the organisers and the people who took part in the march for ensuring that the campaign to make Trident history was given new life and for providing an appropriate backdrop to today's debate.

In the aftermath of the march, the marchers sent all MSPs a message in which we were reminded that we have been elected to serve the people of Scotland. I hope that all of us will always remember that. The message also said:

"As an MSP you can play a critical role in eliminating the scourge of nuclear weapons. If the Scottish Parliament took a stand against any replacement or upgrade of Trident, you will send a strong message to London and the world that there is no place for nuclear weapons. The responsibility to reflect the conscience of the people of Scotland has not been reserved to Westminster."

We wanted to have the debate so that we could reflect the conscience of the Scottish people and concentrate on the strategic, ethical, moral and legal rationale for not replacing Trident. On the whole, we have managed to achieve our aims.

I make a simple invitation to Michael McMahon: bring on a Scottish Executive-initiated debate any time, any place, anywhere. It can be held in Executive time, whenever the opportunity arises. The reality is that Labour members do not want to be embarrassed because they have all changed their minds on the issue. When I heard Michael McMahon say that he changed his mind in the 1990s, I wondered whether having his conscience removed was part of the vetting process that he went through to become an MSP.

**Phil Gallie:** I suggest that Michael McMahon's conversion came with Labour's inheritance of government. Responsibility changes minds.

**Bruce Crawford:** As I said, I think his conscience was removed.

Jackie Baillie's amendment refers to

"significant reductions in the UK's nuclear weapons arsenal".

There may have been a reduction in the overall payload, but everyone who looks at the facts will realise that now that the Trident submarines have 48 warheads and a much greater capacity to target, they are more effective than any weapons that we have had in the past. That is the reality.

I will take no lectures on jobs from Jackie Baillie, when Labour has been responsible for the loss of 2,500 MOD jobs from Scotland since it came to power.

**Jackie Baillie:** Is it not the case that under an SNP Government, we would lose them all?

**Bruce Crawford:** Instead of spending £5 million a head on the jobs of the people who are involved

in work on Trident, we would use the money to create a heck of a lot more jobs than exist at present.

At this stage in UK politics, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to influence the outcome of the debate on whether Trident should be upgraded. What do I mean by that? As we are all too aware, the British Labour Party is in the process of replacing its leader and, as a consequence, the UK will have a new Prime Minister. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the next Labour leader and Prime Minister will be a Scot: Gordon Brown. While I accept that he has committed himself to the continuance of the UK's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, I believe that if we in this Parliament were to vote against that, he could be persuaded to alter course.

Why do I believe that? I do so because he has already altered course. He did not always believe, as he does today, in the need for the UK to maintain WMD. Indeed, so opposed was he that, as Rosie Kane alluded to, he said in the House of Commons on 19 June 1984 that Trident was

"unacceptably expensive, economically wasteful and militarily unsound."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 19 June 1984; Vol 62, c 188.]

I believe that his arguments were right in 1984 and that they are even more valid today.

I also believe that Labour members, who were elected to this Parliament to serve and reflect the conscience of the Scottish people, can play a critical role. I wonder about Bill Butler in that regard. Was he struck off the Labour list of speakers in the debate because his views are too strong to be heard in the chamber? At the end of the long march for peace, I saw a number of Labour members outside the Parliament join others to greet the marchers on their arrival here. The role of those Labour members in securing a majority vote in Parliament against the replacement or upgrading of Trident is paramount.

The people who took part in the long march and the majority of the people of Scotland, who believe that there is no strategic, ethical, moral or legal rationale for the UK retaining Trident, are hoping, nay praying, that Labour members will vote with their conscience at decision time. Today, with Labour members' help, the Parliament can make history by voting to bin the bomb and make Trident history. In doing so together, we can begin the process of deconstructing the arguments of those who want to usher in a new period of WMD in the UK.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I agree with the terms of the SNP's motion and, if we get to it, I will support it. However, does the member think that the political posturing that is coming across the chamber from the SNP will

persuade other members to support the motion? Is the posturing not simply designed to do the opposite and to prevent people from supporting the SNP's position?

**Bruce Crawford:** If Elaine Smith had been in the chamber for the whole debate, she would perhaps be aware that all the political posturing is coming from the Labour side of the chamber. If she wants to be able to vote for our motion, it is clear what she must do: she must vote against the hypocritical position that the Labour Party has adopted.

I do not know how many members want to do the same as me. I want to be able to say to my grandchildren that I was part of an historic debate in the Scottish Parliament that said enough was enough and signalled the beginning of the end of Trident on the Clyde. Members should vote with their conscience and vote for their grandchildren and those to follow.

## Small Businesses

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4863, in the name of Jim Mather, on small businesses.

10:29

### **Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):**

I am here to move the motion and to debate the Scottish National Party's commitment to optimising the Scottish economy and Scottish living standards. I will consider specifically what we will do for small businesses, because they are the key drivers that help to grow our economy and sustain local communities. Crucially, they are rooted in Scotland. In short, the viability and success of small businesses dictate the vibrancy of Scotland.

What we propose recognises that the key factor in any plan for the perpetual improvement of an economy and for ensuring the vibrancy of our small businesses is constancy of purpose. That factor is absent from the current Executive's track record. We have had rhetoric on economic growth, but we think that such growth has been triggered largely by the success of our economic case around the boardrooms and committee rooms of Scotland. All we have had from the Executive is Jack McConnell originally hiking business rates above the prevailing United Kingdom level and then doing the same with business water charges, leaving Scotland with a development blight and a development bottleneck right across the country.

Belatedly, we have had some reversing of those hikes, but it is not enough. Unlike the current Executive, our constancy of purpose is real. We want the power to make Scottish business more competitive to create the vibrancy, jobs and true prosperity that Scotland needs. Today, we are signalling what we will do with the existing powers and independence to encourage people to invest their capital and their lives in Scotland, while highlighting the total impossibility of converging on other countries with only a subset of the powers, motivation and rewards that are available to them.

We must create the wider conditions for growth if we are to get higher growth, increased affluence, population growth and more people in work, which we crucially need. Today, we will spell out exactly what we will do to increase the viability of small business in Scotland. Specifically, we are tabling our small business bonus scheme, which the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland warmly welcomes. Under that scheme, I, along with 119,999 other small businesses, will be taken out of the business rates net, while another 20,000 businesses will be better off. We are also announcing a further reduction in red tape and

overheads because small businesses will have to apply for the scheme only every five years, to coincide with revaluation.

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** I read the member's paper on a better deal for business and had his proposal costed at circa £184 million gross and £155 million net. Where will that money come from?

**Jim Mather:** I suspect that, as usual, the minister's costings are amateur and sell us out. He has probably not considered charitable relief, rural rate relief, which is already in place, relief for businesses with a combined rateable value of more than £20,000, the lack of relief for chains of businesses and empty premises and so on. However, much more important, he has forgotten that if Scotland was running its own economy, the £122 million—40 per cent of the increase in gross domestic product—would percolate back to us. He is ignoring the potential for higher growth and the fewer failures that would ensue.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jim Mather:** I will in a second, but I have just got to nail this one more time.

In essence, what we have is a Government whose own attempt at producing business rate relief with a link to research and development has totally failed. It was not checked with the European Commission, the Inland Revenue or the Executive's own legal opinion. The minister should get his facts right before he comes at me.

**Murdo Fraser:** If I understand Mr Mather correctly, he is saying that there would be further economic growth. However, that is predicated on further constitutional change. Is he telling us that if a new, SNP Administration came into office after next May, it would have to delay implementation of its scheme until we had further constitutional change?

**Jim Mather:** I advise Murdo Fraser to read "The Making of the Celtic Tiger" and to go in particular to page 284 and read about the impact of signals. When we make a signal—a declaration of intent—people make investment decisions and move forward. I read the Conservatives' press release yesterday and I am shocked that the former party of business has totally capitulated. We are carrying that banner and moving business forward.

Of course, we want to do other things and we will make other signals. We want to lower corporation tax and business burdens, as we announced today, and begin an era of infrastructure and skills improvement, which needs to be driven by independence. That strengthens our case and moves it forward. It will create a new

positive attitude in Scotland and it signals the death of the zero-sum mentality that assumes that Scotland cannot grow. Scotland can grow and move forward. People are coming to that conclusion right, left and centre. Even Sir John Ward has concluded that 1.7 per cent trend growth is inadequate and we need 3.5 per cent.

That requires radical change, which our proposals would put in place. We are persuading more and more people that we can end the era of relative decline that has lasted all my business lifetime and enter an era of perpetual improvement in which the personal and national economic cakes get progressively bigger. That is what has happened in Ireland. Charlie McCreevy's simple adage is that, for a country to become more competitive, it should invest in skills and infrastructure and get more and more people into work—the rest is detail. That process will trigger economic vibrancy. That insight recognises the prerequisite of economic power and the social and democratic imperative of dealing with low life expectancy and population decline, such as we have in Scotland.

We can match what Ireland is doing, because we start from a better place. We have better infrastructure, better and more universities, stronger industry sectors and fantastic natural resources. We have everything that Ireland has, except the cider, plus everything that Norway and Switzerland have. It is important to have national objectives to drive change, and the minister does not have such objectives. The ones that we have include becoming one of the top 15 most competitive countries in the western world; matching the average growth among small European nations of 4 per cent per annum; and reversing population decline by attracting and retaining people so that the population grows at 3 per cent per annum. We want to focus on the fact that true prosperity is shared prosperity that motivates everyone.

We can start that process by energising small businesses and giving an important signal or declaration of intent that Scotland will grow and prosper. That is needed urgently. Since 1997, growth here has been at least 30 per cent below that in the UK, even if we accept that gross domestic product is a good measure for a branch economy, which it is not. The wages gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK has widened by £1,500 per head. That is if we accept the crazy system in which the annual survey of hourly earnings ignores those who work fewer than 18 hours a week. We also have lower life expectancy.

All those issues must be addressed. The only way forward is to make a start, which is what we are doing today—our proposals would be a fillip for small businesses. We welcome the FSB's

endorsement of our proposals and the demise of the Tories as the party of business.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the critically important role that small businesses play in delivering economic growth and local services and confirms the need to deliver specific tangible measures to bolster the competitiveness of Scottish small businesses, such as the SNP's recent Small Business Bonus Scheme which would result in 120,000 small businesses being freed from the burden of business rates, and also recognises that, in implementing such schemes, it will help to increase the viability of individual small businesses and contribute to creating the growth that would allow Scotland's living standards to converge on the higher living standards enjoyed elsewhere, thereby encouraging yet more small business start-ups, creating many more jobs, widening the tax base, increasing local economic vibrancy and improving local services and confidence across Scotland.

10:37

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** I could not agree more with Jim Mather that the key to our future prosperity is a successful economy. He is absolutely correct that an economy that is populated by successful businesses drives economic growth. In Scotland, we have in place an excellent business environment and a support framework that works for Scottish firms, the majority of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. The Scottish economy has performed well. The growth in GDP in the year to quarter 1 of 2006 was 1.9 per cent, which is above our long-term annual average. Our most recent quarterly growth rate of 0.5 per cent is the strongest first-quarter performance for the Scottish economy since 2001.

As we all know, the labour market continues to perform exceptionally well, with more than 160,000 Scots having entered employment since the creation of the Scottish Parliament. Employment levels are at their highest since quarterly records began. Of that growth, 40 per cent has come from jobs in small businesses.

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** How does the Executive intend to close the drastic gap that exists in expenditure on business research and development between Scotland and the rest of the UK and our European Union competitors? Unless we fill that gap, we will not move on the economy as we should be doing.

**Allan Wilson:** I largely agree with the thesis that underlies Bruce Crawford's point. As he probably knows, we have a range of support mechanisms for businesses in Scotland, including the small firms merit award for research and technology, or SMART; support for products under research, or SPUR; SPUR plus; and the small and medium-sized enterprises collaborative research

programme, or SCORE. All those measures seek to boost industrial research and development and have been successful in that objective.

The Executive's internationalism is no longer an optional add-on but a fact of economic life. In 2004, small businesses accounted for £2.2 billion of all Scotland's exports. I presume that members accept that we do not and cannot control global factors, but we have considerable powers to influence growth, build prosperity and grow entrepreneurship. Total early-stage entrepreneurial activity—TEA—in Scotland, as measured internationally, was 5.8 per cent last year, which is the highest that it has been since 2000.

**Jim Mather:** Does the minister accept that, in large parts of rural Scotland, TEA is boosted by the fact that people are in what I call subsistence self-employment—they have no other option but to start a little business?

**Allan Wilson:** We want to ensure that earnings rise with inflation, which is why we introduced the minimum wage to protect people who are at the lower end of the earnings scale. On TEA, Scotland has moved up from the bottom of a league of 15 comparator countries in 2000 to being in the third quartile of a group of 23 comparator countries in 2004. That real progress in total early-stage entrepreneurial activity in Scotland is not an accident; it has come about not by mistake, but because of the policies that we have pursued.

To give another example, Scottish corporate statistics show that the number of small businesses in Scotland has risen from 226,510 in 1999 to 264,660 in 2004. Those new small businesses employ an additional 32,640 people in Scotland. That is 32,640 people in work in small businesses who were not there in 2001. Small businesses in Scotland now employ 760,000 people. That is real progress, involving real people in real jobs in real and growing small businesses here in Scotland. Those businesses have an encouraging turnover of about £52 billion.

I have mentioned some of the positive aspects of our support for small businesses. We have seen small business growth and an increase in total early-stage entrepreneurial activity, with a consequential growth in employment. However, as the devolved Government in Scotland, we are determined to provide further incentives to improve business competitiveness. An important part of that is to demonstrate, wherever possible, that we take account of businesses, big and small. As members know, we have listened to small businesses. Since 2003, about 70 per cent of non-domestic subjects in Scotland have benefited from a rates reduction of up to 50 per cent through the small business rate relief scheme. We have

devised a scheme that assists small businesses significantly with paying their rates bills.

Of course, small businesses—indeed, all businesses—in Scotland benefit from our decision to reduce the business rate poundage by 1.2p this year. We are determined to build on that to ensure that Scottish businesses achieve and maintain a competitive advantage in relation to their counterparts in the rest of the UK. That is why we have announced our intention to go further in April 2007 and cut the rate poundage again to the level in England. My ministerial colleagues and I will continue to stress to the business community that we look to them to take full advantage of what is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by investing the savings in the future prosperity of Scotland. We want to make the best of Scotland, to create more wealth, employment and small businesses and, by doing so, to create the type of Scotland in which we all want to live.

I move amendment S2M-4863.2, to leave out from "critically important" to end and insert:

"central role that small businesses play in delivering both economic growth and local services and welcomes the success that the Scottish Executive has had in supporting the growth in the total employment and overall number of small businesses and new business start-ups in Scotland since 1999; welcomes the benefit that small firms gain from a range of grant schemes that encourage the development of new products and processes, the creation or safeguarding of jobs and becoming more energy efficient, and also welcomes the Executive's Small Business Rates Relief Scheme that results in around 70% of non-domestic rate subjects in Scotland receiving rates relief of up to 50% and the decision to equalise the poundage with England from 1 April 2007, which demonstrates our determination to deliver the right conditions for all businesses to grow by encouraging yet more small business start-ups, creating more jobs, widening the tax base, increasing local economic activity and improving local services across Scotland."

10:44

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

It is to the credit of the minister that he almost managed to keep a straight face as he talked proudly about the reduction of business rates, when it was his First Minister who increased them.

I am grateful to the SNP for giving us the opportunity to discuss the future of the small business sector. We should remember that the great majority of businesses in Scotland are small ones. Recent figures suggest that about 93 per cent of Scots companies employ fewer than 10 people. Those firms are the bedrock of the economy and have a crucial role in growing the economy, providing jobs and boosting town centres and local economies. Despite their importance to the economy, it is obvious that small businesses are among the most vulnerable of enterprises. They are far more likely than larger

firms are to suffer the ill effects of Government regulation or an excessive tax burden. It is therefore essential that the state does all that it can to make the business environment for small companies as competitive as possible and steers clear of policies that will stunt their development. The record over the past 10 years has been poor. We have a much lower level of business start-ups than in the United Kingdom as a whole and the lowest three-year business survival rates in the UK. According to the labour force survey, the number of self-employed people in Scotland is now 7,000 less than in 1997. The picture has not been a rosy one.

I agree with Mr Mather that we should consider reducing the rates burden for small businesses. Comparatively speaking, they feel the burden of rates more than larger enterprises. Up and down Scotland, in small towns and villages, we see the depressing sight of empty shops because the rates burden often makes it uneconomic for a small or growing business to take them on. Some alleviation of the burden of rates on those properties would be welcome and would provide a boost for town-centre economies.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** What is the Tory policy on business rates these days? How does the Tory party intend to reduce the burden of business rates? What will be the Tories' manifesto commitment?

**Murdo Fraser:** Mr Neil will find that out when we publish our manifesto. *[Interruption.]* We will announce our policy in due course. I could have asked Mr Neil that same question a month ago and he would not have been able to tell us. The problem with the SNP's proposal is that it lacks credibility. The SNP says that it has costed the scheme at £150 million, but from recent parliamentary answers it is clear that it would cost £150 million to abolish rates just for companies with a rateable value of less than £8,000. As the SNP's scheme is much more generous than that, I wonder whether it has a problem with the arithmetic somewhere.

Another problem with the SNP's plan is that there is no indication of how it is to be funded. For the second time in two weeks, the SNP front bench is showing remarkable generosity. Two weeks ago, it promised to spend billions wiping out student debt and replacing student loans with grants for all. Today, we have another pledge: to spend at least £150 million reducing the rates burden on small businesses. Perhaps next week we will hear another pledge: to double the state pension, or to build 100 new schools or 10 new hospitals. However, we have not heard one word from the SNP on how that largesse will be funded. Where is the money coming from? When I put that

question to Mr Mather earlier, he did not have an answer. Now he does.

**Jim Mather:** The answer is this: when we produce our manifesto, Murdo Fraser will see our position. I guarantee that John Swinney will have the books balanced. That is how successful countries do it. People adopt what works, and this party is adopting what works. Watch this space.

**Murdo Fraser:** I look forward to seeing the huge tax increases that will have to be proposed to pay for all those commitments. I was mocked by Mr Neil a moment ago for saying that he would have to wait until he sees our manifesto. Now the SNP is using the same defence.

Where the SNP's credibility really runs into the sand is on its proposals for a local income tax. The great majority of small businesses are unincorporated and pay income tax rather than corporation tax. A total of 240,000 Scots are registered as self-employed in Scotland and all pay income tax. Every one of them will be hit hard by the introduction of a local income tax. Every penny of their profits is deemed as earnings and will be taxed at the local income tax rate. A reduction in business rates would directly benefit small businesses that occupy premises, while doing nothing for small businesses that operate in people's homes, for example. However, all small businesses would be hit by local income tax rises. What the SNP gives with one hand it would take away with the other. It may pretend to be supporting small businesses, but when we consider the full picture, what it is proposing is quite different. The overall effect of the SNP's proposal is no more than a smash-and-grab raid against hard-working people in small businesses up and down the land.

Small businesses are suffering from the high level of rates that they are paying and would undoubtedly benefit from a reduction in their bills. Any proposal that is not properly costed, for which we have no idea where the money is coming from, and that will be coupled with a local income tax that will claw back any savings, is not the way forward.

I move amendment S2M-4863.1, to leave out from "confirms" to end and insert:

"believes that there is a need for government to create a business environment which will improve the competitiveness of Scottish small businesses; further believes that any detailed proposals to reduce the business rate burden for small businesses should be properly costed and the source of such monies identified; notes the impact of excessive regulation and poor levels of investment in infrastructure on the capacity of small businesses to grow; calls on the Scottish Executive to bring forward policies to create a more business-friendly environment in Scotland, and notes that the introduction of a local income tax as proposed by the SNP and the Liberal Democrats would

directly penalise hundreds of thousands of unincorporated small businesses throughout Scotland."

10:49

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I too thank the SNP for securing this debate. It has been interesting to listen to Jim Mather—a businessman of some distinction and repute—telling us his thoughts about the future economy of Scotland. There are perhaps not as many businessmen in public life as we would like; indeed, I cannot think of any party leader who comes from a business background such as that of Jim Mather. That said, I fear that Jim Mather has been listening to some of his colleagues a touch too much. Without wishing in any way to emulate Murdo Fraser—God forbid that I should; I concede that that would be fatal—there is the point about where the money will come from. We look forward to John Swinney's books, which we shall crawl over with a large magnifying glass. Last week, we heard about all the money that will go to students; there is at least a big question mark about how those figures stand up.

**Alex Neil:** I remind the member of the commitment given by his leader, Nicol Stephen, to a 2p reduction in income tax, which is within the power of the Parliament. Where will that be funded from?

**Mr Stone:** We can have great fun crawling over each other's books. Our figures are there for examination; we await the SNP's with interest.

The economics that we hear about are based on the idea of a fiscal surplus. We need detail on that. Where is the long-term security? We cannot base it on oil stocks. I will return to that matter. Population has increased and the economy is growing steadily, but we still have to work out the costings. We need more precision on the tax situation, which perhaps we will get when John Swinney brings us the fully costed proposals. On 12 January 2005, Jim Mather—seen by many, including the Scottish media, as being somewhat on the right of the SNP—pledged the trickle-down style economics of cuts to business rates to let the economy grow and to redistribute wealth. He said:

"The stark facts are that we need to set more competitive rates on taxes, business rates and water charges, and leverage our oil wealth and other advantages."

One week later, my good friend Christine Grahame took the socialist line and said:

"We can tackle Scotland's poverty only if we have the economic power here. Members have differences over how far that economic power should go, but those differences run throughout the parties."

What is important is what she went on to say:

"We need to raise taxes and redistribute the wealth in Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 2005; c 13601.]

The everlasting growth argument does not enjoy huge support. Brian Ashcroft of the Fraser of Allander institute said that growth of around 2 per cent

"is the lot of most mature economies large or small. Yes, the Irelands, South Korea and China of this world are growing significantly faster. But, for them it is about a 'catch up' from a low level of development, which will not be sustained."

**Jim Mather:** Can the member tell the difference between raising taxes and raising tax rates? We can raise taxes by generating economic growth. That is the objective.

**Mr Stone:** I have to say to my good friend Jim Mather that, as he enters an election period, being clever with words is not the way to persuade the electorate, who want to know how much of the stuff in their pockets will be wheeled out by a future Government.

There are two points that we must address, away from the political argy-bargy. One thing that is certain is that the price of oil will continue to rise steadily. We may not like it, but that is probably an economic reality. I see Mr Mather nod in agreement. For small businesses, therefore, the issue of energy becomes ever more crucial. That is a challenge for the Executive as much as for every other party. I am talking about microrenewables. How do we encourage small businesses to go down the route of small wind generators and solar panels? That is one thing that they can do to tackle the problems that we will surely face.

Finally, no debate about business would be complete if I did not mention one of my favourite subjects—

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** Cheese.

**Mr Stone:** It is corporate social responsibility. The linkage between business, the future of our young, and empowering our best and brightest needs to be made. Until this moment I have not mentioned any dairy products whatever.

10:54

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I will come to Jamie Stone's quip shortly. I wish to approach the subject from a social justice point of view by considering the blight in our town centres, referred to by Murdo Fraser, and the impact on communities of boarded-up shops and the expansion of charity shops, which are exempt from rates and some of which sell goods in direct competition with local retailers. That has a knock-on effect: pavements are not maintained, streetlights do not work, shopping trolleys lie



broken and there is graffiti. The impact on the heart of the community is one of disintegration. There can be a domino effect: one shop goes, another shop goes and so on. Communities often feel that there is no way for them to retrieve the situation.

There are examples in my constituency, and I will start with Galashiels. Thankfully, it has recovered somewhat in recent years from the body blow of mill closures and the plundering by Viasystems. It is by no means out of the woods yet, however. The small shops adjacent to my office on Bank Street come and go, sometimes within months. The onward and upward expansion of Tesco and the arrival of Sainsbury's will add to the pressure on locally rooted shops providing local jobs.

The result of such supermarket sweeps is even more apparent in Penicuik, whose town centre is the despair of many of the town's inhabitants. Buildings are not only boarded up; they are literally falling down. Pavements are unkempt and the square is blossoming with "to let" signs. The town's development trust, crime prevention panel and community council are all trying to do their bit, despite the fact that the local authority appears to have little regard for the community, as witnessed by the closures of leisure centres and so on. Without support, the small businesses that provide jobs in the local economies and communities in which they are rooted will have an uphill struggle.

There is no conflict between Jim Mather and me on this—his business rates proposals are practical and crucial to the balance sheet of small businesses. I have in my hand a list of 122 Penicuik businesses—I am also working on various areas of the Borders. Those businesses would save a total of £151,500 under Jim's proposals. Some, I admit, would save as little as £59 per annum, but others could save up to £3,500. That sum alone would give oxygen to businesses on the brink and to those that wish to consolidate or, even better, expand.

As for the alleged cost, I will express that from a different perspective. Job creation, health, the well-being of communities and crime prevention are sometimes not easy to cost, yet we know that when a community thrives there are fewer police patrolling the streets, fewer people go to their doctors for depression and fewer people feel isolated and develop illnesses. That is what the impact could be. As we all know, the cure for many ills is a decent, well paid job.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You have one minute left.

**Christine Grahame:** In that regard, no one can do better than someone in a local business. That is why I commend Jim Mather's proposals.

**Allan Wilson** *rose—*

**Christine Grahame:** I am sorry, but I have only a minute left. I would have taken the minister's intervention otherwise.

Members have mentioned raised taxes. Yes—the tax base would be increased, and more people in the community would pay taxes into the system for everyone else. That is what I mean by it. Any idea of a division between us is not correct. I like Jim Mather's metaphor of bigger cakes—I am for bigger cakes, and we both agree that they shall be more equitably divided. That is Jim's recipe for the economy, and it is my recipe for social justice.

10:58

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** On Christine Grahame's last point, we must recognise that we have only one size of cake. The cake cannot get any bigger—it is the size of the slices that needs to be changed.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on the subject of small businesses. They are the bedrock of the Scottish economy, with no less than 99 per cent of Scottish businesses classed as small and medium-sized enterprises. More than half of Scottish jobs are in the SME sector. With SMEs constituting such an important part of the Scottish economy, we might think that the enterprise agencies would be falling over themselves to support and nurture them. It is clear, however, that Scottish Enterprise is far more interested in wooing inward investment and attracting big-name companies. We know the rest: they come and invest here, they enjoy the grants and perks and, as soon as the novelty has worn off, they vanish, leaving us worse off than before.

In an age of increasing globalisation when jobs, commodities, money and services pay less and less attention to national boundaries, we believe that the only way to build a secure, stable economy is to relocate. For that to happen, we need to place small businesses at the heart of any economic strategy. How do we go about supporting this vital part of our economy? We need to ensure that SMEs are able to compete with larger businesses on a genuinely level playing field. That means amending business rates in such a way that the larger players cannot fiddle the system to their benefit. It means changing the planning system so that the larger players cannot manipulate it. It means moving towards a system that puts people before profits.

While we are on the subject of business rates, I was interested to hear that the Liberal Democrats have come round to our way of thinking and adopted a policy of land value tax to replace business rates. I look forward to their adopting some of our other core green policies.

We need a more effective business gateway system—one that does more than simply offer advice when businesses are starting up. We need gateways to follow through with long-term, on-going advice. We need them to be able to support the increasing number of social enterprises that are springing up throughout Scotland. It is heartening that so many entrepreneurs recognise that there can be more to a business than profit. The wider social benefits are just as important.

For a healthy mixed economy, we need to ensure that bigger businesses do not abuse their market clout and buying power and wipe out smaller businesses. In the grocery market—we heard descriptions of the situation from Christine Grahame—we need much more effective regulation and a tougher code of conduct, with an independent regulator. Otherwise, more and more small shops and local high streets will be killed off by aggressive competition from supermarkets. That is already happening, and the situation cannot go unchecked.

