

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Wednesday 6 February 2008

Session 3

£5.00

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# CONTENTS

Wednesday 6 February 2008

## Debates

Col.

<b>TIME FOR REFLECTION</b> .....	5833
<b>BUSINESS MOTIONS</b> .....	5835
<i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>BUDGET (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 3</b> .....	5836
<b>BUDGET (SCOTLAND) BILL</b> .....	5859
<i>Motion moved—[John Swinney].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Iain Gray].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney).....	5859
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab) .....	5864
Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con) .....	5868
Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD) .....	5871
Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP).....	5873
James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab).....	5875
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con) .....	5876
Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) .....	5879
Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP).....	5881
Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....	5883
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green) .....	5885
Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP).....	5887
Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind).....	5889
Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	5890
Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD) .....	5893
David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con) .....	5895
Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab).....	5898
John Swinney .....	5900
<b>BUSINESS MOTIONS</b> .....	5904
<i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford]—and agreed to.</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	5906
<b>SCOTS TRAD MUSIC AWARDS</b> .....	5911
<i>Motion debated—[Rob Gibson].</i>	
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP).....	5911
Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab) .....	5914
Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD) .....	5914
Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP).....	5916
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....	5918
Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD) .....	5919
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab) .....	5920
The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani).....	5922

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## Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 6 February 2008*

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The first item of business is time for reflection. I am very pleased to welcome as our time for reflection leader today, under very difficult circumstances, which she will tell you about, Suzanne Dance, on behalf of the Edinburgh Theravada Buddhist Group.

**Suzanne Dance (Edinburgh Community of Interbeing):** I am Suzanne Dance of the Edinburgh Community of Interbeing. I have the honour of reading this time for reflection contribution on behalf of Jody Higgs of the Edinburgh Theravada Buddhist Group, who passed away on Sunday evening. Jody was a much-loved, respected and vital member of the Buddhist and interfaith communities in Edinburgh.

In the teachings of the Buddha the emphasis is on the cultivation of wholesome states of heart and mind. The Pali Canon lists 10 of these wholesome states to be cultivated by the wise ruler—10 *rājadharmā*. Today I would like to discuss a few of them with you—just some of the Buddha's guidance for good governance.

The first of those, perhaps not surprisingly, is morality. People do not trust rulers who lack moral integrity, but perhaps even more important, without integrity you cannot trust yourself. By cultivating effort in the sphere of morality, you give yourself freedom from fear about the consequences of your actions; instead you feel a sense of pride and self-esteem.

The second wholesome mind-state to be cultivated is generosity. True giving is a thoroughly joyful thing to do. We experience happiness when we form the intention to give, again in the actual act of giving and yet again in the recollection of the fact that we have given.

However, I suspect that many of you here often feel that you have to give too much, not of material goods but of yourself—your time and your energy. If that is so, perhaps you need to cultivate the practice of generosity towards yourself. For example, can you generously give yourself the gift of self-acceptance?

Finally, the wise ruler, out of respect for all life, will cultivate the path of non-violence. Fortunately for us, we have on the planet just now a world leader who exemplifies the virtue of non-violence:

Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. Her non-violence and her patient abiding with difficult conditions clearly stem from a deep understanding of the true nature of things. She serves as an inspiration to good people everywhere.

To conclude, I have been describing some of the wholesome states that the Buddha listed as those to be cultivated by the wise ruler: morality, generosity and non-violence. It is not of course a coincidence that the Buddha's guidance to good governance is similar to that of other great teachers. That is because the wisdom being pointed to is not Buddhist wisdom but universal wisdom.

For the first time in history we can benefit from the wisdom teachings of all major human civilisations. I want to underline and celebrate this Parliament's openness to those teachings. I believe that this time for reflection, with its inclusive policy honouring diversity, provides a fine example to the rest of our fragmented world.

Let us end by celebrating and honouring the core goodness in ourselves and others. Let us reflect on the good things that we have done and recollect the times when we have been generous, or when we have been caring—times when we have chosen the hard non-violent way. That does not mean ignoring our bad qualities or our unskillful actions. We can fully acknowledge those difficulties while at the same time choosing to focus on our collective goodness. This practice best serves the well-being of ourselves and the people of Scotland who have honoured you with their trust.

## Business Motions

14:05

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1307, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 6 February 2008—  
after

*followed by*            Stage 3 Debate: Budget (Scotland) Bill  
delete

*followed by*            Legislative Consent Motion: Education  
and Skills Bill – UK Legislation.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1314, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for the stage 3 consideration of the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, during Stage 3 of the Budget (Scotland) Bill, debate on groups of amendments shall, subject to Rule 9.8.4A, be brought to a conclusion by the time limit indicated, that time limit being calculated from when the Stage begins and excluding any periods when other business is under consideration or when a meeting of the Parliament is suspended (other than a suspension following the first division in the Stage being called) or otherwise not in progress:

Group 1: 45 minutes.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Budget (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

14:07

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is stage 3 of the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

In dealing with amendments, members should have before them the bill—as the bill was not amended at stage 2, it is the bill as introduced—the marshalled list containing all amendments selected for debate, and the groupings of amendments, which I have agreed.

The division bell will sound and proceedings will be suspended for five minutes for the first division this afternoon. The period of voting for the first division and any subsequent divisions will be 30 seconds.

Amendment 1, in the name of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, is grouped with amendments 2 to 6.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The amendments that we propose to make to the 2008 budget bill follow consideration of the recommendations that were made by the Finance Committee and other parliamentary committees.

On the issue of police numbers, last year we announced a first step in the recruitment of additional police officers, with investment that would see an extra 150 recruits last year and this year as part of a programme of recruiting 500 new officers to police forces during this spending review period. We have heard the views of Parliament and, if these amendments are agreed to, we will be able to take a second step, delivering an additional £10 million funding, which will put 300 more police officers on to our streets in 2008-09. Moreover, we will commit resources in the following two years to increase that total to 500, over and above the 500 that we had already pledged to recruit.

Those extra officers come on top of the substantial increases in policing capacity that we are expecting to deliver through improved retention and reinvestment of efficiency gains, which will be focused on ensuring that they enhance the level of policing in Scotland's communities. We are committed to working with partners in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to achieve the increase, through our historic concordat, and we will be working closely to support chief constables and police boards to deliver on that objective.

