

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 29 November 2006

Session 2

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## **SCOTTISH MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS**

FIRST MINISTER—Right hon Jack McConnell MSP  
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER—Nicol Stephen MSP

### **Justice**

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE—Cathy Jamieson MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR JUSTICE—Johann Lamont MSP

### **Education and Young People**

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE—Hugh Henry MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE—Robert Brown MSP

### **Enterprise and Lifelong Learning**

MINISTER FOR ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING—Nicol Stephen MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING—Allan Wilson MSP

### **Environment and Rural Development**

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT—Ross Finnie MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT—Rhona Brankin MSP

### **Finance and Public Service Reform**

MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM—Mr Tom McCabe MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM—George Lyon MSP

### **Health and Community Care**

MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE—Mr Andy Kerr MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND COMMUNITY CARE—Lewis Macdonald MSP

### **Parliamentary Business**

MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS—Ms Margaret Curran MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS—George Lyon MSP

### **Communities**

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITIES—Malcolm Chisholm MSP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR COMMUNITIES—Des McNulty MSP

### **Tourism, Culture and Sport**

MINISTER FOR TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT—Patricia Ferguson MSP

### **Transport**

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT—Tavish Scott MSP

### **Law Officers**

LORD ADVOCATE—Elish Angiolini QC  
SOLICITOR GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—John Beckett QC

## **PRESIDING OFFICERS**

PRESIDING OFFICER—Right hon George Reid MSP  
DEPUTY PRESIDING OFFICERS—Trish Godman MSP, Murray Tosh MSP

## **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CORPORATE BODY**

PRESIDING OFFICER—Right hon George Reid MSP  
MEMBERS—Mr Kenny MacAskill MSP, Mr Duncan McNeil MSP, Nora Radcliffe MSP, John Scott MSP

## **PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU**

PRESIDING OFFICER—Right hon George Reid MSP  
MEMBERS—Bill Aitken MSP, Chris Ballance MSP, Ms Margaret Curran MSP, Margo MacDonald MSP, Alasdair Morgan MSP, George Lyon MSP

## COMMITTEE CONVENERS AND DEPUTY CONVENERS

Committee	Convener	Deputy Convener
Audit	Mr Brian Monteith	Mr Andrew Welsh
Communities	Karen Whitefield	Mr Jamie Stone
Education	Iain Smith	Lord James Douglas-Hamilton
Enterprise and Culture	Alex Neil	Christine May
Environment and Rural Development	Sarah Boyack	Eleanor Scott
Equal Opportunities	Cathy Peattie	
European and External Relations	Linda Fabiani	Irene Oldfather
Finance	Ms Wendy Alexander	Mr John Swinney
Health	Roseanna Cunningham	Janis Hughes
Justice 1	Pauline McNeill	Stewart Stevenson
Justice 2	Mr David Davidson	Bill Butler
Local Government and Transport	Bristow Muldoon	Fergus Ewing
Procedures	Donald Gorrie	Karen Gillon
Public Petitions	Michael McMahon	John Scott
Standards and Public Appointments	Brian Adam	Bill Butler
Subordinate Legislation	Dr Sylvia Jackson	Mr Kenneth Macintosh

24 November 2006

## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 29 November 2006*

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

### Time for Reflection

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Pastor Patricia Sawo, who is the east African co-ordinator of the African network of religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Pastor Patricia Sawo (African Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV/AIDS):** Good afternoon. My theme for time for reflection is that each and every one of us can make a difference with our lives.

The New Testament tells us:

"It is God himself who has made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus; and long ages ago he planned that we should spend these lives in helping others.

Each one of us should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

To many of us, it is obvious that we should help others, but in today's world many people ask, "Why?" Allow me to share with you my personal testimony of how I have been helped by others to be who I am today.

Peter Drucker said:

"knowledge is a very special type of resource: it is borderless, and can travel even more effortlessly than money; it bestows upward mobility, because it is available to anyone who can access formal education; and it cannot be inherited or bequeathed. Yet knowledge alone is not enough; everyone can acquire it, but not everyone can use it to win."

Most of us believe that HIV/AIDS is a song that has been sung for long enough. Everybody should have knowledge about it and people need only to change. I started knowing about HIV and AIDS in 1985 in Kenya, yet it meant little to me. It was a curse and punishment from God—something from outside that was not meant for people in the church. I preached and quoted the Bible out of context and I had a negative attitude.

Then, in 1999, I became very sick. I boldly took an HIV antibody test, believing that I needed only to fast and pray for seven days and I would test negative, but that did not happen. I suffered self-stigma and societal stigma. I lost everything and every friend and I almost died, but with the help of Canon Gideon Byamugisha, who was the first

African minister to live openly with HIV, hope was restored to me in 2002. As I stand here today, I am a witness that without help from others I would not be alive and my family would not be the same. I would not be winning the battle against HIV and AIDS.

The Bible tells us:

"humanly speaking it is impossible. But with God everything is possible".

Everything is impossible until someone takes the first step. As we approach world AIDS day, I want to challenge each and every one of us—you and me. You can make a difference to someone's life with just a small action. Your efforts can help to prevent a child from being infected; you can postpone one death from AIDS by availing people of antiretrovirals or nutrition; you can help orphans to have a better quality of life, both in Africa and here in Scotland.

It has been a great privilege to share with you this afternoon and I thank you. [*Applause.*]

## Points of Order

14:35

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I want to ask about the conduct of the Executive parties in the Parliamentary Bureau with regard to my Commissioner for Older People (Scotland) Bill.

I have adhered to both the letter and the spirit of the standing orders, as well as the founding principles of the Parliament. The way in which members' bills have been dealt with recently is frankly unacceptable. There has been a deliberate attempt by the Executive parties to butcher the bills and put them into the long grass. That fails to live up to the basic principles of the Parliament.

Presiding Officer, I beg that you reopen the issue, because we expect you to defend the interests of back-bench members and individual members in every respect. I hope that you will take up the matter with the bureau and ask it to come to its senses and reconsider.

The role of the Minister for Parliamentary Business is not just to represent the Labour Party, but to ensure that we adhere to the founding principles of the Parliament.

**Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):** Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer. I introduced my Home Energy Efficiency Targets (Scotland) Bill on 19 September, with cross-party support from 40 MSPs. That is well over a third of those members eligible to sign their support, and one of the highest levels of support for any member's bill in this session.

The bill would do what the title suggests: improve energy efficiency levels in Scotland's homes in order to reduce energy use. As such, it clearly lies within the energy efficiency remit of the Enterprise and Culture Committee. It would also tackle fuel poverty, which comes under the remit of the Communities Committee. The bill thus falls within the remit of two committees equally.

The Greens argued that the bill should be referred to the Enterprise and Culture Committee because the Communities Committee was clearly overburdened with legislation following the Executive's decision to ask Parliament to change that committee's remit to cover the Executive's Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill—a bill that clearly fell under the remit of either the Health Committee or the Education Committee rather than the Communities Committee. Despite that, the Parliamentary Bureau referred my bill to the Communities Committee, which has understandably ruled that it does not have time to consider it.

Presiding Officer, I ask you for a ruling on the criteria that you and the bureau use, or should use, when considering which committee a bill is referred to. Do you take into account the committee's workload and whether it is likely to be able to examine the bill? Do you agree that it would be appropriate to consider re-referring the bill to a committee that has sufficient time and whose remit covers the bill?

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (Sol):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I stand to seek support for the Treatment of Drug Users (Scotland) Bill to be considered again. It has been dropped from the agenda because of the shortage of time in the Health Committee.

I would like to move a motion to have the bill considered by the Health Committee or a substitute committee under rule 9.6.1 of the standing orders, which states that the lead committee

"shall consider and report on the general principles of the Bill."

We are bringing the Parliament into disrepute by leaving members with no choice but to make points of order about their bills. My bill met the timescales given, the consultation was wide, and the responses to it were hugely in favour. Drug treatment and rehabilitation is a huge issue in our communities, and the bill should be heard. I would like to move that motion, and I would like the Parliamentary Bureau to reconsider the bill and the Procedures Committee to examine the situation.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** I thank the members for giving prior notification of the points of order.

As members are aware, the bureau has considered the matter on several occasions, including at its meeting yesterday, which I attended. While recognising the concerns that have been raised, the bureau has confirmed its earlier decision not to set deadlines for the bills. However, I understand that the Procedures Committee is examining the management of members' bills; I hope that that will address the issues in the forthcoming session. I cannot reopen the matter, and I suggest that we move on.



## Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill: Final Stage

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-5161, in the name of Margaret Jamieson, that the Parliament agrees that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill be passed.

14:40

**Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab):** I speak as the convener of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. The bill was introduced in Parliament on 31 January 2006 by what is now Strathclyde partnership for transport—the promoter. The bill's principal objective is to authorise the construction of works in Renfrewshire and the city of Glasgow to provide a new railway service between Glasgow airport and Glasgow Central station. It should be noted that, contrary to the belief of some, the committee did not work for the promoter in any shape or form throughout the process. We scrutinised all evidence in a fair and impartial manner that treated the objectors and the promoter in the same way.

The Parliament debated and agreed to the general principles and agreed that the bill should proceed on 21 June. The committee met on 22 June to discuss the proposed groupings of objections and deadlines for receiving written evidence from the lead objectors and the promoter, and to indicate to the assessor what would be expected of him.

We were the first committee to appoint an assessor to hear oral evidence on its behalf during consideration stage of a bill. The benefit to the committee of appointing an assessor was to

“reduce the burden on MSPs in dealing with what are at times highly complex and technical matters”

while enabling the

“process to be conducted more efficiently.”

I remind members of the amount of time that members of earlier private bill committees spent on attending meetings and dealing with vast amounts of paperwork in relation to evidence and submissions on technical matters, which sometimes made it difficult to focus on a bill's general details.

Professor Hugh Begg was appointed to undertake the role of assessor for the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill. He scrutinised all written submissions, went on site visits to familiarise himself with the area and finally heard evidence from witnesses at six meetings that were held over five and a half days in Paisley. I thank

Renfrewshire Council and its staff for providing accommodation and the services of staff throughout those meetings.

Professor Begg reported to us in a little over three months, most of which were in the summer recess. I thank him for producing a comprehensive report for the committee to scrutinise. We considered in detail the assessor's report. We agreed with nearly all his recommendations and made numerous changes to the scheme as a consequence. The use of the assessor was invaluable, as it enabled the committee to concentrate its efforts on scrutiny of the principles that underpin the bill. I draw to members' attention the fact that it has taken a mere 10 months from introduction of the bill to this final stage debate. I thank the Procedures Committee for recommending that standing orders be changed.

I thank the promoter's staff for all their hard work and commitment in taking the bill to this stage. The committee appreciates the time given and the effort made by objectors in submitting their written evidence to a very tight deadline over the summer. Some found that daunting and time consuming, but all deadlines were set to make best use of the time over the summer recess. I thank the objectors and all witnesses who took the time to appear at the assessor meetings in Paisley and I thank the clerks and the team for their efforts. I also thank my fellow committee members for their hard work and diligence throughout the process.

During consideration stage, we met five times and heard oral evidence from the promoter, the Minister for Transport and Transport Scotland on outstanding issues that arose from our preliminary stage report. The promoter gave evidence on issues such as Glasgow Central station's opening hours, park-and-ride facilities, safety and security, consultation, funding estimates, noise and vibration and the code of construction practice. The Minister for Transport and Transport Scotland gave further evidence on Glasgow crossrail proposals; the business case for investment in the new infrastructure between Glasgow Central station and Paisley Gilmour Street station compared with the business case for the project as a whole; the project outturn costs for the Glasgow airport rail link; and the impact that the Edinburgh airport rail link could have on GARL. My colleagues will speak about some of those issues; I will deal with the code of construction practice and the noise and vibration policy documents, which are intended to give protection to people who will be affected by the proposals during and after construction.

At our request, the promoter provided much-revised versions of those documents, which covered all the undertakings and commitments that we required to be covered, particularly on

mitigation issues. The code of construction practice will ensure that the impacts of construction activities on the public and the environment will be minimised. The changes that were made included the idea of appointing a liaison officer to liaise with local authority departments, members of the public, the press and the media. Community liaison groups and business liaison groups will be formed to represent the views and concerns of the larger community along the proposed route during construction. Those groups will be consulted and given regular updates on the project's progress. In addition, the public will be given a minimum of seven days' advance notice of planned works, and a complaints procedure will be put in place for members of the public so that direct contact can be made during working hours. Acknowledgment of receipt of a complaint will be made within 24 hours. Actions that are taken on complaints will be monitored and the relevant information will be made publicly available.

The noise and vibration policy gives the commitment to strive to reduce noise and vibration levels from GARL train services to as low a level as is reasonably practicable. Indeed, the bill now includes a requirement for the promoter to use all reasonably practicable means to comply with the policy.

I will give an example of how the committee listened and used its powers to make a difference for one objector. For years, a gentleman had complained about the increased use of loud klaxons on trains that passed his property. The noise caused distress to him and his elderly neighbours. No one listened, but we did and required an amendment to the bill to provide for a noise receptor to be placed near their properties. The use of klaxons will now be regularly monitored as part of the bill's noise monitoring scheme. That is a further demonstration of the impartial manner in which we worked. I suggest to the minister that the Transport and Works (Scotland) Bill make production of such documents mandatory at the outset in the new procedures.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill be passed.

14:48

**The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott):** I thank the convener of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee, Margaret Jamieson, and her colleagues, the promoter of the bill, advisers and committee clerks for the work that they have done to get the bill to this stage. I take the point that Margaret Jamieson made about the bill process taking 10 months.

The undertaking has been complex and has required a great deal of rigorous evaluation. The construction of a direct rail link to Glasgow airport is a key commitment in the partnership agreement, and the Government strongly supports the motion in the name of Margaret Jamieson.

Growing Scotland's economy is the Government's first priority. We are not taking a piecemeal approach to that; rather, we have proposed fundamental, integrated changes to our railway system and investments that must be made if our railways are to make a significant contribution to the integrated transport system in Scotland that we all want. The Glasgow airport rail link is an essential part of that programme. As Glasgow airport continues to grow and the number of passengers continues to rise, we must ensure that viable and sustainable public transport options are available.

Let me deal quickly with some of the nonsense that we have heard from some people about the impact of the Edinburgh airport rail link on the Glasgow airport rail link. I provided evidence to the committee on that issue in September and again in October. In response to a request from MSPs for further information, Transport Scotland provided a technical note of the modelling work that was undertaken by Scott Wilson Railways Ltd, which was commissioned by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The modelling work that was asked for was provided, so I suggest that the conspiracy theorists should grow up.

The modelling work was based on assumptions from the Department for Transport aviation white paper and provided a range of scenarios. It was not intended to provide a definitive view, but was used as part of a series of pieces of work to inform Government on the airport rail link projects. A full assessment of options is what Government does.

It is easy to quote selectively from any report, but my evidence to the committee made it clear that the impact of EARL on GARL, and vice versa, depends on a range of factors. Those include forecast air passenger growth, the market that is served by each airport, and the service availability and frequency at each airport. The complete analysis of the business case for both airport rail links is robust and the impact of the one on the other is considered to be minimal. Both projects were required to undergo regular business case assessment before the release of public money. That will continue to be the case.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife (Ind)):** I seek clarification. Was the study that the minister described an independent study?

**Tavish Scott:** The study was commissioned by Transport Scotland in pursuit of its assessment of

the airport rail link options available to the Government.

The Glasgow airport rail link will provide an important contribution to economic growth in Renfrewshire, Glasgow and throughout Scotland. The link will be good for local residents, airport workers, tourists and Scottish business. The promoter estimates that Paisley will benefit directly from an additional 675 jobs and 650 jobs will be brought to Glasgow and Renfrewshire.

The Glasgow airport rail link will cost £160 million in 2004 prices. Last month, the promoter reached an agreement with BAA under which the airport owner will be fully involved in the delivery of the rail link. That will provide enormous benefits in managing the project and in ensuring that costs and risks are kept under control.

Scotland and Glasgow will lose out if we do nothing. Cities in Europe compete for investment and business opportunities in a highly competitive environment. The rail link will greatly enhance Glasgow's competitiveness. Companies locate in cities with good transport links, so we must invest in those improvements. When it was announced last week that Barclays' wealth will create a further 500 jobs in Glasgow, the company stressed the importance of Glasgow's accessibility and its direct links to other financial centres. If we are to attract and keep businesses in Scotland, we need the Glasgow airport rail link.

The project is integral to the Government's approach to transport. We are committed to putting in place the transport infrastructure and connections that will allow Scotland to compete, and compete well, in the global marketplace. I hope that Parliament will endorse that vision this afternoon.

14:53

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** Strathclyde partnership for transport, which is the organisation behind the Glasgow airport rail link, has given the project a series of objectives: to stimulate economic growth in the west of Scotland, which I believe is key for the whole of Scotland; to contribute to the provision of a sustainable basis for the future growth of both west of Scotland airports, which are key to our economy; and to support sustainable regeneration along the M8, Ayrshire and Inverclyde corridors by developing rail capacity.

Clearly, the project is about more than just an airport rail link, so perhaps the name of the bill is not as appropriate as it might be. Other objectives include: to improve social inclusion and accessibility by connecting areas of low car ownership and high deprivation to the economic opportunities that already exist near the airport

and in the nearby city of Glasgow; to provide high-quality, high-capacity public transport services that connect the airport, Paisley, Glasgow and, ultimately, Ayrshire; to provide public transport services to the airport and to the M8 and Ayrshire corridors; and to integrate with the existing transport network. To what extent the airport rail link will achieve all those objectives remains to be seen.