It should not be a question of either/or. We need to recognise the vital role that small businesses play in the Scottish economy. We ignore them at our peril.

11:02

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** Like many colleagues, I know that there is a commitment across parties to ensure that small businesses grow and develop, not just because they help their local economies, as was described in the last speech, but also because of the substantial role that they play in the Scottish economy. That is why I welcome the Executive's commitment in the years since the creation of the Scottish Parliament to investing in skills and education as key drivers to ensure that the quality of the people we recruit for businesses is of a range and level that allows us to maximise the opportunities for those businesses to grow—whether those businesses are small, medium-sized or large enterprises. I recognise the work that has been done to invest in the knowledge economy and in the transport and planning frameworks over the past few years, by which we are trying to address the concerns that have been raised at all levels of both small-scale and large-scale business, ensuring that we develop a more business-friendly approach.

I will not concentrate on the figures that have been produced so far by the spokespersons for the Executive and other parties. Suffice to say that small businesses play a critical part in the Scottish economy, £2.2 billion-worth of Scottish exports being associated with small businesses.

There seem to be three fundamental issues. First, how do we improve productivity? I agree with Jim Mather that that must be done, but we probably have different perspectives about how best to do that. We could do it in what I call the stable framework of the United Kingdom, working in partnership with our largest economic partners, or we could take the risk, as Jim Mather argues we should, of going down the route of independence and separation, which he thinks would make economic growth more powerful. I do not agree with that. Those are legitimate areas of disagreement, but we need to amplify these debates over the forthcoming period so that voters have a clear choice of their direction of travel.

The second issue is the burden on businesses themselves. That is why the small business rate relief scheme has been welcomed by the small business community throughout Scotland. There will surely be debates about enhancing that scheme and improving and refining it, but I do not think that anyone can disagree with its principle. We have listened and learned from that debate in recent years, irrespective of what previous positions people might have taken in it. People can develop different positions. There was a noble time in Alex Neil's career when he was an economic researcher for the Scottish Labour Party, and he was a very good economic researcher. Unfortunately, however, he took a wrong turn around 1976, and his expertise has been lost to the Labour movement. That is a great regret not just to me, but to many people in Scotland.

I turn to the third, most fundamental, issue. We have had an interesting debate. Jim Mather's motion does not mention independence. It talks about how to help small businesses—a noble objective.

**Bruce Crawford:** Frank McAveety is obsessed with independence.

**Mr McAveety:** It is not me who is obsessed with it.

Funnily enough, although every speaker from the SNP has said that we can deliver real change for small businesses only if we can get independence, no one was brave, courageous or committed enough to include the word "independence" in the motion. If we cannot use the word in a motion, how are we to believe that it can be delivered in reality?

In the past month, commitments have been made by the SNP that would dwarf the commitment that it has made on small businesses, although even that pledge is a big one. A sum of £150 million is a reasonable figure; in terms of an economic assessment, it is probably reasonably well within the ball park. However, taking that sum

away from the culture and sports budgets would halve the amount of money that is available to those two critical areas of economic growth in terms of tourism and hospitality. If the SNP makes a pledge, it must demonstrate where that money will come from.

In this debate, we have heard about what I call transitional nationalism. If Jim Mather were to launch a new national soft-drink product, it would come in a can, it would have a saltire on the front, it would contain a fair amount of hot air, it would lack a wee bit of sparkle but, if not handled with care and if it went through a period of significant turbulence, it would cause significant damage. That new product would be called "independence lite". It strikes me that we cannot take a risk with that product.

In *The Scotsman* today, Ruaridh Macdonald, of Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, talks about what he has learned from the growth of that great hospitality and tourism business. He says:

"Growing a business is done by the quality of people and product."

If we get those two elements right we will make a real difference to the Scottish economy. Business rates relief will help, but the two critical areas are the quality of staff and what we want to sell. If Jim Mather can get that right, he might be in with a shout.

11:07

**Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):** In the previous debate, the SNP came in for some criticism for raising an issue that, apparently, had nothing to do with the Scottish Parliament and was more to do with independence. Yet, in this debate, Frank McAveety has spent the best part of his speech criticising us for raising an issue that is within the competence of the devolved Scottish Parliament. For heaven's sake, the Executive parties should get their arguments consistent for the space of one quiet Thursday morning in the chamber and should decide what the line of argument will be against the SNP.

**Allan Wilson:** I did not understand that from Frank McAveety's speech. The gist of what he was saying was simple: where does the £150 million that the SNP proposes to spend on small business rates relief come from?

**Mr Swinney:** I will answer that question in the course of my speech but, with the greatest respect, I must say that that is not the point that Mr McAveety was making.

**Mr McAveety:** Would Mr Swinney allow me to amplify my point?

**Mr Swinney:** I gave way to the minister for a pointless intervention, so I will not let Mr McAveety

make what would probably be another pointless intervention.

Shiona Baird, who is not in her seat just now, said that the argument was not about the cake getting any bigger, because it cannot. What a ridiculous proposition. Scotland's trend economic growth over the past 25 years has been 1.7 per cent. If it had been 2 per cent, the cake would be bigger and if it had been 4 per cent, the cake would be even bigger still. To say that all that we can do is cut up a cake that is probably diminishing in size and not try to transform the economic life chances of the people we have the privilege of representing is to lack the ambition that the SNP has for the future of Scotland.

We have also been criticised this morning by people who have said that our proposal has not been effectively costed. Accordingly, I want to inform the chamber of the comments that were made by the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, Mr McCabe, in a letter to the convener of the Finance Committee, Mr McNulty, dated 18 November 2005. He wrote:

"I would like to reassure the Committee that the decision to proceed with this commitment"

on the small business package

"was made on the basis that it had been carefully costed".

However, we find out now that the Government cannot implement the small business package that it announced to this Parliament because it breaches the state aid rules of the European Union. At a meeting of the Finance Committee, Mr McCabe told me:

"There is no connection between the costing of the project and some of the legal obligations that we have as part of the European Union."—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 19 September 2006; c 3896.]

Mr McCabe wants us to believe that there is no connection between the costing of a policy initiative and the ability to implement that policy initiative. The Government, therefore, has a brass neck to criticise even slightly our ability to cost our proposals, particularly as it has increased business rates during the past seven years—I am sure that that is what Mr Wilson was going to talk about if I had allowed him to intervene earlier. That policy, which has punished the small business community month after month, was started by the former Minister for Finance, Jack McConnell, who is now our First Minister.

I want to speak about how the proposals would be paid for. Later, Mr Neil will also speak about that and will tell us about some of the research that he has been undertaking. On that point, I would say to Mr McAveety that Mr Neil's research is of great benefit to the Scottish National Party and I am glad that we have his skills on this side of the chamber.

In the short term, the SNP intends to fund its policy commitments out of the £1.4 billion—the people's money—that is currently held by the Treasury. In the medium term, the SNP is advancing proposals that have been well trailed in the press—if members have not been paying attention, I suggest that they go and read their newspapers—and which will reduce the role and the significance of the quango state that this Government has expanded month after month since 1999, even though it promised a bonfire of the quangos. In the spending review for 2008, we will apply our priorities to those commitments. Members should not dare to come to chamber and say that the SNP is not prepared to look wisely and sensibly at its proposals and come to a conclusion.

Finally, I must comment on Mr Fraser's speech, which seemed to consist of him reading out this morning's Conservative press release—if I had known that, I would not have come to listen to it but would have just read it at half past 8 this morning, or whenever it came out.

Mr Fraser's argument seems to miss the point. Small business people who might be liable to pay the local income tax will not have to pay the council tax, which will have been abolished. If Mr Fraser cannot understand the rudimentary arithmetic that is involved, there is no prospect of the Conservative party succeeding.

11:12

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I am well aware of the importance and relevance of small businesses to the communities in my constituency. They provide small villages with shops and revitalise our town centres. I welcome the steps that the Executive has taken to support those small businesses.

I am certainly not criticising the SNP for bringing this debate to the chamber, but I think that Frank McAveety made some worthwhile points—

**Mr McAveety:** Hear, hear.

**Karen Gillon:** Cheers, Frank. Culture.

Frank McAveety talked about the fact that Jim Mather said that the SNP policy is a signal. I am disappointed that Jim Mather has not bothered to stay in the chamber to listen to the debate, given that he led it. I wanted to ask him what he meant. Is the policy a signal that the SNP would do what it proposes once we had independence, on the first day of an SNP Administration, once the negotiations between the UK and Scotland started, or at some other time? What was the signal? Are we talking about a policy or a signal? That was certainly not clear from Mr Mather's speech.

In *The Independent* today, a headline to a story about consumer debt talked about people living in "never, never land". Judging by Mr Mather's speech this morning, it would appear that the SNP now has policies designed for Never Never Land. Perhaps Mr Mather, who has just returned to the chamber, could comment on what is a signal and what is a policy.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that you are being offered the chance to intervene, Mr Mather, but I am not sure that you heard the question.

**Jim Mather:** If Karen Gillon repeats the question, I will gladly answer it.

**Karen Gillon:** Mr Mather indicated in his speech that the SNP policy is a signal. [*Interruption.*] Pardon? If Ms Robison has something to say, she should stand up and say it.

**Jim Mather:** I am happy to repeat what I said earlier. This policy is a signal to Scottish business and the Scottish population that the SNP is serious about economic growth and that, like every other country, we should invest and prepare to have that investment rewarded over time. That is the signal.

**Karen Gillon:** Can the signal be delivered through independence or through devolution? If the member is saying that it can be delivered through devolution, he has to say where the money will come from and what budget within the Scottish block will be cut to pay for it. Mr Swinney said that it would come from a fund of £1.4 billion that is held by the UK Government. Is the policy dependent on negotiation or can it be delivered through the Scottish block grant?

**Mr Swinney:** Karen Gillon criticised Jim Mather for being out of the chamber for a moment. I will not speculate about why he was not in the chamber. However, I wonder whether Karen Gillon was here to listen to my speech. I said quite clearly that the policy can be delivered within the devolved competence of this Parliament. The £1.4 billion fund that I mentioned is Scottish taxpayers' money that is held at the UK Treasury and has not been spent. It cannot be simpler than that.

**Karen Gillon:** The SNP spends that money in the chamber every week. It spent the money this morning, last week and the week before. It spent it almost singularly on writing off student debt. Any good housewife knows that they can spend only what they have got and that they cannot spend it more than once. If SNP members are saying that we can keep spending money, and spend it more than once, they are kidding themselves and the Scottish public, who will see through their shallowness.

The truth is that the SNP does not have costed commitments and has not thought through the adding up of its commitments. It is all very well to make commitments here and commitments there, but they have to be added up. The SNP cannot keep on spending the money.

I ask the minister to comment on the revitalisation of town centres, which is a particularly important issue in my constituency. How will the Executive—within the powers of the Parliament and through local government—revitalise our town centres? What direction is it giving Scottish Enterprise, as the agent for change, to do that? Frankly, Scottish Enterprise is not at the forefront of driving forward that agenda in my constituency. It is taking a back seat and is not taking on the obligations that I believe it has as the driver for economic change here in Scotland.

In my constituency, local government has taken a leading role, but Scottish Enterprise has not been at the table. I want to know what the Executive will do to ensure that that situation changes and that our important town centres are revitalised, not through a Never Never Land policy from the SNP, but through practical action by the Executive.

11:17

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** We should concentrate on what we can do to increase and improve the performance of small businesses and attract more of them. We can argue about money and rates and all that, but the Executive has introduced some good ideas, as have other bodies such as charitable trusts, and we should examine those and build on them. We should build on success—that is a good parliamentary motto as well as a good military motto.

There has been some improvement in the education world, but we need a lot more in schools and youth clubs. We should involve young people in community planning, which works well in some areas but does not exist in others. We should also involve them in training projects and instil in them the frame of mind in which they realise that they can alter things in their communities. One way of doing that is to get them involved in small businesses. We need to remove the feeling of helplessness that a great many people in our society have.

Good training projects are run by many organisations, including the Prince's Trust, Barnardo's and other youth organisations. They help young people by teaching them how to get involved in business, how to start a business and so on. Training projects are important. Often, the more difficult a youngster is, the more potential he or she has as a businessperson because of his or

her energy, bloody-mindedness and determination. In many areas young people can use those things only in illegal ways at the moment. We want to get them to start up legal businesses. If they are part of the black economy, our friend Gordon Brown does not hear from them. It is much better for young people—and older people—to be encouraged to do constructive things rather than to sell drugs to one another, which is the only outlet for many people's energies at the moment. We should encourage and harness the energies of our young people, who are potentially better than some of their older confrères.

We must also consider regulation. Everyone in our profession, wherever they go, hears that everything is overregulated, whether it is small businesses, big businesses, the police, schools, colleges, hospitals or whatever. Everyone is overregulated. For heaven's sake, can we not get stuck into tearing up a lot of the regulations? We take regulations far too seriously. A lot of them are idiotic and we should get rid of them. We are far too po-faced and we are frightened of bureaucrats and insurance people. They should be told to get lost and business should be allowed to get on with it.

11:21

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):** A lot has been said this morning about the importance of small businesses to the economy, and particularly to the economy of town centres. I agree with a lot of what has been said. It is crucial that we do whatever we can to encourage small businesses to thrive. Christine Grahame and others made valid points about regeneration of town centres. If they are to be regenerated, it will, by and large, be small businesses that do it, so they should be given every encouragement.

I congratulate the SNP on using at least part of its time today to debate small businesses. It should have used all its time to debate that, rather than for debating something that is not—and, in my view, should not be—within the competence of the Scottish Parliament. However, let us give the SNP credit where it is due for debating small businesses at least to some extent.

I also give the SNP credit for suggesting some new ideas today. Quite a lot of new ideas have come from the SNP of late. I am sure that when John Swinney told Mike Russell to "grasp the thistle" it was probably meant literally, but it has nonetheless led to a number of interesting emanations. I thought that I would look to see what Mike Russell is actually proposing, but being the prudent sort I did not want to spend money on his book, so I turned to Google, which is a helpful

source for anyone whose researcher has gone home for the evening.

First, I found a reference to "The Geochemical Origins of Life" by Michael J Russell. I knew that he was clever, but he must be seriously bright, I thought. Next, I found:

"Mike Russell; is he the last of a dying breed?"

We can only wonder. Finally, I found:

"Celebrity Circus

Mike Russell now reveals secrets he has kept for years".

There was nothing in that, either.

Eventually I found what Mike Russell had said that might interest small businesses. He was talking about a separate Scottish currency; about the abolition of inheritance tax, which will be music to the ears of many small businessmen; and about ending the bar to working with the Conservatives. I look forward to hearing what the SNP makes of that—it will be interesting.

Murdo Fraser made a number of points about the credibility of what the SNP has been saying. He made his points well, but I have to say that Mike Russell made them better. He said:

"For the SNP ... it is not enough to argue that independence will solve everything. In order to be credible ... it needs a more robust set of policies which anticipate harder times ahead and which determinedly eschew the traditional opposition solution of throwing cash at any problem".

That is absolutely right. I could not argue the point better. To be fair, Jim Mather does not mention independence in his motion, although he did talk about it in his speech.

Let us consider the costings of the SNP's small business bonus scheme, which have been debated this morning. The SNP's document "It's time to help small business" states:

"over the medium term the cost of the SBB scheme is likely to fall as more small businesses grow into larger businesses."

That is true—provided that no more small businesses are created, which I would have thought was the goal that we are looking for in the economy.

Murdo Fraser also talked about the impact of local income tax. John Swinney responded on that point.

**Jim Mather:** Is the member making the assumption that the bigger businesses will stop paying business rates? As I see it, what we suggest would make the cake bigger.

**Derek Brownlee:** It might, but we would need to see the detailed costings. What Mike Russell said seemed to be predicated on the possibility that there will be no new small businesses.

I turn to local income tax and the challenge that John Swinney made to Murdo Fraser. If council tax were replaced with a local income tax, surely small and unincorporated businesses would pay a disproportionate amount of that local income tax because they would be earning more than the average person. That suggestion comes against the background of the SNP's economic policy document "Let Scotland Flourish", which talks about cutting corporation tax.

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

**Derek Brownlee:** I do not have time.

"Let Scotland Flourish" also talks about lower business rates and says that

"While the Scottish Executive has few economic levers at its immediate disposal",

it has local business rates. It also says that it is not enough to remove higher tax rates in order to give every Scottish business every advantage. I agree, but the SNP is talking about using one of the few economic levers at the Scottish Executive's disposal to increase taxes. How on earth could that incentivise small business? It would be difficult to design a better way to hit small business hard.

We need to do more to help small business. Donald Gorrie made points about regulation, and I was glad to hear what Jim Mather had to say about that, because the burden of regulation is much too heavy. Last week, at their conference, the Liberal Democrats supported a motion to introduce targets for deregulation. That is all very good, but when we asked the same question of the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, he said that that is not policy in Scotland; it is not going to happen. We need some straight talking from the Liberal Democrats on their policy. However, the deregulation that the SNP is talking about is all very good.

Finally, I refer to Frank McAveety's points. We do not need to change our country to deliver for small businesses, but he might want to reflect upon changing the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

11:26

**Allan Wilson:** I will deal first with some of the issues that have been raised on the Executive's current small business relief scheme, which effectively targets rates relief at small businesses. We all agree that they need our help.

To address Shiona Baird's point, the current scheme is jointly funded between the Executive and larger businesses. There is a transfer of £28 million, £16 million of which comes from larger businesses and goes to help to relieve the rates of

smaller businesses. Our independent evaluation of that scheme showed that it was broadly welcomed. It means that about 70 per cent of non-domestic rates subjects in Scotland currently benefit from reductions of up to 50 per cent in their rates bills, which directly contributes to protecting small businesses in our smaller communities and helps to address the town-centre blight about which Karen Gillon and others have spoken.

By itself, however, the scheme is not the answer. If people want to know how to address town-centre blight, I suggest that they come to West Kilbride, in my constituency, which was recently named a United Kingdom capital of enterprise because of the activity of the local community. That is a good example of how the enterprise networks can involve themselves in regenerating local communities.

Amidst all the talk of cakes, I make—with the greatest of respect—a simple point to Derek Brownlee, which is that the Labour chancellor has doubled the size of the Scottish cake during his tenure.

**Derek Brownlee:** Earlier, the minister said that it was the Executive that had done all these great things for Scottish business. Will he clarify how many of the new businesses that he mentioned earlier are simply unincorporated businesses that are switching to limited company status?

**Allan Wilson:** I do not have the exact figure for that, but I would be pleased to get it for the member

**Mr Stone:** Will the minister give way?

**Allan Wilson:** I want to develop my point about the size of the cake, because it is absolutely fundamental. By their own admission, the nationalists' proposals would cost £150 million, which is a serious cut of the existing business rates income.

**Jim Mather:** If the minister looks carefully at the document, he will see that the net cost would be £122 million.

**Allan Wilson:** I have costed it at £155 million. [*Interruption.*] Jim Mather says that the total cost of the scheme would be £150 million; we will not argue over £5 million. If we were to make up the Executive funding in full, we could do so only at the expense of other programmes. That is the point that Frank McAveety made. As he said, it would mean halving our spending on culture and sport or cutting the entire rural development budget. [*Interruption.*] Jim Mather says that John Swinney answered that point but he did not.

Just last week, Fiona Hyslop spent more than £1.4 billion in this chamber, all of which makes me long for the return of the Swinney years. Bring back John Swinney as leader of the SNP, that is

what I say. At least when John Swinney was leader, the nationalists had some understanding that if the party wanted to be taken seriously as a prospective Government, it had to balance the books and match spending with saving, or raise revenues elsewhere.

**Mr Swinney:** Does the minister accept that when the Government announces a policy such as a rates relief scheme for research and development companies, it is important for it to be able to deliver rather than just to talk a good game in the chamber but find it cannot deliver in the real world?

**Allan Wilson:** Mr Swinney cannot even talk a good game in the chamber. If we cannot achieve our objectives because of potential state-aid difficulties, we do not abandon the project; instead, we consider how to deliver the objectives.

After Nicola Sturgeon's putsch and Alex Salmond's latest—and probably short-lived—stint as leader, we are going back to the bad old days. Mr Swinney promises everyone everything with no regard for how it is to be paid for.

I congratulate Jim Mather for one thing at least—his prudence. His proposals would cost only £155 million, unlike Fiona Hyslop's proposals to replace student loans with grants and write off historic debt, the bill for which would start at £1.7 billion. Either the SNP does not know how to balance the books, or it is refusing to tell us how it is going to do it. I have already given two examples of what it would have to do; it would have to cut the entire rural development budget or halve the sport and culture budget to pay for its proposals. If the SNP will not tell us how it is going to do that, it is making worthless, empty promises that will be seen through by the Scottish electorate—as they have been seen through in the past.

11:32

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** It has been an interesting debate. I particularly enjoyed Frank McAveety's speech and I totally agree with him that the quality of Labour's economic arguments in Scotland has been severely damaged by the fact that I am no longer doing its economic research. The speeches of Frank McAveety, Karen Gillon and others proved that point.

It is a great pity that our dynamic part-time absentee Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning is not participating in a key debate on enterprise. Perhaps he could come and tell us how ministers who have all the resources of the civil service behind them cannot get right a simple policy on business rates, when from day one, the civil

service advised them that they had announced a policy that could not be implemented. How can ministers therefore criticise us for allegedly not costing our proposals? How can anybody have any confidence in those ministers when they come forward with fairy-tale numbers for Fiona Hyslop's proposals on student debt or Jim Mather's proposals on business rates? They are the ministers who presided over the financial fiasco at Scottish Enterprise earlier this year. They did not even know what RAB was.

**Allan Wilson:** I bow to the member's superior knowledge of fairy tales. If Fiona Hyslop's proposals would not cost £1.7 billion, what would they cost?

**Alex Neil:** That is dead easy—£100 million. We will also have a choice about how to fund business rates, so it is a pity that Karen Gillon is not here to—

**Christine Grahame:** She is.

**Alex Neil:** I apologise to the member for missing her.

There are four ways we could fund the business rates cut. As John Swinney said, we have a balance of £1.4 billion sitting in the Treasury in London, not earning any interest. If we used that money for nothing else, it could fund our proposal for almost 10 years. Can people not do their sums? If £1.4 billion is divided by £140 million, the result is 10.

**Derek Brownlee:** I do not wish to rain too much on Mr Neil's parade, but has not the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform stated that £800 million of that £1.4 billion will be spent on the—no doubt very well-intentioned—schemes that will be announced close to the election?

**Mr Swinney:** On what will the money be spent? On what? On what?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Swinney, really.

**Alex Neil:** I suspect that the £800 million will be targeted at every marginal constituency in Scotland, but given how the opinion polls are going, the money will need to be widely spread, particularly if Gordon Brown and John Reid fight it out for the leadership. They will be tearing each other's eyes out and the SNP's position in the polls will go through the roof. We will be in a position to implement our proposals.

However, other sources of funding are also available. According to the Scottish Executive's own figures, the amount that we forgo in business rates from unoccupied business premises is actually more than the cost of our proposal. We could, if we decided, fund it through that.

Another comprehensive spending review is due next year. When we form the Administration, we will reorder priorities, starting with all the quangos in Scotland that are under the control of Labour's retirees. There is no problem about funding our proposal.

When we win the independence referendum, we will be able to fund even more. This year, Scotland will earn a record income from oil revenues of more than £12 billion. That would be a jackpot for Scotland if we had control of the oil money. We would not waste it—we would invest it in Scotland's future. As long as Scotland remains tied to Westminster, we will not see a penny of that money, just as we have not seen a penny of it over the past 30 years. Karen Gillon can be assured that funding our programme, whether under devolution or independence, will not be a problem for us.

Neither of the previous two speakers actually talked about small businesses. Among the many substantial challenges that face our small business community, one issue that has not been mentioned so far is energy prices. Is it not ironic that we who live in gas-rich, oil-rich and renewables-rich Scotland pay energy prices that are among the highest in Europe? We need to take control of the policy framework for energy prices in our country. For example, the way in which the policy of the London-centric Office of Gas and Electricity Markets is biased against small businesses in Scotland that contribute renewable energy is totally unacceptable. We need to help our small businesses to face the energy challenge.

Small businesses also face a skills challenge. In too many sectors, our businesses face real barriers to growth because they cannot get the skilled people that they need so that they can expand and grow. The Scottish Executive has no policy on skills. At the Labour Party conference on Sunday, the First Minister came up with a back-of-the-envelope policy that was not only ill thought out and uncoded, but would have huge implications for the future of our comprehensive education system.

Far from being shy about our proposals, we are proud of our proposals. Unlike the Tories or the Liberal Democrats, we have costed our proposals and we have said where the funding will come from. Unlike Labour, we can add up. The Labour Party cannot even add up. Anyone who cares about the Scottish economy must vote for our motion at 5 o'clock tonight. If our policy was implemented, Scotland would be a much richer place.



## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### General Questions

11:40

#### Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration

##### 1. Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what treatments are currently available for wet age-related macular degeneration. (S2O-10678)

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I call Andy Hughes—I mean Andy Kerr.

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr):** We were married for a fleeting moment there, Janis.

Two treatments are available for wet age-related macular degeneration: photo-dynamic therapy, which makes use of the drug verteporfin; and a drug called Macugen, which was recently recommended by the Scottish medicines consortium.

**Janis Hughes:** I am pleased that the minister mentioned Macugen. As he will be aware, research has shown that Macugen can reduce the risk of moderate to severe vision loss and can even improve vision in some cases. Can he assure me that the treatment will be readily available to those patients for whom it is deemed to be clinically appropriate?

**Mr Kerr:** The point that medicines should be used where they are clinically appropriate is important. Clearly, a clinical judgment needs to be made for the individual patient. Following the drug's approval by the SMC in August 2006, health boards in Scotland should be working to ensure that it is provided according to clinical need. Some ophthalmology departments may still be establishing their processes, but on the member's behalf I will make inquiries to ensure that the drug is in use in our health service as quickly as possible.

#### Nuclear Waste Storage

**2. Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many nuclear waste storage facilities are expected to be built in Scotland in the next 20 years and where these will be sited. (S2O-10645)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** Current plans from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority indicate that, over the next 20 years, four radioactive waste

storage facilities are expected to be built in Scotland: three at Dounreay and one at Hunterston. The authority will also conduct feasibility studies on the provision of waste facilities at Chapelcross.

As is clear from its strategy, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is conducting a review of its interim storage requirements for intermediate-level waste. The Executive, the United Kingdom Government and the Welsh Assembly Government are also conducting a review of low-level radioactive waste policy.

**Ms Watt:** Will the minister confirm that spent fuel that is now transported to Sellafield is unlikely to be reprocessed, given the proposed closure date for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—THORP—of March 2011? Will on-site storage of such material now be considered?

**Ross Finnie:** I have responsibility neither for the nature of what is done at THORP nor for how business is conducted there, but I am happy to look into the issue and advise the member. I am aware only of what we have been advised by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority in respect of its proposals for storage facilities in Scotland.

**John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** Has the minister's department received inquiries from the Scottish National Party about possible storage locations for the waste from Scottish power stations that has been stored at Sellafield over many years? Presumably, in the event of independence, such nuclear waste would be returned to Scotland as it is Scottish nuclear waste. I think that people would like to know the full costs and implications of the nationalists' programme.

**The Presiding Officer:** Representations, yes; responsibilities, no—does Mr Finnie want to add anything further?

**Ross Finnie:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. The point is no doubt of immense interest to members, but it might more properly be directed to the SNP.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** The Committee on Radioactive Waste Management report identified deep geological storage as the least worst option for legacy waste, but it also strongly advised that we need more research into deep disposal. Has the Executive pressed the UK Government on undertaking such research?

**Ross Finnie:** As was announced at the time of its publication, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Executive and the UK Government will respond to the CORWM report. When we make that response, which we will do very shortly, we will address the report's recommendations, including those on the need for further research on

deep geological storage, to which Nora Radcliffe referred.