Let me be clear: the additional money that the amended budget will provide means that we will not only deliver 1,000 more police officers on our

streets and in our communities but go substantially beyond that.

**Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I welcome the Government's U-turn back to the Scottish National Party's manifesto position. I will pick the cabinet secretary up on the points that he has made about increased capacity through retention and redeployment. I remind him that David Strang and others told the Justice Committee that retention would not increase numbers in any way, shape or form, and that the Scottish Police Federation and the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents felt that redeployment had gone as far as it could. How can the cabinet secretary say that he will increase capacity beyond the 1,000 additional officers?

**John Swinney:** On Margaret Smith's first point, I love the graceful way in which the Liberal Democrats make their contribution to parliamentary debates. As I have gone through the budget process, I have tried as hard as I can to build consensus in every corner of the parliamentary chamber—

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** Even with your tie.

**John Swinney:** Indeed, even with my tie, Mr McArthur—do you not think that it is a super choice for today?

Therefore, I am surprised that the spirit of consensus has not descended on the member for Edinburgh West.

I will address Margaret Smith's second, substantial point. It would be foolhardy for us to say that we are at the limit and that redeployment activity has reached all the heights that it could possibly reach in our police services. There are numerous police authorities in which significant redeployment initiatives are taking place—Grampian and Strathclyde come to mind. Through the partnership approach that epitomises this Government, we are encouraging our chief constables and our police boards, working with our local authorities and with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and his officials, to deliver on that commitment. We should not limit our ambitions as Margaret Smith would have us do.

**Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Can the cabinet secretary confirm that, as well as meeting the SNP's own manifesto commitment to 1,000 more police officers, he is now going to match the Conservative manifesto aspiration of 1,500 more police officers?

**John Swinney:** Mr Brocklebank's proposition and Margaret Smith's proposition cannot both be true. What is undeniable is that we are exceeding the manifesto commitments that we made to the people of Scotland. We have had to make some

difficult decisions to release resources from other parts of the budget in order to find the additional money that we are putting into this policy initiative. We propose to deliver the extra police officers by changing the timetable for some projects within the prisons estate and e-health budgets and by finding a contribution from the motorway and trunk road network strengthening and improvement budget. In taking those decisions, I assure members that no other services or projects will be affected.

The amendments will also allow for an increased investment of almost £4.3 million in our climate challenge fund, to help to accelerate our work in that area. Our consultation paper on the Scottish climate change bill makes clear the scale of the challenge that we face in tackling climate change. As members know, our budget invests resources to help us to make greater use of our substantial renewable energy resource, to reduce the climate change emissions from transport, housing and business, and to improve Scotland's record on waste management and recycling.

Our communities have a major contribution to make to tackling climate change, and the additional money that we want to provide through our climate challenge fund will support a range of sustainable development and climate change initiatives. We want to provide that extra funding in recognition of the increased level of effort that is required, both within and outwith Government, to deliver our greener Scotland commitments, including our ambitious climate change targets. To provide that extra investment, we propose to transfer funds from the Registers of Scotland's public dividend capital. I am delighted that that will be possible without having any negative impact on the valuable services that the Registers of Scotland provides. In formulating the budget for 2009-10 and the subsequent year, I will make provision for the continuation of investment of that magnitude in the fund.

14:15

We have had to build consensus and make some tough choices in order to create a programme that can command a majority in Parliament today. I have heard many calls from throughout the chamber for the Government to intensify its efforts to ensure that there is a strong police presence in our communities and to take vigorous action to tackle climate change. I believe that the amendments will go some way to deliver on those aspirations, which have been expressed throughout the Parliament. I urge Parliament to support the amendments in my name.

I move amendment 1.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab):**

Labour will support the amendment on the justice budget to ensure the funding of a further 500 police officers. It is similar to a proposal that we made in committee.

Labour achieved record police numbers and we are proud of our record in office. We committed to build police capacity and the visibility of police officers in our communities, but in addition we promoted—and we still support—the vital resource of community wardens working hand in hand with police officers in the community. The Government seems to have ditched that commitment.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Pauline McNeill:** No, thank you.

We also stand on our record of the decisions that we took on civilianisation, which most notably involved transferring the duties for the custody of prisoners and their transport from prison to court. That freed up hundreds of police officers to be on the streets in communities, where they are of the most benefit.

The Government has at last conceded that the budget should honour the promise of 1,000 police officers or perhaps substantially more. You have been dragged kicking and screaming to honour your own promise, clapping yourselves on the back for honouring your own commitment to the Scottish people. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has been sacrificed for the past six months so that you could do a deal with the Tories for your first budget—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Pauline McNeill:** I am at least pleased that, at long last, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has been put out of his misery so that Derek Brownlee could come along and attempt to take the credit. However, I suggest to Mr Brownlee that Labour played a crucial role in holding the Government to account on its manifesto promises.

Of course, we wish the Government well in delivering an additional 1,000 police officers during the current session of Parliament. However, even if the number is substantially higher than that, it will still fall short of the Liberal and Labour achievement in government.

The real issue today is that the Government has failed properly to address the real challenge of shaping our police force in the next three to four years. When I asked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth last week how the shortfall in police pensions is to be paid for, he washed his hands of the liability. Strathclyde Police confirmed in a letter to me that the shortfall for all the Scottish authorities is more than £100 million. That is the single biggest factor that affects

the deliverability of an additional 1,000 police officers.

The letter from Strathclyde Police states that the identifiable grant-aided expenditure figures for the police in the spending review 2007 make no allowance for the additional pension cost pressure. It also says that local authorities' ability to fund that pressure fully along with all the other pressures is extremely problematic. Indeed, recruitment levels in Strathclyde Police have been moderated because of the cabinet secretary's lack of commitment to fund police pensions. The Government is refusing to live up to the liability, which will almost definitely affect the deliverability. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Pauline McNeill:** We will ensure that you will not be able to blame local authorities for the black hole in the budget. Do the right thing. Fund police pensions. Find £100 million. We might then believe that you will honour your promise of 1,000-plus police officers. We shall be watching.