I commend the committee for the work that it has done to tease out much of the detail and for issuing challenges to ensure that the interests of a wide variety of stakeholders are taken into account.

There is no doubt that there are issues relating to connectivity; my colleague Mr Matheson will elaborate on those in his speech. We cannot look at GARL in isolation. There is considerable interest in the Glasgow crossrail project, which is not dealt with in the bill. If the economic case for the project stacks up, it will make a significant difference to the utilisation of GARL. Direct connections between Glasgow Queen Street and Glasgow Central station would be of particular benefit to GARL, as they would undoubtedly increase patronage and have a direct impact on the business case for the scheme.

**Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I am pleased to hear the member speak so favourably about the project. Can he explain why, exactly a year ago, his colleague Fergus Ewing described it as a waste of money?

**Brian Adam:** I will come to the money in a minute. Undoubtedly there will be a modal shift, which is one of the bill's objectives.

I hope that the minister will be able to reassure us that there will be firm control of the costs of the scheme. Even the figures that the promoters have produced suggest that the scheme will have only a marginal economic benefit. We must be careful to ensure that the overall costs are kept distinctly under control.

I am delighted that the issues relating to playing fields have been resolved satisfactorily and in consultation with stakeholders. My colleague Sandra White will address the outstanding issues relating to disabled access.

14:57

**Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con):** The Scottish Conservatives have long campaigned for a rail link to Glasgow airport, as well as for links to Scotland's other main airports. We strongly support the project that is before us today. It is a good project, but there is still tremendous opportunity and scope for

improvement, especially for better connectivity to the main railway networks in Scotland.

The Labour leader of Glasgow City Council seemed to suffer a bizarre lapse of judgment when he claimed in *The Herald* on 19 April that the project would offer a direct link to Edinburgh, Stirling, Aberdeen and Dundee. Although there will be a link to Edinburgh, he was not right about some of the other cities at this time. I would have expected him to understand his city much better. Like others, we argue that Glasgow Central station and Queen Street station must be connected to provide the connectivity that everyone expects in that area in the long term.

SPT appears to have missed a trick by not using the link to serve the massively popular Braehead shopping complex. Does the minister have a view on that? The undoubted merits of the scheme have been overshadowed by poor communication between ministers and the promoter, which appear to have driven up the cost of the project to taxpayers and to have pushed it back by two years. In March 2005, SPT said that it hoped to introduce the bill that spring and cited a cost of £140 million and a completion date of late 2008. However, by October the bill had still not been introduced, although SPT said that it was ready to introduce it in June, and the cost had risen to £160 million. In a letter to Mr Scott, Alastair Watson warned that SPT was

“starting to incur significant additional costs as a result of the delays being imposed by the Scottish Executive.”

In March 2006, the minister claimed that the project was on target, but this time he used the figure of £170 million to £210 million and cited the end of 2010 as the completion date. The upping of the cost seemed to anger the bill committee, which had been assured that £160 million was the grand total. In its stage 1 report, the committee worried that

“such a lack of clarity does not inspire great confidence in the project.”

I am surprised that the rail link does not have better connections beyond the airport into other parts of the west of Scotland. There has been no mention of the opportunity to create park-and-ride facilities adjacent to the station, which would remove at a stroke thousands of car journeys into Glasgow, ease congestion and reduce pollution. Such a scheme must allow for dropping off and picking up people at bus station points so that much better use of available transportation can be made. We also have an opportunity to create a rail hub for the area to increase passenger usage, which is vital to ensure that the project meets its costs and returns.

Last week in the debate on the Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill, I

mentioned to the minister compulsory purchase orders and proximity impact, both of which apply to GARL. I was pleased to hear the convener talk about a noise and vibration policy and developing a code of construction practice. I support her comments whole-heartedly.

We simply cannot afford further delays and cost overruns. Will the minister give us an assurance on those matters? Despite the difficulties, there is a huge amount of good will for the project to succeed, both in the west of Scotland and beyond. I congratulate SPT, BAA, the bill committee and its advisers and clerks, and the Executive, who all played a part in getting us to this point. We on the Conservative benches will take great pleasure in voting for the bill at close of play today.

15:01

**Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):** I thank the convener for her stewardship of the bill through the parliamentary process. As the minister said, Parliament has already debated the economic contribution that GARL can make to the economic competitiveness of the whole of the west of Scotland—that is the essential case for the bill.

My coalition colleagues will deal in their speeches with some of the wider metropolitan benefits. I will mention some of the more local economic benefits. For example, 650 new jobs will be created in Renfrewshire in the next 10 years and some 700 jobs will be created in Paisley town centre once the line starts to operate. Additional benefits will include extra office space, additional visitor expenditure and superior rail links to Glasgow and beyond.

I urge members who still have anxieties about whether the patronage estimates will be met to consider the encouraging evidence that we have heard during the bill's passage about lines such as the Larkhall to Milngavie line, on which patronage levels have been considerably up on the promoter's original estimates. In that optimistic vein, I draw Parliament's attention to an agreement that has been reached in the past 48 hours between Renfrewshire Council and Strathclyde partnership for transport concerning the St James playing fields in Paisley. As some members know, the St James playing fields are the biggest concentration of football pitches in the west of Scotland. I can do no better than John Lyle, the general secretary of the local Paisley and district amateur football league, who said yesterday:

“It's like Christmas has come early! I've been a member of this league for 50 years and can remember playing in the 1950s with nothing but a cold water trough outside the clubhouse.

The Glasgow Airport Rail Link is the best thing that's ever happened to St James playing fields and we're delighted with the new changing rooms, drainage system and alternative pitches being put in place by SPT."

After that, I can only congratulate all the parties that have an interest in the St James playing fields and sports in Scotland on reaching such a welcome agreement.

As we move on and pass over responsibility for the construction stage to SPT, I urge that organisation to remain mindful of local concerns about the impact of the link. There is further work to do to relocate and compensate businesses that will be displaced and disrupted and continuing consultation of local residents is necessary. I welcome the community liaison groups that have been set up and which are operating—they will meet this week—but there is more to be done if we are to meet the ambitious and encouraging timetable for construction that will begin next year and will be delivered by 2010. In particular, I mention the need to upgrade Paisley Gilmour Street station. It is not included in the project, but SPT has said that it will consider the matter.

I welcome Brian Adam's endorsement of the scheme, but his conversion is somewhat late and I am not sure that word of it has reached Renfrewshire, where the local SNP candidates persist in calling GARL

"the wrong route, in the wrong place and at the wrong price".

I suspect that voters in the west of Scotland will make their own judgments on the wisdom of turning our backs on 700 additional local jobs and the economic competitiveness that the line will bring.

After so many years, the Glasgow airport rail link is with us. It is a visionary development that is now on the point of delivery. Given that it will strengthen the physical infrastructure of the west of Scotland and bring direct economic benefits to the whole of the west of Scotland metropolitan area, it deserves Parliament's support.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. I ask for four-minute speeches.

15:05

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I will try to be as quick as possible.

Wendy Alexander's politicking this afternoon does not become her: I fought for the Glasgow airport rail link when I lived in Paisley and continued to fight for it when I moved permanently to Glasgow. The proposal has been around for years and years and, thanks to the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee, it has achieved the support of all parties, not just of one. I thank

the committee for its hard work. As Margaret Jamieson said, from its inception, the bill has taken only 10 months to reach the final stage—a feat on which the committee should certainly be congratulated.

The case for GARL has been well made for many years, and I thank not only the bodies that have lobbied me and other members on the matter, but the Glasgow *Evening Times* for its unstinting campaign to make the link a reality. I am sure that, either now or once construction of the line begins, the newspaper will launch a campaign for a Glasgow crossrail, which is, as Brian Adam said, the missing link. Once that line is in place, the west of Scotland rail network will be complete. I fear that, without the crossrail, the Glasgow airport rail link will not be used to its full potential.

Previous speakers highlighted GARL's economic benefits not just to Glasgow and Paisley but to Ayrshire and beyond. We must not forget that its impact will extend to Ayrshire, and it would be absolutely—

**Margaret Jamieson:** On a point of clarification, as there are only two rail corridors from Ayrshire into Glasgow, only North and South Ayrshire will benefit from GARL.

**Ms White:** I thank Margaret Jamieson for her intervention. I know that she comes from Ayrshire, but I have to say that I did not mention a specific area. In any case, I do not think that it matters whether the corridors are in the north, south, east or west of the county; the whole of Ayrshire will still benefit from this excellent proposal.

The benefits of the link are overwhelming, but one of its greatest benefits is that it will be a major feature in Glasgow's bid for the 2014 Commonwealth games. I believe that, with such an asset, we will win the bid.

Brian Adam said that I would mention disabled access. Under the current proposals, three disabled parking spaces will have to be removed to extend what is called platform 11a.

**Margaret Jamieson:** The spaces are not being removed, but are being relocated to allow access and to provide protection for the public.

**Ms White:** Margaret Jamieson says that the spaces "are being relocated". As far as disabled people are concerned, they are being removed, because the spaces are in an area that they have always used. Even able-bodied people find platform 11a to be quite a distance from the main concourse. I know that the committee has no say on the matter and that it will be a planning decision for Glasgow City Council. Although Margaret Jamieson might well be right to say that the spaces "are being relocated", disabled people feel that they are simply being removed. They will certainly find it very difficult to get to platform 11a.

Although I praise the bill—as I said, I have fought for it for many years—we have to be realistic and get the link right for everyone in our society.

15:09

**Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):**

If we pass the bill—as we should do—Scotland's largest city, Glasgow, will be connected by rail, via Scotland's largest town, Paisley, to Scotland's busiest airport, Glasgow international airport. All three locations are linchpins of a city region that contains 42 per cent of Scotland's population and produces 43 per cent of Scotland's gross domestic product. Given the significance of those figures, the question whether to build the Glasgow airport rail link ought to be a no-brainer. However, by all means let us examine the business case for the project. If we do so, we will see that it is actually pretty conservative—with a small C. It is based on the downbeat forecast of the 2003 United Kingdom aviation white paper, which I refer to as "The Dodgy Dossier" because it predicts that only 15 million passengers a year will use Glasgow airport by 2030, although most analysts agree that a likelier number is 24 million.

The Glasgow airport rail link can be seen and supported as being an incremental step towards providing real access to Glasgow international airport for the rest of Scotland. The Glasgow airport rail link, combined with a scheme called the Glasgow crossrail, which was rightly highlighted by the committee, was to be submitted by the former Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive back in 2003, but it was dissuaded from doing so by civil servants partly because of the findings in "The Dodgy Dossier". That may not matter for the purposes of today's debate, but only if—as I said earlier—GARL is seen as being an incremental step towards wider rail access to Glasgow international airport.

My message to all parliamentarians on all sides of the chamber, to officials in the various agencies and to civil servants is that they should support the Glasgow airport rail link, stop using "The Dodgy Dossier" and open their minds to the early completion of crossrail. To do anything less would run the risk of creating an uneven playing field for the west of Scotland, which many of us will not stand for.

15:12

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** The position that I will put forward is similar to Charlie Gordon's, albeit for very different reasons. Before I do that, I echo members' congratulations to the committee on its thorough scrutiny of the bill.

The last time we debated this issue in the chamber, I gave GARL a cautious, cool and

distinctly unenthusiastic welcome. Surprise, surprise—I will do so again today. At heart, what we have is a proposal that is motivated by the wrong reason: it is motivated by the Executive's stated top priority of chasing the myth of everlasting economic growth on a planet of finite resources. If we had a Scottish Executive that has a genuinely sustainable approach to transport policy, we would probably end up with a Glasgow airport rail link at some point. However, I believe that we would have started with the crossrail scheme that Charlie Gordon talked about. The crossrail scheme would have benefits across central Scotland—in Glasgow, most families still do not have access to a car.

Our objective should be to take traffic off the roads and get people on trains. An airport rail link can do that, if that is our objective and purpose and if that is the wider context in which it is to operate. However, if the wider context is the one that Charlie Gordon described, in which politicians and ministers look at projections of ever-increasing aviation, instead of taking the grave concerns about climate change seriously and asking how we can limit and restrain the damaging growth in aviation, they ask how we can facilitate and make more of it.

We have the absurd spectacle of Government ministers saying on the one hand that climate change is the greatest overriding threat to our society and civilisation and then, on the other hand, saying that we should be flying three times as much. It just does not add up.

However, the Greens will vote for the rail link. I just hope that, as Tavish Scott sits there through debate after debate listening to us harping on about crossrail, he and the Executive will throw their political backing and weight behind crossrail as they have done in the past behind deeply damaging schemes such as the M74.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):** You have one minute left, Mr Harvie.

**Patrick Harvie:** I do not think I will need my final minute, Presiding Officer, save to say that one day, perhaps not many years from now, some poor overburdened generation of politicians will look back on the words of the Scottish Executive in some dusty tome and wonder how such complacency was ever allowed to pass for government.

15:16

**Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** Patrick Harvie's contribution has left me in a major quandary. The Greens say that they are in favour of rail travel but are against air travel. Does that mean that all the Greens will end up milling around Glasgow airport with no place to go?

The capital cost of the project was one of the major issues arising during consideration of the bill. When the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive submitted its initial estimate of expense and funding, the capital cost of the infrastructure amounted to £160 million at 2004 prices. In the ministerial statement, the figure was between £170 million and £210 million. For the information of Mr Davidson and others, the difference between the two is no more than the effect of a range of inflation figures between 2004 and the delivery date, which is expected to be 2010. For the avoidance of doubt, the committee was pleased to have assurance from the minister that the expenditure has been scrutinised rigorously, even though this is a complex project with different inflation rates relating to different parts of the work.

In support of financial stringency, I note that in the overall estimate for the project, a figure of £35 million is labelled for contingencies. Although I recognise that all major projects hit unseen obstacles, I hope that instead of the cost overruns that David Davidson mentioned, this part of the funding will be largely unnecessary and the overall cost will be less than the budget. I am also pleased to note that part of the total capital cost is going to come from Europe under trans-European networks funding.

I move on from the likely cost of the project to the economic benefits that will accrue from the implementation of this new branch line that will link Glasgow Central station, the busiest station in Scotland, with Paisley Gilmour Street, which is the third busiest station in Scotland, and with an airport that is already handling more than 8 million passengers annually. As Charlie Gordon pointed out, that figure is predicted to rise to 24 million by the end of 2030, air use taxes aside. With more than 50 per cent of the expected patronage of the new line being airport-related, the primary beneficiary must be the operator of Glasgow airport.

Because of commercial confidentiality, it was difficult to extract from the promoter the details of the negotiations between the airport operator and the promoter and thereby to find the exact contribution that would be made to the overall project by the company that is now running the airport. That highlights the fact that companies that are operating in the private sector can reap the rewards of major investments by the public sector. However, a wider view of the economic plus points of the airport rail link show that they will be widespread.

The minister was right to emphasise that jobs will be created by construction of the link and—more important—through improved connections in the transport infrastructure. As Wendy Alexander remarked, the committee was provided with

evidence that between 600 and 700 jobs could be created in the Paisley area within four years of the new line's opening.

Consultants for the promoters also showed an additional 52,000 visitors coming to Scotland, bringing an estimated £10 million boost to the tourist economies in Glasgow, Renfrew and Inverclyde. A major area of growth could be the conference circuit, with existing facilities in Glasgow benefiting considerably from the direct link from overseas.

I think that I am the first east coast politician to speak in the debate—

**Mr Davidson:** That is not right.

**Mr Arbuckle:** I am sorry. I need to qualify that further—I am the first Fifer to speak in the debate. I point out that there will still be a gap in the links between the east of the country and Glasgow airport. The distance between Queen Street station and Central station is not vast, but I would like it to be dealt with in a future phase.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close.

**Mr Arbuckle:** Like other members of the committee, I thank the support team for helping us to get the bill through to the final stage. Although time was not on the committee's side, papers were turned round quickly and efficiently by the support staff. I fully support the passing of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill and look forward to the physical work starting after such a long gestation period.

15:20

**Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** As a Glasgow constituency member and long-time supporter of the Glasgow airport rail link campaign, I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in today's final stage debate. I applaud the committee for its commitment and hard work throughout the bill's parliamentary journey and I congratulate my colleague Margaret Jamieson on her stewardship of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee.

Scottish Labour's 2003 manifesto contained a pledge to build GARL and following the last Scottish general election it became part of the coalition agreement. GARL will provide a 15-minute service from Glasgow Central station to a new purpose-built station at the airport. Creation of the link will significantly enhance accessibility to and from the airport.

At a time of airport growth—it is estimated that a threefold rise in annual patronage of Glasgow airport will mean that 24 million travellers will use it by 2030—modern, high-quality infrastructure from Glasgow city centre to the airport is vital if we are

to protect the airport's competitive edge. It is estimated that GARL could support up to 1,300 jobs across Glasgow and that it will generate a total of about £3.14 million per annum in gross value-added economic benefit, both of which are good things. It will also help to support Glasgow's expanding £112 million conference sector and will offer a significant asset to the 2014 Commonwealth games, if Glasgow's bid is successful, which we all hope it will be. The committee was right to conclude that GARL will improve job opportunities and contribute to regeneration in the west of Scotland. GARL is a coherent and sensible project in its own right. It is based on a positive business case and it marks significant progress.

In the time that remains to me, I want to draw Parliament's attention to the committee's excellent preliminary stage report, which made it clear that the progress marked by GARL can and must be built on. In paragraph 18 of the report, the committee concluded that

"greater connectivity could be provided by linking GARL more closely to other rail developments",

and it went on to say that

"the Committee believes that GARL is a scheme that could be significantly bolstered with the concurrent development of a cross-rail scheme in Glasgow."