### **Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill**

**3. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to include in the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill measures to ensure that pre-school children are served only healthy, nutritious meals and snacks at nursery. (S2O-10672)

**The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock):** All food and drink provided by local authority nurseries will be subject to the nutrition requirements of the bill. In addition, earlier this year we published nutritional guidance for all providers of early years education and child care. That guidance provides nutrient standards and offers advice on menu planning.

**Cathie Craigie:** I accept that there will be a duty on local authorities and managers of grant-aided schools to ensure that food and drink supplied in the schools meets the dietary and nutritional standards. Are there powers to extend that provision to all nursery schools—including those in the private sector—to ensure that the same standards are met?

**Peter Peacock:** The bill's specific provisions cover local authority nurseries. However, we also have powers under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 to issue statutory guidance, to which providers must have regard.

As I indicated, we issued nutritional standards earlier this year for that sector. In addition, the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education have powers to inspect all the providers of early years education. The care commission in particular will include in its inspection process specific questions about the nutritional standards of the food offered. We believe that through that mechanism we can get enough purchase in that sector to make the changes that are necessary and appropriate.

### **Glasgow (Metropolitan Status)**

**4. Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what consideration it will give to Glasgow being granted metropolitan status. (S2O-10636)

**The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon):** As the member will be aware from Mr Kerr's previous answer to this question, there is no such designation as metropolitan status in Scotland. Metropolitan status is an English term used by the United Kingdom Government.

**Ms White:** Perhaps the minister should tell that to Glasgow City Council and its ruling Labour group. The council uses the term in "Metropolitan Glasgow—A Vision for a Region" and a document that was sent to the minister and to the Finance Committee refers to metropolitan status for the city of Glasgow.

Is the minister aware that if metropolitan status or, as it is sometimes called, city status, is granted to Glasgow, council tax payers would save £150 per year on their houses? Is it not time that Glasgow was considered for metropolitan status? Will the minister take up the issue?

**George Lyon:** I am concerned that the member, who represents Glasgow, does not know that Glasgow is a city. I think that that is well known throughout the rest of Scotland.

As I said in my original response, and as Mr Kerr said in his response, there is no such thing as metropolitan status in respect of how we distribute money here in Scotland.

Glasgow receives the highest grant aid per head of any mainland authority in Scotland—£1,969 per head for this year. There is a £29 million increase in central funding this year alone and, on top of that, in recognition of its city status Glasgow received £18.1 million from the city growth fund this year. In addition, Glasgow benefits from targeted programmes such as the community regeneration fund, from which it will benefit to the tune of £124 million over the next three years. Glasgow will receive £10 million from the working for families programme over the period between 2004 and 2008. Glasgow will also receive £10 million from the vacant and derelict land fund between 2004 and 2006. The total for the city growth fund that will go to assist Glasgow between 2003 and 2008 is £76 million. Members can see that this Executive recognises the city status of Glasgow.

### **Cattle Breeds (Commercial Viability)**

**5. Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will review the effect of recent regulatory changes on the commercial viability of those cattle breeds whose meat is typically best after 24 months. (S2O-10630)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** The European transmissible spongiform encephalopathy regulation classifies vertebral column as specified risk material and requires its removal from bovines aged over 24 months. The Scottish Executive supports and is leading the United Kingdom's efforts to have that age limit raised and the European Commission has asked the European Food Safety Authority for an opinion on the matter.

**Alasdair Morgan:** As the minister knows, there is a real problem for butchers who specialise in slower maturing beef breeds, such as the Galloway. There is also a knock-on effect on the breeders of such stock. There is some indication of effects on market prices for that kind of beef. Has the minister, or his department, undertaken any investigation into price movements and can he give us a timescale for when we may look for the 24-month limit to be replaced by a 36-month limit, which was originally in place?

**Ross Finnie:** As I said in my first answer, the overall European position was a 24-month rule and it was difficult to upset that as part of the negotiations to get beef exports reinstated. We must consider the whole picture. However, I take Alasdair Morgan's point. I am sure that he is aware that, following our representations on behalf of the industry to the Food Standards Agency, it recommended that we take up the derogation that allows butcher shops, which I think are the traditional retailing outlet for such beef, to be authorised by local authorities to remove vertebral column from 24-month-old to 30-month-old cattle. I appreciate that difficulties are attached to gaining that authorisation, but nevertheless that facility exists. In the interim, the trade should look again at that derogation to see whether it offers an interim position prior to our persuading Europe to raise the overall age.

### Fostering Strategy

**6. Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive when the national fostering strategy will be published. (S2O-10642)

**The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown):** As I said during the recent stage 1 debate on the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill, we are developing the fostering strategy, which we hope to publish for consultation before the end of the year.

**Mr Ingram:** Does the minister acknowledge that we as a society continue to fail the 5,000 or so children and young people who are at any one time looked after away from home in residential or foster care? The patchy nature of services, lack of training for foster carers and poor levels of financial support, which have led to significant problems with the recruitment and retention of carers, are endemic in the current system. It is little wonder that the outcomes for children who are unfortunate enough to fall into the system are so poor. Is not the minister ashamed of the Government's track record? How does he intend to respond to the manifesto for looked-after children, "No Time to Lose", which was launched in the Parliament yesterday and has been

endorsed by 68 organisations—children's organisations and others—in Scotland?

**Robert Brown:** Adam Ingram is well aware of the complex and important nature of this area of policy. That is why we are producing the national strategy and why we will involve all the stakeholders in discussing it. A meeting of a reference group in October will involve the major stakeholders. We intend to involve the Education Committee, too, in discussion of the issues.

Fostering is a complex matter and many of the issues are interrelated. Issues around recruitment and retention, and training and support, are important because of the increasingly complex nature of some of the young people concerned.

I share with Adam Ingram the desire that all Scotland's children should have the best possible opportunities in life. That is very much part of the Executive's strategy, building on the £12 million support that went into local authorities over two years, which has been well used to improve all levels of support and back-up for foster parents in our society. This is a key policy area and we are determined to ensure that there are significant improvements in how Scotland deals with looked-after children.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** In developing the strategy, will the minister take into account calls from the Fostering Network and Barnardo's that there should be a cap on the number of children that any foster family can take on at once in order to make certain that there is a high standard of individual care?

**Robert Brown:** Lord James Douglas-Hamilton makes an important point, which will be examined as part of the national strategy consultation. We must consider how all these things work together. At the moment, we are not persuaded that putting a cap on the number of people who can be fostered would be the right way forward. The key underlying issues are the recruitment of more fosterers and the provision of proper training and support for fosterers who are currently in place. That will be part of the consultation and we look forward to engaging in the debate about it with the various interested stakeholders.

### Hunterston B Power Station

**7. Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many cubic metres of packaged intermediate and low-level waste and tonnes of spent nuclear fuel are expected to be produced by Hunterston B power station if its life is extended by 10 years. (S2O-10643)

**The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):** As Michael Matheson is aware, no decision has been taken to

extend the life of Hunterston B; that would be a commercial decision for British Energy.

However, based on the information that was reported in the 2004 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory, a 10-year life extension of the Hunterston B advanced gas-cooled reactor would generate approximately 350 tonnes uranium of spent fuel. If processed, that spent fuel would generate in packaged form approximately 25m<sup>3</sup> of high-level waste, 700m<sup>3</sup> of intermediate-level waste and 600m<sup>3</sup> of low-level waste.

There would be additional waste at Hunterston B arising from operating the two reactors for an additional 10 years. That is estimated to be 700m<sup>3</sup> of intermediate-level waste and 2,300m<sup>3</sup> of low-level waste, quoted in packaged form. The additional operational waste arises irrespective of the spent fuel's management route.

**Michael Matheson:** I thank the minister for his full and detailed answer. Have any discussions been held between the Scottish Executive and the London Government or the operators of Hunterston B on the possibility of extending the power station's lifespan? What criteria will the Scottish Executive use in considering whether it would support such a proposal?

**Ross Finnie:** I am not aware of any such discussions. On the criteria that we would use, any application or requirement to extend Hunterston B's lifespan would need to satisfy the safety and environmental requirements of the regulators—HM nuclear installations inspectorate and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

### Anaesthetics

**8. Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether a reduction in training opportunities in specialist training posts in anaesthetics as part of the modernising medical careers programme will reduce the anaesthetics services available in St John's hospital in Livingston. (S2O-10702)

**The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr):** The answer is no.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Is the minister aware that, whether he likes it or not, the new fixed-term contracts for junior doctors are considered to be second-class training and that, already, our best trainee anaesthetists are leaving Scotland? Is he aware that, as consultants told MSPs last night, many of the trainees who will fill contracts in August next year will not be ready immediately to fill on-call rosters, which will mean that women in labour and people in need of emergency surgery may need to be transferred from district general hospitals such as St John's to bigger acute services hospitals? Does he agree that that is no

way to run a health service and that he must act now to stop junior doctors voting with their feet?

**Mr Kerr:** That is an outrageous assertion in so many ways and I will try to address many of those points.

There will be sufficient training opportunities in Scotland and we will sustain our services throughout the transition to modernising medical careers. Lothian NHS Board has confirmed that the implementation of MMC will not adversely affect the anaesthetics service at St John's hospital. The way to resolve those matters is by discussion with the chief medical officer, who is leading the MMC implementation throughout the United Kingdom. The royal colleges and other observers recognise that, in Scotland, we are ahead of the game on MMC.

I am more than happy to meet clinicians and trainee doctors, as I did yesterday, to reassure them that a lot of the stuff that they are reading and which people such as Fiona Hyslop perpetuate is inaccurate and untrue. It destabilises and undermines our NHS staff.

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I wish that Andy Kerr had listened to the information that the doctors presented. Will he confirm that their analysis that they will not be able to fill one rota in three comes from the Executive's leaked workforce planning statistics? Will he confirm that the Executive's workforce planning will mean that all current rotas will be able to be filled in the future and that we will not witness further closures of acute services such as accident and emergency in NHS Lanarkshire because there not enough anaesthetists?

**Mr Kerr:** Now we get to the nub of the problem. Miss Leckie referred to a leaked document. That document was, in fact, a consultation document with our health boards on how many junior doctor training posts we require in our national health service. I repeat the point that, as a result of that consultation, we will ensure, first, that there are sufficient training opportunities for our junior doctors in Scotland and, secondly, that our hospital services are safe and will continue to be delivered throughout the implementation of MMC.

**The Presiding Officer:** Members will wish to join me in welcoming to Parliament His Excellency Jaakko Laajava, the ambassador of Finland to the United Kingdom. [*Applause.*]

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

**1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues they will discuss. (S2F-2457)

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

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Last October, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform set up an independent budget review to look at whether

"taxpayers' money is being spent wisely".

Why is the finance minister refusing to let taxpayers, not to mention the Parliament, see the findings of the review?

**The First Minister:** Because we are in the business of discussing the budget for next year, and the review report will be published when the budget is published.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** That is a change of position. I remind the First Minister that, when the finance minister announced the review, he promised that its findings would be published this year. When the chairman of the review team handed the report over to the finance minister in July, he said that it would be made public in the near future. It was only after the finance minister had read the report that he decided to suppress it and delay publication by a year—in other words, until after next May's elections. What exactly is in the independent report on how the Government has spent taxpayers' money that the finance minister does not want the Scottish public to see?

**The First Minister:** The review report is not an independent report on how the Government has spent money; it is an independent report, commissioned by us, on how we can look at future Executive budgeting in creative ways that might assist taxpayers and service users in Scotland to enjoy better services at more efficient rates. It seems to me to be imperative on us as a devolved Government to ensure not just that we have experts producing reports but that, when they produce a comprehensive report that is of genuine interest to ministers and within the Executive, they have an opportunity to discuss its detail with departmental heads and individual ministers as part of the decision-making process for the next year's budget. That would seem an entirely sensible way to take matters forward.

The report, and any subsequent reports from a committee that is still meeting, will be published when the spending review outcome is available and the budgets are properly published in due course. There will be no attempt to hide either that report or the individual decisions that ministers have taken on the recommendations. As a result of the report and deliberations, we will have a better budget with more efficiencies and therefore better services for Scottish taxpayers.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I point the First Minister to what Tom McCabe said about the review. In his press release, Tom McCabe said that it was

"to ensure taxpayers' money is being spent wisely and on priority areas".

I also point the First Minister to the comments of Arthur Midwinter, the independent adviser to the Finance Committee, who said:

"It would be pointless to publish it next September after the key ... decisions have been made."

He said that that would be a

"retreat to the private government of the public finances that existed before devolution."

Will the First Minister live up to the principles that he says that he believes in? Has he forgotten that when he was first elected as First Minister he said that his top priority in the running of the Government would be

"to enhance, rather than avoid, Parliamentary scrutiny"?

Has he forgotten that he said in Labour's last manifesto that he would

"be open and transparent in government"?

In the interests of openness, transparency and parliamentary scrutiny, will the First Minister overrule his finance minister and instruct the immediate publication of the report on how taxpayers' money is being spent by the Government?

**The First Minister:** I believe absolutely in a transparent budget process. That is why I brought to Parliament what became the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000, which sets out how we in the Scottish Parliament deliberate on our budget, which we do far more openly than anyone else does. It is also why we have insisted all along that not only the report to which Ms Sturgeon refers but other reports that we have commissioned should be properly published and be part of parliamentary scrutiny.

The reality is that that parliamentary scrutiny starts next September when the budget is presented to Parliament. *[Interruption.]* I am talking about the future budget for future years. The Parliament will have the chance to consider not only the budget proposals but any reports that

were commissioned alongside them. That is the right and proper way to proceed.

No attempt by Ms Sturgeon to deflect attention from the devolved Government's record on spending money in ways that have improved school results, reduced waiting times in our health service, increased employment and reduced crime will succeed. On all those measures, our budget is making a difference. At the same time, we are delivering on our budget targets on efficiency. Ms Sturgeon may want to deflect attention from that, but we certainly do not.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The question is very simple. Do the Scottish public not have the right to see an independent report on the Government's financial competence and management before rather than after next year's election? I remind the First Minister that he said in the chamber just a few weeks ago, and has repeated today, that he wants to be judged on his record, but when he has an independent assessment of his record, what does he do? He suppresses it and runs away and hides in a corner. Does that not say it all about the Government's record? The Scottish people will draw their own conclusions from the Government's secrecy and will conclude next May that it really is time for change.

**The First Minister:** The Scottish people will draw their conclusions from the fact that, every week in the chamber, the Scottish National Party promises £100 million for this, that and the next thing and suggests that it can spend that money and make tax cuts at the same time. That is nonsense and trivial budgeting from the SNP.

Expenditure in devolved Scotland is scrutinised by Audit Scotland, which publishes all its reports without any involvement or interference by ministers. Audit Scotland is the correct body to scrutinise expenditure by the devolved Government and by public agencies.

We commissioned a report on the future options for budgeting that will be published as part of an open debate on the budget in the Parliament and elsewhere. That is the right course of action for Scotland and it is precisely that approach to budgeting that has delivered shorter waiting times, better results in our schools, a higher employment rate and reductions in crime. We will continue that course of action.

### **Cabinet (Meetings)**

**2. Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-2458)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** At its next meeting, the Cabinet will of course discuss matters that are important to Scotland.

**Miss Goldie:** The First Minister's dismissal of Ms Sturgeon's points is understandable as she is the deputy leader of a party that has turned making extravagant spending promises without costing them into an art form. However, as I am the leader of a party with a somewhat more respectable track record in providing value for money—unlike the nationalist party, my party has been in government—I would be obliged if the First Minister answered my question.

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform has ordered that the independent budget review report should be kept under lock and key and my party has lodged a freedom of information request about that report. Will the First Minister shed light on the issue? He is under an obligation to give an explanation. What is in the report? Why has the information not been disclosed? Is the information too trivial or too embarrassing?

**The First Minister:** I will be absolutely clear yet again. The report was commissioned by ministers for future budgets starting from 2008-09 and it will be published at the start of the Parliament's scrutiny of the budget proposals from this Executive or any future Executive. The Executive will present to Parliament a proper budget bill for deliberation in the most transparent way, as set out by the Executive and agreed to by Parliament back in 1999 and 2000. That is the right way for a budget to be deliberated.

It is entirely proper that a report by a group of experts who have been brought together by ministers—not by the Conservatives or the nationalists, whose spending plans would not stand a day of scrutiny, never mind a year of scrutiny—to help them with their deliberations on next September's budget should be discussed properly in every department of the Executive and taken seriously by ministers and that its recommendations should be decided on one by one, alongside other proposals that may be made inside or outside the Executive during that time. In that way, we will get the right budget for Scotland and will be able to continue with our record of increased employment, reductions in waiting times, improvements in our schools and reductions in crime. Budgets should not be about the sort of trivia that we see from Miss Goldie but should be about results for real people. That is what we are about.

**Miss Goldie:** Wiggling, squirming, prevarication—I do not think that the taxpaying public think that the Executive's covert behaviour is trivia. Let us try a simpler question. Last Thursday in the chamber at 10 past 12, when I told the First Minister that he had £76 million of unallocated funds in the health budget, he rubbished his own figures and denied that he had the money. At 1 o'clock, his spin doctors were in a

vortex and were waffling to journalists. They admitted that the money existed, but said that it was in the wrong column, because it has been allocated. Here is the interesting part—no one knows to where it has been allocated. Only the Executive could blow 76 million quid in three quarters of an hour and not know where it has gone. Will the First Minister tell us why money is sloshing around that he does not know about, why he is hiding his budget figures from the country and why the Executive seems to have no grip whatever on Scotland's public finances?

**The First Minister:** It was not the budget document that I rubbished, but the question. The money had been spent—not in the Executive but on the health service. The reason why today the health service has delivered a reduction of 16 per cent in the in-patient day-case waiting list, an increase of 11 per cent in the number of operations, an increase of 256 per cent in the number of angioplasties, an increase of 24 per cent in the workforce of medical and dental staff, an increase of 27 per cent in the number of doctors in training and a host of other improvements is that the money is being spent. Unlike during the Tory years, we have the money and are spending it on improvements in the health service. We are proud of that.

**Miss Goldie:** At 12.12 on 28 September, the First Minister managed to sort of answer a question in the Parliament. For a week, the information that he has just given has apparently been known only to him. The people of Scotland will find it pathetic that it takes pressure from Opposition politicians to elicit any information about a specific item in the First Minister's budget document. That is a shambles.

I go back to the independent report that is lying around in a locked room. Public confidence and trust in politics and politicians are at an all-time low. That is little wonder, given what we have heard from the First Minister today. The Parliament was supposed to be about honesty, integrity and transparency, so let us see some of that. Will the First Minister save the information commissioner some trouble and time by publishing the report and restoring a little bit of faith to the Scottish people?

**The First Minister:** The fact that I have answered the question in a way that the member does not like does not mean that it has not been answered. The report will be published before the Parliament has to scrutinise or vote on the budgets for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. It is entirely proper that a report that has been prepared for ministers by a group of independent experts should be discussed with ministers and departments, so that we can look seriously at the experts' recommendations.

It is also important that we remember the purpose of the exercise. The reason why we have a budget in the first place is to ensure that money is spent on the health service, to bring down waiting times and to increase the number of staff; on the education service, to increase the number of staff and to improve results in our schools; on growing our economy, so that we have higher employment, more businesses and improvements in research and development and inward investment of the sort that we have seen this week; and on our justice system, so that we have better clear-up rates for and reductions in crime. That is what our budget is all about. It is not about trivia; it is about real people, real services and real results.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I will take two questions from back benchers.

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** As the First Minister knows, for three years the Executive has been considering legislative options to close the loophole that was created by the Transco case. Today is the final opportunity for the Executive to announce its position on my proposal for a member's bill to amend the law on culpable homicide and close that loophole. My proposal has attracted support from 68 members of the Scottish Parliament. Will the First Minister assure me that he acknowledges that my proposal is fundamentally different in scope—in relation to the organisations that it would cover and to individual directors' liability—from the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill, which the Home Office has introduced?

It is inconceivable that the United Kingdom bill will not impinge on devolved responsibilities, as the Scottish Law Commission highlighted in its submission to the First Minister's expert group on corporate homicide in Scotland, so will the First Minister assure me that even if the Executive decides that the UK bill is its preferred option, the Scottish Parliament's consent will be required? Finally, if the Executive decides to go down the UK route and close down the opportunity for the Scottish Parliament to legislate, and it is proved—as I am sure it will be—that the UK bill will not close the loophole that the Transco case created, will the First Minister commit to coming back to the Parliament with further options for legislation?

**The First Minister:** We do not take the decision lightly, as Karen Gillon knows. We have taken considerable time to deliberate on the details and the on-going discussions that have been taking place in Whitehall. The Cabinet discussed the matter yesterday, but it did not reach a final conclusion. We hope and intend to do so before the deadline for responding to Karen Gillon's proposal, but we must of course abide by the legal advice that we receive and consider the context in

which we work. Legal advice will be central to our decision, so I hope that the decision that we formally present to Karen Gillon later today or tomorrow will be able to stand the test of time.

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** The First Minister is aware that a dawn raid was carried out yesterday on the Benai family from Algeria. Oussama Benai, who is 11 years old, attends St Brendan's primary school in my constituency, whose head teacher, Mr Donal Currie, is reported as saying:

"The removal of asylum-seeker children in this way is not only traumatic for them but is also extremely distressing for the rest of the school community."

I agree. Such action is unacceptable.

Given the Parliament's welcome for the negotiated agreement with the Home Office on 30 March, will the First Minister urgently contact the Home Office to ascertain why the terms of the agreement seem to have been completely ignored in this case? Will he use his influence to ensure that the terms of the agreement on health, social work and education input are strictly adhered to in future?

**The First Minister:** Obviously, we want a report on that specific case so that we can decide whether such representation would be appropriate.

During the past 24 hours, I checked on the status of the agreement and the progress that has been made on the different elements of it. There has been significant progress on the appointment of a regional director for immigration in Scotland and on making improvements to the voluntary removal and deportation processes. There has been significant progress in other areas, for example on independent inspection of the deportation process, which is particularly important. Legislation to allow for such inspection should complete its timetable in Westminster by November and be in place by the end of the year.

One area in which there appears not to have been sufficient progress is the appointment of a lead social services official locally, to ensure that all the appropriate information is available in both directions in advance of any deportation measure being carried out. From my investigations during the past 24 hours, it is not clear whether the delay in making progress on that was avoidable and, if so, whether the responsibility lies with local authorities, the Executive or the Home Office. I intend to get to the bottom of the matter and I will be happy to write to Bill Butler when I do so.

### **Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)**

**3. Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** To ask the First Minister when he will

next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-2474)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** I have no immediate plans to meet the secretary of state.

**Shiona Baird:** The First Minister will be aware of the shock and concern that many parents have expressed on learning that some Scottish schools have been fingerprinting their children to control their access to facilities such as libraries. The Minister for Education and Young People, Peter Peacock, has issued a written answer, which states:

"Such decisions are matters for individual education authorities and schools"—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 26 September 2006, S2W-28273.]

Does the First Minister agree that this issue is of national concern and that the Scottish Executive must have a clear policy on whether it supports the fingerprinting of schoolchildren?

**The First Minister:** That is scaremongering nonsense of the worst kind from Shiona Baird and the Green party. I understand why they should wish to raise their apparently genuine concerns about civil liberties in the Parliament, but they should not do so on the basis of misinformation in an attempt to scare parents in Scotland that something as sinister as the sinister fingerprinting of children is going on in our schools.

There are schools in Scotland that are voluntarily—with volunteer parents and children—piloting a system that, as I understand it, uses the fingerprints of children in order to offer those children additional security and to encourage the use of libraries at a local level. The system is entirely voluntary, it is being decided on and administered at a local level, and it is not the same as fingerprinting Scottish children in some sinister way as if they were criminals.

I want Shiona Baird and the Green party to retract the accusations that they have made and to understand that, across Scotland, sensible people in our schools are making sensible decisions in consultation with parents and children. Those people should not be demeaned in this way.

**Shiona Baird:** The First Minister is totally wrong. We have evidence that parents have not been consulted before their children have been fingerprinted. The First Minister puts great emphasis on the voluntary consent of the parents, but he is obviously not aware of another answer from Mr Peacock, saying:

"The Executive believes that parental consent is an essential pre-requisite."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 26 September 2006, S2W-28275.]

We have proof that that is not happening.



I ask the First Minister how he, as a parent, would feel about such a thing. It is not enough to say that consent is a prerequisite; he must explain how the Scottish Executive intends to enforce that idea. Fingerprinting without consent is happening; how is the First Minister going to stop it?

**The First Minister:** Mr Peacock made the Executive's position crystal clear, and we understand that what he said has been implemented. If there are any individual instances in any local authority in Scotland of its not being implemented properly, it is incumbent on those who claim to have evidence of that to go to that school or local authority to correct the procedure that is in place. They should not come here to scaremonger among parents in Scotland that in some way criminal fingerprinting of Scottish children is going on. Shiona Baird should retract the accusation and she should be more honest with the chamber and with parents in Scotland about what is going on and what should be going on, and about what is right and what is wrong.

### Vocational Training

**4. Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what plans there are to address vocational training needs for 14 to 16-year-olds. (S2F-2467)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Current pilot skills for work courses and new developments in school-college partnerships indicate that there is a need and a demand for quality vocational options and access to quality teaching and facilities.

**Margaret Jamieson:** Does the First Minister agree that, to secure continued growth in Scotland's economy, we need to build on the work of the skill centres that we already have, and to put a new focus on vocational training to run alongside the range of measures that we are taking to support education at all levels? Does he also agree that it is vital that the beneficiaries of the new centres receive equal options, benefit from equal treatment, and receive accreditation that is given equal value to the accreditation of those pursuing the academic route? Does he further agree that our next generation of plumbers, joiners, mechanics and hairdressers is entitled to parity of esteem among members of the Parliament and people throughout Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I believe strongly that there is a need in our economy and our society for more people with trades and for more young people to be inspired to go into trades; we all know that from our domestic and business experience. I also believe that there is a need to ensure that alternative options are available to young people in our schools. The academic nature of course and curriculum development in the early 1990s was

wrong and has led to some of the behaviour problems in our schools and to young people losing the inspiration that they might have had. It has also resulted in fewer young people going into trade-based careers.

At Edinburgh's Telford College, in the Western Isles and elsewhere, I have seen examples of young people spending some time in college and some time in school to pursue proper certified vocational courses. That is the right thing for them and for Scotland. Those young people should have parity of esteem.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Although many of us share the objectives of the First Minister's policy, does he not agree that its implementation should not create a social or educational divide where none exists? It is important that we do not send out the message that pupils with ability should not consider a skilled occupation.

I draw the First Minister's attention to the Costello report on the curriculum in Northern Ireland, which recommended that for older pupils in secondary school the curriculum should be divided into three parts: one third should be academic, one third should be vocational and pupils should be able to decide, on the basis of their interests and ability, whether the other third should be academic or vocational.

**The First Minister:** Although vocational options will be particularly appropriate for those youngsters who have found school to be less inspiring than it should be—as many pupils did during the 1990s—a wide range of certified vocational options should be available to all school pupils.

Many such options are already available in Scotland. Our curriculum includes 13 qualifications in subjects such as financial services. We want vocational options to be available to everyone, but we want them to be a particular priority for the education and inspiration of those young people who are not being well served by our education system.

As well as being highly supportive of the goal of providing all pupils with a wide range of options, I support the provision of the best facilities in which youngsters can pursue those options. I say to the Scottish National Party that that will include the building of new schools with decent facilities.

### Scottish Prison Service (Budget)

**5. Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Prison Service's budget represents good value for money. (S2F-2459)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** The budget allows the Scottish Prison Service to meet its performance targets and to invest some £1.5 million each week on the modernisation of the prison estate. The Prison Service also contributes to the Executive's efficient government programme and the cost per prisoner place has fallen from more than £32,000 in 2003-04 to just over £30,000 in 2005-06.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I welcome the slopping-out claims settlement offer that has recently been made, which will reduce the £80 million provision in the budget to a mere £40 million, which represents some 15 per cent of the operational budget.