**The Presiding Officer:** It is timely to remind all members that they should not use the word "you", please, or refer directly to other members.

**Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP):** I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate.

We are nearing the end of the most open and transparent budget process in the Scottish Parliament's history. We have a minority Government for the first time, and the Parliament as a whole must endorse our budget proposals. The previous Administration did not need to listen to Parliament—indeed, there have been times over the past three months when I and, I am sure, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth wished that we did not need to do so—but a minority Government must listen to views from across the chamber, and that must be good for democracy.

The cabinet secretary has led the way with the new approach to government. The budget and the amendments testify to the fact that he has listened to views from across the chamber. The Labour Party has learned to its cost that a party will be unable to achieve anything in a Parliament of minorities unless it secures the backing of other parties. Its inability to take on board the views of anyone else resulted in its isolation on the Finance Committee and at stage 1 of the bill, when it failed to secure the support of any other parties for its amendments. However, the SNP Government has listened. I hope that the work that John Swinney has done to take on board the views of other parties will result in the budget and the proposed amendments receiving support throughout the chamber.



A budget has never before been debated as much. Communities have never before scrutinised a budget to the extent that they have, the media have never taken such an interest in a budget and the public have never known as clearly how they will be affected by the decisions that we make today.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** If communities throughout Scotland have been consulted on the budget as never before, what about the parents of disabled children? What has happened to the £34 million that came to the Scottish Government? The member should tell the parents of those children—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** That is further scaremongering. I said that the public have never taken such a great interest in a budget. The member should pay attention, please.

If the budget is not passed, the public will know who is to blame for the impact on public services and investment throughout Scotland. One of the clearest consequences for the public of our not passing the bill will be a huge rise in council taxes for Scottish households. Massive council tax increases are inevitable if the budget is not passed today: councils will not receive any increases on last year's budgets so, if front-line services are to be protected, they will have to raise the difference through a council tax increase of around 22 per cent. That will be a 22 per cent increase on every bill, which could mean a rise of £350 for a band D property in Dundee.

The SNP Government is providing in the budget the resources to deliver on our manifesto commitment to freeze the council tax. The Labour Party said on page 99 of its manifesto:

"we will work with colleagues in local government to keep Council Tax increases low."

In its document on its agenda for 2007, the Labour Party went further. It said:

"Every Labour Council Leader in Scotland will today rule out introducing council tax rises above inflation for the next four years."

If Labour fails to support the budget today, the 60 per cent council tax increase under the previous Government will pale into insignificance. Rather than working with local government to keep council tax rises below inflation, Labour members will be voting for the highest rise since the council tax was introduced.

The budget will not pass without the support of Opposition members. If it is not passed, the Parliament will have failed the people of Scotland. The cabinet secretary has listened and addressed many of the Opposition's concerns in the amendments and in his statements. It is now up to

the Opposition parties to raise their game and rise to the challenge.

I commend the budget and the amendments to members.

**Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con):** The cabinet secretary has listened, and there is no greater joy in heaven than when a sinner repents. If I may make another biblical analogy, surely there has not been such a volte-face since Saul went on his celebrated excursion to Damascus. The SNP Government was elected on a manifesto that promised 1,000 new police officers, but it reneged on that promise. Instead, it offered 500 new police officers, with the remaining 500 to be produced by an amalgam of retreads, redeployment and an extension of civilianisation, none of which was going to work in practical terms.

In the end, the Government has had to recognise the persuasiveness of my Conservative colleagues and the fact that members from other parties knew that that policy was never going to work because it could not work. If you were a police officer of 52 years of age getting down and dirty in the east end of Glasgow, would you be prepared to work for one third of your salary? That is basically what that lot on the SNP benches were asking them to do. It was never going to work.

Pauline McNeill correctly said that the Government has been brought kicking and screaming to today's position. She did a fair bit of screaming herself, I may say—the kicking may follow, so I will be wary of where I position myself in proximity to her. Is that the same Pauline McNeill who was elected on the strength of a manifesto that stated that there would be no extra police officers? Is it the same Pauline McNeill who abstained in the vote on a Conservative motion in January that called for the recruitment of more police officers? Is it the same Ms McNeill who voted—also in January—against a different motion that called for more police officers? Fortunately, some wiser counsel prevailed on the Labour side.

Pauline McNeill slightly misrepresented history in talking about what happened when the matter came before the Justice Committee. The Labour members moved for 1,000 new police officers. Unfortunately, their suggestion for how the savings would be made was totally unworkable and impractical. Her colleagues suggested that the money be taken from the budgets for serious crime and drug enforcement. If they had thought it through, they would have realised that that, surely, could not have worked either.

We have made progress. Perhaps for the first time in nine years, Parliament has approached the budget process in a sensible and moderate way. The parliamentary arithmetic perhaps dictated that that was inevitable; nevertheless, people have

listened to one another. On that basis, we will support the amendments and we will listen with considerable interest to what is said elsewhere. Progress has been made and, as a result of the amendments, Scotland's communities will be much safer than they have been in the past. We will see a tangible benefit, as has been seen already in central Glasgow and central Edinburgh, where police officers are actively and visibly patrolling the streets. That can be no bad thing.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** The Liberal Democrats welcome the announcement that Mr Swinney has made this afternoon on police numbers—a position to which the SNP has been brought by the whole Parliament. All members should respect that. Parliament will want to look closely at the numbers that Mr Swinney has announced, as the budget contains less detail than ever before. I am sure that the numbers that he has announced will be scrutinised in considerable detail by the Justice Committee.

Mr Swinney should not have brushed off quite so readily the statement of Chief Constable Strang, on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. Chief Constable Strang said:

“Retention will not increase police numbers. If we retain someone, the funds will not be available for recruitment.”—  
[*Official Report, Justice Committee, 20 November 2007; c 356.*]

It is important that the cabinet secretary and his ministerial colleagues reflect on that evidence, which was given to a parliamentary committee.