As the convener of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on Glasgow crossrail, I could not agree more with the committee's wise words. The crossrail scheme has a significant role to play in increasing the number of passengers who would use GARL, so I was especially pleased that at the recent Scottish Labour Party conference in Oban, my party pledged

"to take forward the Glasgow crossrail project as one of the strategic projects necessary to secure the future growth of Glasgow and its neighbours."

I welcome that pledge.

The so-called missing link between Glasgow Central and Queen Street stations is more than just an inconvenient 15-minute walk for passengers; it is a decisive split in Scotland's rail network and an avoidable gap in our passenger rail services. The Glasgow crossrail scheme is of strategic importance to our rail network. It would make it possible for direct journeys to be made from the north to the south and from the east to the west of the country. The cost of linking Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street stations would be insignificant compared with the positive effects of a scheme that would offer such widespread and fundamental benefits to the rail network. The scheme would provide value for money. SPT estimates a cost between £115 million and £187 million to develop. In my view, that would be money well spent because crossrail

would significantly improve the Glasgow conurbation's rail links and it would support economic regeneration in some of Glasgow's poorest and most disadvantaged areas. As I have said, it would also be hugely advantageous to the bid for the 2014 Commonwealth games and to the many thousands of visitors who would come to Glasgow if that bid were successful.

Today is a day to celebrate the passage of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill, but it is also a day to acknowledge that more needs to be done. Glasgow crossrail represents the next stage in our journey towards greater connectivity and continuing economic growth. We must commit to it as soon as possible, given the beneficial impact that it would have nationwide. I commend the bill.

15:25

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** In principle, the Scottish Socialist Party is in favour of a rail link between Glasgow and Glasgow airport. We favour increased public transport and believe that the money that is intended for investment in the M74 should be put into public transport. The bill gave us a big opportunity not just to get air passengers from Glasgow airport into Glasgow, but to invest in public transport in the area as a whole. That opportunity has been lost.

The promoter's memorandum stated that it did not want any stops, apart from at Paisley, between Glasgow and the airport, which means that other communities in that area have missed out on a rail link to the airport and to Glasgow. There was a big opportunity to reopen Renfrew station, which is closed, and to site a new station at Braehead, but that opportunity has been lost. There is now no opportunity to link those stations with the proposal that is before us today.

The issues have become clear. The bill is not about social inclusion or regeneration, or about all the statements that are in the memorandum from the promoter: it is just about getting bums on seats from the airport into Glasgow, so it has missed out on some of the bigger priorities that Parliament is supposed to be in favour of. Although the SSP favours a rail link in principle, we will not support the bill today. The proposed line is on the wrong route and it bypasses communities in the area, which will not have easy access to the rail link. In particular, the route will miss out Braehead, where many people in the local area want to shop.

My final point is about the financing of the scheme. The figures of £115 million to £175 million have been cited, but I have also seen a figure of up to £210 million. Am I the only one who thinks that it is an anomaly for us to spend £210 million of public money—of taxes—by giving it to ScotRail, a private company that pays its



shareholders nice dividends, while all the onus of funding will remain on us? The companies that run cheap flights from Glasgow airport are not to be responsible for putting any money into the infrastructure that will benefit them. If we are going to go for the free market and for privatisation, we should let those companies pay for part of the infrastructure. We want a public rail network; if we want to invest public money in developing it, let us take the rest of it back into public ownership.

15:28

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I would like to make two points. I was against the proposal to start with, because of the playing fields issue. It is commendable that all those who are involved have negotiated together sensibly so that the railway will operate in an intelligent fashion and the community will end up with improved playing fields. That is a lesson for quite a number of other projects in which developers and communities have ended up at loggerheads. It is possible to negotiate and to come to a compromise that is a win-win situation for both sides, so I commend all those who have been involved in those negotiations.

Secondly, I support what Bill Butler and other members have said about the relevance of the Glasgow crossrail project. The more interconnectivity—or whatever the difficult word is—we can get, the better. People from all over Scotland should be able to get to airports and other parts of Scotland in a sensitive, civilised and competent way, and should not have to howk lots of luggage from one station to another. I hope that we can progress from the Glasgow airport rail link to the Glasgow crossrail project, and that we can continue to make other improvements to the railways.

The Executive deserves credit for progressing quite a number of railway improvements. Twenty-odd years ago, when I suggested improvements such as new stations, it was like suggesting going into outer space, but now there is serious support from Government, local government and other sources for improving our railways—I hope that will continue. I look forward to having fast trains to London, for example, so that we do not have to fly.

I welcome the bill and other bills to improve our railways.

15:30

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind):** I am delighted to speak, if only to say that there are reasons to be anxious about the bill. Wendy Alexander is not anxious, but I am. I pay tribute to the good work of the committee, particularly the convener, the clerks and the bill

team. It is a tribute to the committee that it managed to get the bill through in 10 months, including hearing from objectors and visiting Manchester for guidance on how a rail link might work.

The route is the right one—an airport link is not in the business of serving areas such as Braehead. If we opened up other stations on the link, rather than catch a train that stops at every halt there would be no reason for airport passengers not to get the bus. In that sense, the concept of the rail link is sound.

I am anxious about the cost. The fact that the cost reflects insurance makes me worry that there could be differences in the outturn because of poor management or unexpected difficulties with the route.

I am disappointed that Glasgow crossrail has not come first—that will have knock-on effects. Crossrail should have been the Executive's priority.

I am anxious that there have been no independent studies—in other words, ones that have not been commissioned from Transport Scotland—of the effect of the Edinburgh airport rail link on the Glasgow airport rail link and vice versa. Clearly, those effects could be important.

The idea that businesses will not locate in Glasgow because of the lack of a rail link is fallacious, as businesses tend to use taxis. Businesses need a direct link when an airport is further away from a city. Heathrow, for example, is 45 minutes away from London.

Although there are reasons to be anxious about the bill, it will certainly be passed. However, the most important thing is that a crossrail bill should be introduced to Parliament soon.

15:32

**Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab):** I have a simplistic view of the Glasgow airport rail link: as a matter of common sense, it is a good thing. That is not very scientific or technical, but for me it is quite simple: a city such as Glasgow needs a rail link.

To those of us who live there, Glasgow is a major European city, and we want it to remain so, in terms of business and tourism. We want prosperity to increase. Some members, such as Sandra White, have spoken about the Commonwealth games. Others have spoken about conference facilities. That is all part of the picture. I apologise to Patrick Harvie, but most of us are always looking for more flights to more places. A direct link from the airport to the city centre is a feature of the kind of city where that is the case.

At the moment, the situation in Glasgow is back to front. Paris city centre is a short train ride from the city's major airport. If we fly budget to an outlying airport, as most of us do, we take our chance on the bus getting through the traffic. It is the same in Frankfurt, Stockholm or any number of cities. Glasgow is the other way round. If we arrive at Prestwick, we cross the bridge, get on the train and we are up the road. With Glasgow, on the other hand, we take our chance on the M8. It is almost common sense that a major city should have a rail link to its airport.

I emphasise, as many members have done, that the rail link is part of the jigsaw for the wider area and for those who live and work there. I join other members—Charlie Gordon in particular—in saying that Glasgow crossrail is important. The crossrail scheme will make the airport much more accessible for people from throughout the city, but it makes no sense to wait for it before building GARL. I disagree with Frances Curran, who is in favour of GARL but, because everything is not happening at the same time, will not support this part of the jigsaw. To me, that is daft. With any jigsaw, one has to put the pieces in one at a time, as long as one keeps the big picture in mind. Most of us have the big picture in mind and will not let the Executive forget it but, in the meantime, we are grateful for this piece of the jigsaw, because it will provide real practical advantages to people.

At the moment, residents of Lanarkshire can go to the airport in a number of ways. They can take their cars and leave them at the airport for a week at an astronomical cost. They can take a taxi, but that, too, costs an astronomical amount. They can take the train into Glasgow and then get on a bus and on to the M8, which is cheap, but it certainly is not cheerful. With GARL, people will know where they are. They will be able to get into Central station, cross the platform and get on a train to the airport. That will be true for people from Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. GARL is important to a big area and a great many people.

I do not know how the figures stack up or how it all works in detail, despite all the major studies. I have been on another railway bill committee and I think that most of us take the projections with a pinch of salt, because we are never quite sure how the modelling will turn out in practice. However, for those of us who live in the west of Scotland and for people who come into the area from outside the country, GARL is a commonsense, important part of the jigsaw. Most of us find it as simple as that, which is why we will support the bill.

15:36

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** Unless there is a mood in the Parliament that I have failed to detect,

the bill will be passed later this afternoon, which undoubtedly makes today a good news day for Glasgow.

We must all realise that the economic infrastructure of Glasgow and, indeed, the west of Scotland has changed profoundly over the past 30 years. The old heavy engineering and metal-bashing industries, such as shipbuilding, have largely gone and we must now earn a living for Glasgow by making it a much more attractive city to visit and in which to invest.

Depending on the criteria one uses, the Glasgow conurbation has a population of 1 million to 2.2 million people. They have been singularly ill served by the transport links to the airport, which are manifestly poor in comparison with those in any comparable European city, therefore the action that we propose to take today is long overdue.

Glasgow's conference industry is worth £115 million. Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Executive and the previous Conservative Government have done an awful lot of work to attract conferences and tourism to the city. That has been successful to some extent, but we need to build upon the success.

If there was one slightly discordant note in this afternoon's debate, it came from Patrick Harvie. I accept that the Greens probably feel totally justified in having some caveats with regard to the GARL project, but the air transport genie is well out of the bottle now. The fact is that many people fly to Glasgow from the United States; it is no longer a viable option to sail from New York or Canada.

**Patrick Harvie:** I note the Scottish Conservatives' failure to grasp the "vote blue, go green" message as fully as their colleagues down south. Does Bill Aitken agree that, although we might not need to abolish aviation if we want to tackle climate change seriously, we cannot fly three times as much? The sums do not add up.

**Bill Aitken:** I question the accuracy of the assertion that aviation will triple. I fully acknowledge that there are environmental issues, but there is a much wider argument involving the consumption of carbon fuels. Patrick Harvie might find himself in agreement with me on that, as an avid proponent of reducing carbon emissions.

This has been a good, consensual debate. However, Charlie Gordon might have been better advised not to use the term "dodgy dossier", which is redolent of debates in another place that have not been quite so consensual. We hope that the bill will be passed today, and that there will be no last-minute hiccups. We are confident that, once the line is completed, there will be real economic benefits to the city of Glasgow.

I stress to the minister that neither the Parliament nor the Executive should countenance any delay to the scheme or any serious increase in costings. With that warning and caveat, I wholeheartedly support the motion that the bill be passed.

15:41

**Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP):**

As the Scottish National Party member of the bill committee, I begin by thanking those people who assisted the committee in conducting its scrutiny. In particular, I pay tribute to the clerks for their hard work. They were always there, assisting and supporting us in undertaking our task. The Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill marked the first opportunity to try out the new truncated process for considering private bills, without the need to address all the individual complaints ourselves. I endorse the procedure, and I hope that other committees will follow it in future. Although the process took us 10 months, I suspect that it would have taken almost twice as long had we been required to consider all the complaints.

A considerable amount of ground has been covered in the debate. I will pick up on two particular issues—connectivity and the football pitches at St James park. In our first evidence-taking session, it was clear to the committee that connectivity would be key to GARL's success. The committee was rightly anxious at the outset about the low patronage figures for the line that were provided by the promoter. It was clear that one factor explaining those low figures was the poor connectivity associated with the project.

The line was to go from Glasgow Central through Paisley Gilmour Street, with a spur going off to the airport. Someone wishing to get a train to Glasgow airport from Cumbernauld, for example, would have had to get on at Cumbernauld, get off at Queen Street, get the bus or walk with their baggage to Glasgow Central and then get the train out to the airport. It was clear from the evidence that we received when visiting Manchester airport that, if the link is to be successful and if patronage figures are to increase, there must be greater connectivity and the journey must be made convenient for people, so that when they get on a train they know that they can remain on it until they arrive at the airport.

Several members, in particular Bill Butler, raised the issue of crossrail. He is quite right about the important role that crossrail will play in making GARL even more successful. It is important to keep in mind the type of crossrail that is set up. A shuttle simply running between the two main stations will not have the impact that a service running from Queen Street to Central and then to Glasgow airport will have. That will be much more

convenient for people in choosing the train to access the airport. Crossrail is important, but it is also important to put the right type of crossrail in place to maximise the potential benefits of GARL.

Wendy Alexander raised issues around St James park, although I notice that she has not stayed for this part of the debate, which is unfortunate. The committee recognised the important role that the park and its facilities play in the local community, and for that reason lodged amendments to ensure that the code of construction practice contains a clear commitment to upgrade the existing facilities, to ensure that there is access to adequate facilities while the work is continuing on the viaduct and to ensure that there is full access to both sides of St James park once the viaduct is in place, in case a ball happens to end up over on the other side during a game.

I hope that members will support the recommendation of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee to support the bill.

15:45

**Tavish Scott:** Glasgow is indeed a great European city and, as members have said, there is every reason to support the bill to encourage the trend to make it and wider Scotland more sustainable—despite what the Greens say—and more economically developed as a result of the better transport connections that we create. Even if the number of passengers using the airport remained the same, there would still be an argument for investing in the airport rail link, given the points that Gordon Jackson and others made about the number of people who use cars but who could switch to rail and about the increased competitiveness that rail links give great European cities. That argument will continue to apply as the number of people using the airport grows, to a greater or lesser extent.

Gordon Jackson's jigsaw analogy was a fair assessment of what must happen. I say to Charlie Gordon, Bill Butler and other members who raised the issue of Glasgow crossrail that SPT is undertaking further work on the demand forecasts for crossrail services and evaluating their operational impact on the wider rail network. We anticipate that that work will provide the basis for a business case for crossrail, which will be considered alongside other transport investments in the strategic transport projects review.

I say to David Davidson and Bill Aitken that, as others have said, construction industry inflation is common to all transport projects. Andrew Arbuckle illustrated the numbers involved. On Mr Davidson's specific point, the bill had to be right. I am sure that the Tories would have been the first

to criticise if a bill had been introduced to Parliament that was not right.

I say to Margaret Jamieson that the 10 months spent on the parliamentary process has been a valuable learning experience, not just for her committee but for Parliament and our assessment of how the system will work. I take seriously the points that she made about the Transport and Works (Scotland) Bill, which is currently proceeding through Parliament, and the code of construction practice and the noise and vibration policy. We will reflect on the committee's views and make judgments about the best way to tackle those issues.

I would have greater respect for Mr Adam and other SNP members in articulating their support for crossrail and its connections to GARL if it were not for all the quotes from their transport spokesman and other SNP spokesmen, such as:

"the wrong route, in the wrong place and at the wrong price."

Paisley North SNP constituency association formally objected to the bill. The transport spokesman of Mr Adam's party said that the project was a mini Holyrood in the making. I would take the SNP's support for GARL and crossrail much more seriously if it were not for the contrary remarks made on the record by Mr Ewing locally and nationally time and time again.

GARL is an important project for Scotland, Glasgow and Glasgow airport, and I encourage members to support the bill.

15:48

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am happy to be the closing speaker in this debate, and I take this opportunity to thank members for their contributions. The debate has been informative. Members have been passionate in their arguments and it has been interesting to hear their views.

Before I sum up some of the committee's views, I will comment briefly on some of the speeches. I welcome the support for the bill from members throughout the chamber as well as from people throughout Scotland. I welcome the details of local economic benefits, which Wendy Alexander outlined, and I reassure Sandra White that there are no outstanding issues about disabled access. As Margaret Jamieson said, the three parking bays will be moved, not removed, to the National Car Parks car park, and there will be drop-off and pick-up facilities at the canopy area of Gordon Street in addition to the existing Union Street facilities. The promoter is working to make further improvements, including providing collection vehicles and assistance with luggage.

**Ms White:** I thank Marlyn Glen for her explanation. I was concerned that there would not be disabled spaces in the NCP car park, but she has clarified the situation.

**Marlyn Glen:** I understand that people are concerned about the change, but I do not think that it will be to their detriment.

In response to Patrick Harvie, I point out that I take climate change seriously, but the improved and increased rail service between Glasgow and Paisley will reduce road traffic and therefore emissions. I say to Frances Curran that the project represents a sizeable investment in our rail system. From that point of view, I hope that she will support the bill.

**Patrick Harvie:** Does Marlyn Glen accept that her assurances would carry more weight if they came with an Executive commitment not to use the project to facilitate the expansion of aviation but to use it as a way of getting traffic off the roads?

**Marlyn Glen:** I understand that that is one of Patrick Harvie's priorities, but for the moment I think that the bill will make a real improvement.

The Glasgow crossrail project is one of the issues about which members are most concerned, and I acknowledge their arguments for an early decision on it. However, the committee accepts that it is not appropriate to delay consideration of the bill until a decision is made on the crossrail scheme. The committee accepts the position that the minister outlined in his evidence when he stated:

"The strategic projects review, which is being taken forward now and will conclude through 2007 and 2008, will provide an opportunity for further consideration of projects that can come together to deliver improved connections."—  
[Official Report, Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee, 3 October 2006; c 285.]

The crossrail options may well be considered as part of a national transport strategy. The committee believes that a crossrail scheme would enhance connectivity as well as the business case for GARL, particularly if the service offered direct connections from Glasgow Queen Street station to the airport.