I remind the First Minister that this disgraceful situation sprang from the £13.5 million budget cut that was made on 21 October 1999. When the convener of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee asked whether the cut would delay an end to slopping out, she was told by Jim Wallace:

"It is one of the results."—[*Official Report, Justice and Home Affairs Committee*, 14 December 1999; c 518.]

In Monday's edition of *The Herald*, Jim Wallace said:

"I cannot recall being advised ... that this ... would jeopardise the timetable for ending slopping out."

Was the Liberal minister wrong in 1999, was he wrong on Monday or was it the Minister for Finance—in other words, Jack McConnell—who was at the bottom of things?

**The First Minister:** I agreed with Jim Wallace when he said this week that that is a myth and that the position has been completely misrepresented since that time. The reality of course is that a positive choice was made back then to ensure that the money that was in the budget was spent on tackling drugs and drug crime in Scotland. The result of that is record levels of drug seizures; record numbers of drug criminals caught; more criminals having the proceeds of their crimes taken from them and reinvested in the community; and a drug enforcement agency that is the admiration of the rest of Britain. That is the proud record of the devolved Government. The Scottish National Party might have disagreed with the choice, but it was wrong and we were right.

**The Presiding Officer:** As we started late, there is still time for the last question.

### **Criminal Justice (European Union)**

**6. Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con):** To ask the First Minister what representations the Scottish Executive has made to the United Kingdom Government to ensure that the UK veto in the European Union on criminal justice

measures continues to protect the independence of the Scottish justice system. (S2F-2462)

**The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell):** Ministers and officials regularly discuss a range of European Union issues with colleagues in the UK Government. Like the UK Government, we are committed to working co-operatively with our European partners in the fight against serious cross-border crime. We are open to engaging in discussion on how that co-operation might be improved, although we remain to be persuaded of the merits of the move to qualified majority voting.

**Phil Gallie:** I thank the First Minister for the courtesy of his answer, which is perhaps an unusual factor in a response to me. However, I accept what he said.

Does the First Minister agree that if the European constitution had been adopted, we would not have had a choice in this matter? Does it concern him that the European Commission may be attempting to advance certain objectives beneath the blankets, let us say, to achieve what is in the European constitution?

**Members:** Oh!

**The First Minister:** Andy Kerr is saying, "Don't go there," so I will not go underneath the blankets with Phil Gallie.

I believe that it is very important that we look seriously at these matters. As part of the discussions in which the UK Government is involved in the European Union, the Executive will be involved in ensuring that the interests not only of the Scottish justice system but, crucially, of victims and people throughout the European Union are properly protected.

It will be essential in this modern world for us to have measures throughout the European Union that allow us to tackle cross-border crime. That will mean that it will be an absolute necessity for the European Union to have a system of decision making that allows for proper action on cross-border crime to be taken. Therefore, we look positively at these discussions, but we are hesitant about the outcome because we want to ensure that it is the right outcome for people here in Scotland.

**Phil Gallie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise that I could not give you notice of this point, which concerns an issue that arose during the First Minister's exchange with Miss Goldie. He referred to the budget report that was produced for ministers to consider and to allow them to prepare for the next Executive's budget, following the election. It seems to me that in the past, when officials or taxpayers' money has been used to produce information that is intended to assist in producing budgets for after an election, it

was felt that that information should be shared. It is not the property of Labour and Liberal ministers alone.

**The Presiding Officer:** That is not a point for me.

12:34

*Meeting suspended until 14:15.*

14:15

*On resuming—*

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### Justice and Law Officers

##### Dispersal Orders

**1. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many dispersal orders have been implemented in Scotland. (S2O-10654)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** The use of dispersal orders is monitored on a six-monthly basis. The most recent statistics covering the period to the end of September will be available shortly. We are currently aware of dispersal orders having been used in eight locations across Scotland.

**Mike Rumbles:** Does the minister agree that the presence of uniformed police officers, rather than the use—or, in this case, the lack of use—of new legislation is the most effective way of dealing with public disorder? Will he join me in welcoming the current drive by Grampian police to recruit more than 100 new uniformed police officers for our north-east communities?

**Hugh Henry:** I certainly welcome the recruitment of additional police officers. As the member knows, police numbers in Scotland are at record levels. I am delighted that this Government has been able to deliver that.

However, I do not agree with the member's other conclusion. Yes, visible policing in communities can make a difference, but I know from talking to people in the areas where a dispersal notice has been used that the communities are absolutely delighted and that the local police see dispersal orders as an effective means of tackling a persistent problem. A combination of action is needed to make improvements and visible policing is but one component of that.

##### Justice Policy (Young People)

**2. Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how young people are involved in shaping its justice policy. (S2O-10662)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Wherever appropriate, young people have been involved in shaping the reforms of our justice

system, through research, focus groups and direct consultation.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I thank the minister for her response, which is to be welcomed. I also thank her for her letter, which I received today, following my question to the First Minister last week.

The minister will be aware that all too often young people themselves are the victims of youth crime. Does she acknowledge that there is more of an opportunity to involve young people in the formulation of justice policy not only at a national level but with the community justice authorities and in the individual antisocial behaviour plans that local authorities have to put together? Will she consider the wider use of young people in shaping justice policy, which, ultimately, will make it more effective?

**Cathy Jamieson:** As the member is aware, I have something of a history in working for an organisation that helped to shape various pieces of policy before I came to the Parliament as a member, so I have a particular interest in the issue.

It is appropriate that we look to involve young people correctly and not in a token way. Huge strides forward have been taken in the past few years in relation to how local authorities and other public sector organisations involve and consult people. This Parliament also has a good record in that respect. I hope that we can build on the work that has been done and ensure that the policies that we develop meet the needs of all the people of Scotland.

### Bail Conditions

**3. Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it intends to take to address the rising incidence of breaches of bail conditions and what guidance it issues regarding the granting of bail to accused individuals with a record of repeat offending, particularly bail breaches. (S2O-10653)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Provisions in the Criminal Proceedings etc (Reform) (Scotland) Bill will increase the custodial sentences available for breach of bail conditions and ensure that those sentences will be served in addition to any other sentence, sending out a clear message that people on bail are in a position of trust and that abuse of bail will not be tolerated.

Decisions on each case are of course for the court to make in accordance with the law and the individual facts of the case. The Lord Advocate issues guidance to procurators fiscal, which makes clear the prime importance of protecting the public and securing the course of justice. He will update that guidance before the bail provisions in the bill come into force to underline the

importance that he gives to dealing with bail breaches.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The minister will be aware that in Tayside the number of bail breaches has rocketed from 244 in 1997 to 1,885 in 2004—the most recent figures. I am sure that there have been similar increases throughout Scotland. The numbers include people involved in high-profile cases, such as the one involving my constituent Robert Basterfield, about whom Tayside police are so concerned that they are seeking a sexual offences prevention order, which will subsist for a minimum of five years. I do not expect the minister to discuss the details of that case, but does she think that the time is now right to consider a three-strikes-and-you're-out policy for bail breaches? Perhaps the policy should be known as a three-bail-breaches-and-you're-in—in custody, that is—policy.

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am aware of the case to which Roseanna Cunningham refers. She accepts that it would be inappropriate for me to go into its details.

I sound a cautionary note on the notion that three bail breaches would have to occur before anything was done. In many cases in which bail has been breached, it is absolutely right and proper for the court to have the option to do something there and then. I certainly do not want to give out the message that there are good reasons for courts accepting any breach of bail. We are trying to tighten up the procedures and, as I said in the recent debate on the issue, to ensure that the wider public interest and public safety are taken into account by the courts.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Sarah Boyack is not in the chamber to ask question 4.

### Crime and Safety Awareness Days (Schools)

**5. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to support crime and safety awareness days at schools throughout Scotland following the success of the event run by the No-Way Trust at Ross high school, Tranent, on 12 September 2006. (S2O-10677)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** The Scottish Executive already supports the promotion of crime and safety awareness in schools. We have provided funds to supply schools with a DVD about knife crime and helped to fund an initiative through the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency to provide schools throughout Scotland with greater awareness about drug misuse. We also provide funds to community safety partnerships. Obviously, it is up to local

partnerships to decide how best to use the funds that are available.

**John Home Robertson:** Will the minister commend the No-Way Trust on its hard-hitting session in which role-playing pupils were arrested, interviewed and charged by real police officers, prosecuted by real fiscals and then locked up by real prison officers, all of whom gave up their time voluntarily? Does she agree that such events can do much to promote good citizenship and deter crime? Ross high school had to raise money for the event on 12 September. Will the Executive consider the case for funding the excellent work of the No-Way Trust in promoting such events at schools throughout Scotland?

**Cathy Jamieson:** I am aware of the work of the No-Way Trust and certainly support any initiative that gives our young people the opportunity to understand better the need to be a good citizen, to recognise the impact of their actions on others and to have a better understanding of our legal system and our justice system more generally. I am sure that the experiences that those young people gained will have a lasting impact on them. They could also have a lasting impact on the member, who did not say whether he was arrested and held by the officers whom he mentioned. Perhaps that is something for the future.

On a serious note, it is important to recognise that we provide funding locally and that we want local community safety partnerships to have discretion in their use of funds. However, I will reconsider the issues that John Home Robertson has mentioned and provide him with a fuller response to his question.

### Sentencing

**6. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive when it will respond to the recommendations in the Sentencing Commission for Scotland's report on the scope to improve consistency in sentencing. (S2O-10687)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** I recognise the public concern about consistency in sentencing, which is why we asked the Sentencing Commission for Scotland to consider the subject. I welcome the publication of the commission's report and will carefully study its recommendations before I decide how to progress that important aspect of the criminal justice system.

**Mr McNeil:** I look forward to the Executive's response to the commission's thoughtful and well-argued report. However, how will the minister respond to the representative of the faculty of procurators of Greenock, who said that

"standardisation would be an impossibility"?

Does she agree that handing down wildly different sentences for similar crimes undermines public confidence in the courts? Is not consistent sentencing in the interests of everyone who is involved in the justice system?

**Cathy Jamieson:** It is important to understand that the Sentencing Commission for Scotland has not proposed the standardisation of sentences. It is important that judges consider all the facts of each case that is before them before they decide on the appropriate course of action.

The commission's report contains recommendations that would, if they were adopted, mean the creation of a new statutory body that would give advice on sentencing in Scotland by preparing draft sentencing guidelines for consideration by the appeal court of the High Court of Justiciary. Of course, ministers would need to be involved in a number of other matters. I do not think that the issue is about standardisation; it is about addressing the question of consistency, which has been our aim.

### Women Offenders

**7. Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made on extending across Scotland the range of interventions targeting the specific offending needs of women. (S2O-10675)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** The Executive has taken forward a wide range of measures in response to the 2002 report from the ministerial group on women offenders. That includes the successful 218 time-out centre in Glasgow.

The needs of women offenders are one of the top priorities in our strategy for reducing reoffending, which we published in May, and we have set up a short-life group with people who have a wide range of practical experience in working with women offenders. The group has met twice and is looking at the lessons from the 218 centre and preparing a blueprint on what more can be done for women through the new community justice authorities.

**Marlyn Glen:** I am glad to hear that the issue is still a top priority for the Executive. However, I am concerned about the length of time for which we have been talking about it and the slow progress that we are making. Are there plans to set targets and a timeline for the reduction in the number of women who are inappropriately placed in prison? I am concerned that, although lots is going on in the justice portfolio, some of it has not been gender proofed. For instance, the Sentencing Commission for Scotland's report, to which Duncan McNeil just referred, does not mention women at all, and we

know that women are imprisoned for lesser crimes than those for which men are imprisoned.

**Cathy Jamieson:** Marlyn Glen makes a number of interesting points. I know that she has taken a particular interest in the issue. The wider reforms of the justice system in general are designed to benefit the whole population, including women; however, there are some issues that we require to look at in more detail. That is why we have asked the working group to prepare a blueprint. I want to see what ideas the group comes forward with and what the new community justice authorities are going to do in their areas to join up better the work that is done in prison and in the community. That will give us the focus to do exactly what Marlyn Glen has suggested.

### **Drug Rehabilitation (North-east Scotland)**

**8. Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what the average waits are for drug rehabilitation and to enter a methadone programme in north-east Scotland. (S2O-10704)

**The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry):** Average waiting times are not regarded as a particularly effective measure of the accessibility of drug treatment services. However, the most recent figures from the waiting times framework show that, in the north-east, more than 80 per cent of clients entered prescribed drug treatment within 14 days of being considered ready for that intervention. The figures for rehabilitation show that 79 per cent of those who entered rehabilitation did so within 14 days.

**Mrs Milne:** That is perhaps progress, but not enough. What action is being taken to improve the figures? Will the minister give a commitment to introduce an easily accessible online central directory of rehabilitation places like the one that is in use south of the border?

**Hugh Henry:** I suppose that grudging praise from the Tories is better than no praise at all. I am pleased that, despite her mean words, Nanette Milne admits that progress is being made. However, we have much more to do.

The issue of the central register has been raised on several occasions, and answers have been given on it. We are seeking to get as much information as we can about the facilities that are available throughout Scotland. Nonetheless, a much broader range of initiatives is required. We are trying to get behind the figures, and we need to ensure that there is better integration of services. Yesterday, along with Lewis Macdonald, I launched an initiative on improvements in quality standards. Better integration and understanding of services, better communication and better information all have a part to play.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I know that the minister shares my deep concern about drug problems in Scotland. Will he give further consideration to ensuring that residential places that draw people out of addiction in the long term—methadone is generally merely a method of parking the problem—are stepped up as a key part of the strategy? Will he ensure that places are not left vacant in too many parts of Scotland, given that, according to Professor Neil McKeganey, more than half of addicts want to get off drugs rather than go through harm reduction?

**Hugh Henry:** Stewart Stevenson has raised a more complex issue. In fact, in suggesting that we expand the number of places while at the same time pointing out that some of the existing places are lying vacant, he has highlighted one of the contradictions at the heart of the matter. One problem is that the decision about when to send an addict to residential rehabilitation must lie with the professionals who are responsible for that individual. They assess the person's needs at the time and decide on the most appropriate course of action.

We must ensure that when someone is offered the opportunity of residential rehabilitation not only are they ready for it but the support facilities are available when they come back out. Some of the stories that my officials have heard on this matter are heartbreaking. For example, one individual had been in residential rehabilitation seven times, which clearly indicates that, in their case, it had failed. Indeed, it is a very expensive failure, and that use of resources probably means that other people were denied the opportunity of treatment. I have even spoken to people in Stewart Stevenson's constituency who have been in residential rehabilitation two or three times. It is clear that other aspects of this very complex problem need to be taken into consideration.

### **Spousal Witnesses**

**9. Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will provide an update on the consultation on proposals to amend the law on compellability of spousal witnesses. (S2O-10673)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** Given her strong interest in this matter, Helen Eadie will be aware that the Executive has undertaken a consultation on proposals to amend the law, which closed on 19 September. We are currently analysing the responses and I will report back to the member and, indeed, to Parliament in due course.

**Helen Eadie:** I am sure that the minister shares everyone's concern about situations in which people who are charged and who are likely to end up in jail suddenly marry their intended, with the

result that their spouses do not have to testify against them in court. In that respect, I am particularly concerned about cases that involve violence against children and feel that we must deal urgently with the matter. To what timescales is the minister working?

**Cathy Jamieson:** The purpose of the consultation was to elicit a range of views on this matter. After all, there are different views on the correct way of dealing with it, which is why I want to examine the consultation responses very carefully. We also have to consider whether and when there might be a suitable legislative time slot to deal with the issue—everyone in Parliament knows the pressure on the legislative programme at the moment. I assure the member that the responses to the proposals are being analysed and that I will deal with the matter as soon as I possibly can.

### Violence Reduction Unit

**10. Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress the violence reduction unit has made in tackling crime in Govan. (S2O-10679)

**The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):** To mark the end of the national knife amnesty in July, I visited Govan police office along with Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan and other colleagues from the violence reduction unit and saw how part of our £100,000 investment in metal detecting wands was being used to tackle knife crime in the area. Such tough enforcement action is in addition to the other positive work that is under way in Govan, in particular to tackle crime associated with gang culture. The pathfinder initiative and operation tag are two excellent examples of how the police service is working with a wide range of partners to find effective solutions to local problems.

**Gordon Jackson:** I appreciate what the Executive and the police are doing on this matter. However, does the minister think that, in addition to the measures that the police have introduced, more could be done a stage earlier by targeting young men and tackling the culture? In particular, we could introduce a whole range of initiatives aimed at schools, for example, that would attempt to stop violent behaviour before it reached the point at which the police and the courts had to be brought in.

**Cathy Jamieson:** I absolutely agree. Indeed, the whole approach to changing the culture is part of the work that the violence reduction unit has embarked on. I recently attended the launch of a DVD—I mentioned it in reply to an earlier question—at Kilwinning Academy in Irene Oldfather's constituency, although it will be used much more widely than in Ayrshire. The DVD

portrays a graphic message about young victims of knife crime, with families of people who have been affected by knife crime talking about their experiences. I had the opportunity to sit in on a class and discuss the DVD with young people, and it was clear that that was a powerful way of getting the message across. I suspect that many of those young people would have severe thoughts about whether they would get involved in any way in the types of incidents that were portrayed.

## Enterprise, Lifelong Learning and Transport

### First ScotRail (Meetings)

**1. Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive when the Minister for Transport last met representatives of First ScotRail and what issues were discussed. (S2O-10683)

**The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott):** I last met representatives of First ScotRail on Tuesday 26 September 2006. We discussed issues relating to rail fares and the success of the rail industry in Scotland. We also discussed what further investment in Scotland's railway might be required to build on that success to accommodate future growth.

**Paul Martin:** During his discussions with First ScotRail representatives, did the minister remind them of the importance of everyone in Scotland having the right to access rail? Is he concerned that disabled people do not have access to Springburn rail station? That is an issue about which I have been corresponding with him for some time. Disabled people are advised that, if they wish to travel by rail, they should first travel to the nearest accessible station, at Queen Street. Will the minister ensure that everyone in Scotland has access to rail, regardless of disability?

**Tavish Scott:** Mr Martin makes a fair point about accessibility at stations throughout Scotland. Responsibility for that is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. I appreciate his points with regard to Springburn. We are taking forward a programme throughout Scotland—in conjunction with the Department for Transport, given the reserved nature of the disability legislation—to improve facilities and to achieve the outcome that Paul Martin rightly wishes for his constituents. We will continue to work to deliver accessible stations, and I will keep him updated on progress in respect of Springburn station.

**Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab):** When the minister met representatives of First ScotRail, did he also speak to them about the new rolling stock that will be necessary following the

reopening of the Airdrie to Bathgate rail link? If he did not, when will he do so?

**Tavish Scott:** I assure Mary Mulligan that we did discuss new rolling stock. She will be pleased to hear that we also discussed the railway line that she mentioned. We are making an important investment in the track infrastructure of Scotland to benefit not only her constituents but many other people in central Scotland. As she knows, we are considering a rolling stock programme for 2009 onwards, as was discussed in Parliament last week when we debated the Edinburgh airport rail link, and we will bring important details of that programme before Parliament in due course.

### Science (Scottish Universities)

**2. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is encouraging Scottish students to study science subjects at Scottish universities. (S2O-10658)

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** We encourage students to consider the full range of subjects on offer and to make informed choices based on their abilities and interests. Careers Scotland is helping young people to consider the wide range of career opportunities that science courses can lead to. Its recent initiatives include career box, a tool that highlights role models who have chosen science-related careers; science matters, which supports hands-on science activity for pupils in schools; and space school, which inspires pupils through the topic of space exploration.

**Mike Pringle:** Given the huge contribution that science research makes to the Scottish economy, especially at Edinburgh University's King's Buildings in my constituency, will the minister investigate how the work of science education services at universities, such as Edinburgh University's SCI-FUN, can be better funded to persuade more schoolchildren to apply to study science at Scottish universities?

**Allan Wilson:** I am wholly in favour of encouraging more students to study science subjects. It is interesting to note that, despite press commentary to the contrary, overall recruitment of Scottish students into science has increased significantly in recent years. We wish that trend to continue.

Any mechanism that improves or maintains the flow of students into higher education in universities is to be commended. I would like to look into that in more detail with respect to the University of Edinburgh.

**Ms Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Is the minister aware that the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen recently stopped offering chemistry degree courses, and that the

number of chemistry graduates has declined in Scotland? What is the minister doing to promote chemistry in particular as a degree course, given its relevance to the energy sector and the life sciences sector in the north-east?

**Allan Wilson:** Irrespective of the regional location of a particular problem, I agree with the member that there has been a marked fall in the number of students taking pure science subjects such as chemistry and physics and a fall in the number taking engineering. We need better analysis and perhaps a debate on what the trends indicate. We need to know whether they might lead to problems in the labour market of the future. We plan to consult on such issues as part of our science strategy. We hope to have the consultation document in the public domain next week.

### Freight

**3. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to develop further initiatives with companies such as Tesco plc and Eddie Stobart Ltd to move heavy freight from road to rail. (S2O-10686)

**The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott):** We are currently in dialogue with a number of companies that are developing business proposals to transfer freight from road to rail.

Since 1999, we have made 22 awards of freight facilities grants, totalling £35 million, to projects that have moved freight from road to rail. That has enabled major companies such as Argos, Asda, BP, Diageo, Ikea and Tate & Lyle to transfer their products to rail.

**Michael McMahon:** A previous initiative involved two companies in my constituency. Safeway transferred goods from road to rail at Eurocentral for transport to Inverness.

Many companies experience too much bureaucracy when they apply for freight facilities grants. This morning's report from Audit Scotland states that the Scottish Executive is not meeting its congestion targets, so does the minister agree that it would be helpful to redouble the efforts to get road-to-rail initiatives through the process more speedily?

**Tavish Scott:** An important aspect of the Audit Scotland report is its support—with which I obviously agree—for our transport policy objectives. As Michael McMahon suggests, one of those objectives is the transfer of freight from road to rail, when that is achievable.

We have to consider the competitiveness of the Scottish economy and the way in which it can affect decision making in business. Decisions



must make commercial sense, and mechanisms such as the freight facilities grant can help with that.

In constructing relationships with businesses, we have worked to minimise bureaucracy, to ensure that turnarounds are much quicker than they have been in the past. That is clearly evidenced by the examples that Mr McMahon mentioned in his question.

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am sure that the minister will join me in congratulating Tesco on deciding to use the intermodal hub at Grangemouth to bring many of its goods to Scotland. That decision will lead to a reduction of 13,000 lorry journeys between England and Scotland in the course of a year.

When the intermodal hub was originally developed, Falkirk Council asked the Executive for financial support to provide an access road from the hub to the Laurieston bypass to ensure better links to the local motorway network. The hub is used increasingly, and there will now be 13,000 extra journeys on local roads in Falkirk Council's area, so will the Executive provide financial support for the access road? I hope that that road will encourage more companies to use the intermodal hub.

**Tavish Scott:** I will have to look into the details, but if the road that Mr Matheson describes is a local one it will be a matter for the local authority. I am sure that the road is important for the whole area, so the regional transport partnership in the area may wish to consider the case carefully. We have provided a substantial capital allocation for regional transport partnerships, which could provide a mechanism to help. That would be the best way forward, but I am happy to consider the details of the road that Mr Matheson mentions.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** As the minister will be aware, I have raised with him on previous occasions the need to move freight from road to rail along the A9 corridor to reduce traffic levels on Scotland's deadliest road. Has the minister's department made any progress in its discussions with the relevant companies?

**Tavish Scott:** Commercial discussions are continuing with a number of companies. I am sure that Mr Fraser would not expect me to disclose the stage that they have reached. I hope that in future we can reach agreement with a number of operators on investment in the transfer of freight to rail, so that supermarket chains such as the one to which Michael McMahon referred will again use rail. It is certainly our intention to pursue such agreement. We also intend to ensure that investment in the Elgin to Mossend upgrade, on which work is continuing, will assist the movement

of freight from the central belt to the north-east and the Highlands.

### Enterprise Networks (Meetings)

**4. Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive when the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning last visited the offices of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and what issues were discussed. (S2O-10628)

**The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Nicol Stephen):** I visited the offices of Scottish Enterprise on 26 June 2006 and the Inverness office of Highlands and Islands Enterprise on 31 July 2006. In both cases, we discussed issues of importance to the Scottish economy.

**Jim Mather:** The minister will know that the chairman of Scottish Enterprise, Sir John Ward, has accepted that Scotland's trend growth rate of 1.7 per cent over the past 25 years is inadequate and that it should be doubled to a rate of 3.5 per cent. In the light of that statement, what new, lasting steps will the minister take to achieve that higher rate of long-term growth? Does the minister propose to assist Scottish Enterprise and the wider economy to achieve that objective?

**Nicol Stephen:** As Jim Mather knows, there are encouraging signs on our long-term trend growth. Recently, we have outperformed the long-term trend growth rate, and it was encouraging that when the United Kingdom economy's growth rate dipped, ours remained stable. There are many positive things happening in Scotland. That is why I strongly support Scottish Enterprise and HIE and their strategies for growth and why economic growth is at the top of the Executive's priorities.

Only this week I visited Grangemouth, where £25 million has been invested in the port. I saw the new facilities and equipment that the money has been invested in, which have resulted in significant growth in containerised movements of around 10 per cent this year. I also visited INEOS, which has taken over the adjacent petrochemical plant that belonged to BP. It proposes to build the largest biofuels plant in the world, at a cost of around £70 million. Those developments represent impressive opportunities for Scotland.

Those opportunities are underscored by the presence in Edinburgh yesterday and today of the global Scots who have come for the globalscot conference and the meeting of Scottish Enterprise's international advisory board. There is no more positive group of individuals who are determined to promote Scotland internationally, and they should be encouraged in all that they are doing.

### **Research and Development-intensive Companies (Business Rates)**

**5. Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive how research and development-intensive companies based in Dundee could benefit from a reduction in business rates. (S2O-10631)

**The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Nicol Stephen):** Research and development-intensive companies in Dundee are already benefiting from our decision to reduce the business rate poundage by 1.2p in the current year. A further cut in business rates will be delivered from April next year.

**Shona Robison:** Given the importance of the research and development sector to Dundee, does the minister understand the great disappointment and frustration of companies in that sector that planned additional research and development investment but which now find that the Executive's much-trumpeted business rate relief scheme has been kicked into the long grass? What new alternative proposals will be developed to provide specific assistance to the research and development sector in Dundee and elsewhere in Scotland? I suggest to the minister that the Scottish National Party's proposals would represent a good starting point.

**Nicol Stephen:** I will certainly examine the SNP's proposals.

I have visited a number of research and development-intensive companies in the Dundee area. It is encouraging that so many such companies, which do fantastic work, are in that area. The companies that I visited were Axelon, which is looking at new battery technology; IDMos, which has new dental detection equipment that has uses in many other sectors; Cyclacel, which does fantastic work in cancer and life sciences; CXR Biosciences; and Tayside Flow Technologies. There is a long list of such companies. Therefore, to return to Jim Mather's question, something strong and positive is happening in Dundee and we want to encourage more of it.

On support for business rates, my colleague Tom McCabe made it clear in evidence to the Finance Committee on 19 September that the funding that we had allocated for research and development companies, particularly small and medium-sized ones, will be targeted at and spent on those companies. Funding of £7 million was allocated this year and £15 million will be allocated for next year.

Research and development is the engine room for future growth of Scotland's economy. We must up our levels of R and D. Some of that—indeed, a

large element of it—must come from companies themselves, but this Government is determined to support those companies in the future.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 6 is withdrawn.