The Liberal Democrats are puzzled as to why the Government's golden rule that every amendment must say where the money would come from within each portfolio area and must be fully scrutinised has been disregarded at stage 3. There has been no parliamentary scrutiny by the committees of the changes that Mr Swinney has announced this afternoon. We take Mr Swinney's word for it that those changes are not significant. However, there are changes in the budget areas of e-health, motorways and prisons, among others. It is up to Mr Swinney to demonstrate to Parliament that they are insignificant changes. They are changes that no committee has had the opportunity to scrutinise. I hope that the minister will reflect on that.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I am not always a fan of time for reflection, but I listened to today's speaker talk about the importance of generosity amongst wise leaders, and embodying that by pointing out that Buddhist teaching is not exclusive but universal. This far into the debate, I cannot help but reflect on how far we all are from enlightenment.

Throughout the budget process, the Greens have sought to be constructive and to argue—

14:30

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** What about the trunk roads?

**Patrick Harvie:** I thank Mr Purvis; if he wants to stand up, he should do so.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Which particular trunk road in Scotland should not be part of the budget? What roads development would Patrick Harvie like to see in the budget?

**Patrick Harvie:** There will be no news in my response to that. Jeremy Purvis—and every other member—knows that we have opposed, and remain the only party that continues to oppose, projects that his party proposed, including the M74 extension. Labour and Liberal Democrat members complain that too much is being spent on tarmac, but Jeremy Purvis's colleagues need to answer a question: which budget lines would they like to see less being spent on, and which roads projects would they want to join the Greens in scrapping?  
[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Patrick Harvie:** If members will permit it, I will turn to amendment 1. During the election, the Scottish Green Party argued that one of the most important things we can do is give communities a sense of empowerment, and a sense that climate change presents opportunities and not just threats and difficult challenges. The climate challenge fund was an effort to address that and give communities the ability to put in place their own creative and innovative solutions for low-carbon living. I am glad that the Government agreed to include a climate challenge fund and has lodged an amendment that will increase that fund.

On amendment 5, members will not be surprised to hear that the Green party has never been a party of gung-ho tough-on-crime rhetoric, although I agree that an increase in the number of police officers will do a great deal less harm than the proliferation of preventive orders that we have seen during recent years. I therefore have no problems supporting amendment 5.

At stage 1, we emphasised the budget's shortcomings on many issues, including those that Mr Purvis helpfully pointed out, and we explained the changes that we wanted. I welcome the proposed changes, but there are still measures to which the cabinet secretary can commit even at this late stage—not least in response to last week's vote on support for bus services. I look forward to those commitments coming through during the debate, during which time, with any luck, I will get another go at Mr Rumbles, to boot.

**Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands)**

**(SNP):** Labour and the Liberals have attempted to thwart the process since the SNP Government's first budget was introduced. While other parties have opted for constructive engagement with the SNP Government, Labour and the Liberals have indulged in an orgy of negativity, which we have witnessed again today, and which obscures the real debate which is about the future good of Scotland, not selfish party politics.

**David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)**

**(Lab):** I am rather disappointed by Mr Thompson's negative tone. Mr Thompson and I are members of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, in which I lodged amendments on skills academies and modern apprenticeships. I do not recall receiving any backing from the member. Where was his consensual approach?

**Dave Thompson:** Mr Whitton wanted to cut road maintenance and other budgets, which would not be very good for people in the Highlands or elsewhere in Scotland.

The amendments that we are discussing today are the result of positive engagement: that is to be welcomed. The main Labour line, however, has been to scaremonger and frighten Scotland's most vulnerable people. That is a shameless tactic that has backfired badly on Labour. It claimed that local councils all over Scotland would penalise vulnerable groups because their funding is no longer ring-fenced—as if councils could not wait to dump the poor and the disadvantaged. However, Labour members forgot that lots of those councils are Labour-led. It did not take long for one of their most senior councillors—Pat Watters, convener of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—to remind the Labour Party of that when he said that its claim

“is both a slur on local government politicians and a silly argument.”

The problem is that Labour and the Liberals have not got the hang of being in opposition to minority Government and act as if their coalition was never wound up. Unlike the Tories, the Greens and Margo MacDonald, the parties of the former Executive think that being in opposition is all about kicking the SNP Government at every opportunity. They keep on getting it wrong and falling flat on their faces—it is hilarious to watch them. They remind me of a “Carry On” film—“Carry On Coalescing”—with Wendy Alexander and Nicol Stephen as the Barbara Windsor and Sid James of Scottish politics.

On the other hand, the Tories, the Greens and Margo MacDonald have adapted to the new politics like ducks to water. Let us be honest: the amendments would not have been lodged if the Tories, the Greens and Margo MacDonald had not

encouraged us to fine-tune our first budget. I welcome the amendments and, as a Highlands and Islands MSP, I endorse the budget. My constituents will benefit from the freeze in council tax, the reduction in business rates, the reduction in prescription charges, the additional investment to tackle waiting times and so on and on.

The budget follows the worst settlement from Westminster since the Scottish Parliament's inception, but it presents Scotland with a unique opportunity to move forward, following John Swinney's excellent work on the budget. For eight years, the Labour-Liberal coalition held us back and the country's services, economy and reputation suffered. Nothing was done without Westminster's approval and nobody spoke up for Scotland. The new Scottish Government will speak up for Scotland. Its first budget is a budget for Scotland and a milestone in our history. The budget is tempered by the desire to co-operate, the desire for consensus and the desire to move Scotland forward.

I welcome the amendments and applaud all those who have sought to engage constructively with the Government for the good of the country.

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):**

Let me make it clear that Labour members will support amendment 6, which will increase the climate change fund. Having read John Swinney's explanation to the convener of the Finance Committee, we hope that his approach will be genuinely sustainable and that that means that social justice will be included as an element of sustainable development. A crucial part of our response to climate change must be to ensure that the people who are already most vulnerable do not lose out further when climate change really begins to kick in.

We know that climate change is already with us—that is why Labour Rural Affairs and Environment Committee members expressed disappointment about the flooding and strategic waste issue. We believe fundamentally that the budget as a whole does not do enough on climate change. The SNP dumped its manifesto commitment to year-on-year targets for reductions in carbon emissions. Amendment 6 must be about ensuring not just that the climate change fund is provided with £4 million of spare cash but that it can drive change across the budget. I ask the cabinet secretary to consider carefully how he will spend that money. We must ensure that all proposed Government expenditure not only does as much as possible to reduce our carbon emissions but takes into account the other greenhouse gases as well.