I turn to running times and opening hours. The committee heard evidence on the opening hours at Glasgow Central station and their correlation with flight times from Glasgow airport. It was felt that a balance had to be struck in relation to opening hours. It is not within the gift of the promoter to start the service one hour earlier, because that would require input from a range of organisations, including Network Rail. Even if GARL's opening hours were extended, there would be no other trains, which would leave onward passengers stuck in Glasgow. It is not

clear where passengers could wait for other types of connecting transport—other than in the station—as shops and cafes would be closed at that time in the morning.

A further problem with early opening is that it might impinge on maintenance work, which in turn would lead to safety issues. The committee is satisfied that, because of the cost implications, it is difficult to justify running trains beyond the times stated in the business case. We are, therefore, satisfied that the proposed opening hours are the best option for now. However, we are happy that the promoter intends to continue discussions with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to determine the optimum timetable. The committee expects the timetable to be kept under constant review.

The committee sought an improvement in the promoter's contact with objectors and agreed that it should continue to consult all parties. The promoter provided an account of the consultation with objectors and the committee noted the promoter's improved efforts since preliminary stage.

Having scrutinised all the evidence, the committee is satisfied that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the negatives. We are satisfied that an appropriate balance has been struck between the rights of those who are adversely affected by the scheme and its benefits to the wider community. The revised code of construction practice and noise and vibration policy offer better protection to those who are affected. Construction hours will be restricted to 8 am to 7 pm on weekdays and 8 am to 1 pm on Saturdays, and the public and businesses will be notified of construction work seven days in advance.

The bill provides that the code must be agreed with local authorities and that Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency must be consulted. Local authorities will have direct involvement and powers to enforce mitigation and even to stop work if necessary. The provision in the bill on deemed planning conditions will allow local authorities to enforce compliance with the code under their existing planning powers.

There are no statutory requirements in Scotland for mitigating noise from railways, but in line with previous legislation we have required the promoter to implement the provisions of noise and insulation regulations that apply in England and Wales and to set noise design targets at lower levels when it is reasonably practicable through mitigation measures. Those measures will be incorporated into the appropriate contracts for the construction and operation of the railway and will be binding.

As the committee said in its consideration stage report:

"The Committee has throughout its consideration of the GARL Bill been mindful of its role in deciding the balance between the potential impact of the GARL Bill on the working and personal lives of objectors and that of the benefits the promoter asserts that the GARL Bill will deliver."

In considering each objection, the committee examined its content along with the assessor's recommendations and took into account all the written and oral evidence provided by witnesses. As Margaret Jamieson explained, we made many changes to improve protection and assist those most affected by the bill.

I add my thanks to everyone involved in the bill's progress, particularly those of us for whom this has been their first experience of the private bill process. We have produced a much-improved bill, and we recommend that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill be passed. I support the motion in Margaret Jamieson's name.

## St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-5113, in the name of Dennis Canavan, that the Parliament agrees that the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:56

**Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind):** I thank the non-Executive bills unit and the convener and members of, and clerks to, the Enterprise and Culture Committee. A special word of thanks is also due to Maureen Conner, who has done a huge amount of research and other work associated with the bill.

Tomorrow, Scots all over the world will celebrate St Andrew's day. St Andrew is Scotland's patron saint, and the St Andrew's cross is embodied in our national flag. At one time, St Andrew's day was a popular day of festivities throughout Scotland, but unfortunately domestic celebrations have dwindled over the years. Recently, the day has probably been celebrated more by expatriate Scots and their descendents in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

There are St Andrew societies and clubs in many parts of the world, and if St Andrew's day were properly recognised at home as a national holiday, that would enhance such international celebrations and help to promote Scotland on the world stage. That is part of the reason why I introduced the bill to make St Andrew's day a national holiday in Scotland.

I accept that the bill will not automatically trigger a national holiday for everyone because the Parliament does not have the power to enforce recognition of holidays, but it will send out a strong signal. The bill will be a parliamentary proclamation in favour of making St Andrew's day a national holiday, and I believe that recognition of the holiday will grow in the years ahead as a result.

The Executive's position is that the bill should be a replacement, rather than an additional, holiday. My preference is that it should be an additional holiday because we are at the bottom of the European league for the number of public holidays. However, I agreed to the Executive's compromise suggestion because I am realistic enough to understand that the bill has no chance of getting parliamentary approval without the Executive's support. It is important to establish the principle of a St Andrew's day national holiday, and I am confident that, in the years ahead,

recognition of the holiday will grow and constructive negotiations between trade unions and employers will lead to it eventually becoming an additional holiday.

There is overwhelming support in the country for my proposal. A MORI opinion poll indicated that 75 per cent of people are in favour of it, and 85 per cent of the respondents to my nationwide consultation were in favour of it.

I realise that opinion is divided in the business community, but surely a St Andrew's day holiday should be seen by many businesses as an opportunity rather than a threat. That is especially true of businesses that are related to tourism, culture and entertainment.

I will give two small examples of enterprise initiatives that arise from St Andrew's day. I am wearing a St Andrew's tartan tie. The tartan was designed and the tie produced by a small company called International Tartans, which specialises in such products. That business is doing very well indeed. I am also wearing a heather badge that was produced by pupils at Torry academy in Aberdeen to celebrate St Andrew's day. Those pupils are members of a school enterprise group called support base one enterprises. The positive recognition that they receive by selling their products helps to raise their self-esteem and the profits are donated to the Aberdeen branch of Children 1<sup>st</sup>.

The entrepreneurial spirit of those schoolchildren should shame some of the pusillanimous people in our business community who made the absurd claim that a St Andrew's day national holiday would be bad for Scottish business and bad for the Scottish economy. For example, the Scottish Licensed Trade Association made the bizarre suggestion that a St Andrew's day holiday would mean a loss of trade for Scottish pubs. When I told that one in an Irish pub, everybody burst out laughing and the bartender said that if a publican cannae make a profit on St Patrick's day, he shouldnae be in the business. It is preposterous to claim that St Patrick's day is somehow bad for Irish business and bad for the Irish economy. The St Patrick's day celebrations mean an injection of €80 million into the Dublin economy alone, and they help to promote Ireland internationally.

The international dimension of St Andrew's day is important for our celebrations at home and abroad. St Andrew is an international figure and, in Scotland today, we have people from many nations, from different ethnic origins, from different cultures and from different faiths. Last Saturday, many of those people took part in a St Andrew's day march and rally against racism and fascism that was organised by the Scottish Trades Union Congress. We should encourage such events, so

that all the people of Scotland will have ownership of the St Andrew's day celebrations.

Parliamentary approval of my bill will not only encourage recognition of a national holiday on St Andrew's day but encourage all the people of Scotland to celebrate our patron saint and our cultural diversity. It will also encourage the people of Scotland to celebrate our national identity and our membership of the international community.

I finish by quoting Alexandra Gill, a pupil of Clyde Valley high school, who told the Public Petitions Committee:

"Surely a country with a history as old as Scotland's deserves a day when its people can reflect on their past and focus on their future."—[*Official Report, Public Petitions Committee*, 25 May 2005; c 1746.]

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill be passed.

16:03

**The Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform (Mr Tom McCabe):** It is appropriate to be in the chamber on the eve of St Andrew's day to debate stage 3 of the bill. I express my sincere thanks to the Enterprise and Culture Committee for the work that it did to bring the bill to this stage. I acknowledge that we gave the committee an extra piece of work that—to its credit—it did well. That is appreciated.

I acknowledge the constructive approach that the member who introduced the bill, Dennis Canavan, has taken. That approach has played a part in helping us to reach the present point and it is genuinely appreciated. He 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.

The bill will create a legal framework that will encourage employers and employees to substitute a national St Andrew's day holiday for an existing local holiday. We should be clear that the bill in itself will not automatically create an additional holiday. The bill is symbolic, but it signals greater celebration and awareness of St Andrew's day and represents an extremely important contribution to the on-going celebration of Scotland's national day.

The Scottish Executive is having discussions with its staff organisations to seek their views on moving a holiday to our national day. We believe that it is important to make people aware of the meaning of what has been proposed. Therefore, if the bill is passed today, the Executive will write to all local authorities and other employer organisations to say what the legislation will mean

for them. We will also have a dedicated web page on our internet site that will explain the legislation, and a generic e-mail address that people can contact to ask questions about how they will be affected.

I acknowledge that it is important that the Scottish Executive should play its part in celebrating our national day, and we have demonstrated our willingness to do that. This year, we are again supporting and promoting national and international events under the one Scotland, many cultures theme. We are building on the success of last year's events. This year, events are taking place in our six cities and in many other areas of Scotland. The Executive thanks everyone who has been involved in organising those events. I wish them the best of luck. The events will celebrate a diverse and modern Scotland and will have a strong emphasis on our young people.

We want to encourage children to develop their own events and activities on or around St Andrew's day, which is why we have distributed a St Andrew's day pack to every school in Scotland. We have received more than 100 responses to our request to schools to let us know about their plans around St Andrew's day. I will mention just a few of the many imaginative ways in which schools throughout Scotland intend to celebrate that day. Scottish food will be sampled, assemblies will be held and there will be ceilidhs, fun runs in tartan and human saltires. Schools will also celebrate diversity, which is important, and many events will incorporate the one Scotland, many cultures message. Our website features a selection of the great work that is being done in Scottish schools, which allows people to see how deep the celebrations go in our society.

St Andrew's day is not celebrated only in Scotland; indeed, the Scottish Executive supports events throughout the world. More than 100 international events are taking place in around 80 countries, and we have distributed more than 90 Scotland in a box promotional boxes to Foreign and Commonwealth overseas posts to be used at those events. The First Minister will again send to Scots overseas an annual message to be read out at St Andrew's day events wherever they take place.

We are doing such things because we believe that the Government must take the lead in promoting the celebration of St Andrew's day. This year, we have invested more than £300,000 in St Andrew's day events, and we are also looking to the long term. We hope that more partners will work with us in future years to promote more events in Scotland and throughout the world.

I hope that I have made it clear, as we have tried to do in earlier debates, that we see our support for the bill as an important aspect of our desire

greatly to improve the celebration of St Andrew's day and to bring our national day to much wider attention, not only in Scotland, but across the globe. I urge members to support the bill.

16:08

**Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):**

The Scottish National Party welcomes the fact that the bill has reached this stage, and we will certainly support the motion at decision time. We congratulate Dennis Canavan on getting his bill to stage 3, even if he has had to make compromises on his original plans along the way. It is no mean feat for a back bencher to get a bill to stage 3.

Dennis Canavan made an excellent speech in which he summed up many of the feelings that I have about what we need to do on St Andrew's day and about having a proper national holiday. The idea that pubs cannot make money on public holidays seems incredible. Anybody who has been in a bar in Glasgow during the Glasgow fair weekend will have seen the money that publicans make then.

I welcome the Executive's conversion to supporting the bill, even though that support has been a bit late and half-hearted, and even though the Executive is still opposed to a full holiday for Scots on St Andrew's day. The Executive's attitude that people can have the day off as long as they lose a day elsewhere is best summed up as a you'll-have-had-your-day-off attitude.

**Mr McCabe:** For clarification, we are not opposed to Scots having a holiday on St Andrew's day. We have said that people are perfectly free to enter into discussions with their employers on moving an existing holiday to that day.

**Mr Maxwell:** If the minister had listened, he would have heard me say that people will be given the St Andrew's day holiday as long as they lose a day elsewhere. I did not say that the Executive is opposed to having a day off on St Andrew's day, but it is opposed to giving people an extra day off on that day despite the fact that we are at the bottom of the European league for public holidays.

**Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mr Maxwell:** No.

Three ceilidhs and an ice show seem to be the limit of the Lib-Lab ambition for a national holiday. It is clear that the Executive will go no further than supporting a symbolic holiday rather than a real holiday and a real celebration of all things Scottish. The SNP is committed to a real holiday.

We will build St Andrew's day into the start of a winter festival programme that will include all Scotland's people from north to south, from young

to old and from A to B—from Andrew to Burns. We want a festival that stretches from St Andrew's day through Christmas, hogmanay, new year's day and January to Burns night. Such a winter festival could and would sell Scotland to the world and brighten up the dark winter nights for us all. Perhaps we could even persuade shopkeepers that the Christmas season belongs after St Andrew's day and should not start just after Hallowe'en. That is a personal plea, but I am sure that many parents would agree with it.

We want a series of winter festivals that would allow us to celebrate Scotland's culture, arts, history, enterprise, sport and so much more. An SNP Government will invest substantial resources in such events. We need to invest in our culture and arts, but we must also seek out sporting occasions that we can attract to Scotland during the winter.

Most important of all, we need to celebrate Scotland's people. That means not just those who were born in Scotland but all those who have made their home here, no matter where they came from. After all, we are all Jock Tamson's bairns. We should celebrate what unites us as well as our individual uniqueness.

One of the most important elements of the celebrations must be an outward-looking and internationalist approach. Of course we must let the whole world know about us, but not in a brash, bragging "Wha's like us?" way. Instead, we must show that we are an open and friendly society of people who are ready to greet visitors from across the world as friends. The Scottish diaspora numbers tens of millions of people. We must tap into their desire to make contact with their roots and use them to send a positive message around the world about Scotland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If the bill is to be more than just a symbol, it must symbolise our ambitions for our country. Let us agree that it is time for Scotland to rejoin the family of independent nations. In the famous words of Winnie Ewing,

"Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on."

16:12

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I did not think that I would live to see the day when I would hear Mr Maxwell calling for people to drink more—

**Mr Maxwell:** Responsibly.

**Murdo Fraser:** Of course, Mr Maxwell.

The Scottish Conservatives have supported the bill since stage 1 and we will be happy to support it at decision time today.



I commend Dennis Canavan for the way in which he has pursued the issue and for all the work that he has put into winning support for his bill. He did a tremendous job in consulting interested parties and rallying support for his proposal. As Mr Maxwell said, for a back bencher to achieve the passage of a bill on to the statute book is no mean feat, especially if the back bencher is, like Dennis Canavan, not a member of an Executive party. Then again, if today's edition of *The Herald* is to be believed, that may not be the case for much longer.

It is rather regrettable that it has taken us so long to get to where we are today. We had the opportunity to pass the bill last year, but the Executive decided at that time that it would not support the bill and that more work required to be done. It is a pity that time was wasted when we could have made some progress.

We have always accepted that the bill will not of itself create a public holiday. As Mr Canavan admitted, it is not legislatively competent for this Parliament to create or enforce a new holiday. The bill is simply permissive.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Does the member agree that it is a bit ridiculous that this Parliament does not have the power to make simple decisions such as what should constitute an additional public holiday?

**Murdo Fraser:** I hate to think how many holidays we would have if Mr Neil had his way. We must take a responsible attitude. Members from different parties made the case that we are at the bottom of the league table in Europe for holidays, but we must remember that we have one of the most competitive economies in Europe—perhaps the two matters are not unlinked.

The Scottish Executive's support was crucial to the bill, because if the Executive were not prepared to take the lead in encouraging public sector employees to take St Andrew's day as a holiday, it would be a pointless piece of legislation. It was vital that the Executive showed support for the bill. Our position all along was that we did not wish an additional holiday to be granted. The Enterprise and Culture Committee heard strong evidence to that effect from employers organisations. An extra day of no trading or production, for which staff would still have to be paid, would place a burden on the business community, especially small businesses. We are pleased that the Executive has come round to our way of thinking—that a St Andrew's day holiday should be granted, but as a substitute for a holiday at a different time of year. It is just a pity that the Executive did not come round to that view earlier. However, we now have the best of both worlds.

I am pleased that we will have a holiday celebrating St Andrew, who is our patron saint. St Andrew was our Lord's first apostle, a fisherman from Galilee who was executed by the Romans. Legend has it that his bones were taken by St Rule or St Regulus to St Andrews, which led to that town's foundation. We share St Andrew as a patron saint with other countries, such as Russia and Greece, so he is by no means exclusive to Scotland.

The bill will not create a holiday, because we do not have the power to do that, but it gives us the opportunity to use St Andrew's day to promote Scottish identity in the same way that the Irish have built up St Patrick's day. Just as St Patrick's day is now internationally recognised and delivers substantial economic benefit, so St Andrew's day can be of benefit to the Scottish economy. St Patrick's day is now worth about €80 million to the Dublin economy alone. We have a great opportunity to make St Andrew's day worth an equivalent sum, if not more, to the Scottish economy, and I look forward to St Andrew's day being celebrated throughout Scotland in future years.

16:17

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I, too, extend my thanks to the Enterprise and Culture Committee and its clerks for a most interesting piece of work. I offer my congratulations to Dennis Canavan on having the persistence and determination to bring the bill to what we assume will be a successful conclusion today. As he pointed out, today is the eve of St Andrew's day, a day recognised throughout the world. Persistence can sometimes make a difference in the Parliament. Putting aside party divisions, I believe that one aspect of the Parliament of which we should be proud is that sometimes, as Murdo Fraser said, a back bencher can introduce legislation and succeed in having it put on the statute book. Dennis Canavan's contribution may be around for many hundreds of years, as I hope that St Andrew's day will be celebrated for as long as we have civilisation in Scotland.

Like other members of the Enterprise and Culture Committee, I regard the bill as one of the most interesting pieces of work that has been done in the lifetime of the Parliament. We saw the evolution of the legislation, the garnering of arguments and the use of sheer intelligent persuasion to bring it about. I will not be churlish and say that the Executive is a Johnny-come-lately on the issue. There has been a genuine recognition across the political spectrum of the benefits of the bill, and we should be magnanimous about that.

As members know, the Liberal Democrats support the replacement of an existing national holiday by St Andrew's day, to be celebrated on or as near as possible to 30 November. The bill will provide a focus that, over time, will encourage people to participate in a national holiday to celebrate the day. The tourism benefits of such a holiday have been highlighted. That issue is of huge importance to me, given the constituents whom I represent. One of the bullet points in our briefing states:

"Tourism businesses may receive a boost during an otherwise quiet time of year"—

other members have referred to the dark nights—

"particularly if the holiday was combined with leisure, cultural and other activities."