### **Fastlink Service (Glasgow to Renfrew)**

**7. Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will give favourable consideration to proposals for a fastlink service south of the River Clyde, better linking Glasgow to Renfrew. (S2O-10666)

**The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott):** In the first instance, it is for Strathclyde partnership for transport to consider fastlink in the context of developing the regional transport strategy. There has been no submission to the Scottish Executive for funding so far. Any request for such funding would receive full and careful consideration.

**Ms Alexander:** Given that fastlink bus services are currently unavailable in many parts of Scotland, although they have a proven track record of improving connectivity and are economical and quick to introduce, will the minister undertake to discuss the desirability of fastlink services in general with SPT and write to me with the outcome of those deliberations?

**Tavish Scott:** I would be happy to discuss the issue with SPT and consider the innovative fastlink model for moving people quickly, efficiently and affordably around the areas in the west of Scotland that Wendy Alexander mentions. Strong proposals and practical plans exist for that type of modal transport. We are examining fastlink closely and I undertake to examine it further with SPT.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** In doing so, will the minister also examine carefully the provision of a fastlink service north of the river on the linked north Clyde development route? We are aware of the Executive's focus on the Clyde waterfront and its importance for the regeneration of the west of Scotland. It is unfortunate that so far there is no strategic transport approach to it. Fastlink north and south of the river and the north Clyde development route would significantly benefit my constituents and those of many colleagues.

**Tavish Scott:** The transport framework that SPT will conclude and publish later next year will be important in providing the context that Mr McNulty rightly seeks. It is important that we have an overall vision of how transport services are to develop both north and south of the Clyde in the way that members seek. I look for that to come through in the SPT report next year, which we will study carefully.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 8 was not lodged.

### **Job Losses (Interfloor)**

**9. Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is aware of potential job losses at Interfloor in Dumfries. (S2O-10693)

I am afraid that those job losses have now been confirmed.

**The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson):** Yes, we are aware of Interfloor's intention to make 54 staff redundant at its Heathhall site. I understand that that has come about as a result of difficulties in the global market for industrial rubber sheeting.

Our immediate concern is to help those staff affected by the proposed redundancies. My officials are working closely with Interfloor in order to help it sustain and develop its business in Dumfries.

**Dr Murray:** I can give slightly better news: the unions and management have been able to reduce the proposed number of redundancies by eight. However, I am sure that the minister is concerned about the loss of high-quality manufacturing jobs in Dumfries, particularly given the loss of similar jobs in spring at the Hunter Rubber Company. Is there any way in which the Scottish Executive can help existing companies to consolidate and preserve jobs without contravening European Union state aid rules?

**Allan Wilson:** Any support that we give to companies must be compatible with EU state aid rules. We are a member of the EU and, as long as this Executive is in power, we will remain so, therefore we must assist companies in accordance with those rules. However, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway are working with Interfloor and other companies to help maintain and expand manufacturing opportunities in that part of Scotland. That is the job of those bodies—we give them resources and that is what they should do. We are happy to ensure that the enterprise agencies engage wholly in any opportunities that arise to exploit future manufacturing potential in Dumfries.

## **Right to Buy**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** I invite Malcolm Chisholm to make his statement on the right to buy.

14:56

**The Minister for Communities (Malcolm Chisholm):** Presiding Officer, as you know, I wrote to George Reid this morning expressing my regret that copies of the report "The Right to Buy in Scotland—Pulling Together the Evidence: A report to Parliament on the effect of the Right to Buy in practice" were issued by the printer to a few housing stakeholders at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon. That was an error, as my officials had instructed the printer to dispatch the report to those stakeholders at 3 pm today. When we found out about the error, we received undertakings from all the stakeholders that they would not comment on the report before my statement today. As I said, I regret deeply what happened.

The background to the report lies in the Parliament's first major piece of housing legislation after devolution: the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which made significant changes to the social rented housing sector. At that time, it was the will of the Parliament that major changes should be made to the right to buy to respond specifically to Scottish circumstances. The legislation acknowledged that there remained many people who wished to buy their homes and continue to live among their communities, but also acknowledged that a better balance was required between the needs of the community and the benefits that individual tenants received from discounts. As a result, discounts were substantially reduced. In the past, they had been as high as 70 per cent, but the 2001 act reduced them to a maximum of £15,000 or 35 per cent, whichever is lower. Existing tenants had their discounts protected, provided that they retained the tenancies that were in place at the time. The right to buy was also extended to tenants of non-charitable housing associations, but those tenants had their rights suspended until 2012 to allow associations time to prepare for the extension.

Although the right to buy was the subject of review and refinement in 2001, Parliament saw the need for a further report on its effects. Therefore, the 2001 act contained a statutory requirement for the Scottish ministers to report to Parliament on the effects of the right to buy by the end of September this year. The legislation set out clearly the information that had to be provided. The report that I publish today meets that specification. In it, members will find evidence on the extent to which tenants have exercised the right to buy together with a comprehensive look at the effect of the right

to buy on the nature and condition of the housing stock in Scotland. Furthermore, the report considers the effects of the right to buy on the needs of those who require housing, as well as on the demand for housing accommodation and its availability.

Those specific requirements demand a detailed report that considers a broad range of evidence and which is based on facts—it is not a review of our policy on the right to buy. Although valuable research has been conducted on the topic, much of it preceded the significant legislative changes in 2001. Now, possibly for the first time in a purely Scottish context, we have a comprehensive and detailed picture of the evidence on the right to buy in Scotland on which we can all rely.

I am pleased that the report presents all the evidence in a clear and objective fashion, and I hope that that is recognised by those with an active interest in the subject. The report draws on recent evidence provided by the wider housing stakeholder community. I welcome that input, particularly the evidence from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland and Shelter Scotland, all of which commissioned work on the right to buy. Our key stakeholders, including local government, have also participated in seminars on the report. I am grateful to them for their time and contributions.

I turn to the report itself. It contains a range of findings, and I can touch on only some of the key conclusions here. First, there is the trend in sales. Nearly half a million sales have taken place in Scotland since the right to buy was introduced in 1980. Sales peaked in the late 1980s and to a lesser extent four or five years ago. Those high numbers of new homeowners mean that more than 67 per cent of Scottish households are now owner-occupied. That is almost double the proportion prior to the introduction of the right to buy. Around half of the households that have moved into home ownership have done so as a result of the right to buy. For many years, more homes were being sold to sitting tenants than being built, but that trend has changed recently, with right-to-buy sales declining and new build—both in the private sector and of affordable housing—on the increase.

To date, much of the research on right to buy has asked questions about the role former right-to-buy properties might play in the wider housing market. Such resales are considered in detail in our new report. It has often been suggested that right-to-buy properties, when sold again on the private market, could help first-time buyers on to the property ladder; that is certainly true in some areas. Right-to-buy properties can be affordable and can help to widen choice at the lower end of

the housing market, but in areas where the housing market is experiencing pressure, even former right-to-buy properties can be out of reach for some.

The finding that the ability of social landlords to meet housing need is affected by right-to-buy sales is not new but self-evident. That is why we acted in 2001 to curb overly generous discounts. The report identifies those areas that have seen the highest right-to-buy sales and that experience pressure on affordable housing and vice versa. The interplay between those factors is explored. One of the key arguments aired in the debate on the right to buy focuses on the replacement of stock sold. Commentators will be interested in the report's analysis, which underlines that one-for-one replacement of stock is not required. In recent years, we have supported significant new-build programmes for affordable housing in Scotland, and our investment is delivering new homes for rent and for low-cost home ownership where they are needed most. However, need varies so much throughout Scotland that local areas must assess carefully any response by way of new-build affordable housing.

Overall, the report presents a detailed picture of significant local variations in need and availability. Different areas have historically seen different levels of sales, and the need for affordable housing varies from one part of the country to the next. Therefore, it is really only at the level of the local community that the full effects of the right to buy can be considered with any real clarity.

As well as capturing a great deal of existing data, the report draws on some new qualitative research. The report on that work is also being published today. Our new research, which considers the views and experiences of tenants and purchasers, finds that the right to buy has had positive effects on individuals and households and has given purchasers a greater sense of control over their housing choices. In some cases, there appears to have been a shift in culture from renting to owner-occupation, with some younger family members now considering that owner-occupation is a realistic option.

One limited change since the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 is the application of the pressured area mechanism, which is unique to Scotland. Scottish ministers can designate pressured areas to enable local authorities to suspend the right to buy for certain tenancies for up to five years. The final chapter of the report considers the effectiveness of the mechanism's operation and examines the cumulative effect of the designations that have been granted across Scotland to date. With six local authorities already operating suspensions, it is clear that pressured area status is being seen as a useful tool.

Pressured area designations can help local authorities to preserve stock where it is needed to meet demand from housing waiting lists as part of a wider strategic approach to new affordable housing provision.

However, at this point the report cannot tell us much about one important aspect. The report's statutory timetable is such that it is impossible to say how the changes to discounts that were introduced under the 2001 act will alter sales patterns. That is largely because tenants who have taken new tenancies in the social rented sector since September 2002 must serve a minimum five-year qualifying period before they have any entitlement to buy their home.

The report reveals that the tenants who are now in the social rented sector are less economically active than their predecessors 20 years ago. It is unclear whether the smaller discounts that are now on offer will enable them to purchase in our buoyant housing market. From September next year, we will be looking with interest to see how sales under the modernised arrangements compare with those under the traditional scheme. Only at that stage will we be able to establish whether the legislative changes have achieved the better balance that was sought.

Today, our policy is to aim for mixed-tenure communities. We recognise that building monotenure estates of social rented housing is not desirable for residents or communities in the long term, although that was not always the case. The right to buy has been instrumental in mixing tenure and in helping to forge stability in many communities, as families purchase homes for the first time. However, the report recognises that that has not necessarily been the case across the board, as the effects of the policy have varied depending on location.

I have touched briefly on some of the key findings, but there are many more in the body of the report, for example on the relationship between the right to buy and repairs, as well as the relationship with the private rented sector, and on further areas of interest such as the characteristics of today's social rented sector compared with those of other housing tenures.

The right to buy is judged controversial by some people, and it continues to provoke strong reactions. There is no doubt that it has been a major influence in shaping many communities and in helping to build communities with mixed tenure. The substantial changes that we made in 2001 were largely welcomed by those who engaged in the debate on the right to buy. Some people want us to go further, by either amending the policy again or removing it altogether. However, the evidence in the report does not support such a position.

The report tells us many things about the right to buy and about the social rented sector in general. It does not tell us that the policy that the Parliament put in place in 2001 is failing to meet its aims. Those aims are to meet tenants' aspirations to own their own homes and, as a consequence, to create diversity of tenure within communities. Nearly 500,000 households have been helped into home ownership by the right to buy. In the report, we recognise that the right to buy can affect the ability of social landlords to provide accommodation in areas of pressure, but that is not a new finding. Indeed, it was precisely the reason for the introduction of the pressured area mechanism in 2001, which operates over and above our rising investment in new affordable homes for rent and in low-cost home ownership where that is needed most.

I acknowledge that the debate on the merits of the policy will continue and that it is as yet too early to evaluate fully the effects of the changes that were made in 2001. We will watch with interest what happens from autumn next year, when most tenants under the modernised scheme will begin to be eligible to buy.

I urge members to spend time looking at the evidence in the report, which is detailed and demands close attention. Until now, such an objective overview of the evidence has been lacking. I hope that the report goes some way towards filling that gap and will lead to a more informed and more rational debate on the right to buy.

**Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):**

It is regrettable that the report was released to housing organisations but withheld from MSPs, despite a promise to members of the Communities Committee that we would get it at half past 11 today. It is quite unacceptable that such a detailed document was not made available to members until it appeared at the back of the chamber when the minister first stood up to make his statement.

The report is not a comprehensive examination of the effect of the right to buy, despite the minister's claims. The report says that people who have bought through the right to buy view the policy positively. However, no one asked the people who have lost out through a lack of choice of housing type or who are now waiting longer to be housed whether they view the policy favourably. When will the minister take their views and needs into account, or do they not matter?

The minister claims that many younger people consider that owner occupation is a realistic option for them. Will he not acknowledge the truth, which everybody in the chamber and outside it knows, which is that many of them are buying because they have no choice and because they cannot get a house for rent? They are buying at prices that

are more than they can afford, and mortgage arrears are increasing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Quickly, please.

**Tricia Marwick:** Just this week, it was revealed that homelessness due to repossession is at an all-time high.

Nearly 500,000 houses have been sold under the right-to-buy policy, which means that the number of homes that are available has been reduced, yet this Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Do you have another question?

**Tricia Marwick:** I am coming to it. Three thousand four hundred—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please ask your question.

**Tricia Marwick:** In 2004, the Executive built only 3,483 socially rented houses, which is less than were built by the Tories in 1995. Will the minister tell us what increase in money for housing he has made a bid for in the next spending review?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I have already expressed regret about what happened today. I intended to do what I said I would do in my letter to the Communities Committee, but it was against the procedures of the Parliament, as Tricia Marwick knows. In that sense, I was in error to assume that the document could be released at 11.30.

Tricia Marwick's main point was that we have not taken into account the views of those who need affordable rented accommodation. Ms Marwick has had the report for an hour or so, so she will know that by far the biggest chapter in it is about the effect of the right to buy on the availability of affordable accommodation. People will read that chapter with perhaps the most interest and attention because it contains detailed evidence that has not been available before. She might want to look in particular at the table on page 33, because it gets the issue into proportion. The number of extra houses that would have become available for rent is quite small. If we compare that with the number of houses that are being built now through our massively expanding affordable housing programme, it pales into insignificance. Over and above that, of course, Tricia Marwick is forgetting the pressured area mechanism. We recognise that, in certain situations, it is desirable to suspend the right to buy if there is a big gap between the number of lets becoming available and the number of people on the waiting list.

I believe that we have got the balance right, and that the Scottish National Party is turning its back

on the thousands of people who have fulfilled their aspirations by buying their own home. Tricia Marwick is not examining the evidence in detail and is turning her back on aspiring home owners.

**Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I thank the minister for providing me with a belated copy of this thorough report. I am pleased to see that it shows that a majority of tenants or former tenants view the right-to-buy policy positively, regardless of whether they have taken advantage of it. I am also pleased that the findings demonstrate clearly that a flagship Conservative policy has done more to transfer a greater amount of wealth from the state to the people than anything that this Executive has proposed in the past seven years has done. Accordingly, will the minister guarantee that if he is minded to change the policy in future—a move that we would oppose—existing tenants will retain their current rights?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** There are no proposals in the report to change the policy. As I said in my statement, the report is a review not of the right-to-buy policy but of the evidence of the effect of the policy. In so far as it comes to a conclusion, it bears out the decisions that the Parliament made on the policies that Wendy Alexander and Jackie Baillie set out in 2001. Of course, we acknowledge the number of people who went into home ownership under the Conservative policy but, in 2001, the Parliament thought that the policy needed to be rebalanced so that there were lesser discounts and provision was made for the pressured area status of certain parts of the country. I think that we got the balance right in 2001. There is no intention to change that balance as a result of this report.

**Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD):** Is the minister in a position to say whether any implications for the 2012 homelessness target arise from the report, or is it too early to say? Also, will he confirm that pressured area status can apply to a housing type? Is the pressured area mechanism sophisticated enough to deal with an acute shortage of a certain type of property in an area—say, four-bedroom houses—but a surplus of other types of housing?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** On the second point, that is not part of the pressured area mechanism. Detailed analysis is done of the housing situation in a particular locality. That locality can be quite a small area, which is why I said earlier that the relevant decisions have to be made at the community level.

On Mr Robson's first point, of course we will examine the evidence in the report in the context of our general work on the 2012 target. There are many parts to homelessness policy, but central to it is ensuring that there is an adequate supply of

affordable housing. That is why work to increase the number of affordable homes that are built is at the heart of our housing policy. The number will increase next year to 8,000, which is the highest figure for many years. Ensuring that we build enough new, affordable homes is at the heart of our policy, and it is in the light of the overall policy that people should consider the effect of the right to buy, which, as I said in my answer to Tricia Marwick's question, is modest in comparison with the massive housebuilding programme that we have at present.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and the report, even if it annoys one or two of his own back benchers.

I hear what the minister says about the lack of an intention to reform the right to buy as a result of the report, but I ask him about the longer term. He paints a picture of detailed, significant local variations in need and availability. Pressured area status might be a useful tool, as the minister says, but it is the only tool in the box. Can the minister tell us that, at least in the medium term, his mind is open to the case for more fundamental reform?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** As I have indicated, we do not think that the evidence in the report points in that direction, but obviously the debate will continue and people will make their suggestions and contributions. Perhaps someone will make contrary suggestions today, although we have not heard many detailed proposals so far.

We believe that we struck the right balance with the provisions that are enshrined in the 2001 act. The pressured area mechanism is the best way to deal with shortages in particular parts of the country, but it exists over and above our fundamental policy of ensuring that enough new affordable homes are built in the right places. That is at the heart of our housing policy.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's statement, but does he agree that the phrase "right to buy" is a misnomer? It is not a right but a right-wing tool of housing policy that was introduced by the Tories to sell off a collectively owned asset to private individuals. With that in mind, will the Scottish Executive make a commitment at least to consider a long-term, wider-ranging review and reform? As the minister said in his statement, there is still further information to be considered.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I certainly do not accept that the right to buy is a right-wing tool. I would not allow the parties of the right to claim the territory of aspiration, which is right at the heart of what the Labour Party believes in—if I can speak for the Labour Party rather than the Executive for a moment, although I am sure that the Executive

shares that view. Aspiration and compassion, together, are absolutely central to what we are all about. Aspiration for those who want to own their own home is enshrined in our housing policy, but so is compassion, and we have the most progressive homelessness policy in Europe. I do not think that they are in any way contradictory.

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** I am reassured by the minister's comment that the debate will continue following the report and his statement, but the recent homelessness figures show that homelessness has gone up rather than down and is increasing in the categories of single men, pregnant women and lone parents. The Executive will not meet the 2012 homelessness target unless it fundamentally changes the right to buy. It is interesting that the report does not—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Will you come to a question, please?

**Frances Curran:** The report does not mention the burgeoning number of homeless people on the waiting list. They are the people who are really affected. Will the minister consider abolishing the right to buy?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** In fact, this week's homelessness figures show that the number of people who have been assessed as homeless is more or less the same as before. Of course, the numbers have gone up in the past few years because we have given homeless people new rights, but the figures that were produced this week show that action to prevent homelessness is successful in two thirds of cases; that more households have been rehoused than ever before; that rehousing in permanent accommodation is increasing, which is obviously central to our homelessness policy; and that fewer pregnant women and families with children are being temporarily accommodated in bed-and-breakfast or hostel accommodation.

There is still a long way to go on homelessness policy, but there are many signs of progress in this week's figures.

**Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I refer the minister to the section of the report on right-to-buy resales in rural areas. It seems to indicate that not very much research has been done, but the minister must be aware of concerns that houses are being sold on to the second-home market. What research has been done or is being done in that area? What steps, if any, can be taken to redress the balance?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I cannot give an exhaustive account of the research that has been done, but Communities Scotland published some a few months ago.

Maureen Macmillan is right to fasten on to that particular aspect of the report. In general, much of the information about rural areas is comparable with the information about urban areas, but there seems to be a significant difference in respect of resales. I can write to the member with a more exhaustive list of the research that has been done, but I know that Communities Scotland did publish some recently on the subject.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** First, is the minister surprised, as I am, that paragraph 4.4 of the report shows that Scottish Borders has a surplus of affordable housing, although that is not what my in-tray tells me? Could that figure be distorted by the fact that we had a wholesale stock transfer?

Secondly, when the minister says “affordable housing”, does he mean affordable rented housing or affordable housing to buy, or both? Thirdly, has he asked those who are on the extensive waiting lists what they think of the right to buy? Fourthly, does he agree with the statement in paragraph 4.9.3 of the report that

“No new dwellings were completed by local authorities in 2004 or 2005”?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Make your answers brief, minister, if possible.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** On the member’s final point, a rising number of new affordable homes are being built every year. Of course the majority of them are being built by housing associations, but tenants are very happy to be moving into housing associations; it does not matter to them whether their home is a housing association property or a council house. However, some councils, such as Midlothian Council, are looking to build their own houses in the near future.

That takes me back to Christine Grahame’s second point. The majority of our investment is in affordable rented housing, but the homestake shared equity scheme has already been a massive success. The three-year targets were met in about six months. There is great demand for the scheme, which is meeting a great deal of the housing need. If people were not able to access it, they would be on waiting lists for social rented accommodation.

**Christine Grahame:** What about the point about no new dwellings?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No, that is enough.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** I noted with interest the minister’s comments on pressured area designation. Is he aware that several local authorities have suggested that obtaining such a designation can be cumbersome and overly bureaucratic? Does the report highlight

any possible changes that could be introduced to make the process easier for local authorities?

I agree with the minister that it is too early to assess the full impact of the modernised right to buy that came about as a result of the amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 that I lodged. What will the Scottish Executive do to monitor the impact of the modernised right to buy when it is introduced next year?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** We will certainly be following that very closely indeed. Certain projections have been made and the report discusses different scenarios, but nobody can know for certain what the effect will be. We might surmise that a lower number of people will exercise their right to buy, but we cannot be sure. We will certainly consider the evidence very carefully indeed.

We will also examine pressured area designations to see if there is too much bureaucracy. I think that there were some difficulties with the first pressured area, but six designations are now in place and the whole process is flowing far more smoothly. It is right that there should be a thorough and comprehensive process. I notice that some people—not Karen Whitefield, of course—want to get rid of the process and just let local authorities do what they like. However, that would result in postcode variations and we must have some national criteria for designating pressured areas. Again, it is a matter of getting the balance right, but if any excess bureaucracy can be eliminated, it will be.

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** Does the minister agree that although debate is always valuable, this excellent report highlights the overall success of the principle of the right to buy, the fact that perhaps with some increase in the extent of new build, existing policies are genuinely working, and the fact that there is no need to disturb the existing arrangements for the foreseeable future?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** That is certainly the view that I have outlined in my statement today. To repeat, we believe that the 2001 act struck the correct balance. We acknowledge what the Conservatives did in starting the policy, but the balance had to be adjusted in the way that it was under the 2001 act. We need the safety valve of the pressured area mechanism plus significant levels of new build to strike the right balance if we are to deliver both for those who need social rented accommodation and for those who aspire to own their own home.

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** I thank the minister for the report. As he rightly recalls, our objectives in the 2001 act were to remove the unfairness of two-tier tenancies, which were a legacy left by the Conservatives; to deal



with the unfair levels of discounts—the bribe rather than reward—for long-standing tenancy; and to introduce a pressured area mechanism for areas in which there were particular pressures.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Can we have a question, Ms Alexander?

**Ms Alexander:** The Parliament took that step without the evidence. We now have the evidence that suggests that we have introduced a rather sophisticated solution that appears to be vindicated by the data.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Alexander, do you have a question?

**Ms Alexander:** Will the minister comment on the fact that the challenge going forward is to deal with perhaps as much the areas of net surplus as those of net need in our continuing efforts to rebuild communities in Scotland?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I certainly agree with all Wendy Alexander's comments and, since she has asked a question, I repeat the tribute that I paid to her for all the work that she did on the issue.

On Wendy Alexander's specific question, she is right that the differences between housing issues in areas of net surplus and areas of net need are a key issue. In headline terms, the issue in areas of net surplus is perhaps more to do with regeneration. Community ownership can be particularly appropriate in those areas where a great deal of money is required for investment. Obviously, the area that Wendy Alexander represents is coming very much into the frame, given Renfrewshire's ballot on community ownership this week. The needs in areas that require regeneration will be different from those in areas that require new supply. We need to strike a balance between those two needs in our housing policy.

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (Sol):** Does the minister accept that it is misleading for him to talk about a massive expansion in the building of social housing in the past three years, given that less social housing was built in 2004-05 than in 2000-01? Does he further accept that it is unacceptable and unsustainable that, since the Parliament was formed, 3.3 social housing units have been sold for every new social housing unit that has been built? Is that not the reason why levels of homelessness are not staying the same but increasing and why local authority and housing association waiting lists are rising? Does he accept that it is time for a radical response to the housing shortage, especially for young families? Instead of a right to buy—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Sheridan, I think that we have got the message now.

**Tommy Sheridan:** Is it not time for a right to

rent discount to keep people in the social rented sector?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Tommy Sheridan understates the figure for 2004-05. Next year, we will build 2,500 more affordable houses per year than in 2004-05. Therefore, we are very much expanding new affordable housing in Scotland.

However, the fundamental fallacy is the ratio that Tommy Sheridan quotes about the number of new houses built compared with the number of houses sold. I refer him to the table on page 33 of the evidence document that we published today, which lists figures that are central to the whole debate. The significant issue is not the number of houses sold under the right to buy but how many of those would have come up for let in a given year. That story is told in table 4.4 on page 33.

For example, although East Lothian has had significant problems with a lack of new affordable housing, the number of lost lets as a result of the right to buy has been only seven a year. The number of new houses built in the area each year was far greater. In Edinburgh, the number of lets lost through the right to buy has been 42 a year—by the way, that represents the upper limit because, for various reasons, we made that figure as high as possible—whereas this year 596 new affordable homes are being built in Edinburgh. We must keep the lets lost because of the right to buy in proportion. They are not the fundamental problem, although we will deal with them if the area is under pressure. The real issue is building new homes and, notwithstanding what Tommy Sheridan said, that is exactly what we are doing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I express my regrets to the four members whom I cannot call, but we have overrun the time allocated for this item of business.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I have sat through the previous 32 minutes. Some members asked questions that lasted for two and a half minutes. I just wanted to get on my feet and say that the right to buy is a good concept but—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are not entitled to say that, Mr Swinburne. That is not a point of order.

I note your concern at the length of some of the questions. The member who was due to be called next was Cathie Craigie. I particularly apologise to her, but we know why that last question was squeezed out.

I encourage members, particularly those who ask long serial questions, to think in future about the rights of other members. We give a degree of latitude to the lead questioners from the main political parties, but members who follow on

further down the line should not think that they are entitled to ask four questions, nor should they think that they are entitled to build up through five or six lengthy sentences the basis for a question that they could ask as a free-standing question.

## **St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1**

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):**

We now move on to the next, delayed item of business, which is motion S2M-4827, in the name of Dennis Canavan, that the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill.

15:31

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** I thank the non-Executive bills unit, all the people who were involved in producing the stage 1 report—especially the convener, members and clerks of the Enterprise and Culture Committee—and all those who contributed to the research that the committee commissioned. I also thank the Executive, particularly the First Minister and the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, Tom McCabe, for agreeing to give qualified support to my bill.

This is the second time we have had a stage 1 debate on the general principles of the bill. On the previous occasion, nearly a year ago, the Executive lodged an amendment that referred the bill back to the Enterprise and Culture Committee for further consideration, despite the fact that the committee had unanimously recommended that Parliament support the general principles of the bill. Parliament agreed to the Executive's amendment by 66 votes to 58. The committee therefore undertook further consideration of the bill and commissioned independent research on the economic, social and cultural costs and benefits of a bank holiday on St Andrew's day and of alternative options for celebrating that day.

Part of the original criticism of my bill was that the bill of itself—I emphasise “of itself”—would not have achieved the objective of ensuring that St Andrew's day be a day of national celebration. The bill would have given St Andrew's day the same legislative status as any other bank holiday, but would not have ensured widespread recognition of the holiday or a national celebration of St Andrew's day. Additional measures would have been required to ensure such a national celebration. The committee has given serious consideration to that point.

The research report contains useful examples of national celebrations in other countries: Ireland, France, the United States and Sweden. The report also suggests some options for celebrating St Andrew's day, including cultural and sporting events. For example, last year the Scottish Executive organised a St Andrew's day ceilidh in Edinburgh. Similar events could be held at other venues throughout Scotland. Other suggestions

include civic parades, pageants, local festivals, concerts, a St Andrew's day marathon, St Andrew's day cards, marketing of Scottish produce, an annual St Andrew's day lecture on a Scottish theme, the organisation of children's competitions and international cultural exchanges. If such events were organised—some at national level and some at local level—throughout the country, St Andrew's day could be a day of great national celebration.