We raised the issue of supported bus services last week, so I ask the cabinet secretary to clarify whether today's press reports are right in

suggesting that he is considering acting on fuel costs for the bus industry. The bus industry is environmentally friendly. Buses are part of how we can ensure that we get about our business more energy-efficiently and they are part of the response to tackling climate change.

In supporting amendment 6 today, we want to see more being done in the rest of the £30 billion. That is the crucial point. The budget will increase money for microgeneration, but more must be made available for that—the SNP promised a lot in its manifesto—than is currently provided in the budget. On energy efficiency, we support the climate change fund, but the cabinet secretary must sign up to ensuring that energy efficiency is a priority across the Scottish Executive's budget so that we save Government money while reducing carbon emissions. That must be a win-win.

We want to ensure that the budget is spent more wisely so that it helps to tackle climate change and does not make it worse. We have raised those concerns in committee debates on the budget process thus far. We hope that, as part of the climate change fund, the cabinet secretary will look at the budget as a whole rather than just tinker around the edges. He must ensure that the new money can drive change right across the Executive so that we have targets in carbon reduction. This is not about just a small amount of money but about making a change across the whole budget. We are prepared to work constructively with the Government on that. That is the context in which we will support amendment 6.

**John Swinney:** Far be it from me to suggest the best set of tactics to influence the Government from the Opposition benches, but I have to say that Sarah Boyack's contribution to the debate is perhaps a model of how to advance an argument that will, in this multi party Parliament, get one's point of view across. I take very seriously the points that she raised about ensuring that we do not just focus on the £3 million end of the spectrum, but on the £31 billion end, in terms of the impact on the environment. The measures in regard to carbon accounting that I announced in my speech to Parliament in the stage 1 debate give, I hope, some reassurance of the Government's direction of travel in an area in which there is no proven method of assessment of the issues, but in which the Government is prepared to move forward.

I assure Sarah Boyack that, in a number of areas in relation to the distribution of resources in the climate change fund, we will be mindful of the impact of climate change on social justice. I further reassure her that although the Government has certainly changed the method of distribution of money to the local government block fund—one of the changes that I have made in the budget

process—it is still investing significantly in flooding and strategic waste. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment has a significant budget for advancing the Government's zero waste strategy, which is an essential commitment of our Administration. Sarah Boyack's contribution to the question of how to influence the Government was, if I may say so, in somewhat marked contrast to that of Pauline McNeill. I am not quite sure where in the process Pauline McNeill thinks the Labour Party "played a crucial role".

In the financial settlement that we have proposed to local authorities, we have included funding for the police pensions problem. I realise that it is a significant factor to be wrestled with, but my discussions with chief constables, conveners of police authorities and with Government officials and ministers show that we can work through the problem.

**Pauline McNeill:** I will make a very serious point. There is an admitted shortfall for police pensions of £100 million throughout Scotland, but there does not seem to be that amount in the grant-aided expenditure. Can you confirm that that is the case, cabinet secretary? Otherwise, what will you tell Parliament you are going to do about the black hole? It is a serious issue.

**The Presiding Officer:** I tell Pauline McNeill that I can do none of those things, but I am sure that the cabinet secretary will help.

**John Swinney:** I shall certainly turn my hand to the problem in your absence, Presiding Officer.

I have said that funding is provided in the settlement to tackle the police pensions issue. Police pension payments are a statutory responsibility—they cannot be avoided. The public purse must therefore make provision for that and, as I have said, we have made funding available in the settlement. If the issue—I make the point as gently as I can—is at the top of the Labour Party's list of concerns, where is it in the amendments that were marshalled by the Labour Party throughout this process?

Before I address other issues, I will say that there was an interesting article in the *Evening Times* yesterday—one Glasgow city councillor, in reflecting on the Government's financial support to local authorities, which was more than the city council had bargained for, simply said, "God bless them." There we have it, from the Glasgow City Council Labour group: "God bless" the SNP Government for its generosity.

Mr Aitken made two remarks on which I will concentrate. He said that in this budget process people had listened to each other. That is a serious point on which Parliament needs to reflect, because the Government has made changes to

the budget bill. It is the first time I can remember the Government bringing forward such changes, so people must have been listening to other people—unlike under the tyranny that we had for eight years in the previous two sessions of Parliament.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** Does Mr Swinney acknowledge that one factor in that might have been that, in its eight years in opposition, the SNP managed on only one occasion to lodge an amendment to the budget bill?

**The Presiding Officer:** One minute, cabinet secretary.

**John Swinney:** Let me say that the political climate of the time was not particularly conducive to such ideas.

Mr Aitken talked about police officers in the east end of Glasgow. I should point out that, in contrast to police officers in the east end of London, police officers in the east end of Glasgow are at least getting the pay settlement to which they are entitled.

Finally, Tavish Scott expressed concern that I had broken my golden rule with regard to where the money was coming from. I assure him—if the Presiding Officer allows me to, will explain to him in enormous detail—that we are taking resources from e-health in the health budget and from the prisons estate in the justice budget. Resources are going into the rural affairs budget for the climate change fund. As I said in my opening remarks, money is coming out of the motorway and trunk roads network operating budget, and the Government will also take capital receipts from the Registers of Scotland without interrupting its service.

That all adds up to a fully explained audit trail of where the money is coming from and where it is going to. On that basis, I commend the amendments to Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 1 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. As this is the first division, there will be a five-minute suspension.

14:46

*Meeting suspended.*

14:51

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We now move to the division on amendment 1.

## FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
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 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
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 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
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 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
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 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 110, Against 14, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Can you read out the result of the division again, please?

**The Presiding Officer:** I certainly can. The result of the division is: For 110, Against 14—

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** Fourteen is what came up on the screen. I apologise—there were no abstentions. [*Interruption.*] Order. I will read out the result again.

The result of the division is: For 110, Against 0, Abstentions 14.

I apologise. Does that address your point of order, Ms McInnes?