I make a plea for us to look at the broad spectrum of culture in Scotland. St Andrew's day should not be confined to the south of Scotland but should be for all of Scotland. I have said before that Scotland is like a diamond and that each facet expresses a different kind of culture, from my constituency and that of John Farquhar Munro in the Gaidhealtachd to the Borders and the south-west. If that can be recognised and we can build on it, that will be all well and good.

As an example of the potential for the tourism industry, it is estimated

"that Edinburgh's Winter Festivals generated £44.4 million extra spending in 2004-05 with a net contribution to income for Edinburgh of £11.3 million."

Another example, which has been mentioned already, comes from an analysis of the contribution made by the St Patrick's festival in 2003, which indicated that it was worth approximately €80 million to the economy of Dublin.

Mention has been made of reaching out to the Scottish diaspora. St Andrew's day should be celebrated by Scots all over the world. I ask members to forgive me for reiterating a point that I have made previously and which has already been hinted at, which is that other countries, such as Greece and Russia, celebrate St Andrew as their patron saint. I say, as I am sure would all our families who have lost people in wars, that if a St Andrew's day holiday means better communication and a better friendship with other countries, it will be a gift not only to our generation but to generations to come.

I hope that the peoples of Russia and Greece and expatriate Scots will celebrate and embrace this special day. It is a sure foundation—I hope that it is not too high flying to say this—that I hope will contribute to mutual understanding, friendship and the cause of peace, because there can be no finer cause. It is my pleasure to support Dennis Canavan today.

16:21

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I join the chorus of approval and congratulate Dennis Canavan, who has conducted himself very ably in the course of the bill's progress. I am also delighted that he has confirmed that the reports in *The Herald* today have no truth in them.

I thank both Dennis Canavan and Tom McCabe for their kind words about the Enterprise and Culture Committee. I will return to the committee's report and research on the subject shortly.

I want to emphasise the fact that, in his otherwise excellent speech, Murdo Fraser created the first hostage to fortune of the election campaign when he said that

"we have one of the most competitive economies in Europe".

I am sure that Mr McCabe has written down that quote verbatim and that it will come back to haunt Murdo Fraser during the election campaign.

**Murdo Fraser:** I was, of course, referring to the United Kingdom economy. Does Mr Neil appreciate that the competition, in European terms, is not significant?

**Alex Neil:** I think that Mr Fraser is trying to extricate himself from an embarrassing situation.

Murdo Fraser also compared St Andrew's day to St Patrick's day. I hope that what we are doing will mean that St Andrew's day soon has the same impact as St Patrick's day, although I point out that, in Ireland, St Patrick's day is an additional holiday rather than a substitute holiday. That goes against Mr Fraser's position.

I know that when I lived in the States, in the Boston area, St Patrick's day was a holiday and certainly a day of celebration for a lot of people in that part of America. Indeed, it is a day of celebration in the White House, whether the President is Republican or Democrat. I look forward to the day when First Minister Salmond goes to the White House to celebrate St Andrew's day. *[Interruption.]* I say to members that I am willing to take an intervention.

In comparison with our other national heroes—William Wallace, Robert the Bruce and Robert Burns—St Andrew is unique: out of the four, he is the only one who was not born in Ayrshire. Despite that, we are still prepared to celebrate him—even in Ayrshire.

On the argument about the economic impact of St Andrew's day, the committee undertook research jointly with the Executive as part of our reconsideration of the bill. That research came to the conclusion, if I may paraphrase what was said, that the economic impact of the holiday depends on what we make of it. If there is an ambitious

programme of celebration, both nationally and internationally, it will have major economic benefit for Scotland. However, if we do not celebrate it ambitiously enough, it will make a contribution that is either negative or zero. In essence, the economic argument boils down to what we make of the holiday.

I welcome the Executive's programme for this year as a start and hope that, as each year passes, the programme will become much more ambitious. Indeed, I am sure that, by this time next year, the new Government that will be elected in May not only will have made St Andrew's day an additional holiday but will be planning to make it an independence day holiday.

16:25

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):**

Anyone who has seen the film "Independence Day" knows what nationalism will mean for Scotland.

On a more consensual note, I congratulate Dennis Canavan on successfully promoting his bill in Parliament. It is certainly an achievement for a member's bill to clear all the parliamentary hurdles. I also congratulate him on rightly promoting the work of the pupils of Torry academy and sporting their heather. It is good for the Parliament to have reached a consensus on this matter, because, despite Alex Neil's flights of fancy and the SNP's wearying fascination with separation, we know that members from all parties want more promotion of St Andrew's day as a national celebration.

Of course, Mr Canavan's bill has taken a circuitous route. It will not, of itself, create a bank holiday, but the member has taken the somewhat unusual but nevertheless constructive step of introducing a bill that acts as a starting point for the further work that will be required to fulfil its intentions. The bill benefited from further consideration, and its progress has raised important questions, not just about how committees should consider member's bills, but about how early and how deeply the Executive should be involved in any debate on such bills. The Parliament and the Executive can reflect on such points.

The fact is that the stance that the Executive has taken has enabled people within and outwith the Parliament to reach a consensus on the bill. Once the bill is agreed, however, we face more important questions. How will we take its aims forward and what kind of event will St Andrew's day be in Scotland? I would not support the bill if I felt that it would lead to a narrow, nationalist celebration. However, I am confident that it will

lead to much more than that and might, in particular, boost Scottish tourism.

The tourism hot topic in the north-east is whether the plans for a spectacular golf course and Trump boulevard will become a reality at Balmedie. However, with a holiday and celebrations on St Andrew's day, we could benefit economically not only from people in Scotland celebrating the day, but from encouraging visitors to Scotland at this time of year. We should aspire to make St Andrew's day the kind of international event that St Patrick's day has become.

I hope that, once the bill has been passed, the Executive will not only take further steps to promote the celebration of St Andrew's day, but will encourage people throughout Scotland to take the day as a holiday and will participate in the celebrations by taking a lead in organising celebrations and encouraging local people and organisations to organise their own events.

We should think carefully about what we want St Andrew's day to mean. For example, in the stage 1 debate, members asked whether, in our multifaith society, a Christian saint should be the focus of a national day and whether St Columba has a better claim on the title of national saint. Although we can reflect on those questions, I should point out that we share St Andrew as a patron saint with other countries in the world. The First Minister has stressed that he regards St Andrew's day as an opportunity for Scotland to celebrate its cultural diversity and membership of the international community. Indeed, for many years, the Scottish Trades Union Congress has used St Andrew's day to celebrate antiracism and internationalism.

Dennis Canavan cannot be any more right when he says that we should work towards such a celebration of our national day once the bill is passed. Our national celebration should befit a modern Scotland. It should not simply reflect on our past, but celebrate the country that we are and our aspirations. It should celebrate the fact that Scotland is home to many cultures and people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. If, once the bill is passed, we can move towards such a celebration, our national day will be embraced by all the people of Scotland.

16:29

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

Like Dennis Canavan, I am proud to wear my Torry heather and congratulate the Torry academy pupils on their enterprise.

At last, we can celebrate the welcome passing of the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill. It does not introduce a separate bank holiday but represents, at least, a positive recognition of

our national day. Of course, I am disappointed that we have been unable to enshrine this day as an extra public holiday, but the bill represents a good start. Who knows what the future might hold?

We have so much to celebrate in Scotland. I do not want to say that we are the best wee country in the world, but there is no doubt that we are a great wee country with a great deal to be proud of. We have a history of travel, innovation and discovery to be proud of and a culture, environment and food that are renowned around the world. Further, we once again have our own Parliament with a magnificent building. We have our own patron saint, a flag and a date every year on which to celebrate our country. However, only now, as a result of Dennis Canavan's bill, can we begin to focus on enshrining that day in our calendar. Time will tell just how indebted we are to Dennis Canavan for his tenacity.

We have much to learn from the experience of other countries. We have heard about how Ireland has expanded its celebration of St Patrick's day and how Sweden legally recognised its national day in 1983 and then established it as a public holiday. In time, we, too, could make this a full, additional public holiday. I welcome the change of heart in the chamber and hope that the bill will provide the legislative framework for a national day of celebration. I hope that, over time, the day will develop into a holiday that reflects the pride and confidence that we should have in our great wee country.

The Green group will support the passing of the bill.

16:31

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** I congratulate Dennis Canavan on his achievement. I also thank the Executive, because it is good that it can say, "We was wrong." However, I urge it to do the whole-hearted thing and support the idea of a bank holiday. As Stewart Maxwell said, that can develop.

If we do this properly—which is what Murdo Fraser urged—and celebrate our identity, we are likely to build a bit more pride in ourselves without all the caveats that we have been hearing from the Executive benches about how we should not go too far in terms of celebrating ourselves. Why not? The more pride we have in ourselves, the more we will venture, the bigger we will grow and the better we will do. If that happens, we might be able to think seriously about rivalling the St Patrick's day reward that the Irish reap.

Speaking of rewards, I say to the minister that £300,000 sounds like a lot, but it is not a lot if we take into account the cost of a televised public information campaign to urge people to celebrate

their identity, or of making some DVDs for the foreign market. We could do with a bit more money behind the bill.

The only thing that worries me is the thought that at some point in the future, with a forward-looking and imaginative foreign policy emanating from this Parliament, the first thing that we would do would be to send Alex Salmond to see the American president. I think not. Let us have a St Andrew's day holiday, and let us not make mistakes like that.

16:33

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I have always supported Dennis Canavan's proposal that we should have an additional holiday. In fact, some time ago, I lodged a motion to that effect. He has succeeded in persuading the Executive to make some progress in that regard, but some of us will still work towards having a full, new holiday. We are being offered one if we get an SNP Government, but some of us might feel that that was a wee bit of a difficult choice to make and might not accept that offer.

We can make progress. We are in the middle of making a bit of a muddle of the holidays around Christmas and new year and the whole holiday business could do with some serious examination. We can build on the Executive's support for Dennis Canavan's idea and develop St Andrew's day as a building block for all sorts of things, especially tourism. Scottish tourism was invented by the monks of St Andrews, who promoted St Andrew as opposed to St Columba. St Andrew and his monks have a good record in the tourism industry.

We could build new activities around the St Andrew's day holiday. We could have inclusive sporting events that bring together Protestants, Catholics and people of other religions who can all support a great spiritual leader such as St Andrew. We could also have cultural events, local festivals and so on. The holiday is an important block on which such ideas can be built. All power to Dennis Canavan. Let us get stuck in and, locally, develop really good things on the back of St Andrew's day.

16:35

**Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this historic day, when we hope to pass the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill. I speak as someone who has long supported the principle of a holiday for St Andrew's day, although I have always been of the view that it should be a replacement holiday and not an additional holiday. I also represent the royal burgh of St Andrews where the historic relics of St Andrew were placed, according to legend.

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

I must have misheard the member; he said that he was a long-standing supporter of a St Andrew's day holiday. I seem to remember him speaking against such a holiday the last time the subject was debated.

**Iain Smith:** Tricia Marwick had better check the *Official Report*. I think she will find that I have always supported the principle of a St Andrew's day holiday. [*Laughter.*]

If members will check the record, they will see that I have consistently said that there should not be an additional holiday, but a replacement day. I said that at the previous debate on the subject. At that time, the members on the other side of the chamber doubted the intentions of the Executive and those of us who supported the continuation of the bill and said that we were killing the bill. We were not doing that; we were simply ensuring that we got the bill right. We have been proved right and the SNP has been proved wrong yet again.

I am sorry; I did not want to turn this into a political debate because we should be celebrating today, and I wanted to start by congratulating Dennis Canavan on his persistence in pursuing the bill.

**Alex Neil:** It is the same bill; there have been no amendments.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** Members must not speak from a sedentary position.

**Iain Smith:** With the deepest respect, we have changed the basis on which the bill was introduced. When we had the stage 1 debate, the intention was to create an additional bank holiday. It is quite clear that the bill will not now do that. The reason for supporting it is that we will create a holiday for Scotland that will be a replacement holiday. That is an important distinction and it is why I now support the bill that will be passed. I did not support the bill at stage 1 because I thought that creating an additional holiday would be a serious problem.

I was surprised by Murdo Fraser's road to Damascus conversion.

**Murdo Fraser:** What?

**Iain Smith:** He is now trying to claim that the Conservatives have supported an additional holiday all along, which I do not think is quite the case either. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Iain Smith:** In the time I have remaining, I want to say a little bit about history, and how important it is to St Andrews. Although I believe that the St Andrew's day holiday can become the launch pad for the winter festivals in Edinburgh, Glasgow and

elsewhere, I hope that we also remember the important role that the town of St Andrews should play. St Andrew's week is in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of celebrating St Andrew's day and it is important that that week receives support and is developed as a major focus of part of our St Andrew's day celebrations. I hope that people will support that event.

I hope that we will develop links with other places that have St Andrew as a patron saint. It is important to work to develop St Andrew's day internationally, because it can only be for the benefit of Scotland.

I am sorry that some members would prefer to use today for cheap political point scoring, because that is not what I intended to do when I stood up. I genuinely believe that we have got the bill right. The principle is established that we should be encouraging a St Andrew's day holiday, just as the Parliament did when it was first established and we changed one of the staff holidays from September to St Andrew's day. We should encourage other local authorities, public bodies and the private sector to consider switching a holiday so that we can all celebrate St Andrew's day properly. I support the bill.

16:39

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):**

First, I join others in congratulating Dennis Canavan on his achievement in bringing the bill to this stage. I wonder whether it might not have taken significantly longer for the bill to get as far as it has today without his drive, determination and enthusiasm.

Before I move on, I will clarify our position on the bill by quoting from the *Official Report* of the stage 1 debate in 2005. My colleague Mr Fraser said:

"We should ensure as widespread support as possible for the bill."—[*Official Report*, 6 October 2005; c 19878.]

According to the copy of the *Official Report* that I have in front of me, Mr Smith said that the bill would not deliver, but I think that I heard Mr Neil telling us that the bill that we considered then is the same bill that we are considering today.

**Tricia Marwick:** I can confirm that we are considering exactly the same bill—there have been no amendments to it whatever. The bill that Mr Smith voted against on that occasion is the bill that he will vote in favour of tonight.

**Derek Brownlee:** It would be unfair not to allow—

**Iain Smith:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I think that the *Official Report* will show that I did not vote against the bill. I voted for the amended motion to continue consideration of the bill.

**Derek Brownlee:** Now that we are clear on that point, we can move on.

I turn to the substance of the debate. For a fairly short bill, it has generated a great deal of heat. We must hope that it will generate a lot of good for Scotland. Other members have made much of the impact that the St Patrick's day holiday has had in Ireland. If we could come even close to replicating the impact that that has had on the Irish economy, we would be doing extremely well.

St Patrick's day is not the only comparator that we should be thinking about. It has been notable that in recent years our friends south of the border have made much more of St George's day than they ever used to. The bill represents a huge opportunity, which—if we are willing to grasp it—we can do much with.

Mr Canavan made an eloquent point about the attitude of the business community. It is right to be up front and to concede that the business community has had divided views on the bill's implications but, as Jamie Stone mentioned, the bill offers significant potential for tourism. On a broader front, it provides recreational opportunities—

**Mr Stone:** Does the member agree that there might be opportunities to build on the bill by developing more local saints' days, such as those of St Gilbert in Dornoch and St Duthus in Tain in my constituency?

**Derek Brownlee:** I would not seek to deny Jamie Stone's constituents a day off.

The bill offers a great deal of potential. I was glad that the minister said that the bill's implications would be clarified if it is passed, as it appears that it will be. Although it is a short bill, there has been significant confusion during its passage about what it seeks to do and what it could do. It is important that once the Parliament has passed the bill, people understand what it does and what it does not do, so that we can maximise the benefits that accrue from it.

My final point is that in a Parliament and a country in which so many things can divide us, St Andrew seems to have the potential to be a uniting factor. He is not a nationalist figure or a unionist figure; he is very much a Scottish figure. We should welcome that and should use every opportunity to make St Andrew's day as great a success for Scotland as other patron saints' days are for their countries.

16:43

**Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** Like other members, I thank Dennis Canavan sincerely for persevering with the bill. He has done Scotland a great deal of good. He is

right to say that the bill will help us to enhance and promote Scotland's image and that, as recognition of the holiday grows, everyone will respect it and have it as a holiday. The sooner that happens, the better.

I liked Dennis Canavan's anecdote about the Irish publican. Ireland can teach us a thing or two about recognising economic opportunities, so we should grab the opportunity with which the bill presents us. There have been a few harbingers of doom on the establishment of a St Andrew's day holiday and Dennis Canavan has proved them wrong.

After the sincerity of Dennis Canavan, we had warnings that independence would result in terrorists flooding into Scotland, that there would be border guards and that someone would need a passport to visit their granny in Bognor Regis. Now we know that Richard Baker has watched the film "Independence Day" and that he believes that independence would be followed by the arrival of lots of little green men. He ought to get a life, just like his colleague John Reid, who made an overexuberant attack on independence.

Stewart Maxwell rightly said that we should send a positive message about Scotland throughout the world. He wants us to look outwards and to take an international perspective, and I do not think that any member could disagree with those sentiments.

Alex Neil, in his usual exuberant style, showed quite clearly how his effective convenership of the Enterprise and Culture Committee helped us to ensure that the bill came to the Parliament today for a vote. Predictably, Margo MacDonald rose to his bait about Alex Salmond; I would not have expected anything else.