When first I introduced my bill, there was criticism from some people in the business community, who claimed that it would be bad for business. Not everybody in the business community agreed with that view, however. Supporters of my bill include the Scottish Retail Consortium, the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions and some leading business people, such as Lord Macfarlane of Bearsden, who considered that a St Andrew's day national holiday would be a great business opportunity rather than a threat. Although the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland and the banks expressed reservations, even they have indicated that they will be prepared to go along with the proposal, provided that the St Andrew's day holiday becomes a replacement for an existing holiday, rather than an additional holiday. The Executive has, apparently, now reached the same conclusion. Earlier this month, the First Minister said that the Executive would support the bill, provided that the St Andrew's day holiday was a replacement for an existing local holiday, rather than an additional holiday.

**Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab):** On that point, does Mr Canavan agree that one holiday that would not be up for trading would be the internationally renowned May day holiday, which I think should remain?

**Dennis Canavan:** Absolutely. My preferred option is still for the St Andrew's day holiday to be an additional holiday, but if it is to be a replacement holiday, I certainly do not want it to be a replacement for May day. I do not think that the Executive would want that either.

Despite my preference for St Andrew's day to be an additional holiday, I am realistic enough to accept that the bill has virtually no chance of getting parliamentary approval without the support of the Executive so, in that context, I agreed to make a joint statement with the First Minister earlier this month. It is important to establish the principle of a St Andrew's day national holiday. I am confident that, once the holiday is established, recognition of it will grow in the years ahead and, with the help of negotiations between employers and trade unions, it will eventually become an additional holiday.

This is an historic opportunity for Parliament to show a lead to the nation by giving statutory recognition to St Andrew's day. By doing so, we will encourage the people of Scotland to celebrate our patron saint and our national identity as well as our multiethnic, multifait and multicultural diversity. It will also enable us to celebrate our membership of the international community and help promote Scotland on the world stage.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill.

15:38

**The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe):** As Mr Canavan said, we are in the unusual position of having a second stage 1 debate on a bill. However, the time that has elapsed since the previous debate has been well used. I am glad that I can speak on behalf of the Executive to endorse the recommendations of the Enterprise and Culture Committee. The fact that I am able to do so is due in no small part to the willingness that has been shown by the member in charge of the bill, Dennis Canavan, to accommodate some of the concerns that we expressed at our earlier consideration. I thank him for that because it has allowed us to move on.

Dennis Canavan has always made it clear that the ultimate intention of his proposal is to facilitate the creation of a national day to celebrate Scotland and its people. The Scottish Executive subscribes completely to that aim and we think that initiatives that we have led so far are evidence of our intentions. Improvement of how we mark St Andrew's day has the potential to remind people from all walks of life just how much there is to celebrate in this great country.

Last year, for the first time, the Scottish Executive supported the one Scotland ceilidh on St Andrew's day in Edinburgh and I am pleased to confirm that we will support it again this year. It will help to launch Edinburgh's winter festival. We are also planning to expand our celebrations of St Andrew's day to other cities around Scotland, all under the banner of one Scotland, many cultures, and we will announce our plans in the near future.

The celebrations this year—and, I hope, in future years—will have a strong emphasis on young people celebrating a modern Scotland in which children can mark St Andrew's day and in which the Executive can help by the distribution of material such as an event box to allow children to develop their own events and activities around 30 November.

Once again, we will support and encourage the celebration of St Andrew's day internationally. We have already distributed about 1,500 saltires and

event packs to people in Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts to help them to celebrate the day, and the First Minister will again this year send a message around the world to be used in places where the day is celebrated.

We do such things because we believe in the benefits to Scotland of celebrating our national day, although it is important that those benefits be not undermined by the ways in which we celebrate it. We welcomed the Enterprise and Culture Committee's decision to commission work into the costs and benefits of various approaches to celebrating the day, and we are well aware that the Government needs to take the lead in such matters. The research provided useful information about how such matters are handled in other countries. One of the conclusions of the consultants' report is that the Government must give a lead in improving the celebration of our national day: I hope that the Executive has proved by its actions that we intend to give that lead in the long term, and we hope that Parliament will be our partner in those endeavours.

What most concerned us about the bill was the possibility that a false impression of what it can do would be created. The joint statement that has been agreed with the member in charge of the bill helps to address such concerns. Copies of the statement have been made available at the back of the chamber. It underlines the economic and promotional opportunities that St Andrew's day offers and stresses that we should not be complacent about any potential negative economic impact of adding an additional holiday to people's annual entitlement. It also makes it clear that the bill's purpose is to encourage employers and employees to substitute an existing local holiday in favour of a national St Andrew's day holiday. The bill will not in itself create a national holiday; therefore, the statement makes it clear that the bill is symbolic, but provides an important signal in favour of greater celebration of our national day.

The bill has a symbolic aspect, but it also represents an extremely important contribution. It will combine with the initiative that we are taking to improve the celebration of St Andrew's day. Therefore, I urge members to endorse the joint statement and—more important—the principles of the bill.

15:42

**Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Dennis Canavan on getting his bill this far. To get a bill to this stage is no mean achievement for a back bencher. I hope that members will agree to pass the bill at stage 1 so that it will progress to stage 2 and eventually become law. A holiday for St Andrew's day is, of course, a long-standing Scottish National Party

policy, so we welcome this first step towards making that day a holiday.

Scotland has among the lowest number of bank holidays in Europe: we have eight, while other countries in Europe have 10 or 12 and some have even more. An extra day's holiday for Scots would therefore still leave us with well below the average number of bank holidays in Europe.

Some people have given the impression that the business community in its entirety is against having an extra day's holiday, but that is simply not true. Dennis Canavan mentioned the Scottish Retail Consortium. The SRC supplied the Enterprise and Culture Committee with figures that showed that sales from a St Andrew's day holiday on a Monday could represent as much as £88 million, which would be an increase of almost £30 million on sales on a normal Monday. The Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions said that an additional bank holiday would encourage important growth in the tourism industry, particularly from the domestic market. If we are serious about growing our tourism market by 50 per cent over the next 10 years, initiatives such as an extra bank holiday are exactly what we need, rather than robbing Peter to pay Paul by taking a holiday away from elsewhere in the year.

St Andrew's day could be the linchpin in a tourism marketing campaign that would take us from the autumn gold campaign to the hogmanay celebrations and on through the Celtic connections festival in Glasgow. A series of winter festivals for tourists would do a great deal to boost tourism—we could use St Andrew's day as the launch pad for those festivals.

Those who are fearful of an extra holiday on St Andrew's day need look no further than Ireland to see the potential of such a holiday. Ireland uses St Patrick's day to help to grow its tourism industry and its export markets, and to attract people to do business in and with Ireland. An economic survey found that St Patrick's day is worth €80 million to Dublin alone. Money is spent on food, drink, transport, accommodation and tickets for events. Some 29 per cent of people who visit Dublin are from overseas and 47 per cent of them come specifically for the St Patrick's day celebrations—in fact, 81 per cent said that they would return to Ireland because of the experience of their St Patrick's day trip.

St Patrick's day is an enormous success worldwide. It allows Ireland to sell Ireland the brand around the world and provides a marketing opportunity that most countries would give their right arm for. Professor Tom Devine, of the centre for Irish and Scottish studies, has said:

"It is no accident that the Irish have raised their national profile above those of their neighbours."

He went on to say that

"It is a hard one to quantify in terms of Irish punts, but their celebration and marketing of St Patrick's Day has been a huge factor in the Irish economic miracle."

Normal countries around the world have a day on which to celebrate their history and culture, but Scotland has for far too long lacked such a day, which would give us a platform for the expansion of a celebration of all things Scottish and give a particular boost to our artistic and cultural communities. The SNP believes that it would be a fantastic opportunity for Scotland and its people if we were fully to embrace a St Andrew's day holiday. We need to put into practice what the Irish have already done; we need to learn that lesson. If we do that, we will reap the rewards. If we do not, it will be because of the fear-of-everything-Scottish faction on the Lib-Lab benches who oppose an extra holiday for Scots.

The SNP will support the bill. However, if the proposal is simply to substitute St Andrew's day for another holiday, that is not good enough and the bill does not go far enough. Next May, voters will get the chance to elect an SNP Government led by Alex Salmond. That Government will not rob Scots of one of their precious holidays; instead, we will ensure that Scotland gets an extra day's holiday to celebrate our history and culture and to market Scotland as the ideal place to visit and in which to live, work, do business and enjoy a day off.

15:46

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Stewart Maxwell was doing so well until his final point.

I join members in commending Dennis Canavan for the way in which he has pursued the issue and for lodging his member's bill. He has done a tremendous amount of work in consulting interested parties, rallying support and building a coalition of interests to back his proposal. The Scottish Conservatives support the general principles of the bill and will be happy to vote for it at decision time.

It is almost a year since Parliament last debated the bill, back in October 2005. It is a great pity that it has taken the Executive a year to come round to the view that the bill should be supported. We have seen parliamentary time and expense squandered when we could have been making progress.

From day one, the Conservatives accepted that the bill would not, of itself, create a public holiday; in fact, it is not legislatively competent for the Scottish Parliament to create a new holiday or to have it enforced. The bill is simply permissive in that it will allow banks the opportunity to take a

holiday on St Andrew's day if they wish to do so. The support of the Executive was crucial to the bill because of that. Without the Executive's saying that it would take a lead in trying to encourage the taking of St Andrew's day as a holiday and doing that with its own employees in the public sector, the bill would be pointless. It was, therefore, vital that the Executive show its support.

The Conservative position all along has been that we do not wish to see an additional holiday granted. The Enterprise and Culture Committee heard strong evidence from employers that they do not want there to be an additional day's holiday. With respect to what Dennis Canavan and Stewart Maxwell have said, that was the weight of the evidence that the committee heard. Why do employers not want an extra holiday? It is because it would lead to extra costs; small businesses in particular would struggle to compete with larger rivals that would have the staff to cover the additional public holiday. The Department of Trade and Industry has estimated that there would, at 2000 prices, be a cost to Scotland of about £160 million for that additional day's holiday, which is probably equivalent to £200 million today. I am, therefore, pleased that the Executive has come round to our view that we should have a holiday on St Andrew's day but in substitution for a holiday at a different time of year.

**Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab):** Does the member acknowledge that the debate about whether to have an additional holiday is in danger of descending into a phoney debate, and that the joint statement that was issued by Dennis Canavan and the First Minister clarifies that the bill does not legislate, and would never have legislated, for that?

**Murdo Fraser:** Susan Deacon has made a fair point. However, I point out that the statement from the First Minister and Dennis Canavan says that if the bill is passed it will

"encourage employers and employees to substitute an existing local holiday in favour of a National St Andrew's Day holiday".

That is the point that I have just made. It is a pity that that principle could not have been agreed to a year ago; instead, time and resources were wasted waiting for the Executive to come round to that view.

Last October, in the previous stage 1 debate on the bill, the Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business, George Lyon, said:

"The principle that he"—

meaning me—

"and the other Tories adopt is that St Andrew's day should

be a substitute for an existing bank holiday. If that happened, which bank holiday would we choose? If the holiday was a substitute not for a bank holiday but for a local holiday, how would that be achieved? How would we ensure in practice that workers had the day off?"—[*Official Report*, 6 October 2005; c 19899.]

Those might be valid questions, but they are questions to which the minister must now find the answers. It is a pity that, instead of being prepared to listen to the arguments at the time, he asked such spurious questions.

At least we have been consistent from day one. I very much welcome the fact that other parties have come round to our way of thinking; once again, the Conservatives are setting the agenda. We are delighted to support the bill's general principles and look forward to celebrating St Andrew's day with a holiday from this year onwards.

15:51

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I, too, congratulate Dennis Canavan on bringing us to this point. I also thank my fellow committee members and the committee's clerks for their work.

I found it most interesting to examine the bill's different ramifications. I should say that I was persuaded quite early on of the bill's merits, particularly after Dennis Canavan spoke personally to me about it. I echo the tributes that other members have paid to his skills of persuasion.

As almost everything that can be said about why we are where we are has already been said, I will change the agenda slightly and talk briefly about St Andrew himself. He was not only a follower of John the Baptist, but one of Jesus's earliest followers. He is also the patron saint of Russia and Romania. There are at least three or four different legends or stories about how he became the patron saint of Scotland, but he had certainly attained that position by the time of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320.

Members have mentioned St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, whose day is hugely celebrated by Irish people in many English-speaking parts of the world, particularly the United States. It is also worth remembering that he is the patron saint of many other countries including—much to one's surprise—Nigeria, and of excluded people and engineers. In any case, Ireland has certainly used St Patrick's day as a marketing tool very much to its economic advantage. As I pointed out in committee, we have a huge opportunity to make use of St Andrew's international links in the same way that the Irish have made use of St Patrick.

When we did our spadework and got together all the statistics and facts, especially the results of a poll of 1,000 or so Scots, it became evident that there is a lot of enthusiasm for making St Andrew's day a holiday, particularly among young people. Once the bill is passed, we should use the holiday to focus on forging international connections among the young people of Russia, Romania, Greece and Scotland. We could, for example, have exchanges between schools, youth groups and communities. Why not? Fostering friendship and an understanding among young people that we are all fellow travellers in a fragile world can do nothing but good for the cause of international co-operation and development and—ultimately—peace. We can translate much of what a saint who lived at the time of Jesus and, indeed, Jesus himself were about into something that could do a lot of good in a broader international context.

I commend the work that has been done on this matter. I supported the bill from the word go and believe that its general principles will be approved unanimously by Parliament. It is quite an achievement for a back bencher to have got this far—I congratulate Dennis Canavan on doing so.

15:54

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Enterprise and Culture Committee, to recommend that Parliament agree to the principles of the bill. I would also like to add my congratulations to Dennis Canavan, who has shown leadership and tenacity. I do not want to dwell on the history of the past year or so, although there may be lessons to be learned, both by committees and by the Executive, about how we handle bills. The positions that were taken last year could perhaps have been handled slightly differently.

Once Parliament had decided to refer the bill back for further consideration by the Enterprise and Culture Committee, we decided to do two things. First, we decided to accept that the remit that we had been given would be fulfilled in the spirit as well as to the letter of what Parliament had agreed. Secondly, we thought that the best thing to do was to begin by garnering original research on St Andrew's day, and on the three different potential impacts of a bank holiday on St Andrew's day—the economic impact, the cultural impact and the social impact.

As Jamie Stone said, St Andrew's day is celebrated in 30 countries throughout the world. St Andrew is the patron saint of a number of countries, not just of Scotland. The consultants who were appointed decided to select four countries in an effort to benchmark and compare the likely impact on Scotland of a bank holiday for

St Andrew's day, based on what happened with St Patrick's day in Ireland, Bastille day in France, independence day in the USA and the national day in Sweden. Although that exercise was commissioned by the Enterprise and Culture Committee, and supported by funding from the Conveners Group, we went out of our way to ensure that the Executive was properly represented at official level on the steering group of the body that oversaw that work, so that at every stage we could ensure that the Executive was fully aware of how the study was going, what the findings of the research were and what the final report would look like.

Working in co-operation with the committee, the bill's sponsor and the Executive has got us to where we are today. The Executive now accepts the general principles of the bill, the committee unanimously accepted those principles, and it looks as if we are going to have unanimous support—or certainly substantial majority support—for the bill today.

I would like to mention one other point that the committee has stressed. Passing the bill will not, of itself, be enough to ensure that St Andrew's day is properly celebrated, either at home or abroad. The information that we have available through the consultancy and research exercise that we commissioned gives us a host of new ideas, which I hope will be pursued by the Executive and by others to ensure that we have a truly comprehensive programme of celebration for St Andrew's day.

Finally, I would like to make a recommendation to the Minister for Parliamentary Business. It would be wholly appropriate if we could time the stage 3 debate on the bill for 30 November this year. That would send out a loud and clear message about a Parliament that is unanimous in its recommendation to the people.

15:58

**Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab):** I will support the general principles of the bill and I welcome the joint statement from Dennis Canavan and the First Minister, which has gone some considerable way towards achieving clarification of the bill and agreeing a joint way forward. We should welcome the sensible and pragmatic approach that is being taken. That approach has the potential to achieve a broad basis of support and to enable a range of activities to be developed to mark St Andrew's day.

That is why it has been disappointing to hear the front-bench speeches from the SNP and the Tories, who still seek somehow to claim credit for suggesting the ideas. I recognise the contribution

that Dennis Canavan's initiative in introducing a member's bill has made to getting the issue debated and discussed. It was disappointing during earlier debates—it has happened again today—to hear suggestions that any one party more than the others wants to celebrate our Scottishness. We have to avoid descending into a bidding war over whose tartan is the brightest or whose kilt is the biggest. This debate offers us a good chance to come together to do practical things that will be widely welcomed.

I guess I am saying that the means justify the end, and I am pleased with where we have got to today. However, it is right to ask questions about how we got here and why it has taken us so long. The Enterprise and Culture Committee has asked about the lessons that must be learned.

The joint statement from the First Minister and Dennis Canavan says specifically that the bill is largely symbolic. We are consciously moving towards putting primary legislation on the statute book for symbolic purposes. At the very least, we ought to be careful that that does not act as a precedent.

We should consider how the Executive and the Parliament can co-operate better at an earlier stage of members' bills, especially when there is broad agreement on the general aspirations. However, I agree with the convener of the Enterprise and Culture Committee that the Parliament can learn lessons too. What do MSPs mean when they sign a member's bill proposal? Are we saying that we want the issue to be debated, or are we saying that we will support the bill right the way through? There is confusion there, and we should think about devising mechanisms that sit somewhere between a member's bill proposal, and all that goes with that, and a member's motion as a means of getting ideas debated and developed.

We must be clear from the outset about what bills will and will not do. I have read and reread the policy memorandum and the financial memorandum that accompany this bill. They are clear that the bill's direct impact will be relatively limited, but they also assess in detail the costs and benefits of an additional holiday, which the bill will not deliver. The joint statement went some way towards providing clarification, but we will have to work hard in the months and years ahead to be clear about what the Parliament is legislating for.

When we put in place practical legislative measures, we should consider what is happening elsewhere. Only last week, the DTI completed a consultation on public holidays and bank holidays, and I am not convinced that we kept as close an eye as we might have done on that parallel piece of work. Having listened to Stewart Maxwell's speech, I am interested to know what part

Westminster SNP MPs played in feeding into the DTI exercise and what steps they took to support the Government's position in considering extending the provision of holidays.

We are moving in the right direction and I welcome that. As well as considering St Andrew's day, I hope that the Executive will consider the wider guddle so that parents, schools, banks and shops can all be off on the same day in the future.

16:03

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I join others in congratulating Dennis Canavan on his hard work on the bill. The bill has had wide support, with 75 members signing the original proposal. Some members have pointed out that we had a debate on the issue almost a year ago. In that debate, the Executive got itself into the bizarre situation of opposing the committee's unanimous stage 1 report. A year on, we must ask the question: what exactly has changed in the past year to make the Executive do such a spectacular U-turn?

In the debate a year ago, Tom McCabe stated that there were two very important reasons why the bill should be rejected. The first was that

"we should legislate only when it is necessary to do so"

and the second was that

"when we legislate, we should be able to give practical effect to that legislation."

The minister then stated:

"the bill does not satisfy those two important criteria."—  
[*Official Report*, 6 October 2005; c 19875.]

A year on, the bill remains exactly the same and it still does not fulfil the two criteria that the minister said were so important. Given that the minister will support the bill tonight, it is clear that those criteria were not quite as important as he made them out to be.

I thought that the Executive might have changed its mind as a result of the Experian report that the committee commissioned and published. However, when the minister appeared before the committee he said that that was not the case because, although the report was generally positive, it did not provide decisive evidence in favour of having a St Andrew's day holiday. To be perfectly frank, I remain in the dark about why the Executive has made such a spectacular U-turn. I suspect that the real reason is that, in the light of his poor ratings in the opinion polls, the First Minister is becoming increasingly nervous about his prospects for next year's election and is desperate to wrap himself in the saltire.

I have little doubt that true economic, social and cultural benefits will be derived from Parliament's

support for the bill and its creation of a St Andrew's day holiday as a day of national celebration. Although I welcome the fact that the Executive has agreed to support the bill at this stage, I share Stewart Maxwell's regret that the new holiday, rather than being added to the present list of holidays, will substitute for an existing local holiday. Given that Scotland's number of public holidays is one of the smallest in the European Union, a more socially progressive Executive would have been prepared to establish an additional holiday.

The minister stated in his letter to the committee of 11 September that the St Andrew's day holiday should replace an existing local holiday. In the committee, I mentioned to him the existence of regional holidays. Perhaps he will clarify whether he expects a regional holiday or an existing bank holiday to be replaced.

In the debate almost a year ago, the Executive's amendment stated that we should seek

"to uphold the consensus across the Parliament that we should only legislate where necessary".

I am delighted that the Executive has accepted that the consensus in Scotland is that we should have a national holiday to celebrate our nation and that the minister and the Executive parties will join the more enlightened members who supported the bill the first time round.

16:07

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** Last night I attended the inaugural dinner for the globalscot network, a prestigious event that was attended by guests from all over the world who had come to celebrate their roots and to discuss the contribution that they can make to Scotland. Listening to the conversations at last night's dinner brought home to me just how much we have to celebrate here in Scotland. Many people spoke highly of the sense of confidence that is developing in the country.

I would not like to claim that we are the best wee country in the world, but there is no doubt that we are a great wee country that has a great deal to be proud of. We have a history of travel, innovation and discovery to be proud of and our culture, environment and food are renowned around the world. Once again we have our own Parliament, which has a magnificent building. We have a patron saint, a flag and an annual date for celebration, but only as a result of a member's bill—I commend Dennis Canavan's tenacity—have we had the opportunity to investigate and focus on where we have missed out by failing to enshrine that day in our calendar.

The evidence that the committee received overwhelmingly supported the creation of a



holiday on St Andrew's day. Even people who had concerns about establishing a new holiday wanted to associate themselves with the principle that we should celebrate the national day, which appears to be well celebrated in many other parts of the world. In our own country, on the other hand, it passes relatively unnoticed.

The Experian report that the committee commissioned to examine the economic, social and cultural benefits of celebrating St Andrew's day provided some highly encouraging case studies of how other countries celebrate their national days. Ireland offers a good example of how our national day could develop. The fact that large public events are held and numerous festivals take place in towns and villages throughout the country ensures genuine community involvement. Ireland's day is an official bank holiday, but it was celebrated more abroad than at home until the Government decided to rectify the situation. That investment paid off and there is now a five-day festival, with a significant number of overseas visitors coming to Dublin and giving a huge boost to the tourism business.

Sweden, in legally regulating its national day in 1983 and establishing it as a public holiday in 2005, was concerned about the economic impact of an additional public holiday that would bring its total number of public holidays to 11. As we have heard, we have a mere eight. The Swedish Government researched the impact on gross domestic product of the additional holiday, but its report was not conclusive and was difficult to evaluate. Reducing such days of celebration to mere economics seems to me to miss the point, as Sweden found out.

Celebrating our national day will imbue our country with a sense of pride and self-confidence, which will be well rewarded by encouraging investment and stemming outward migration. I welcome the Executive's change of heart and hope that the bill, if it is passed, will provide the legislative framework for a national day of celebration. I also hope that, over time, the day will develop into an additional holiday that truly reflects the pride and confidence that our great wee country deserves.

16:11

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):** Last night, when I looked up what I had said in last year's debate on the bill, it seemed a little like groundhog day, because in the morning debate that day I had spoken in an SNP debate on the economy. However, we are where we are.

Last year, we said that Dennis Canavan deserved commendation for his inspiration and his drive. As many members have said, he also

deserves great commendation for his tenacity in persisting with his idea. Fundamentally, a great deal of benefit can accrue not just to the Scottish economy but, as others have said, to the broader cultural life of our country, if we make much more than we have done so far of St Andrew's day. We should recognise that and not be afraid to do that.

Michael Matheson asked what had changed in the past year regarding the bill and I confess that I asked myself the same question. I can see that there is a detailed report from Experian and that the Enterprise and Culture Committee has done more work, much of which is good and worth while, but I cannot understand what has changed in the broader principle of the bill because the bill is the same, as has been said.

**Susan Deacon:** Does the member accept that the clear and agreed statement from the member in charge of the bill and the First Minister, while perhaps it ought not to have been such a long time in coming, has gone a considerable way towards making clear what the bill will achieve and setting out shared aspirations for the bill? The fact is that we were not there a year ago, even if we should have been.

**Derek Brownlee:** I agree that the joint statement is positive, but I am not sure what is in it that could not have been signed up to on 6 October 2005. That is the broader point.

When the minister spoke in the stage 1 debate last year, he made a number of fair points about the nature of the bill. As Susan Deacon said, the bill is largely symbolic and when we consider such legislation there is a danger that we might overestimate its impact.

As Michael Matheson said, the minister made the point last year about the fundamental principle of not legislating when it is not necessary to do so. That is a valid point to which we probably ought to pay more attention, but we frequently do not do so in this place. I do not understand what changed the Executive's mind and, frankly, perhaps it does not matter. Perhaps the fact that there has been a change of heart and that we now have the joint statement is all that we should be concerned about. However, did the Executive conduct its own research into the potential impact of the bill prior to the previous stage 1 debate? Was the Experian report necessary or is it in effect a £25,000 fig leaf for the minister? That is a fundamental question, which we should consider.

Serious questions arise with regard to procedure. The original committee report on the bill was unanimous, but the Executive sent it back. However, I see little in the substance of the second unanimous report that was not contained in the first.

Dennis Canavan has produced an imaginative proposal that deserves support and I hope that it will receive unanimous support this evening. I am a little bit puzzled about the Executive's role, but perhaps we will leave it at that. However, I hope that we will today make a clear statement about the Parliament's role and the importance that we ought to attribute to our patron saint.

16:14

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I add to the litany of praise for Dennis Canavan. I am jealous of his skills, because he has persuaded the Executive to go halfway toward his proposal, whereas I recently spoke to 55 amendments to the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill, but failed to persuade the Executive to support a single one. He has skills that I do not have.

**Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Donald Gorrie:** All right—if the member wants to land herself in it.

**Karen Whitefield:** I have no desire to land myself in it. Does Mr Gorrie accept that whether his amendments were successful was entirely up to the Communities Committee and that, to date, the committee has decided that his amendments did not have merit?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Let us stay with the bill that we are discussing.

**Donald Gorrie:** I was commenting on the Deputy Minister for Communities' position, which is relevant—the position of the member's committee is up to her.

Much abuse has been hurled at the Executive for changing its view. One of the problems in politics is that, if a Government takes a view that on reflection it thinks is a bit stupid and so changes its mind, it is given all sorts of abuse. We are encouraged in the good book to take pleasure in sinners who repent, so we should proceed on the basis that it is better late than never. The Executive has at least gone halfway to a sensible approach.

On the issue of an additional holiday, as Susan Deacon and others said, the general situation with holidays is a complete jungle. Another of my unsuccessful stories is that, in my 26 years as a councillor, I made repeated attempts to sort out the holidays in Edinburgh and Lothian, but failed totally. The situation is a complete muddle and we should try to get a grip on it. The idea that the whole economy would collapse if we had another holiday is ridiculous. I hope that we continue to press for the establishment of a serious holiday.