**Alison McInnes:** Yes.

*Amendments 2 to 6 moved—[John Swinney].*

**The Presiding Officer:** Does any member object to a single question being put on amendments 2 to 6?

**Members:** Yes.

**The Presiding Officer:** I will put the questions on the amendments one at a time.

The question is, that amendment 2 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
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 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
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 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
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 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
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 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
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 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
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 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
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 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
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 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

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 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 110, Against 0, Abstentions 14.

*Amendment 2 agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 3 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
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 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
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 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
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 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
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 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)

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 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
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 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
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 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
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 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
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 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 109, Against 0, Abstentions 14.

*Amendment 3 agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 4 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)



Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)

Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 110, Against 0, Abstentions 14.

*Amendment 4 agreed to.*

*Amendments 5 and 6 agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes consideration of amendments.

## Budget (Scotland) Bill

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-1296, in the name of John Swinney, that the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Bill be passed.

14:58

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** I welcome what I hope will be the final debate on the first budget of Scotland's first Scottish National Party Government—the first truly national Government of Scotland—and I ask the Parliament to support the Government through the Budget (Scotland) Bill.

I am particularly proud of the way in which we have taken forward the budget, which clearly demonstrates our approach. We listened to the arguments presented in the Parliament, in particular by the Finance Committee, and by working with Scotland we have a financial package to progress our plans for the benefit of Scottish citizens in all parts of our country.

The budget is at the heart of our efforts to deliver increasing sustainable economic growth. It brings to reality the social democratic contract that we made with the people of Scotland in the election, delivering on our commitment to an increased focus on front-line service delivery, more streamlined and effective government and fairer, lower local tax. The budget is an important first step as we build Scottish success and deliver on the hopes and aspirations of the people of our nation. It will ensure that we can deliver policies that will strengthen the educational experience of Scottish children, improve the health care facilities available to families and individuals and provide new opportunities for all elements of Scottish society—rich and poor, strong and vulnerable.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary has said that the £34 million that came to Scotland in Barnett consequential has been distributed round councils in Scotland. Can he give us an assurance that £34 million will be spent on the families of disabled children?

**John Swinney:** I am confident that, through the partnership that we have constructed with local authorities, resources in excess of that will be spent on supporting the families of disabled children in our country.

Throughout the budget process, we have been only too aware of the reality of operating as a Government without a majority. We have had to make tough choices and build consensus, as the First Minister promised in his first statement to the

Parliament, last May. In the stage 1 debate on the bill, the Parliament voted to support the budget in principle and asked the Government to consider two changes, in relation to increasing police numbers and a reduction in business rates. At stage 2, I made a commitment that the Government would consider those points and would continue to examine ways in which to deliver a budget that commands the Parliament's support. We have already agreed amendments to deliver one part of the Finance Committee recommendations on police numbers. We have worked hard to bring all members to a common place and to respect the wishes of the Parliament that were expressed at stage 1. The Government has at all times maintained its desire to respect the Parliament and that is reflected in the extra measures that I will confirm and announce today. It is now down to the Parliament to judge our proposals and to all parties to respect the decisions that the Parliament took at stage 1.

We have heard what other parties in the Parliament have said about reducing the carbon impact of our approach, which Sarah Boyack mentioned, in areas such as transport, housing, health and enterprise. The carbon impact assessment that I announced in the stage 1 debate a fortnight ago will put Scotland right at the leading edge and will be used to assess the climate change impact of all Government spending. That is a step forward that will deliver benefits for Scots now and in the future.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** The cabinet secretary mentions the carbon impact of transport policy. Can he say anything in response to last week's call by the Parliament for a substantial increase in funding for bus services? Can he say anything about whether money will be spent on some of the damaging road-building projects, given the complaint on the issue that is pending with the European Commission?

**John Swinney:** I will make remarks about the bus service operators grant in the course of my speech that will address that issue properly. On the complaint about the M74 project, the Government has always said and will always say that if a complaint is made about a particular tendering project, we will co-operate fully with the European Commission in the investigation of the complaint. However, I remain confident about the Government's tendering process for the project. I have taken steps to have the process examined to ensure that we have that confidence and that we report fully in the process in which we are engaged. Obviously, I will monitor any developments on that issue.

Another question that has cropped up in debates on the budget is the funding of universities. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong

Learning has begun a fruitful and constructive dialogue with our universities to build on the firm commitments that we have given to support the sector. Scotland's universities have received a fair settlement in the budget, given the financial constraints that we face. Although we cannot increase the size of the financial cake, I was pleased to be able to give our higher and further education sector an increased slice of the cake. We gave a commitment to find more money if we could do so to address some of the issues that face the university sector, particularly the issue of pay. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has announced that we will provide an extra £10 million this year, which will make a difference to universities, lecturers and, importantly, students throughout the country.

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Does the cabinet secretary realise that the extra £10 million meets only half the £20 million funding gap that Universities Scotland says exists for the pay agreement? That leaves serious questions about university funding.

**John Swinney:** The Government is putting additional resources into the higher and further education sector. In the spirit of consensus, perhaps Mr Baker could have welcomed what the Government is doing. I can confirm that our higher and further education sector will have the first claim on new resources that emerge from any Barnett consequentials that are available to us as a result of the United Kingdom budget and pre-budget report.

The higher and further education sector will be encouraged and supported in its efforts to widen access, increase opportunity and develop even further the excellent work that it does on knowledge transfer and research.

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Will the minister give way?

**John Swinney:** I want to make some further progress; I have a lot of ground to cover.

In other areas, too, we are listening to others and finding common ground. Previous Governments ignored the extra demands being placed on the city of Edinburgh, but this Government believes that it is time for a capital city supplement—a case made enthusiastically and eloquently by Margo MacDonald and others in the chamber. We look forward to receiving the results of the city of Edinburgh study later this year, in good time to make provision for a capital city supplement in the budget for 2009-10.

Two weeks ago, the principles of the Budget (Scotland) Bill were agreed to. I want now to address some of the issues left by the Parliament's decisions on that occasion.

In November, I said that we would deliver the small business scheme in full by April 2010, or earlier if resources permitted. Just as we promised, we have been looking carefully at the financial options available. I am pleased to announce today that we are able to do more than I announced in November. That has been made possible because the forecast of non-domestic rate income is higher than it stood when we drew up November's draft budget.