Iain Smith has been doing quite remarkable somersaults during the debate. He tried to explain his position to Tricia Marwick, but if he wants to intervene to tell us exactly what his position is, he might as well have another go.

**Iain Smith:** My position has consistently been that I support a St Andrew's day holiday as a replacement holiday—end of story. That has always been the case, and Mr Crawford can look at every *Official Report* to see that I have said that.

**Bruce Crawford:** I am just not sure that Mr Smith can spell "consistent". That is the problem.

Jamie Stone mentioned the fact that Greece, Romania and Russia all have St Andrew as a patron saint and he was right to suggest that we could use that as a building block towards peace. With that shared position, there is no reason why our countries cannot work a lot more closely together. That was a useful point to make.

In response to what the minister, Tom McCabe said, I welcome the Executive's position as far as one Scotland, too many cultures—[*Laughter.*] I had better try that again. I meant to refer to the one Scotland, many cultures theme, for which the bill has been a constructive and welcome process. It has also been useful as a campaigning and marketing tool for projecting Scotland's image abroad, and we welcome the development of the Executive's proposals in that area.

The promotion of hogmanay has now been transferred from the promotion of one day in Edinburgh to the promotion of a week. I think that we could look at what happens between hogmanay and Burns day, and include St Andrew's day as well, and consider the potential for winter festivals throughout Scotland to celebrate what is good about modern Scotland and to find an opportunity to sell ourselves more effectively during the colder, darker winter months.

16:47

**Mr McCabe:** I am pleased, and the Executive is pleased, that after a long journey we have reached the point where the bill looks as if it will achieve a successful conclusion. That is good for the Parliament and good for Scotland.

Some of the speakers this afternoon have said that sometimes in politics we just have to hold up our hands. Mr Fraser, in his usual eloquent style, has accused us of creating a robust and vibrant economy, and I think that it is time, on behalf of the Scottish Executive, to plead guilty. Not only can we now better celebrate St Andrew's day, but we are guilty of having more of our people in employment than ever before and of being right up there in having more of our people economically active than in any other country in the European Union. We are guilty, guilty, guilty, and I think that it is sometimes healthy in political life just to put one's hands up, so we are happy to do that.

It is true to say that, when we originally debated the bill, there were some concerns about whether or not we were promoting the notion that only by a holiday could we celebrate St Andrew's day. The debate that has taken place since then and the examination of the bill have shown that there are many ways in which we can celebrate our national day and many ways, now and in the future, in which we can develop the celebration. One of the ways in which we can do that is to encourage people to consider taking a holiday at that time, using an existing holiday to do so.

There were also concerns about how the bill could be misinterpreted. We did not want to give people a false impression of what the bill could achieve, and the work that the Enterprise and Culture Committee did in examining the bill and

the commendable way in which Dennis Canavan was prepared to enter into discussions helped us to clarify what the bill could actually achieve, while emphasising that it plays an important part in helping to improve the celebration of our national day. Those things stand the Parliament and the member responsible for the bill in good stead, and underline the importance of our committee system here in the Parliament.

The Scottish Executive has had the opportunity to say that it also has an important part to play. We should be helping to promote the celebration of our national day both in Scotland and outwith our borders. We have ably demonstrated that we are committed to doing that. Of course, things can always improve, and we are interested not only in enjoying this year's celebrations, but in examining how those celebrations can be expanded in future.

As the report commissioned by the committee says, it takes more than just a Government to promote a successful celebration of a national day. It cannot just be legislated for. A Government and a Parliament can give a lead, but it takes individuals throughout society to have that commitment. The Scottish Executive is absolutely committed to providing that lead. The Parliament is playing its part tonight in providing that lead. We should do all we can to encourage people in Scotland to acknowledge and celebrate not only our rich history and traditions, but contemporary Scotland. We should use St Andrew's day to tell the world that we are a strong, vibrant country, with a thriving economy—there is a consensus on that among a range of political parties—and to celebrate the fact that our country is moving ahead on the international stage.

16:51

**Dennis Canavan:** This debate has been in sharp contrast to the debate at stage 1 just over a year ago. At that time, the Parliament was deeply divided and that deep division was reflected in the vote. I am pleased that unanimity is now breaking out all over the place and I am embarrassed about the fine words of congratulation that I am receiving from all quarters. I sincerely thank members of all parties and none who have contributed to the debate, as well as those who have not had the chance to contribute to the debate but who have expressed their support for the bill.

It has been an interesting albeit short debate. Not everybody agreed on every aspect, but some interesting points were made. Stewart Maxwell and Shiona Baird, for example, expressed regret that the Executive does not wish the St Andrew's day holiday to be an additional holiday. I share that regret and I have expressed my view that, in the longer term, it will become an additional holiday. Some members, including Richard Baker

and Donald Gorrie, referred to the importance of the bill to tourism. Alex Neil, in his position as convener of the Enterprise and Culture Committee—the lead committee on the bill—took an active interest in the bill and he spoke today about the bill's broader economic impact, including the economic advantages that many businesses can derive from it.

Several members expressed opinions about the Executive's change of attitude. Margo MacDonald indicated that the Executive has at least partially admitted that it was wrong. Some members have described the Executive's change of attitude as a complete U-turn. Even if that were the case, there is nothing wrong with a U-turn, as long as the performer of the U-turn ends up facing in the correct direction.

**Alex Neil:** Does the member agree that what caused the U-turn was YouGov and the polls over the summer?

**Dennis Canavan:** I am not so sure about that, but there might be a grain of truth in it.

Some members said that Iain Smith, Tom McCabe and so on have done somersaults on the bill. As I said to Tom McCabe in the committee, if he has had a flash of enlightenment on the road to Damascus, I welcome that. I am all in favour of enlightenment and I hope that he has many more flashes of enlightenment. He deserves all the enlightenment he can get.

It is not the Scottish Executive alone that has changed its attitude and done a U-turn. I dug out some old *Hansard* extracts from when the Tory party was in power down at Westminster. The first is from 30 November 1982:

**"Dennis Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will declare St Andrew's Day a public holiday in Scotland.

**George Younger (Secretary of State for Scotland):** I have no authority in the matter, as public holidays in Scotland are fixed locally by district councils."

More than a decade later, the Lib Dems seemed to cotton on. Mr Robert MacLennan—the Che Guevara of the Liberal Democrats—asked the question:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider the designation of St Andrew's Day as a public holiday in Scotland."

I am sorry that Lord James Douglas-Hamilton is not in the chamber, but he, replying on behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland, said:

"Public holidays in Scotland are not defined in statute, but by long tradition and practice are determined by individual local authorities in consultation with local interests. My right hon. Friend"—

that is, the Secretary of State for Scotland—

"has no power to intervene in this process."

**Mr Stone:** Does Dennis Canavan agree that Robert MacLennan would never have been seen dead in a beret?

**Dennis Canavan:** I am trying to imagine him in a beret.

When they were in government, the Tories passed the buck to the local authorities and the secretaries of state did not even seem to realise that they had powers to create additional bank holidays—the powers that I am using for the bill—under the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971. At that time, the Westminster Parliament was responsible but, under the Scotland Act 1998, the schedule that designates bank holidays was devolved to this Parliament.

I have been campaigning on the issue for around a quarter of a century and have lost count of the number of times that I have been knocked back, but I have learned lessons. I remember the lesson that I got at school about Bruce and the spider—that we just have to fight, fight and fight again—and I am pleased that the bill looks like being approved unanimously by the Scottish Parliament.

In a previous debate on the bill, I reminded members of Edwin Morgan's poem that was read out by Liz Lochhead on the day that the Parliament building was officially opened:

"What do the people want of the place? They want it to  
be  
filled with thinking persons".

I am pleased that the Scottish Executive has had a rethink on the bill since the first stage 1 debate. I am pleased that many members of the Scottish Parliament have had a similar rethink. I am pleased that the Scottish Parliament is responding to the wishes of the Scottish people by giving the people of Scotland a magnificent opportunity to celebrate our patron saint, our Scottishness and our internationalism.



## Business Motions

16:59

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item is consideration of business motion S2M-5237, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to this week's business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 30 November 2006—  
after,

2.55 pm Conclusion of Stage 3 Proceedings:  
Bankruptcy and Diligence etc.  
(Scotland) Bill

insert,

*followed by* Executive Motion: Membership of the  
Committee of the Regions.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next item is consideration of business motion S2M-5238, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 6 December 2006

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Executive Debate: Civic Participation  
– Trade Union Engagement with  
Scotland's Civic Society

*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist  
Party Business

*followed by* Business Motion

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 7 December 2006

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Adoption and  
Children (Scotland) Bill

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time—  
Health and Community Care;  
Environment and Rural Development

2.55 pm Conclusion of Stage 3 Proceedings:

Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Executive Debate: Fisheries

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 13 December 2006

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Executive Business

*followed by* Business Motion

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 14 December 2006

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Legal  
Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland)  
Bill

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time—  
Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong  
Learning;  
Justice and Law Officers

2.55 pm Conclusion of Stage 3 Proceedings:  
Legal Profession and Legal Aid  
(Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

17:00

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** With five members' bills now effectively being blocked at the committee stages by various committees, the Parliament is facing a crisis of confidence and credibility among the very people we have asked to engage with. This Parliament was supposed to be different from Westminster. Its founding principles were those of inclusion and engagement with civic Scotland. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Frances Curran:** The ability to introduce a member's bill to the Parliament is seen as an opportunity for voluntary sector organisations, charities, trade unions and civic organisations not just to lobby over legislation or get wheeled in to give evidence at committees, but to be involved in drafting legislation, making the case to both MSPs and the people of Scotland. The decision not to progress those members' bills at committee and the lack of a solution from the Parliamentary

Bureau has ripped up the founding principles of the Parliament and the consensus that exists.

The Education (School Meals etc) (Scotland) Bill—the free school meals bill that I introduced—is supported by a monthly campaign group involving children's charities, voluntary sector organisations and lone parents organisations. They have invested enormous amounts of time, energy and resources in the bill. The group carried out an excellent consultation, in response to which 519 responses were submitted. Those came from key stakeholders, head teachers, health professionals and education authorities.

The Parliamentary Bureau set the cut-off date and the timetable for all the bills to which I have referred. The committees knew that the bills were on their way. The committee clerks were working with me months before the cut-off date, and they were planning the committees' workload. At that time, the bureau changed the remit covering my bill so that it was held not by the Education Committee but by the Communities Committee.

Now, there is no incentive for those who introduce members' bills to do the job properly by taking the time, carrying out the consultation and ensuring that it reaches people other than the usual suspects that Executive consultations go to. The Executive's Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill is being rushed through, despite the fact that there were considerably fewer responses to the consultation for that bill than there were to the consultation for the Education (School Meals etc) (Scotland) Bill.

The Executive parties have displayed cynical behaviour. We have the ridiculous situation that the Finance Committee finished taking evidence on my bill three weeks ago—it took evidence on my bill and the Executive's bill simultaneously—yet the Communities Committee cannae find the time, despite the fact that my bill was referred to it six weeks ago. I have finally obtained a copy of the Communities Committee's workload. I am not saying that that committee does not work hard but, out of its entire workload, there is only one bill—the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill. There are five months of the session left, and the committee has nearly finished taking evidence at stage 1 on that one bill. Why are we not prioritising other proposed legislation—one more bill? Three members' bills have been knocked back, and not even one of them can get on to the Communities Committee's agenda.

The credibility of the Parliament is under pressure. This Parliament is here not only to pass Executive legislation but—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am sorry to interrupt again, Ms Curran. Other members really should listen to what is being said.

**Frances Curran:** However, that is where we are heading. The criteria for members' bills have been changed three times. Now, given the timetable that has been set by the bureau, five members' bills are not going to be considered. We now have a conveyer belt for Government legislation. Welcome to Westminster mark 2.

I ask for the business motion to be referred back to the Parliamentary Bureau so that it can come forward with time on the agenda for discussing the crisis that we are now in with members' bills. If no solution is found, the Parliament has a problem of credibility with its founding principles and its engagement with civic Scotland. I oppose the business motion.

17:04

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Ms Margaret Curran):** I think that Frances Curran is guilty of some degree of exaggeration in her argument. She does a great disservice to the Parliament and to the many members who serve on its committees, working very hard and discharging their responsibilities honourably. She needs to look at the evidence. Over the past four years, the Parliament has passed many members' bills that have come from among the different parties and, in doing so, members have discharged their responsibilities expertly.

We have a particular problem at this juncture. Dissolution is upon us and a range of members' bills and other bills have to be dealt with. Discussion at the Parliamentary Bureau has been thorough and non-partisan and we have attempted to deal with the issues that we face.

Presiding Officer, you ruled earlier on the bureau's decision on the referral of members' bills and I have nothing to add to that—the matter is now finished. It seems to me that the most appropriate course of action is for the Procedures Committee to consider the structure of members' bills and the time that is allocated to them, which it has indicated that it will do. It is not within my gift to find more parliamentary time—I just cannot do that—but the Procedures Committee has a role in considering the matter.

Given that the pressure that we face is one of time, it is particularly unhelpful of Frances Curran to suggest that I find more time to debate her bill, because that is not a feasible option. I ask members to acknowledge the challenges that the bureau faces and the fact that it has tried to address the issues raised and to pass the business motion.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The question is, that motion S2M-5238, in the name of Margaret Curran, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members: No.**

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

**For**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (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)  
 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)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)  
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (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, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)  
 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**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)  
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)

**ABSTENTIONS**

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

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 104, Against 13, Abstentions 4.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 6 December 2006

2.30 pm

Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Executive Debate: Civic Participation  
 – Trade Union Engagement with  
 Scotland's Civic Society  
*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist  
 Party Business  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 7 December 2006

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Adoption and  
 Children (Scotland) Bill  
 11.40 am General Question Time  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time—  
 Health and Community Care;  
 Environment and Rural Development  
 2.55 pm Conclusion of Stage 3 Proceedings:  
 Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Executive Debate: Fisheries  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 13 December 2006

2.30 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Executive Business  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 14 December 2006

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Legal  
 Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland)  
 Bill  
 11.40 am General Question Time  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time—  
 Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong  
 Learning;  
 Justice and Law Officers  
 2.55 pm Conclusion of Stage 3 Proceedings:  
 Legal Profession and Legal Aid  
 (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motions S2M-5239 and S2M-5240, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out timetables for legislation.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Transport and Works (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 19 January 2007.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 19 January 2007.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

*Motions agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:07

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S2M-5233, in the name of Margaret Curran, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2006 Amendment Order 2006 be approved.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

## Decision Time

17:08

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S2M-5161, in the name of Margaret Jamieson, that the Parliament agrees that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill be passed, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)  
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)  
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 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, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)  
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (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)  
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)  
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 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)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)  
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (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)  
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)  
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

# AGAINST

Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)

Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)  
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 118, Against 8, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill be passed.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-5113, in the name of Dennis Canavan, that the Parliament agrees that the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill be passed, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill be passed.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S2M-5233, in the name of Margaret Curran, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2006 Amendment Order 2006 be approved.

## Child Poverty

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

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-5172, in the name of Jackie Baillie, on ending child poverty in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

#### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament agrees that it is unacceptable that children living in severe poverty in Scotland are missing out on basic necessities such as fresh, nutritious food, new clothes and shoes and having a warm home in the winter; welcomes Save the Children's campaign to end child poverty, which highlights the effects for children and their families of living in severe and persistent poverty; acknowledges the progress made by the Scottish Executive in lifting 100,000 children in Scotland out of poverty and helping children in the Dumbarton constituency and across Scotland to improve their life chances, and believes that more needs to be done and that the Executive should prioritise the needs of the very poorest children and continue to work with the UK Government in implementing solutions, such as child seasonal grants, proposed as part of the Save the Children campaign.

17:11

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I have long believed that a strong economy and a strong society are but two sides of the same coin. Equally, I believe that getting people into work is the best and most sustainable route out of poverty. I have witnessed at first hand the liberating effect that gaining employment has on people. In my former work in community economic development, I worked with women and their families to improve their opportunities. Poverty is not simply about income poverty—it is also about poverty of opportunity, which visits itself on successive generations. For those women, employment enhanced their confidence and self-esteem and made them feel valued for their skills and abilities. Their employment transformed their entire families. I want that for every family and every child.

I acknowledge the work of the Executive, which has, in partnership with the Labour Government at Westminster, achieved much in tackling poverty. In Scotland alone, some 100,000 children have been lifted out of relative poverty and as many as 200,000 have been lifted from absolute poverty. We have moved from one in three children being in poverty to one in four. There is, rightly, an ambitious target to end child poverty by 2020, but that is not enough. I urge the Executive to redouble its efforts. As long as any children are born into poverty, are destined to live in poverty and perhaps even to die in poverty, we in Parliament must not rest.

Although 2005 figures from the Child Poverty Action Group suggest that relative poverty in Scotland is less than the United Kingdom average, the Scottish index of multiple deprivation shows that two thirds of the most deprived areas are concentrated in Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire, my area. We need urgently to focus on two things. First, we need to tackle the obvious geographical concentration of disadvantage in the west of Scotland and, secondly, we need to target our resources at the poorest children in the poorest families.

That is why I welcome Save the Children's campaign to end child poverty in Scotland. It estimates that some 80,000 children in Scotland live in severe poverty. Its research tells us that the poorest families will experience particular hardships with what we regard as normal life events, such as the birth of a child, the extra cost of fuel in winter and buying school clothes. Understandably, there is little resilience in their family budgets to cope with such extra expenditure. The fact that there is no spare cash for a rainy day means that families have to make tough choices. Parents of some 1.3 million children in the United Kingdom say that they cannot afford to buy new clothes and one family in five struggles to pay household bills. The parents of 770,000 children in the UK cannot afford to give their children a healthy diet and 1 million children live in houses that have rotting walls and floors.