We have made advances. The saltire—St Andrew's flag—is more prominent and prevalent

than it used to be, although we should make more of it. We should regard a St Andrew's day festival as an opportunity to enjoy ourselves and to make money. St Andrew is our patron saint because of good marketing by the monks of St Andrews who wanted to establish their pilgrim trade. That is why our patron saint is St Andrew, rather than a more local saint such as St Columba or one of the saints from the south-west of Scotland. That gives us a good lead to have an international day, as Jamie Stone suggested, with festivals and activities of all sorts so that we enjoy ourselves, encourage tourism and make money. Some people say that the date is a bad one, but that is wrong—we need a bit of lifting of our spirits in late November. It would be a good day for shopping and would stimulate the economy a lot.

In all respects, we should celebrate St Andrew's day. Voting for the bill would be a step forward, but we must keep up the pressure so that we get the full loaf. Let us enjoy eating half a loaf, but start working to get the other half.

16:18

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** I will not spare Dennis Canavan's blushes. His endeavour, experience and pragmatism put some other members who are in the chamber to shame. On Tuesday, Tony Blair underlined the importance of politicians, as well as being pragmatic, having the confidence and self-belief to take tough decisions. On the other hand, everyone loves a holiday—even at the end of November, when it is dark and miserable and we are saving for Christmas.

There was always going to be a debate about the economic advantages or disadvantages of the proposal and that issue is still up in the air. There is also an argument about whether we should celebrate St Andrew, a Christian saint who never set foot in Scotland, on the ground that that is hardly inclusive. That said, I am of the view that we should use a national day as an opportunity to celebrate Scotland and Scotland's diversity. We have at least heard some ideas—from Alex Neil, Donald Gorrie and others—about working together to make it an exciting day, on which to celebrate the best of Scotland.

Whether an additional holiday is necessary is still debatable. It would hardly be an inclusive national celebration if various sections of the population did not get the holiday. What sort of celebration would it be for low-paid workers in the private sector, who already have the lowest holiday entitlement? Some would say that such a celebration would allow the gap to grow between the people at the top, who get the holidays, and the people at the bottom. What is clear from today's debate is that we are not in any way

addressing discrimination against the low paid with regard to working time, holiday entitlement and work-life balance. To suggest that that is what we are doing is not to take the issue seriously. Two million people in the UK—tens of thousands of them in Scotland—do not receive any public holidays. If we really wish to end the discrimination that divides our workforce, we must end the practice of excluding low-paid workers from public holidays and making them take them as part of their annual leave.

Stewart Maxwell has been the workers' champion here today. Continuing his theme, I am pleased to say that the Labour Party takes those issues seriously. It has a proud record in that respect and, for the first time ever, has addressed legal rights to annual holidays in the United Kingdom. There is the working time directive and maternity and paternity leave. As we would expect—and as Susan Deacon alluded to—we are going further. Working with business and trade unions, we will ensure that those who do not receive bank holidays will receive those extra eight days' paid holiday as a right.

Stewart Maxwell says that the SNP will campaign on the basis of an extra day's holiday. The campaign slogan from Labour will easily match that: "One day for the favoured few with the SNP; eight days for all with Labour". Of course, we can guarantee those rights only through Westminster. The SNP may say that it could give workers the same, or perhaps even more, but in the chaos of separatism would it be in a position to offer workers the rights that they deserve? As Jim Mather and I know, it is the bosses, not the workers, who determine employment policies in the SNP. If the SNP ever comes to power, will it guarantee that workers will not lose out on the eight days' extra paid holidays that they would get if they were still in the UK, or will it continue to give more to those who have most and lock out the have-nots, on the basis of some spurious competitive example in the chaos that would follow separation?

16:23

**Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP):** The minister and other members were correct to point out the promotional opportunities that are offered by the celebration of St Andrew's day as a day for Scotland. As the First Minister commented when he spoke at the globalscot conference, it comes back to Scotland having self-confidence. It is about taking pride in our identity.

Whatever Jamie Stone may say about St Andrew and our patron saint, let us remember that we live in a secular Scotland. The day may be built around our patron saint, but it is a celebration not so much of St Andrew but of what the day does to

identify Scottishness. There are good arguments for our patron saint to be Columba or Ninian, but it is St Andrew and we should celebrate him. Celebrating St Andrew's day, in Scotland or abroad, is done on a secular basis and to promote, support and maintain that Scottish identity. If we Scots do not take confidence in the day and celebrate it, how can we justify promoting it and using it as an opportunity to sell Scotland abroad? Indeed, considerable opportunities are open to the Irish diaspora in the celebration of St Pat's day.

St Andrew's day is and has been celebrated. I believe that the Presiding Officer will be heading off to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner of the St Andrew's Society of the State of New York in November. That society is by no means the oldest St Andrew's society—the St Andrew's Society of Charleston was formed in 1729. Celebrations take place not just in Scotland, but around the globe.

We are a small nation of 5 million people, yet there are 40 million to 80 million people around the world who claim some Scottish identity. We have an opportunity to bond with them and to get some benefits out of that global Scots identity, as was mentioned by Shiona Baird. The St Andrew's day opportunity has to be built upon. The Irish do the same thing successfully. We have to work at it and take it seriously here. We need to use the day as an opportunity not just to celebrate in whatever fashion we choose—many of the ideas that members from all round the chamber have expressed are perfectly sensible—but to go forth and speak with the Scottish diaspora.

There are some problems in the United States, as the minister and others know. The proximity of St Andrew's day to thanksgiving day causes problems in the US, but that is not insurmountable, as the St Andrew's Society of the State of New York and organisations elsewhere have shown. It is certainly not an impediment in Sydney, where not only is St Andrew's day celebrated but the Scottish Australian Heritage Council builds a whole Scottish week around it. When the Irish reach St Patrick's day, they ensure that a minister speaks to the Irish community, and indeed to every community in Australia, about the benefits of Irishness and the things that modern Ireland has, as well as making the link with what went on in the past.

St Andrew's day is an opportunity for us in Scotland to do the same. It is not simply about celebrating the day at home; it should be about taking confidence in being Scottish, rather than defining ourselves as not being English or anything else. It gives us the opportunity to go forth and sell Scotland as a modern, contemporary society and to link up with Scottish communities abroad, many of which have held on to a strong

Scottish identity despite Scotland having given them remarkably little.

I fully support what Dennis Canavan has done—and, to its credit, what the Executive has done, albeit belatedly—to reach this stage. We need to celebrate St Andrew's day at home, but it is also a huge opportunity abroad.

16:27

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** As Derek Brownlee pointed out, this feels more like a debate on groundhog day than a debate on St Andrew's day. I am saddened that, despite the significant progress that we have made with the bill, there are still some moaning faces in certain areas of the chamber, with some members not celebrating the progress that we are making but instead moaning about what I think was the sensible decision last year to refer the matter back to the Enterprise and Culture Committee to allow a further and more detailed examination of the proposal.

The report that the committee commissioned from the consultants is valuable. It has highlighted a number of important issues. For example, it makes the important point that there is already an annual week-long festival around 30 November in the town of St Andrews, which is in my constituency. It features a host of events and activities, including traditional and classical music concerts, arts and crafts exhibitions, ceilidhs, dance, drama, the St Andrew's day gala ball and a fireworks display. That important week is supported by Fife Council and it levers in a significant amount of funding from private sources.

That is a good basis on which to celebrate St Andrew's day in the future. I hope that not just the big cities but the smaller towns and cities and St Andrews in particular will be involved in the Executive's proposals for extending the celebration of the day. It is important to view St Andrew's day as the start of Scotland's winter festival, as is the practice in Edinburgh. We can promote Scotland as a place to come and celebrate the festivities of Christmas and new year, with St Andrew's day and its weekend serving as the launch for that important festival period. I hope that other cities will look to what Edinburgh is doing in that respect and that they will take St Andrew's day as the day when, across Scotland, we turn on the Christmas lights—rather than turning them on in the middle of October, as increasingly seems to be the case. We should celebrate that festival period with Scotland at the heart of it. Scotland knows how to have a party, and perhaps we should start that party around St Andrew's day.

I regret some of the contributions that we have heard from other members. Michael Matheson

gave a particularly sad speech. Almost exactly a year ago, when we debated this bill at stage 1, he said:

"The Executive wants to kick the bill back to the committee because it would not like the result. It wants to send back the bill in the hope that the next stage 1 report will recommend that the Parliament vote down the general principles."—[*Official Report*, 6 October 2005; c 19880-81.]

We said that that was not the intention. We said that the bill was being sent back to the committee so that there could be a proper discussion about how we could develop the proposal in a way that would achieve support across Scotland. There were moaning people on the SNP benches who denied that and accused people such as me who have consistently supported the idea of having a St Andrew's day holiday of somehow selling out and of kowtowing to the Executive, as Michael Matheson put it. Well, he was wrong then and he is wrong now. I am saddened that he has come into the debate today with exactly the same attitude that he had a year ago and that, rather than celebrating where we have got to, he has decided to go for the same negative and sad line that he went for last time.

I have been consistent in my position on St Andrew's day. I have always said that we should have a St Andrew's day holiday on which we celebrate Scotland but that it should not be an additional holiday but should be a substitution for one of the existing holidays. Despite what the SNP and others claim, we do not have a significant shortage of public holidays in Scotland. As well as the formal bank holidays, there are many local holidays. Indeed, some places, such as Edinburgh, seem to be on holiday every other Monday. I think that we should have a holiday in the second half of the year instead of having one among the plethora that we have in the first half.

I welcome the way in which we have moved forward. I think that the committee's new report is better than its last one, which I thought was weak. The Executive's position is perfectly understandable. I support the proposals and hope that the bill can go forward in a way that reaches consensus across the chamber and that we will have a little less moaning from the SNP.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** Before we go to winding-up speeches, I inform members that I expect there to be some discussion on the Standards and Public Appointments Committee motion in the name of Brian Adam. I therefore intend to be out of this debate by 16:55. Everybody will get the time that has been allotted to them, but I ask them to stick to it.

16:32

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am pleased to close for Labour in a debate that has emphasised a desire across the Parliament for St Andrew's day to be a national day of celebration and a holiday. The fact that so many members signed up to Dennis Canavan's bill showed the great level of support across the chamber for the intentions of his bill, although, as we have heard, those intentions might not be as easy to achieve as we might initially have thought.

Iain Smith is right to say that we have benefited from having taken the time to consider the issues around the bill and develop a partnership approach to taking it forward, although the SNP has demeaned that approach today. We come to mark St Andrew's day in a way that is fitting for a day of national celebration. That is why members on the Labour benches warmly welcomed the joint statement by the First Minister and Dennis Canavan. The statement was crucial in ensuring that the effect and intention of the bill will be widely understood. As Susan Deacon said, we must be clear about what the bills that we pass will achieve. Just as important, we must ensure that people outwith the Parliament are clear about the effect of those bills. I think that the experience of the process that the bill has gone through should be reflected on by the Executive and Parliament.

The debate around the bill has been helpful in clarifying the fact that it will take more than a bill on its own to achieve the intentions of the bill. Stewart Maxwell was wrong in his criticism of the Executive's position. His strategy would fail to gain the broad support that is required for this measure. I say to him and Michael Matheson that no party or person in the chamber has a greater claim than any other party or person has to taking pride in St Andrew's day.

Further, I disagree with Stewart Maxwell and Murdo Fraser's view that the extra time that we have had in which to debate this measure has not been useful. Whatever people feel about the quality of the report of the Enterprise and Culture Committee, the fact that there was further time to consider the issues has been helpful in that it enabled us to reach the point of agreement that we have reached and also to ensure that we are aware of what the bill does and what other measures will need to be taken to make it work. As the minister and Dennis Canavan said, by taking a lead in organising events of celebration and encouraging local people and organisations to organise their own events, the Executive will encourage people across Scotland to take St Andrew's day as a holiday and to take part in events to celebrate it.

We should think carefully about what we want St Andrew's day to mean for us. Obviously, we hope

that there will be economic benefits. However, I agree with Shiona Baird that the issue is not only about economics. What is it, exactly, that we are celebrating? As Donald Gorrie and Kenny MacAskill suggested, some people will ask why we should have St Andrew and not, for example, St Columba as our national saint. As Duncan McNeil suggested, some will ask why, in a multicultural, multifaith country such as Scotland, we should celebrate a Christian saint at all. However, as Jamie Stone said, it is in the significance that St Andrew has to many that we may find the answer to those questions. St Andrew is not only our patron saint; he is the patron saint of Sicily, Greece, Russia, Romania and Malta. I was pleased to hear the First Minister emphasise the fact that he regards St Andrew's day as an opportunity for Scotland to celebrate its cultural diversity and membership of the international community. Dennis Canavan, too, endorsed those goals today.

For many years, the Scottish Trades Union Congress has used St Andrew's day to celebrate anti-racism and internationalism. It is fitting for a modern Scotland to celebrate not simply by reflecting on our past but by cherishing the new and future Scotland and celebrating the people from a variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds who have made their homes here. I hope that the Parliament will pass the bill and, with its help, I look forward to a national day of celebrations that will be embraced by all the people of Scotland.

16:35

**Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Dennis Canavan on the pivotal role that he has played in securing a new St Andrew's day holiday. I hope that it is not unconnected with the happy days that he spent camping in St Andrews as a schoolboy.

Last week, in the debate on a greener, fairer Scotland, I quoted from something that I wrote 16 years ago and I claimed, somewhat shamelessly, that I was being energy efficient by recycling an old speech. It seems to me that a number of speakers succumbed to the temptation to do that during this afternoon's debate. What is new, of course, is the First Minister's conversion to the cause of celebrating our patron saint's day as a bank holiday. However, I do not condemn the Executive for not backing the Conservatives' stance during the first stage 1 debate. I am content to reflect, with Donald Gorrie, that angels rejoice when sinners repent.

There is no doubt that, as many speakers reminded us, Scotland has suffered from the fact that it does not have a focal day around which to celebrate all things Scottish. As Stewart Maxwell and Murdo Fraser pointed out, an analysis of the

St Patrick's day festival in Dublin in 2003 estimates that €80 million was generated for the local economy. However, compulsory holidays have a knock-on effect on manufacturers and others, who must count the cost in terms of lost production.

Various of the comrades, including Scott Barrie, who is not here, and Karen Gillon, in the previous stage 1 debate, were particularly vexed at what they regard as a hidden Tory agenda to get rid of May day. However, in a spirit of conciliation, what with new socialist parties apparently springing up in the Parliament every other day—there were about six socialist parties here the last time I counted—maybe they do still need something to unite them, so why not May day? Frankly, I do not give a fig about which holiday is swapped for St Andrew's day.

In the stage 1 debate last year, Tom McCabe tried to convince us that St Andrew's day could be celebrated in other ways without a holiday. I am glad that Jack McConnell obviously did not agree with him.

Iain Smith mentioned the St Andrews festival. As a former member of its committee, I remember the great difficulty that we had in building a programme of events without having a recognised focal date on which we could concentrate. An impressive array of events has already been organised for this year's celebrations and I encourage as many of you as possible to make the trip up to St Andrews to take part in activities such as the golden spurtle competition for the best bowl of porridge or the giant conker competition that has been organised by the St Andrews botanic society.

Of course, it is not only St Andrews but Scottish tourism in general that will derive huge benefits if we celebrate our national day with a bank holiday, as other nations do. In 2009, which has been designated the year of homecoming, many of the 25 million expatriate Scots will come back to the old country. A bank holiday on 30 November to celebrate our national day will be a terrific focal point for the year. Who knows, visitors to the country might also welcome the chance to register for a tartan on that day—an imaginative Conservative initiative that will have great tourism benefits and which was launched today by my colleague Jamie McGrigor.

A St Andrew's day bank holiday is an idea whose time has come. I am delighted to add my support for Dennis Canavan's initiative and I acknowledge his tenacity in securing this additional holiday.

16:39

**Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I welcome the chance to take part in this debate, and I welcome the statement that has been signed by the First Minister and Dennis Canavan. We in the SNP understand the dynamics of thin ends of wedges better than most and we see the statement in a positive light. It is probably no surprise that Dennis was graciously grateful for it, but he reminded us of the delay. A year is a significant time in an economy, let alone in politics. He gave us an idea of the potential that has been pent up when he talked about the open-ended list of options for celebration that are now being envisaged and which could be implemented locally, nationally and internationally.

Dennis Canavan told us about the business support that will be forthcoming from people such as Lord Macfarlane and the Scottish Retail Consortium. It was interesting to hear that the conditional support is evolving and coming our way. Indeed, more significantly, we have had more than conditional support from the Executive, so it is seemly and right that we should welcome that statement.

Tom McCabe's statement about the possibility of celebrating Scottish culture and heritage is also exceedingly welcome. However, although I go along with the minister in his focus on young people in a modern Scotland, I add the slight caveat that I am also keen that he should follow the advice that Michael Porter gave to Scotland the Brand about not throwing the baby out with the bath water. We have a lot of cultural, traditional and historical stuff that people expect to see when they think of Scotland and we should not let them down. The key thing is that we have an opportunity to make St Andrew's day a bridge—a means of exporting goods and services and of bringing people back here to enjoy Scotland and its tourism offerings.

My colleague Stewart Maxwell told us that a St Andrew's day holiday is long-standing SNP policy, and also that the lack of a national holiday is a long-standing omission that leaves Scotland somewhat out of kilter with other countries. Kenny MacAskill made a comment about celebrating self-confidence and how that is a prerequisite to the effective selling of Scotland abroad. That is very much the case. It is one thing to play a home game very well, as we did last night, but it is much stronger to play away games. However, I balance that by saying that although we can use it to sell our produce, services, values and tourism, we can also do that with a strictly home game calendar. We own new year; we have Celtic connections, tartan week and the summer holiday season when people want to be in this wonderful country; the Edinburgh festival is at the tail end of the summer;

and we have St Andrew's day. I must say that Iain Smith's idea of using it as a kick-off to the winter season is eminently sensible.

What struck me most today was Alex Neil's view that we could further develop a comprehensive array of prestigious events and keep the momentum going by using 30 November as a target date for taking the bill through to stage 3. Doing that would be wonderfully symbolic and it would restore the sense of urgency that we believe has been missing to date.

16:42

**The Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Service Reform and Parliamentary Business (George Lyon):** There is no doubt that there is support throughout the chamber today for the Parliament giving a strong lead on the issue. Celebrating St Andrew's day has always enjoyed strong support right across the parties.

Of course, there have been differences during our debates on the bill about whether an extra holiday is necessary to mark St Andrew's day properly. Genuinely different views were expressed in the Parliament the last time that we engaged with this issue. In particular, questions have been asked about the economic impact that an additional holiday would have. It was right for the Parliament to ask the committee to carry out further work so that an informed decision could be reached. The bill might be the same as before, but the approach to it through the joint statement has allowed consensus to be reached. As Alex Neil said, it shows how the Parliament, through its committees and the Executive, can work together to reach a consensus about the way forward on an important issue for Scotland.

We have all been clear that Parliament cannot prescribe a holiday for the individual. Ultimately, decisions about whether people want to have a holiday to celebrate our national day are not for Parliament to take. It is for employers and employees throughout Scotland to come to an agreement on that. We can make sure that the legislative framework is in place that will support those decisions. The bill will provide a focus that, over time, will encourage people to participate in a national holiday to celebrate St Andrew's day.

**Susan Deacon:** If the bill reaches the statute book, as appears likely, what steps will the Executive take to ensure that employers and employees are clear on what the bill will provide for, given that the message will go out that we have legislated for a St Andrew's day holiday?

**George Lyon:** The joint statement—which has already been endorsed by the Enterprise and Culture Committee and will, I hope, be endorsed along with the bill by the Parliament today—sets

out the framework that will allow those discussions to take place.

As is pointed out in the report of the consultants who were commissioned by the committee, successful celebrations of national days are built on genuine public feeling. That is not something for which we can legislate, but we can encourage people and take a lead on the matter. Today, we should agree to the general principles of the bill on the basis that it is a symbol of the lead that Parliament wants to give. The provision will add to the focus on St Andrew's day in our public life and, over time, it will help to encourage a genuine public desire to mark St Andrew's day in a way that is appropriate.

The committee's consultants were also clear that there is no point in having a holiday unless there are events to provide a focus for activity on the day. They concluded, and we agree, that the Government has a crucial role to play. We have made a start on that, as Tom McCabe indicated in his opening speech. Since devolution the Scottish Executive has encouraged the celebration of St Andrew's day internationally and has helped to ensure that our national day is celebrated on every continent. I was also glad to hear Ted Brocklebank report on the celebrations that will take place in St Andrews.

**Mr Brocklebank:** Will Mr Lyon attend the events?

**George Lyon:** One never knows. The conker competition sounds interesting.

Last year, we began working to ensure that St Andrew's day is celebrated in Scotland, too. This year, we will do even more to ensure that people around Scotland have the chance to take part.

However, the Government on its own cannot create a national celebration. We in Scotland have every reason to celebrate our culture and history, but we need organisations and people throughout the country to recognise St Andrew's day as an opportunity to do just that by joining with us in making the day one of national celebration. Today, we have a chance to take that lead in marking off a day in the year to celebrate all of Scotland: its traditions, its culture, the modern Scotland, our pride in Scotland's achievements and our confidence in its future. I hope that the Parliament will take that chance, support Dennis Canavan's bill and endorse the joint statement.

16:47

**Dennis Canavan:** I thank all those who participated in what has been an interesting debate. I thank the members of the various parties for the support that they have expressed for the general principles of my bill. Consensus seems to

be breaking out all round us. It is sometimes said that the Scottish Parliament is at its best when we have a degree of cross-party co-operation and it has been heartening to see the amount of cross-party support for the proposed measure.

Although the Scottish Executive's apparent U-turn in its attitude towards my bill has been referred to, it would be churlish of me not to welcome the support, albeit qualified, that the Executive has now given. Like Donald Gorrie, I welcome people's conversion to a cause that they previously opposed or were rather lukewarm about. I, too, have gone some way towards compromising, in that I still believe that an additional holiday would be the best option. However, at this stage I am prepared to go along with the compromise settlement that has been reached with the Executive whereby the new holiday will replace an existing local holiday. To those who think that that is a sell-out, I say that half a loaf is better than no bread at all.

I can understand Murdo Fraser and other Conservative party members—and some businesspeople outside the Parliament—being concerned about the effect on businesses or, more accurately, on some businesses. However, I firmly believe that in the fullness of time the national celebrations of St Andrew's day will be a great opportunity for many businesses, especially those that are involved in the entertainment and tourism sectors.

I was pleased that Tom McCabe referred to the ceilidh that the Scottish Executive held last year and stated that it intends to hold a similar event this year. He expressed the hope that the ceilidh will help to launch a Scottish winter festival. Stewart Maxwell developed that theme when he referred to St Andrew's day as the launching pad for a series of celebrations throughout December and January: Christmas; hogmanay; new year's day; Burns day; and, of course, Celtic connections in Glasgow. As well as giving us a sense of nationhood and an opportunity for celebration, it will present many business opportunities to people throughout Scotland.

Reference was made to the claim that the bill will be largely symbolic, which is referred to in the joint statement that I agreed with the First Minister. Let me clarify the point. The bill is no more symbolic than any other legislation that sets up a bank holiday; it is based on the same type of legislation. If the bill is passed by the Parliament, the St Andrew's day bank holiday will have exactly the same legislative framework, basis and status as any other bank holiday. Even if the bill were purely symbolic, there is nothing wrong with symbols, provided that something genuine underlies the symbol. Our national flag, the saltire, the flag of St Andrew, is a symbol, but it signifies

our nationhood. It symbolises something very important. There is nothing wrong with legislation that is symbolic, as long as something of substance underlies the symbol.

Several members, including Shiona Baird, Kenny MacAskill and Richard Baker, mentioned the international dimension of the celebrations. I agree with their sentiments. I do not want St Andrew's day to be some kind of narrow-minded, nationalist, chauvinistic celebration. I want it to be an international celebration, whereby Scotland will be put on the international stage and Scots, not only in Scotland but throughout the world, will have the opportunity to celebrate our membership of the international community.

Finally, I re-emphasise the widespread support for my bill. Last year, a MORI opinion poll indicated that 75 per cent of Scots are in favour of a St Andrew's day national holiday. The poll that is currently being conducted by the Scotsman Publications Ltd indicates that 95 per cent are in favour. Expressions of support have been received from many sources, including the trade union movement, local authorities, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Scottish Inter Faith Council. Support for the proposal comes from people from every part of Scotland, from people of different political backgrounds and different ethnic backgrounds and from people of different faiths and people of no faith.

The proposal is one round which the people of Scotland can unite as a nation. The overwhelming majority of the people want a St Andrew's day national holiday. Today, the Parliament has the opportunity to respond to the wishes of the people of Scotland and it can encourage everyone to celebrate our patron saint, our national identity and our membership of the international community. I therefore ask the Parliament to give unanimous approval to the general principles of the bill.



## Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill: Financial Resolution

16:55

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S2M-4872, in the name of Tom McCabe, on a financial resolution in respect of the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9.12.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.—[*Hugh Henry.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

## Complaint

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S2M-4846, in the name of Brian Adam, on behalf of the Standards and Public Appointments Committee, on a breach of the code of conduct for MSPs.

16:55

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** The details of the complaint and investigation by the Scottish parliamentary standards commissioner are set out in the report published last week by the Standards and Public Appointments Committee.

The complaint against Mr Pringle was that a submission that was circulated to all members of the Justice 1 Committee, which the committee had agreed would be published at a future date, was shown to a journalist prior to its publication.

What is important is not the fact that the information was put in the public domain—the Standards and Public Appointments Committee accepts that the information was always destined to be in the public domain—but the timing of the release of the information. The Justice 1 Committee had discussed and decided on the timing of release. It was not in the gift of any individual member of that committee to decide to pre-empt that agreement.

The Standards and Public Appointments Committee noted that the commissioner's investigation was assisted by Mr Pringle's voluntary admission to the convener of the Justice 1 Committee. As members will be aware, there have been complaints in previous years about the leaking of documents from various committees. Investigations into such leaks are notoriously difficult. In this instance, that problem was resolved by Mr Pringle's admission. However, the fact that investigations have not been conducted in the past does not mean that we should condone or tolerate the leaking of documents.

The code of conduct sets out some of the circumstances in which documents might be considered private and why it is important that that privacy is respected.

In arriving at its decision to agree with the findings and conclusion of the commissioner and recommend to Parliament a sanction, the Standards and Public Appointments Committee agreed that the sanction should be proportionate and reasonable. The committee wanted to relate the breach of the code to the proposed sanction, but in so doing had no wish to harm the inquiry that the Justice 1 Committee is still undertaking; nor did we wish to stop the member carrying out

work in his constituency. The sanction proposed is short, but we believe that it is proportionate and reasonable.

We do not act out of malice, but want to send a signal. All members should be cautious in their actions and think of the possible consequences. Therefore, the Standards and Public Appointments Committee recommends to Parliament that Mr Pringle be excluded from all meetings of the Parliament and all meetings of its committees for the first five sitting days immediately after the motion is agreed.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the 2nd Report, 2006 (Session 2) of the Standards and Public Appointments Committee, *Complaint against Mike Pringle MSP* (SP Paper 636) and agrees to impose the sanction recommended in the report that Mike Pringle MSP be excluded from all meetings of the Parliament and all meetings of its committees for the first five sitting days immediately after this motion is agreed.

16:58

**Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP):** I make it clear that I wish Mike Pringle no ill will—indeed, I will oppose the motion. However, I could not, in all conscience, let the motion go without comment. It is worrying that motions such as this are not debated in the chamber.

It is proposed to ban Mike Pringle for one week, with no loss of pay and no loss of allowances for what the Standards and Public Appointments Committee has judged to be quite a serious breach of the code of conduct—a breach of confidentiality. I do not wish to judge whether the committee's conclusions are correct, because I do not profess to know enough of the detail. It is important not to judge in haste.

I pose the question to the committee and Parliament whether they honestly believe that they are conducting their business fairly, consistently and proportionately and upholding the laws of natural justice.