We will accelerate the implementation of the small business bonus scheme. The scheme will not be implemented over a three-year period as I had originally announced. I am delighted to tell the Parliament that the scheme will be implemented in its entirety by April next year. From April 2009, up to 120,000 small business premises will pay no business rates at all, and a further 30,000 will benefit from reductions of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent.

And there is more. We have heard the calls, both from within the Parliament and from Scotland's small business representatives, about the need for swift action to boost the competitiveness of the small business community. As a result, from April 2008, the rebate for the higher band of the bonus will be increased from 12.5 per cent to 20 per cent, and the rebate for the middle band will be increased from 25 per cent to 40 per cent. I am also delighted to announce that, from this April, for the smallest businesses, the rebate will be not 50 per cent but 80 per cent, prior to the abolition of business rates next April for that group.

I want to set out one further change to our budget—one that recognises the importance of providing travel alternatives to the car. Some of us need to be reminded of travel alternatives to the car. Since I presented the draft budget to the Parliament last November, rising fuel prices have continued to put significant pressure on many of our bus service operators. Indeed, the representations that we have received pointed to the loss of some vital lifeline services and a steep increase in fares. Annabel Goldie raised the issue with the First Minister last year, and the Scottish Green Party lodged an amendment that was successful during the Labour Party's transport debate last week—an amendment that encouraged the Government to look at the issue for the benefit of the travelling public. I am pleased to announce today that we are putting extra resources into the budget line for the bus service operators grant in 2008-09, and I give a commitment to sustain that investment in subsequent years. I will not be increasing the budget in line with inflation. Instead, I have decided to allocate an additional £4 million in 2008-09, meaning a 7 per cent increase in the grant to protect fares and services. The resources

required to undertake the change will be secured by transfers from the budget for transport strategy and innovation, and I will make the changes at the autumn budget revision. However, the resources will be available from 1 April 2008.

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** Can the minister confirm that the additional money that he is making available—the £4 million—has nothing to do with fuel but is in fact a correction of the miscalculation of undealt-with claims that was in his original budget calculation?

**John Swinney:** I think that that was another example of the graceful way in which people who make a case in the Parliament cannot quite express it properly. I must give Mr McNulty a lesson in how to be gracious and build consensus.

The change that I have announced will mean that operators of valuable local registered bus services will receive around 80 per cent of the excise duty that they pay on the diesel fuel that they consume. The new money will come in addition to the £260 million that we are already investing to help drive down fares, encourage more routes and enable more older and disabled people to use those important services.

During our stage 1 debate a fortnight ago, I set out some of the serious consequences for the Scottish economy and our public services if the Budget (Scotland) Bill were not passed. Council tax increases would be inevitable. The local government budget is set to increase by £486 million by next year. On average, councils would need to impose a massive 22 per cent rise in council tax to deliver that increase.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Scaremonger!

**John Swinney:** Any member voting against the budget is sending a message to their constituents that they want Scottish taxpayers burdened with a record tax increase, with the pain felt across Scotland and by tens of thousands of vulnerable Scottish pensioners in particular. Mr Rumbles, who specialises in sedentary moaning about budget provisions, should understand that if the budget does not go through, local authorities will be £144 million worse off every single month, starting on 1 April. That is not scaremongering—that is hard reality, and Mr Rumbles should face it.

In the Finance Committee, the Labour Party sought changes to less than one per cent of the Government's budget. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the budget is acceptable to the overwhelming majority of members. It is now the responsible action of all members to support the budget. It is a budget for success that is focused on: delivering our ambitious programme to tackle climate change; our cuts to business rates; better support for students, universities and

colleges; support for small class sizes; support for the abolition of prescription charges; support for drug rehabilitation; support to deliver faster rail journeys; putting more police officers on the streets; and delivering on freezing the council tax. It is a budget for all of Scotland, proposed by a Government that provides leadership for all of Scotland and considered by a Parliament that must speak for all of Scotland. This budget will create a stronger, more confident and prosperous nation. That is what the people of Scotland deserve.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:12

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I grant that this first budget of the third session of the Scottish Parliament makes a little history, as it is the first driven by a minority Government.

Eisenhower said:

"The history of free men is never really written by chance but by choice; their choice!"

This budget is about Mr Swinney's choices. He had a choice when he set out on the budget trail. He could have chosen to construct openly, through the institutions of the Parliament, a budget that every side of the chamber could support and welcome. That would have been a great parliamentary triumph. It would have been the bigger prize and the higher road to take. However, that road was not taken, and no amount of protesting too much from the cabinet secretary or his back benchers can hide that fact. They chose instead to seek a backroom deal or two that would scrape them through budget votes at every stage. They have chosen the lesser prize, sought party—not parliamentary—triumph and pursued not consensus but a charade.

We have had to watch the faltering dance steps of the nationalists and the Tories—a kind of strictly come budgeting, without the revealing behind-the-scenes shots of any mis-steps, tears or tantrums, much as we would all love to see them. This has been a tartan Tory tango, which has stretched from November to today. The partners—Mr Swinney and Mr Brownlee—have pulled apart sometimes and looked away from each other. There has been some stylised, petulant head tossing from Mr Brownlee, signalling that more demands need to be met before the deal is sealed. There has been the odd bit of ritual foot stamping from Mr Swinney to let us know that every inch he gives will have a cost elsewhere. However, every time the music swells to the climatic moment of a vote, the partners spin back

into each other's embrace and all is well—and so shall it be again today, I do not doubt.

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):** In strictly come budgeting, is Iain Gray ready to face the public vote?

**Iain Gray:** Absolutely. I am ready any time.

There is more: like all true romances, this one is strictly exclusive. Not only have the Tories been required to vote with the SNP at every stage but they have also had to vote against improvements to the budget from any other party, even when that meant voting down amendments that would achieve their core demand: funds for additional police recruitment. Of course, the reason that was given for their failure to support amendments that reflected their manifesto—police numbers was not the only one; they voted against vocational courses in schools and help for pensioners with their water rates—was that they could not agree with where we got the money from.