None of that is acceptable, but let me dwell on winter for a minute, when no families—not only the poorest—are helped by the 60 per cent rise in the cost of electricity and the 90 per cent rise in the cost of gas. No physical measures to combat fuel poverty can counter the price rises that we have seen from power companies. Therefore, I commend the comments from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, which I believe signal that he will take action. Next week's pre-budget speech provides an early opportunity for him to clarify his intentions. I encourage him to do so. The chancellor has explicitly acknowledged the pressure on low-income households and has said that he will consider extending to families with children the winter fuel payment that is currently enjoyed by pensioners. That is welcome, but we should not let power companies off the hook. I hope that he will use his influence to ensure that all power companies face up to their responsibilities: indeed, I would go so far as to encourage him to insist on social tariffs rather than discretionary schemes that require people to apply for relief.

Save the Children is to be commended for calling on the Scottish Executive and Westminster to prioritise the needs of the poorest children. It is right that we should target the most effort and

resources on that. Tackling child poverty matters not just to Westminster, the current Executive or Parliament, but to all the people of Scotland. In that context, I want to highlight several suggestions that are at the heart of the Save the Children campaign and which have been echoed by Barnardo's and NCH in their briefings to MSPs.

First, will the Executive identify the families and children who are living in the severest poverty so that our policy interventions can be well targeted and therefore effective? Secondly, we should consider a package of policy responses that include increasing the availability of free child care, extending the entitlement to free school meals for the poorest families, improving school clothing grants and tackling the numbers of children who live in fuel poverty. Above all, we should understand what works and apply it in a focused way.

Finally, we should continue to work with our colleagues at Westminster. That could be through a joint ministerial committee—I know that many exist—or a joint parliamentary committee. Whatever the mechanism, I am clear that this is a shared agenda: our aspiration should be to do nothing short of ending child poverty across the UK, not simply in Scotland.

In the words of Save the Children,

"Children can't wait any longer. Let's fill in the missing pieces for children in struggling families."

Let us continue our work—all of us together—to end the scandal that is child poverty.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ten members have requested to speak, so we must have tight speeches. I will consider later whether we need an extension.

17:18

**Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I will try to be quick so that as many members as possible can speak.

I thank Jackie Baillie for securing the debate. It is incumbent on us all to do our utmost to end child poverty. It does not matter whether it is called relative, absolute or persistent poverty—it is poverty. It is unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that one in four children in Scotland is living in such conditions and is disadvantaged through poverty. We cannot imagine just how difficult it is for them. Other members will have met, as I have, constituents who have no form of heating in their homes, who cannot clothe their children and who are dependent on benefits or are on low wages.

Tackling child poverty is a Westminster issue, but we have to force Westminster into doing something. I do not want to be political because we are talking about poverty, but for me the one

way to get people in Scotland out of poverty is to have an independent Scotland. I will perhaps touch on that later.

Jackie Baillie's motion says that 100,000 children have been lifted out of poverty by certain policies—I acknowledge that. Equally, however, motion S2M-5198 that was lodged by Karen Whitefield mentions that 100,000 Scottish children now live in fuel poverty simply because of the rise in energy prices. Therein lies our dilemma. We can propose policies—Jackie Baillie mentioned various policies that the Executive could adopt and said that we should have a joint working party with Westminster—but we have a dilemma. Low pay, child benefit and other benefits, energy prices, debt and the so on are all the responsibility of Westminster. We do not have control over them.

I fully support Save the Children's campaign, Barnardo's and all the other organisations. I particularly support Save the Children's campaign for seasonal grants and I wish it every success. I condemn Scottish Power's obscene profits, which are up by 77 per cent to £483 million. We have the added concern of the Spanish takeover—we do not know what will happen.

Barnardo's says in its briefing that

"Both Westminster and Holyrood policies contribute to poverty reduction. It is reserved matters—Treasury and Social Security—that have greatest potential to impact on poverty."

Jackie Baillie said that Gordon Brown, the chancellor, is considering winter fuel payments for the poorest families, and other matters that are reserved to Westminster. That is good—something may come out of that. However, the people whom I speak to want decent jobs, access to decent houses and access to decent education. They do not want handouts, but we constantly tell people that they must take handouts. When people take a low-paid job, their low pay is backed by the child tax credit. If winter fuel payments are offered, they will have to apply for them. All those payments are handouts. In an independent Scotland, people would not need to rely on that.

Jackie Baillie mentioned power companies' profits. Gordon Brown and successive Westminster Governments have had the power that she described for years but have done nothing with it. I support Jackie Baillie in asking Gordon Brown to do something, but the basic problem lies in our own country in that we do not, unfortunately, have the necessary powers. It is sad to say that, but until we have control over our own moneys and until we have our own benefits system, we will have poor people and children living in poverty. I do not want that to continue, which is why I believe that independence is the best way forward. That is not electioneering, but a belief, and I hope that families listen to it.



I hope that we as a Parliament lobby Westminster and the next Prime Minister—who might not be Gordon Brown; he might be John Reid or anybody, for all we know. We should lobby Westminster if we are not independent, because we need that success and that power over our own affairs so that our people can live decent and independent lives.

17:22

**Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I will try to be swift.

Poverty at any level is tough and can be a struggle, and child poverty often has even worse manifestations. Children cannot influence the situations in which they find themselves, nor can they take any responsibility for them. They are in a vulnerable period when their needs and welfare are paramount for their progression. It is therefore highly regrettable that in one of the wealthiest countries in the world—a member of the G8 and the first nation to industrialise fully—up to one in four children lives in poverty.

I am pleased that Jackie Baillie has given us the opportunity to discuss the topic and I thank her for that. As communities spokesman, I often deal with issues that concern poverty and urban decay and I am amazed by the effect that they have on people. That so many people still live in poverty is a disgrace.

On the specifics of child poverty, I sympathise with the situation that the motion describes and the intentions of the motion. I welcome the fact that Save the Children has chosen to campaign to highlight the situation. However, there is a broader picture—child poverty exists because poverty exists. The majority of us enjoy comfortable and secure lifestyles, but too many people still live in substandard conditions and worry about how to make ends meet. Many of those individuals have children, so if we are to help them significantly, we need to think long and hard about how we will bring people out of poverty and improve their chances in life.

I am disappointed that, despite a period of significant investment by Holyrood and Westminster, child poverty levels have at best remained static, while social mobility and educational standards have declined. It is often hard to see where money has been spent. Combating poverty is not about throwing around well-intentioned money while achieving little; it is about going to the root causes, identifying problems and implementing effective solutions.

I strongly believe that to alleviate poverty levels, we need to improve economic conditions as a whole. We need to encourage more jobs, regenerate our cities and restore our sense of

community. By doing that, we will allow people to rise out of poverty by their own efforts, and child poverty rates will fall drastically.

Statistics show that children who are born into and grow up in poverty are more likely to be poor throughout adulthood. Therefore, it is imperative that the education system be used as the invaluable tool that it is to provide such children with the ability to escape from the poverty trap. We must ensure that schools are given the investment and authority that they need to deliver education that is fitted to the needs of individual children. It is important to protect the integrity of our exam system and vital that we allow a broader range of subjects—including vocational and life skills—to be taught, as opposed to our relying solely on an academic-subject based curriculum.

We must remember that there is scope in the community for dealing with poverty, including child poverty. The voluntary sector already does a range of important jobs; indeed, its ability to provide support, advice, child care, social interaction and community engagement is far greater than the ability of a host of Government initiatives. It is therefore important to provide the voluntary sector with the financial security that it needs to carry out its responsibilities adequately, and to give it the autonomy to do what the experience of people in that sector suggests is necessary.

I am confident that there is cross-party support on the vital issue of ending child poverty. Accordingly, I would welcome any group or organisation highlighting the relevant statistics and symptoms. It is a shame that such matters are not brought to our attention more frequently.

I am pleased to have discussed child poverty with Save the Children. I read the literature that it sent me and hope that it continues to maintain regular communication with politicians. That said, I think that money for seasonal grants could be better invested in reducing the poverty burden as a whole. I am committed to tackling child welfare issues and hope that Parliament can use the powers that are vested in it to make the right decisions for the most vulnerable sector of our society.

17:26

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Jackie Baillie on securing the debate and on her informed and sincere speech. I also congratulate Save the Children, which has been represented in Parliament's lobby for most of the week, on its useful briefing packs. My colleague Sandra White referred to its seasonal grants proposal, which must be investigated.

Many people have said what Save the Children's literature says, but it is worth saying such things again. Being in the poverty cycle impacts on a person's health, education, job prospects and life expectancy. The poverty cycle denies many children in rich countries such as Scotland happy and secure futures. Some 83,000 children in Scotland are living in severe and persistent poverty, which is extremely worrying. That is 83,000 children too many.

I do not often quote Tony Blair, because I do not agree with all his aims. However, I agree with what he said in 1999. He said then:

"Our historic aim will be for ours to be the first generation to end child poverty forever and it will take a generation. It is a twenty-year mission but I believe it can be done."

I am sorry to say to Jackie Baillie that, for reasons to which she referred, achieving that aim here will be mission impossible under the Scottish Parliament's devolved powers. On fuel poverty, for example, gas prices have increased nearly 90 per cent. For every 5 per cent increase in gas prices, 30,000 people go back into fuel poverty. We are not in control of jobs or the macroeconomy and are therefore unable to develop the economy that we want.

Jackie Baillie rightly alluded to jobs. Decent and well-paid jobs in which people have respect and contribute to society are the pathway out of poverty and to better lives for people and their families, but what do we have? Some 85 per cent of low-income families find the basics that Jackie Baillie mentioned—such as clothes and nutritious food—expensive and cannot buy them. Children growing up in poverty can expect little in life. I heard what Jackie Baillie said about what can be done under devolution—I agree with some of what she said, but we should have more power.

At First Minister's questions last week, I referred to extending winter fuel payments. That issue should be grasped. I do not know how people who are at home far more than I am and who are trying to wash, keep their children warm and keep their households going can afford to pay fuel bills. We know that poor people pay for their fuel by the most expensive means—pre-paid cards. I will not go into the fact that many cards have not been recalibrated and that people are now being charged for underpayment, which is outrageous.

I am not in favour of stigmatising funds such as the school clothing fund—people should use such funds. Currently, a uniform and physical education kit costs £224.69, but people can get £51.27 from the fund. However, some local authorities do not have such a fund.

I am all in favour of extending child care but, as the Poverty Alliance highlighted at the Communities Committee, there is no point in free

child care or free leisure if public transport is too expensive for people to take their two children on the bus, which means that people are denied access to such things. I urge members to read that evidence. The Poverty Alliance voiced the experience of people who are coping with poverty. I will paraphrase one lady, who said that she is teaching her child how to live in poverty.

Finally, I ask Jackie Baillie to accept that, as nationalists, we sincerely believe that an independent Scotland would be a way of growing the economy. However, as she also said, the other side of the coin is social justice and redistribution.

17:30

**Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab):** I thank Jackie Baillie for lodging the motion and for making an excellent speech.

Some years ago, I visited a school in my constituency in what is considered a deprived area that ticks all the boxes of deprivation. The story competition on the wall was, "What do I want to do when I grow up?" One wee boy of about nine or 10 said to me, "That is my story up there." He pointed to a story that began, "I want to be like my big brother and sit in my pyjamas all day and watch television." That is a terrible indictment of the poverty of aspiration.

The question is whether he would write the same story today. I must honestly say that, in some areas, he would. He lives in poverty, he sees no way out of that poverty and he sees a different world when he looks at the television. That is clear inequality. We all agree that alleviating poverty is a major task but, as Jackie Baillie said, some 100,000 kids are not in poverty now who were in poverty when we established the Parliament in 1999. We have made progress, although there is still a lot to do.

A particular group of kids who find themselves in really helpless circumstances—I will call them the forgotten children—are the children of drug abusers. I believe that we need to provide increased support for such children. We would probably all agree that work is the main route out of poverty, but if a child's parents are drug users, work is not an option. Such kids experience their parents stealing or even prostituting themselves. When their parents work, they usually do so on the black market. Their parents work not to feed and clothe their kids but to feed a habit.

The erratic lifestyle of their parents means that the kids will sometimes be lifted up in the middle of the night and moved to the house of a grandparent or other member of the extended family for a short spell because of the state that their parents are in. As others have said, the family or extended family may not have enough money for school uniforms.

That is laughable nowadays, as that is the last thing that one would think of. As for school trips, the kids can forget them as they have no chance. I hope that the minister will address such issues around kinship care, which I have raised before in this Parliament, when we deal with the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill next week.

What kind of life have those kids got? They have no money, no social skills and no support. They do not learn how to live or play with other people. Their parents are stoned out of their minds and show absolutely no interest in them. They are moved from pillar to post. The extended family might try to do what it can but such families are usually poverty stricken themselves.

Those kids are not only in bleak financial poverty but, in many instances, they are also carers. They may be carers of younger children and, indeed, sometimes they are carers of their parents. As young carers, they try to ensure that young ones get to school on time—hopefully, with something in their stomachs—and take care of their parents when their parents are unable to look after themselves.

There is no point in talking if we do not do something. Like Jackie Baillie, I believe that the Scottish Executive needs to work in tandem with Westminster and voluntary organisations, including the National Union of Students, which has considered the issue seriously and come up with recommendations. There needs to be a change in the benefits system.

Providing opportunities for young people who are not in education, employment or training—NEETs—can make a difference, as the cross-party group on the subject heard at its meeting at lunch time today. We all agree that the way out of poverty is work, but the work should not be a dead-end job. Why should such young people not be put on a path to careers? Our aims should be: getting children out of poverty into decent poverty-free lives; welfare reform; and improving the path to good education and good sustainable employment.

Like Jackie Baillie, I ask the Scottish Executive to redouble its efforts. Like her, I also think and hope that Gordon Brown will give us good news on fuel poverty next week. There is no doubt that we need less talk and more action.

17:34

**Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (Sol):** I, too, congratulate Jackie Baillie on bringing a very important issue to the chamber for debate. I hope that she will appreciate the fraternal way in which I will disagree with some of the fundamental points that she made.

By way of introduction, I recall the words of the social reformer and writer Richard Tawney, who said many years ago:

“What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thinking poor people call, with equal justice, the problem of riches.”

Approaching the question from the opposite end of the spectrum might shape our ideas and demands in relation to child poverty.

In 1997, when Mr Blair was elected as the first Labour Prime Minister for 18 years, the richest 1,000 people in Britain had an obscene combined wealth of £98.99 billion. When the Labour Government was elected in 1997, inequality was already grotesque, but there were hopes that that obscenity would be tackled. Today, in 2006, the richest 1,000 people in Britain have a combined wealth not of £98.99 billion but of £300 billion. Under a Labour Government—a Labour Government—they have experienced a 205 per cent increase in their wealth. When we call for higher pensions, a higher minimum wage and higher benefits, we are told that we cannot afford them, but there has been a 205 per cent increase in the wealth of the richest people to £300 billion. Last year, average chief executive pay increased by 47 per cent. Chief executives of FTSE 100 index companies now have average pay of £2.8 million.

In 2000, at the beginning of this decade, the average pay differential between managing directors and workers was 39:1; today, in 2006, it is 100:1. That is the growth in inequality over which Labour has presided. It has taken place under Labour's watch, because Labour has refused to take any steps to tackle inequality. Jackie Baillie and Trish Godman talk about looking for good news from Gordon Brown next week. Good news from Gordon Brown next week would be that he is going to tax the wealthy more and to redistribute wealth from those who can afford it, so that we no longer have to means test our children and low-income families.

According to the Executive's own figures, given to me in a written answer last week, in 2006 20 per cent of individuals here in Scotland are trying to live on less than £5,000 a year and 21 per cent of Scottish households are trying to survive on less than £10,000 a year. That is poverty—that is the problem that must be tackled.

I say to my colleagues in the Scottish National Party that we need independence, but independence without socialism means doing absolutely nothing about Scottish Power, British Gas and the rest of them, and they will continue to bleed us dry with their prices and profits. Independence must be linked with socialism if we are really to tackle child poverty.

17:39

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** I thank Jackie Baillie for lodging the motion and congratulate Trish Godman on ensuring that we do not avoid the appalling reality of the problem that we face and the corrosive effects of poverty on people.

Tommy Sheridan has a point. In Norway, where there is a much flatter rewards system, the rewards for chief executive officers are between six and 10 times those that the average person gets, whereas here they are 30, 35 or 40 times the average wage.

I support Save the Children's calls for seasonal grants for children throughout Britain, but here in Scotland the Executive has the power to enact legislation that could make a real difference to the daily lives of the poorest children.

Everyone will have seen the fuel poverty figures released by the Executive today, which show that, in 2004, 14.5 per cent of all households in Scotland were forced to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on fuel. Although the figures show that the Executive has had some success, they are two years out of date. As we all know, in that period fuel prices have rocketed. The motion points out that the Executive has lifted 100,000 children out of poverty, but the rise in fuel prices means that 100,000 children are in fuel poverty in Scotland, so we are running to stand still.

On putting children at the heart of policy decisions, when it comes to energy policy, we suggest that microrenewables offer a reliable solution to ensuring that Scottish families are no longer at the mercy of international oil crises and the profiteering of energy companies. Through organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust, the Executive can do more to ensure that advice and grants for renewable energy are targeted at the poorest families.