Last year, as the world's biggest terrorist visited our country and the Government was busy trying to co-opt and weaken the campaign and demands to make poverty history—I hope that members will respect my right to freedom of speech—this Parliament's decision to uphold the right to peaceful protest at Gleneagles was wilfully ignored by the Executive and my colleagues and I exercised our right to peaceful protest by holding up messages written on paper in the chamber. For doing so, the hasty and internationally unprecedented sanction of a month's ban, wages and allowances deductions and a fine of £30,000 was imposed without a hearing or without people thinking through the consequences. A precedent was set that could, if it is replicated, have horrific consequences.

It is clear to me that the system does not produce consistent, proportionate, fair and just outcomes. I sincerely hope that, now that time has passed and everybody has settled down a wee bit, members will have the intelligence, courage and vision to acknowledge their mistakes and ensure that no such injustice ever occurs again.

**The Presiding Officer:** I will comment briefly on what has been said. Your fate as a result of attempting to disrupt freedom of speech in the chamber was, of course, recommended by the Standards and Public Appointments Committee and agreed to by the Parliament. That matter has been dealt with and is not relevant to the matter that is before the Parliament.

## Point of Order

17:01

**Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Rule 7.3.1 of the standing orders states:

“Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner”.

This afternoon, the First Minister accused my colleague Shiona Baird of misinforming the chamber, being less than honest and scaremongering over fingerprinting in schools. However, she in no way misinformed the chamber; she simply stated what is occurring in schools. The Green group has received a number of complaints from parents about fingerprinting, which include complaints about their not being asked for consent for their children to be fingerprinted. The First Minister's attempt to cast aspersions on Shiona Baird's honesty and integrity was disrespectful and discourteous. Presiding Officer, I ask you to make a ruling on whether his entirely unsubstantiated accusation that Shiona Baird misinformed the Parliament breached the standing orders.

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** I was given advance warning of Chris Ballance's point of order and have had the opportunity to read the transcript of the exchange that occurred during First Minister's question time. I do not believe that the standing orders were breached; such exchanges are part of the normal cut and thrust of robust parliamentary debate. However, you have made your point, it is on the record, and I note your concerns. We will now move on.

## Decision Time

17:02

**The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):** There are 10 questions to be put as a result of today's business. In relation to this morning's debate on Trident, if the amendment in the name of Jackie Baillie is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Euan Robson and Chris Ballance will fall. In relation to this morning's debate on small businesses, if the amendment in the name of Allan Wilson is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-4864.5, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4864, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Trident, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)

Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 56, Against 57, Abstentions 4.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-4864.3, in the name of Euan Robson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4864, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Trident, 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)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 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, 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)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 17, Against 86, Abstentions 15.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-4864.4, in the name of Chris Ballance, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4864, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Trident, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)

Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 43, Against 74, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-4864, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on Trident, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)  
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)

Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)  
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 44, Against 72, Abstentions 2.

*Motion disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S2M-4863.2, in the name of Allan Wilson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4863, in the name of Jim Mather, on small businesses, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 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, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 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)  
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 44, Abstentions 9.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser falls.

The next question is, that motion S2M-4863, in the name of Jim Mather, on small businesses, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 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, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (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

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 23, Abstentions 31.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

#### *Resolved,*

That the Parliament recognises the central role that small businesses play in delivering both economic growth and local services and welcomes the success that the Scottish Executive has had in supporting the growth in the total employment and overall number of small businesses and new business start-ups in Scotland since 1999; welcomes the benefit that small firms gain from a range of grant schemes that encourage the development of new products and processes, the creation or safeguarding of jobs and becoming more energy efficient, and also welcomes the Executive's Small Business Rates Relief Scheme that results in around 70% of non-domestic rate subjects in Scotland receiving rates relief of up to 50% and the decision to equalise the poundage with England from 1 April 2007, which demonstrates our determination to deliver the right conditions for all businesses to grow by encouraging yet more small business start-ups, creating more jobs, widening the tax base, increasing local economic activity and improving local services across Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-4827, in the name of Dennis Canavan, that the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-4872, in the name of Tom McCabe, on a financial resolution in respect of the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9.12.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

**The Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S2M-4846, in the name of Brian Adam, on a breach of the code of conduct for MSPs, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

#### **Members: No.**

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

#### **FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)

Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)  
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 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)

Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 91, Against 6, Abstentions 18.

#### *Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament notes the 2nd Report, 2006 (Session 2) of the Standards and Public Appointments Committee, *Complaint against Mike Pringle MSP* (SP Paper 636) and agrees to impose the sanction recommended in the report that Mike Pringle MSP be excluded from all meetings of the Parliament and all meetings of its committees for the first five sitting days immediately after this motion is agreed.

## Mesothelioma (Withdrawal of Alimta)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-4742, in the name of Shona Robison, on the withdrawal of Alimta for mesothelioma patients. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament regrets that the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's (NICE) final appraisal determination on Alimta does not recommend Alimta for the treatment of mesothelioma except as part of ongoing or new clinical trials; is concerned that the drug could potentially be withdrawn if NICE repeats that opinion in its final report due to be published in October 2006; realises that, in practice, NICE's decisions ordinarily supersede Scottish advice which could lead to the withdrawal of this drug for Scottish sufferers; recognises that such a move would have a devastating effect on mesothelioma sufferers here in Scotland given that Alimta has been shown to be effective in increasing life expectancy and improving the quality of life of patients; is aware that NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (QIS) will be reviewing its decision to offer the drug in Scotland in light of the NICE recommendation; therefore urges NHS QIS to recognise the contextual differences in Scotland, such as in epidemiology, with a large concentration of mesothelioma cases in Dundee and other post-industrial areas of Scotland; furthermore recognises the existing advice from the Scottish Medicines Consortium that Alimta should be freely available in Scotland, and therefore believes that the Scottish Executive should guarantee the availability of Alimta to existing and future sufferers of mesothelioma in Scotland.

17:13

**Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP):** I thank the members who have stayed for this debate, particularly those who signed my motion. I also pay tribute to members across the chamber who have campaigned to improve the deal of those affected by asbestos. To its credit, this Parliament has done good work on behalf of sufferers, one example of which is the Rights of Relatives to Damages (Mesothelioma) (Scotland) Bill, which was published today and will allow mesothelioma sufferers to claim full compensation and their families to claim for their own loss. Until now, people have been forced to make a distressing and unreasonable choice in that respect.

I pay important tribute to those involved in campaigns in various parts of Scotland from Clydeside to Tayside and, indeed, very much welcome to the public gallery some of those campaigners. I must also thank Ian Babbs and Asbestos Action (Tayside) for their work on behalf of sufferers and their families in Dundee and the rest of Tayside. As a result of their pressure, politicians have been made to sit up and take

notice of the injustice that has been suffered by those affected by asbestos.

It is predicted that, by 2025, 25,000 Scots will have died from asbestos-related diseases. Mesothelioma is a terrible lung disease caused by exposure to asbestos. It is a cancer of the lining of the lung, which is unlikely, in its early stages, to cause any symptoms. However, as it progresses, it typically causes patients to feel breathless and to experience chest pain. Men and women who worked in the foundries or on the building sites of our industrial past have been left with a silent killer that creeps up on them without notice. One of its most cruel aspects is its speed; a constituent of mine recently died within 14 weeks of being diagnosed.

The speed of the disease means that people have little time to make arrangements with their families, let alone to apply for compensation. That is why Alimta has been such an important treatment and a lifeline for many sufferers who are clinically assessed as being suitable for the treatment. Around 80 to 90 per cent of sufferers in Scotland are currently getting the drug, and Alimta is the first and only chemotherapy treatment to be licensed in the United Kingdom. It is not a cure, but it has been proven to alleviate symptoms of what is a very painful disease, and it has also been shown to prolong life, with a proven survival increase of between 23 and 40 per cent, giving people a bit more time to spend with their families.

It is of great concern that the guidance released in June by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence said that the use of Alimta was not considered to be cost-effective. If that is the conclusion of NICE's final report, it will lead to the drug's withdrawal next month. There are real concerns about the NICE process that has been used to assess the drug and about whether the reports on clinical and cost-effectiveness are representative of the evidence available; an appeal is likely.

Relatively few people in Scotland—around 200 last year—receive Alimta, at a cost of less than £500,000. That is not a huge amount out of a predicted budget of £10 billion by 2007-08. Although the number of patients will increase as we approach 2015, the cost is unlikely to rise above £750,000 even then. Furthermore, it is not as if there are other, cheaper alternative treatments available. This is it, and it would be cruel in the extreme to withdraw the only available treatment to any group of patients. However, that is likely to be NICE's decision, and we in Scotland must decide how we will respond.

The question is whether Scotland will follow suit. To date, it has been custom and practice for National Health Service Quality Improvement Scotland and the Scottish medicines consortium to

follow the recommendations of NICE, but that does not need to be the case. It is the role of NHS QIS—I apologise to those in the public gallery for the NHS jargon, which is hard to avoid—to review its decision to offer Alimta to patients in the light of the NICE recommendation, but NHS QIS guidance makes it clear that that body should consider the suitability of NICE guidance for Scotland in the light of any contextual differences, such as epidemiology. It can be shown that Scotland has some of the highest rates of asbestos-related conditions, because of our industrial past, and the number of cases is predicted to peak in 2015. That is further strengthened by the guidance which also states that NHS QIS should take account of the existing guidance of the Scottish medicines consortium. The existing advice from the SMC is clear: that Alimta should be freely available to patients with mesothelioma. In fact, the consortium's position could not be clearer.

Those guidance sources, taken together, show that a clear case can be made for taking a different approach in Scotland, but political support and pressure are needed to help us to get to that position. We are looking for some comfort from the minister and an assurance that he understands the concerns that are being expressed. More important, we need him to give a clear signal to those considering the issue that the Government has a view on the matter and that its view is that Alimta should be made available to existing and future mesothelioma patients. I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say, not only to this Parliament but to those people who are already affected by this terrible condition and to those who will be affected in future. I hope that he can provide some assurance to them and to their families.

17:19

**Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** I am glad to have a chance to speak in the debate and I am grateful to you, Presiding Officer, for calling me early, which I requested because I have to leave before the end of the debate. I apologise for that, but I look forward to reading the speeches, especially the minister's response.

As Shona Robison said, mesothelioma is a rare form of cancer, the most common form of which is pleural mesothelioma: in other words, it affects the lining of the lungs. It is almost always caused by exposure to asbestos fibre, and occupations that are at risk typically include jobs in the military, vehicle builders and shipbuilders, construction workers, painters, welders, joiners and electricians.

Although the use of asbestos has now been banned in the European Union, it is estimated that

250,000 workers in western Europe alone will have died from mesothelioma by 2029, and the UK has the highest rates of mesothelioma in western Europe. There were 1,862 cases in 2002, or 39 cases per million of the population, which is roughly double the rate in other countries, apart from the Netherlands. The incidence of mesothelioma in western Europe is expected to peak between 2010 and 2020. There is no recognised first-line treatment for the condition.

Where does Alimta come in? Alimta is the brand name for a drug whose name I can never pronounce—pemetrexed—that was developed by Eli Lilly and Company. Although it does not offer a cure, several trials have shown that Alimta is helpful for people with mesothelioma. For some, it can help to relieve symptoms. Recent trials in the United Kingdom and the United States of America show that, in combination with another drug, it can control mesothelioma for longer than any other drugs that have been tried. As Shona Robison said, Alimta can give significant increases in survival time and quality of life. The cost of £1,600 per cycle might seem to be a lot, but we are not talking about a large number of people or about lengthy treatments. However, we could be talking about a significant benefit for the people who would receive the treatments.

I want to clarify some things for which Alimta has been approved. In 2005, the Scottish medicines consortium advised that Alimta

“in combination with the drug cisplatin is accepted for restricted use within NHS Scotland for the treatment of patients who have not had cancer treatment and have mesothelioma that is spreading and inoperable. In these patients pemetrexed”—

that is, Alimta—

“in combination with cisplatin prolonged survival compared with cisplatin alone.”

Alimta is the first licensed drug for the treatment of mesothelioma.

What would be the effect of withdrawal of the drug? Well, no other medicines are specifically licensed for the treatment of unresectable malignant pleural mesothelioma. If the Scottish Parliament continued the support of Alimta, it would send a strong signal to bodies such as the SMC and NICE, but also to patients and carers.

Shona Robison was right to speak about post-industrial areas. As I said at the beginning of my speech, mesothelioma is associated with particular occupations that used to be prevalent in Scotland.

I agree that we have to be wary of big drug companies lobbying to get new drugs fast-tracked if that means subverting the independent appraisal process. However, I believe that in this case, on balance, it appears that for the few patients about

whom we are talking, Alimta can be of benefit. It should continue to be available when appropriate.

17:22

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** I begin by congratulating the Clydebank Asbestos Group and Clydeside Action on Asbestos, both of which are here in the gallery. Their campaign has led to the Rights of Relatives to Damages (Mesothelioma) (Scotland) Bill, which has been published today. In my view, it represents a significant step forward for the relatives of sufferers and for the victims themselves. It represents a strong statement by the Scottish Parliament about taking into account the human consequences of the dreadful disease of mesothelioma. Scotland is significantly ahead of the rest of the United Kingdom in responding. I congratulate everyone who has been involved in the campaign, and I say to them that we will continue to work on their behalf.

I welcome this debate on Alimta because real issues arise—not just about the drug itself but, more broadly, about treatments for people who suffer incurable cancer conditions such as mesothelioma. It is important to get the factual background about Alimta correct. I am grateful to the Clydebank Asbestos Group and the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which gathered people together for a highly successful conference in Clydebank some 15 months ago. There were international and national speakers, including senior medical experts who were able to lay out some of the details not only on Alimta but on the whole background of cancer treatments in the UK and internationally.

As Shona Robison said, when it is used in combination with cisplatin, Alimta is a drug that is probably efficacious for only a relatively limited number of people who suffer from mesothelioma; it is not necessarily useful for everyone who suffers from the condition. According to current estimates, it is beneficial for between 15 per cent and 25 per cent of sufferers. As she also said, that limits some of the cost implications that are associated with the drug's use. Perhaps that should be addressed as part of NICE's consideration of the evidence.

Another factor that should be weighed is the fact that NICE probably overestimated the number of treatment cycles on which it based its calculation of whether the use of Alimta offers value. The indications are that as few as four treatment cycles might bring significant measurable benefits. I am not someone who says that we should license any drug just because of the dreadfulness of the condition. We must ensure that Alimta delivers significant benefits within an acceptable cost framework.

When NICE hears the appeals against the final appraisal determination on 27 October, I hope that it not only takes into account all the technical and medical evidence, but recognises that getting for people who have incurable cancer medicines that are efficacious and that provide easement of the condition, even if not a cure, must be treated on an even plateau with the provision of other kinds of drug treatment.

At the Clydebank conference, we heard that it is extremely difficult to get drug companies to invest in research into such drugs because of the difficulty of getting them licensed. Alimta is a drug that is licensed and is prescribed to people in Scotland and people in parts of England, including Newcastle, although not throughout the country, which seems unfair. It would be a huge mistake to make the drug inaccessible to those patients without strong evidence that it simply is not working, and I am not sure that we have such evidence.

I hope that when NICE makes its final judgment, it will move from the current position and so allow the benefits of Alimta to continue to be investigated and not to stop its use as a treatment. I hope, too, that when the Scottish medicines consortium, NHS Scotland and NHS QIS consider the issue they will take account of both the NICE evidence and the circumstances that exist in Scotland.

It is my understanding that there are no circumstances under which anyone who receives Alimta at the moment would not continue to do so and I seek an assurance from the minister that that will remain the case. I also want to be assured that when NHS QIS assesses the use of Alimta, it does so in the context of what the families and communities that have been affected have suffered. In other words, I am arguing for the history of mesothelioma and asbestos-related disease in Scotland to be taken into account because it seems to me that there is an argument for special consideration to be given to the continued use of the drug in this country, provided that it can be demonstrated that there is a good medical case for that course of action. It is always necessary to strike a balance, but as well as the medical evidence, the social circumstances surrounding mesothelioma, the nature of the disease and the suffering that it has resulted in must be examined carefully.

17:29

**Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate Shona Robison on securing a debate on an issue that is of enormous importance to the relatively small but still growing number of people in Scotland for whom Alimta

offers the only hope of reduced pain and breathlessness and of extended survival.

Patients who have malignant pleural mesothelioma are paying a heavy price for their exposure to asbestos fibres in the course of their employment. They know that their days are numbered, that they may face severe pain as the disease spreads beyond the pleura and that they are likely to become increasingly breathless as a result of pleural effusions.

Prior to the development of Alimta, no product was licensed in the UK for the treatment of mesothelioma. Its statistically proven efficacy, in combination with cisplatin, in increasing survival time up to 40 per cent beyond what cisplatin can achieve as a single agent means that there is a ray of hope for terminally ill patients. There is hope for them to have a few more months with their families and friends, and hope for a reduction in their symptoms.

Other treatments have been tried, but there is no standard of care for mesothelioma in the UK, so comparisons between treatment regimes are not easy. However, as we have heard, the Scottish medicines consortium gave its approval for the use of combined Alimta-cisplatin therapy for patients who have not had any cancer treatment and who have spreading and inoperable mesothelioma.

During the past year, that therapy has indeed improved the quality of life for patients who have been treated with it in Scotland and in the parts of England where it has been approved. Indeed, I heard just this afternoon of a patient in Manchester whose tumour growth is static a full year after he was given a course of Alimta. It is now very likely that he will see the birth of his first grandchild, which he could not have contemplated a year ago.

Naturally, the NICE provisional guidance that was issued in June this year came as a body blow to patients who hoped to be eligible for treatment with Alimta. As we know, NICE guidelines are usually adopted by NHS QIS and implemented by the SMC. However, the latter organisation can, in fact, maintain its current position whatever NICE's final guidance. The Clydeside Action on Asbestos charity is, rightly, urging us to reinforce to the minister that that option is available.

NICE does more detailed work on the cost-effectiveness of drugs than the SMC does, which brings out its guidance well in advance of NICE. I, and I am sure most of us, would be happy to accept NICE's recommendations without question, in most cases. However, in this case, in which no other option of effective treatment is available and Alimta's manufacturer has challenged the provisional guidance on the grounds that all the

evidence available to the appraisal committee was not appropriately taken into account and the summaries of cost and clinical effectiveness are not reasonable interpretations of the evidence, I am happy to endorse the call for the Executive to guarantee the availability of Alimta to existing and future sufferers of mesothelioma in Scotland who qualify for it, particularly given its satisfactory results over the past year.

The patients who will be affected by the decision are ill through no fault of their own. They and their families have little to look forward to. However, Alimta gives such patients the hope of a better quality of life in the latter stages of their illness and the prospect of more precious time with their loved ones. We owe that to those innocent victims and I am therefore happy to support the motion.

17:32

**Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):**

I congratulate Shona Robison on securing what is a most important and timely debate on this particular subject.

When I approached the subject, I decided to do a little bit of research into the history of asbestos to find out where it comes from and what it is. We talk about it all the time as if it is an industrial product, and we are used, certainly in the west of Scotland, to all the terrible diseases that result from its use, particularly in the shipbuilding industry. Therefore, I was surprised to find out that asbestos is in fact a Greek word that means inextinguishable and that it has been in use for more than 2,000 years.

It is all the more surprising that we ended up using asbestos so widely in industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when we discover that almost 2,000 years ago Pliny the elder—23 to 79 AD—wrote about the sickness of the lungs that affected the slaves who wove asbestos into cloth. In other words, nearly 2,000 years ago people observed the connection between asbestos and a disease of the lungs, but nearly 2,000 years later we were using asbestos on a daily basis in most of our heavy industry in the west of Scotland and in other parts of Scotland.

It is clear, from the industrial revolution and the fact that Scotland was so involved in that process, why mesothelioma strikes so heavily in Scotland. Asbestos is responsible for 90 per cent of mesothelioma cases. Unfortunately, the area with the highest standardised mortality rate from the disease is West Dunbartonshire, in the west of Scotland, which has a rate that is more than six times the average for Britain. Other areas in Scotland that have high rates are Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow and, as Shona Robison said, Tayside. They are

industrialised areas that have suffered the results of that industrialisation.

Unfortunately, the median survival period from diagnosis ranges from about nine to 13 months. Anything that extends that short period and improves the quality of life for those who suffer from mesothelioma should be supported.

I have two short quotations on the subject. The first is:

“Over 18 weeks, patients treated with pemetrexed”—

no wonder we call it Alimta—

“plus cisplatin demonstrated statistically significant symptomatic improvements when compared with those who received cisplatin alone.”

The second is:

“The results of the EMPHACIS trial suggest that”

Alimta

“plus cisplatin confers a survival benefit of approximately 3 months, compared with cisplatin alone.”

The surprising thing about those quotations is that they come not from doctors or those who support the use of Alimta, but from the NICE document that, despite those statements, ended up rejecting the use of the drug.

As members have said, an extension of three months is a quarter to a third of the expected lifespan of those who are unfortunate enough to be diagnosed with the disease. It is a substantial amount of time for somebody who has been given only nine months to live. Who would deny patients the right to that extra life? It is extremely surprising that NICE rejected the use of the drug. The reasons for that cannot be clinical, so they must be financial. We all accept that finance comes into the decisions on such matters and that it must do so. However, I am puzzled by the NICE decision. I hope that the appeal is successful and that NICE overturns its original decision.

I am delighted that the SMC decided to support the use of the drug in Scotland, but the problem is that, because of the decision south of the border by NICE, the danger exists that it may be withdrawn in Scotland, not for current patients but for possible future patients. The circumstances in Scotland are different. As I said, the case rate in Scotland is six times greater than that in the rest of the UK, which is why NHS QIS must support the continued use of Alimta in Scotland. In the words of Professor Nick Thatcher, the professor of medical oncology at the University of Manchester,

“Alimta and cisplatin is the only licensed treatment for mesothelioma patients and has been shown not only to increase quality of life but also to extend life”.

As members have said, there is no other option. I join them in supporting the call for the continued

use—certainly in Scotland, but, I hope, elsewhere—of Alimta for patients with mesothelioma.

17:37

**The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald):** I, too, congratulate Shona Robison on bringing the matter to the Parliament for debate. I also congratulate the campaigners, who have brought the issue to public attention so effectively, and Des McNulty, whose work has led to the publication today of the Rights of Relatives to Damages (Mesothelioma) (Scotland) Bill, which will provide some acknowledgement of the loss that families face. We all acknowledge that mesothelioma is a devastating condition. I add my words of sympathy for those who have the condition and for the families who have been touched by it. As members have said, there is no cure, sufferers do not tend to live long after diagnosis and, whatever treatment is provided, their last months are never easy.

As has been said, rates of mesothelioma are increasing. As I said in the Parliament last week, the most recent complete figures, which are for 2003, show an incidence that is about three times that of 20 years earlier. We expect the figures to peak some time between 2011 and 2015 at between 195 and 245 diagnoses annually in Scotland. Members have mentioned the clear link between mesothelioma and exposure to asbestos fibres. Most of those who suffer are men who were exposed to asbestos in the course of their work, but the disease can also affect families who have been exposed to the fibres.

Pemetrexed disodium, or Alimta, is licensed as a treatment for mesothelioma in conjunction with cisplatin. As has been said, there is no current standard care pathway for people with mesothelioma, but other treatment regimes are being evaluated in research trials.

Although we are discussing the NICE advice on pemetrexed this afternoon, appeals against NICE's final appraisal determination are being considered. Therefore, we have not yet seen NICE's final advice, and we will not do so until those appeals have been resolved later this year.

According to the draft of the final appraisal determination, NICE takes the view that the drug offers a relatively modest benefit. It has concluded that it can extend life by between three and five months compared with treatment with cisplatin alone. The treatment is associated with serious side effects, although those seem to be manageable in most cases. It does not fundamentally alter the course of the disease, although it has an impact on life expectancy. The final appraisal determination says:

"there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that pemetrexed plus cisplatin was superior to other, far less costly treatment regimens."

In other words, NICE was not persuaded that it was the best drug to deploy in the treatment of mesothelioma and was unable to recommend the drug for general use. Although it is critical that that should be understood to be the basis of NICE's advice, as I said, that view is subject to the appeals process. It is different from the advice previously given by the Scottish medicines consortium.

It might be helpful briefly to review the process by which drugs are approved. Every new drug and treatment that becomes available is considered by the SMC, which looks at initial evidence from the manufacturer to decide whether a drug is cost-effective and whether it should be made available for routine use. That examination takes place at the point at which the drug becomes available on the market and is licensed for use in health care treatment. As further evidence becomes available, NICE may conduct a full evaluation of the drug, often in comparison with other treatments.

NICE is a UK body, which draws on knowledge from throughout the country. It uses seven independent centres to review evidence of drug efficacy, including—although not in this case—the University of Aberdeen. Therefore, its process is not divorced from Scottish expertise. The committee that considered pemetrexed included Professor John Cairns of the London school of hygiene and tropical medicine, who is also a member of the SMC. It includes a number of other prominent clinicians from different areas of the health profession. NICE is respected the world over and its appraisals are carried out at a later stage in a drug's history than the initial SMC recommendation.

When NICE has come to a view on a drug, the drug is not returned to the SMC for further consideration. Instead, as Shona Robison indicated, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland considers the NICE appraisals and advises on whether they should apply in Scotland. NHS QIS is the key body for interpreting NICE conclusions for Scottish application. It considers whether there are particular reasons to vary those conclusions to reflect Scottish circumstances and it is its job to do so on the basis of the best possible scientific appraisal of the evidence and its application to Scottish circumstances.

Other members made the point that the level of mesothelioma in Scotland is high, which is the legacy of Scotland's shipbuilding heritage. Des McNulty referred to the fact that the highest rates of all are found in the north-east of England. That is a phenomenon: a disease that exists in a number of areas that have the same kind of

industrial heritage. However, prevalence of itself is unlikely to lead NHS QIS to vary its advice. The effectiveness of a treatment for an individual patient is not altered by the number of patients. Epidemiology has been mentioned, and the question that NHS QIS will consider is whether the delivery of treatment has a particular Scottish angle. Once NHS QIS has come to a view, the Scottish NHS boards will be expected to follow its advice.

**Shona Robison:** I take it that the minister is saying that there is no barrier to NHS QIS coming up with the recommendation that the drug should be offered to patients in future. If NHS QIS reaches that conclusion, will the minister be happy with that?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I would look to NHS QIS to make absolutely sure that it had considered all the angles in preparing its advice to NHS boards on the basis of the NICE appraisal. It should do that in the context of the ethos and values of the NHS in Scotland, the circumstances of patients in Scotland and what is right for patients, families and communities and on the basis of scientific evidence and advice. In large part, that will be derived from the appraisal carried out by NICE, which will have conducted a more thorough scientific examination of the evidence than would be available from elsewhere.

**Des McNulty:** The minister has referred to the severe concentrations of the condition in certain parts of Scotland, I would suggest particularly in areas of Clydeside, Tayside and Lothian. Before a final decision is reached in Scotland, will the minister consult the relevant health boards, which will have a locus in understanding the health needs in their areas? Has he had any representations so far from Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board, Tayside NHS Board or Lothian NHS Board?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I am not aware of any specific representations, but the Scottish medicines consortium, which considered pemetrexed on its initial availability, includes NHS boards. Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board, for example, is regularly represented at the consortium's meetings at chief executive level. There is very active involvement there, and I would expect QIS to consider any evidence that became available to it from particular areas or that was brought to it by particular boards. I would expect QIS to take all those factors into account in carrying out its appraisal of the evidence.

I will conclude with one further reassurance to Des McNulty on a specific point that he raised. Whatever the final appraisal by NICE and the final advice from NHS QIS, patients who are currently receiving pemetrexed and cisplatin will continue to receive those treatments unless their doctor



prescribes another form of treatment. What is at issue here is the advice that will be provided in the event of future diagnoses. I will ask NHS QIS to make absolutely sure that it has considered all the issues that have been raised in this evening's debate before it comes to a final view on the NICE appraisal.

*Meeting closed at 17:47.*



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