To get families out of poverty we must make them less dependent, and improving the energy efficiency of homes is the perfect example of such an approach. We acknowledge that energy efficiency in homes is improving and commend the Executive for that—much has been done. In 2003-04, only 6 per cent of households lived in dwellings rated as poor and 40 per cent lived in dwellings rated as good, but good is not good enough: we could do much better than that. A rating of good in a dwelling in which fuel prices double is definitely not good enough. We must ensure that those in the most extreme poverty are not left behind. Money spent on insulation saves money for households for a lifetime. There are no maintenance costs and there is no need to rely on the whims of future Governments.

Shiona Baird's Home Energy Efficiency Targets (Scotland) Bill had the backing of MSPs from across the political spectrum, as well as from leading social justice and environmental charities. However, the Communities Committee recently decided not to consider the bill in this session of Parliament, in effect kicking it into the long grass.

We have the opportunity and the ability to make a difference to the lives of children in Scotland. As the weather turns colder, we must do everything that we can to ensure that no parent has to choose between feeding their children properly and keeping them warm.

17:42

**Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to participate in this important debate, which Jackie Baillie has secured. The number of Scottish National Party members in the chamber is a clear indication of the priority that we in the SNP place on the issue. Of course, the facts provided by various pieces of research reinforce the need to engage with the subject.

Figures from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicate that, in the most deprived ward in my parliamentary constituency, 44.4 per cent of children aged between zero and 15 are dependent on the workless, which is one definition of poverty. Although the overall figure for the Aberdeenshire Council area is 10.5 per cent, a significant number of wards are in serious difficulties. In the City of Edinburgh Council area, which by that definition has twice the overall level of poverty of the rural area of Aberdeenshire, the figure for the most deprived ward is 59.6 per cent, so three out of every five children meet the test of being dependent on the workless. In Glasgow, where the overall figure is a startling 39.4 per cent, the figure for Parkhead, the most deprived ward, is 63.4 per cent. At the other end of the scale in Glasgow, the figure for Jordanhill is 4.2 per cent. The localisation of deprivation is one of the key challenges for Governments—here and at Westminster—and local authorities, whatever their complexion.

In Jackie Baillie's constituency, the percentage of children aged between zero and 15 who are dependent on the workless is 28.8 per cent overall and 44.1 per cent in the most deprived ward. The reason why she perhaps brought the debate to Parliament is that the figure for the least deprived ward is 10.1 per cent, which is the overall figure for the whole of Aberdeenshire, which tells us a little bit about something. The issue should engage MSPs and should be debated.

I am glad that, in the past couple of weeks, Gordon Brown has appeared on GMTV to nail his

colours to the mast. Of course, I remain sceptical until I hear what he has to say, but he is a man of good will—I hope. However, if he decides to introduce seasonal grants, as requested by the campaign that will be launched immediately after the debate, he must not rob Peter to pay Paul but add new money to the pot of support for the neediest families in our society.

In the 25-country European Union, the United Kingdom is ranked 21<sup>st</sup> in the league table of child poverty. Of the long list of countries that escaped from the Soviet Union in the 1990s—hardly an economically successful group—only Slovakia and Poland are ranked lower. All the other such countries, which had to struggle out of serious deprivation, are doing better than the UK. That shows how far we still have to go and the steps that we must take to get to where we need to be.

At the moment, the [savethechildren.org.uk](http://savethechildren.org.uk) website is running a poll on whether child poverty can be beaten. Although only 70 people had voted when I looked at the site, 70 per cent of them thought that, with proper investment, the problem could be solved. Let us do so—and soon.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** If anyone is prepared to move it, I am minded to accept a motion without notice under the relevant rule in standing orders to extend the debate by 10 minutes.

*Motion moved,*

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended until 6.10 pm.—[*Christine Grahame.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

17:47

**Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD):** I congratulate Jackie Baillie on securing the debate. I should also congratulate the Executive. As I often criticise what it does, I think it only fair to recognise that it has made progress in dealing with poverty. However, we still need to address some very serious issues, and I want to draw attention to a few that have not been highlighted by other members, who, I might add, have already covered a lot of ground.

Ted Heath used to talk about the unacceptable face of capitalism. To my mind, the financial lenders and fuel companies are two of those unacceptable faces. They act in a totally immoral and disgraceful way—for example, with fuel bills rocketing, people who have to put money in a meter find that it does not go as far these days—and we need to sort them out. Of course, the Parliament might not have such powers, but we should at least try to shame them into more sensible actions.

Traditionally, we have poured a lot of money into poor areas, only for them to remain very poor. As other members have pointed out, they have been unable to catch up. Although we should not stop trying to help the poor, we should perhaps use our brains a bit more and find ways of helping them to help themselves. A lot of these people are very bright and are, potentially, energetic, but they lack self-confidence, self-esteem and ambition. Moreover, they do not understand the system, which is often hostile to them and prevents them from getting their foot on the first rung of the ladder. The first rung is always the hardest and, until they can get their foot on it and climb up, they will struggle.

As a result, we need to examine some good enterprises that give young people some understanding of business. The other day in the Parliament, I met some young people who had worked with Young Enterprise Scotland, which operates in schools and places such as young offenders institutions and helps to teach young people about business by allowing them to set up their own small businesses. All sorts of groups, such as the Prince's Trust, Barnardo's and the Wise Group, are teaching people to go out and do things themselves rather than relying on the state.

We should put more systematic effort into this area. Some of the money that, at the moment, is poured rather thoughtlessly into trying to help poorer communities could be targeted much better. We need to educate people about the use of money. I met an interesting group that has had some success in England with courses that tell people how to manage their money. It hopes to start up in Scotland.

We should help people to help themselves. That means that we have to train up and pay youth workers, family support people and so on to help families and, especially, young people to be more constructive, to do work in their communities, to volunteer and to work towards having a successful career.

We can crack this business. I know that Jesus said that the poor are always with us, but he is not always right. I think that we can really go for it and show that we can do better than could be done in Palestine in the year zero.

17:51

**Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP):** I thank Jackie Baillie for bringing this important debate to the Parliament.

I was asked in a survey what was the biggest luxury of my adult life. After some consideration, I answered that it was gas central heating. Living in a freezing house in the west of Scotland in winter is nothing short of torture. It affects everything—

people's mood, children's homework and so on. It affects people's entire beings. Being freezing all the time and never getting to heat up is a form of torture—I say that as someone who was always freezing and still is.

One of the scary things is that none of us knows where energy prices are going to go next year—or even next month. Members who are worried about that can sign my motion on the public ownership of Scottish Power, which I lodged today.

I am in favour of seasonal grants. However, if we are discussing the wider issues of poverty, there are other, more central issues, that we should address. Last week or the week before, I went to One Plus's annual general meeting, at which we heard a presentation by the London-based Centre for Social and Economic Inclusion that made it clear that the overarching Government policy is to get people back into work. That is the route out of poverty for everyone, regardless of whether they have children. The Government's targets are to get 70 per cent of lone parents back into work and to get 85 per cent of all adults into work.

The figure that stood out most starkly in the presentation showed that an absolute majority of children who are living in poverty live in households in which either one parent or both parents are working. That is the figure that we should be talking about. The percentage of children who are living in poverty in households in which both parents are on benefits has gone down. What are we going to do about those children who are living in poverty in spite of the fact that their parents have already done what Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are asking them to do? We should bear it in mind that many families fluctuate below and above the poverty line.

If we really want to tackle the problem, we will have to do one of two things. We will have either to increase the minimum wage dramatically or to change the working tax credit. Children who live in poverty are concentrated in families in which only one parent is bringing in an income. It is interesting that, when they talk about poverty, people—especially politicians—never talk about money. Politicians never say what they think an income should be. The working tax credit brings the income of a lone parent family up to between £10,000 and £14,000 a year, depending on how many hours are worked. Is that acceptable for families with one or two children? Can people live on that?

Those people are living on the breadline, and they are worrying. They are not living a life in which they can meet all the demands on them, have a holiday and so on. Even if Gordon Brown is discussing the issue, what is he going to do about that? I do not suppose that he will change the

minimum wage, although he should to raise it dramatically because the working tax credit takes the minimum wage to between only £7 and £8 an hour. Where should we fix the working tax credit so that it will lift all children out of poverty? Should it be fixed at £20,000 or £25,000? I would go for £25,000, because that is the average wage of a skilled worker in Scotland. We need that type of debate on policy. We must nail our colours to the mast and say how much we think the figure should be.

My final point is about getting lone parents into education, given the concentration of children in poverty who live in lone-parent families. If someone goes back to college or university, they get £6,000 per year for 30 weeks. That is not enough.

17:55

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, congratulate Jackie Baillie on securing tonight's debate and on her opening speech, the sincerity of which shone through.

We should be having this debate during the day and voting on it because the subject is, with all due respect, too important to be left to a member's business debate at the tail end of the parliamentary day. It is one of the biggest challenges that Scotland faces, so I hope that the minister will be able to schedule a debate on poverty, particularly child poverty, sometime early in the new year.

There are three main causes of child poverty in our society, the first of which is unemployment. I agree totally with Jackie Baillie that the best anti-poverty measure is full employment. However, as Frances Curran pointed out, it is not enough just to get people into jobs—we must also tackle the second major cause of child poverty and poverty among adults, which is low income and low pay. There is no point in people being in jobs if they would be better off on benefits, or if they have to live in poverty.

The third major cause of child poverty is poor housing. Despite all the efforts that have been made over many years, we have never really broken the back of Scotland's housing problem. For example, we are still only building about 27,000 new houses in Scotland every year compared to southern Ireland, where 85,000 new builds were started last year.

One of the consequences of the current levels of poverty is poor educational attainment. According to the Scottish Funding Council, the same percentage of youngsters—about 14 per cent—from working class parents are attending university today as was the case 30 to 40 years ago. The number of people who are classed as

coming from working class parents is smaller than it used to be because many parents would now be defined as middle class, but that still emphasises the fact that we have not made any significant progress in giving people from such homes access to higher education.

As we all know, another major consequence of child poverty is that people's health as adults is badly affected, as is their longevity. No matter what problems we are talking about—housing, unemployment, low pay, education or health—poverty runs through them all as a major theme that has to be tackled.

I would like the chancellor to take three measures in his budget, one of which is the seasonal payments for which Barnardo's is calling. Another is implementation of the Child Poverty Action Group's recommendation that child benefits be paid to every child at the level that is currently paid to first children. That would go a long way towards helping to alleviate the worst of the problem.

Although progress has been made on getting some children out of poverty, that is true only in respect of the definition whereby children are said to be in poverty if they live in a household whose income is less than 60 per cent of the median household income. Many children have gone from living in households in which the income was under 60 per cent of the average to living in households in which it is just over 60 per cent of the average, but the percentage of children who live in households in which the income is less than 40 per cent of the average has increased. We face a major challenge and I hope that the chancellor and others will take radical measures to tackle a huge problem.

18:00

**The Deputy Minister for Communities (Des McNulty):** Like other members, I begin by congratulating my colleague Jackie Baillie on securing the debate. I commend her speech and those of other members.

A majority of Jackie Baillie's constituents live in West Dunbartonshire, as do a majority of mine. The area has the second-highest concentration of deprivation in Scotland. This evening's debate affords us an opportunity to consider how we can best address problems of disadvantage and lift families with children out of poverty in West Dunbartonshire and elsewhere in Scotland.

Since 1999, the Executive has worked in partnership with the United Kingdom Government to introduce a range of new programmes and initiatives that are aimed at allowing us to meet our shared target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. Considerable progress has been made, especially

in raising the household incomes of families with children, although, as members have said, there is still much to do. Measures that have had an effect include the introduction of child tax credit and working families tax credit, a huge expansion in child care provision through sure start Scotland and the supporting people initiative, which I remember introducing when I was the Deputy Minister for Social Justice nearly four years ago. Compared with what went before, those and other measures have helped to transform the lives of children and their parents.

Lack of money is the most immediate issue for families who live in poverty. The past seven years have seen the most radical ever redistribution of resources to low income families, which has been spearheaded by a Scottish Chancellor of the Exchequer. Gordon Brown has a deep personal commitment to improving the prospects of those children and families who most need and deserve our support. The resources that have been made available to Scottish families by the Labour Westminster Government are the single most important factor in taking us towards our goal of eradicating child poverty within a generation.

**Alex Neil:** I understand what the minister says about all the measures that the chancellor has taken but, as the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has shown, inequality in Britain today is worse than it was on the day that Gordon Brown became chancellor.

**Des McNulty:** I believe that there has been a substantial reduction in inequality.

Poverty is a complex phenomenon that cannot simply be equated with low income. The causes of poverty include lack of access to good education and training opportunities, health inequalities, social fragmentation and isolation, poor-quality housing and poor access to transport links. Significant improvements have been made in all those areas. If those matters, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Scottish Parliament, do not continue to be addressed, the inevitable consequence will be a culture of low aspiration, especially in the most disadvantaged communities.

In addition, we must consider how we can support the children who are directly affected by some of the factors that Trish Godman so eloquently described, such as the uncertainty and disruption that are caused by parental drug and alcohol abuse. That is another task for us.

The Scottish Executive was right to set itself ambitious targets—targets that would have been considered fanciful when I first became an elected politician 16 years ago. At that time, west central Scotland, in particular, suffered from high unemployment, tight expenditure constraints on

local government and extremely limited provision for families and especially mothers. Any reasonable analysis of the changes that have been made since 1999 shows that dramatic results have been achieved. By no means would I claim that we have solved all the complex and persistent problems that lead to people living in poverty, but significant inroads have been made into tackling the continuing low achievement of our poorest-performing pupils, which prevents them from making a successful transition from school to work. The stubborn inequalities that exist in health have been addressed, too, and measures have been put in place to help people to overcome barriers to entering the labour market.

As a consequence of those and other measures, more than 130,000 children have been lifted out of relative poverty since 1997, if we exclude housing costs from the calculations. The UK Government set a target of reducing child poverty by a quarter between 1998-99 and 2004-05. Over that period, Scotland has outperformed the target and 100,000 Scottish children have been lifted from relative poverty, which represents a reduction of 34 per cent. That is more progress than has been achieved anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Since 2001-02, the Executive's actions have meant that 20,000 children have been lifted out of severe poverty, with a further 10,000 if housing costs are taken into account.

I believe that that is significant progress. I also believe—and a number of people share my view—that securing meaningful employment is the best and most sustainable route out of poverty. The most effective way of lifting children out of poverty is to enhance the ambitions and job prospects of their parents. By working together, Governments at Westminster and Holyrood have been able to help those furthest from the labour market to develop skills, secure the support needed to get them into work and sustain them in that employment. One group that we have been particularly successful in assisting is lone parents. The latest figures show that 57.2 per cent of lone parents are in employment in Scotland, compared with the Great Britain average of 56.6 per cent. That marks an increase of 10 per cent since 1999, although I accept that there is still scope to do more.

**Christine Grahame:** The figure of 100,000 children lifted out of relative poverty was calculated excluding housing costs. What would the figure be if the Executive included those costs, as the Child Poverty Action Group wants to do?

**Des McNulty:** I think that the figure is about 25 per cent if housing costs are taken into account.

A sum of £50 million is being spent over a four-year period under the working for families initiative in those local authority areas, such as West

Dunbartonshire, where there is the highest concentration of workless households. That investment enables parents from the most vulnerable communities and groups to access education, training or employment by providing the necessary help and support with child care. In Glasgow, the One Plus sustainable employment project assists vulnerable parents to return to and sustain employment by providing pre and in-work support for a period of six months. There are no magic wands or instant solutions. Eliminating poverty requires consistent effort, and considerable challenges still exist, but those measures are making a difference and are achieving significant dimensions of change.

I welcome Save the Children's campaign because it reminds all of us that many families in Scotland still lack the opportunities and support that they need to make the most of their potential. Save the Children is calling for the introduction of seasonal grants to ease the pressure on the budgets of the poorest families at a time when demands on disposable income can increase—during the winter, at Christmas and during the school holidays. Changes to the benefits system in order to permit such seasonal grants are, as we know, reserved matters for the UK Government, but I assure members that we will be discussing those matters with Westminster colleagues as part of our on-going dialogue with them.

Save the Children is right to highlight the additional pressures that are placed on poor families as a result of fuel poverty. Over the past 18 months, rises in fuel prices have put pressure on many family projects that are overstretched. We will do what we can to encourage energy companies to protect those who are most vulnerable to price increases. As members have said, that is an issue that one hopes that the chancellor will examine in preparing his pre-budget statement.

Our programmes are making a significant difference to fuel poverty. To date, we have spent £294 million on our central heating and warm deal programmes. Over the next two years, £102 million has already been committed. More than a quarter of a million homes have been insulated under the warm deal, and many families with children have benefited from measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation. Glasgow Housing Association will shortly complete its central heating programme. When the final installations in Glasgow take place, every house that is rented from a registered social landlord in Scotland will, where the tenant wants it, have central heating.

For too long, poverty, deprivation and disadvantage have blighted the lives of too many of our people. The Executive, working in partnership with the UK Government, has put in



place policies and initiatives that will help to ensure that every Scot gets the opportunity to enjoy a decent standard of living, a decent income and a decent quality of life. We must maintain the momentum that has been built up on tackling child poverty. We will consider the issues that Save the Children has raised and we will discuss them with colleagues in Whitehall as we take forward our shared commitment to eradicating child poverty across the UK by 2020.

As we succeed in lifting people out of poverty, those left behind will inevitably be those who are most difficult to reach, which is why I agree that we need to target resources more closely on the most deprived families.

This has been a constructive debate. There are a range of issues, including education, health, employment, and support for vulnerable people and families, all of which need to be addressed. I hope that all members, no matter which party, keep the goal of ending child poverty at the top of their political agenda. It will remain at the top of my political agenda and that of my party.

*Meeting closed at 18:10.*



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