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** Does Iain Gray acknowledge that the proposal for reductions in pensioners' water rates was in the Labour manifesto? The Conservative manifesto proposal was for a substantial reduction in council tax, so it is quite wrong for him to suggest that we supported his water rates proposal.

**Iain Gray:** I accept Mr McLetchie's point, but I put it to him that our proposal would have given more help to more pensioners than the Tory proposal, so it was surely superior.

The Tories' reward for their support is an amendment that gives extra funding for police recruitment of almost exactly the same amount that they voted down repeatedly and takes money from budgets from which we suggested shifting money with one exception: some of it has come from the prisons budget. That was one of the red lines that the Tories were not prepared to cross, but they will cross it today.

The tactical choice that the SNP made was never to seek consensus but rather to seek narrow party advantage. It culminated last night in the unedifying pantomime of a First Minister threatening resignation from behind the safety of deals that were already done. That was an act of vacuous bravado that sums up his Government's approach not only to the budget but to government in general.

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** Will Iain Gray give way?

**Iain Gray:** No.

It is bad enough to choose the low road of partisan political tactics but, at its heart, the budget contains a far more serious strategic choice—

another wrong choice. The budget is driven by a coarse and discredited economics that says that economic growth and social justice can be fuelled by tax cuts alone. That is not social democracy. Again and again we are told that economic growth is promoted in the budget through the business rate cut—which the cabinet secretary today announced would be accelerated—but, to achieve that, the Government is cutting in real terms spending on education, transport and enterprise, including skills and training. Those are all key programmes that support economic growth.

**John Swinney:** If those are all the Labour Party's points of critique of the Government's budget, why do they not form the contents of the reasoned amendment that Mr Gray has lodged? Why are those issues not in that amendment?

**Iain Gray:** All those issues are contained in the terms of that reasoned amendment. If John Swinney reads it, he will see that it mentions two particular areas in which we wish to see improvements.

Similarly, we are told again and again that the budget promotes equity, solidarity and cohesion solely through a freeze in council tax. However, it cuts spending on housing and regeneration, concessionary travel, deprivation and educational maintenance allowances, which directly target poor families. Many of the services on which the most vulnerable depend are delivered to them by local authorities, but the budget does not provide councils with enough to deliver those services. After inflation and the council tax freeze, our councils share only £175 million for service growth—0.5 per cent.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Will Iain Gray give way?

**Iain Gray:** No.

Those are serious choices with serious consequences for the country's future, and they are wrong. That is why we have brought to the table at every stage in the process—in subject committees, in the Finance Committee and in the chamber—amendments that would mitigate the budget's consequences and broaden its benefits to those who seek to make a future for themselves and their families and contribute more to our future prosperity. Those amendments would also help pensioners with water bills, families caring for disabled children, the homeless and victims of domestic abuse. We proposed more than 20 costed amendments, which is 20 times the number of budget improvements the SNP managed to stir itself to offer in eight years of opposition and 20 more than the zero that the Tories ever managed in eight years in opposition.

We chose those amendments to reflect not only our core concerns but the concerns of the

voluntary sector and trade unions and the concerns of the business community on issues such as the route development fund and skills. All those amendments would have shifted resources to skills, training or education, to support for vulnerable groups or to the protection of funding for vital environmental measures on areas such as waste management and flooding. I do not understand the point about waste management and flooding: either local authorities have ring-fenced money that is allocated for those priorities or Mr Swinney cannot come to us and say that he is investing more or less in those priorities. They are simply one part of the £11 billion that we are asked to sign off as part of the budget.

At no stage have we lost the argument on those proposals. They were simply blocked as part of the backroom deal. At no stage did the Government offer alternative improvements in those areas. Our purpose has never been to block the budget or bring it down. We leave such brinkmanship to others. Of course the budget contains things that we support and welcome—how could it not, given that it represents more than £30 billion of expenditure? Our purpose has always been to improve and strengthen the budget and to protect better the future of our country and our people, especially those who need our protection the most. That is a greater purpose in every sense than the Government's objective, which is just to get the budget through.

Had we achieved our purpose, the real winners would not have been Labour members in the chamber but thousands of future apprentices; hundreds of thousands of school students with access to skills and vocational training; tens of thousands of disabled children; and tens of thousands of families fleeing abuse.

The Government's approach to this budget round has let down and diminished the Parliament. It has defied the Parliament's scrutiny and disrespected its structures. The budget itself lets down so many of our people and diminishes Scotland's future. That is why, whatever happens at decision time, our scrutiny of the budget will continue day by day, with the purpose of bending it towards social justice. That is the promise held open by our amendment, which I commend to the Parliament.

I move amendment S3M-1296.1, to insert at end:

"but, in so doing, calls on the Scottish Government to continue throughout 2008-09 to seek ways to expand programmes of skills and training generally and modern apprenticeships specifically; to secure national minimum standards of service for vulnerable groups and to make a statement to the Parliament outlining how it will achieve this."

15:22

**Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):** I said throughout the budget process that the Conservatives would make clear how we would vote only once we knew what we were voting on. We know that now.

I will come to our decision in a moment but, before I do so, I want us to pause and reflect on the historic nature of today's debate and tonight's vote. Before the SNP gets too excited, I point out that today is historic not because of what the SNP has done but because it marks the final humiliation of Scottish Labour. A year ago, it was a party of government; today it is not fit to be called a party of opposition. At lunch time yesterday, Wendy Alexander was berating the right-wing alliance and promising to stand up for the vulnerable—a bold stance that she maintained until teatime, by which point Iain Gray had capitulated on the budget and scuttled down to the chamber desk to lodge a reasoned amendment, begging the Government to consider continuing to seek ways "to expand ... training generally". SNP spin doctors had barely mentioned the prospect of an election if the budget was not passed and the Labour Party hoisted the white flag. Now we know why it did not dare install a flagpole at Bute house. If Iain Gray—and the Labour Party—had spent more time scrutinising and engaging with the budget and less time phoning journalists to express undying admiration for Wendy Alexander, perhaps today Labour would have achieved more out of the budget. The only thing that it has achieved is what nobody believed possible: Labour today has even less credibility than when the budget was first published.

Mr Rumbles has a perfect introduction.

**Mike Rumbles:** Derek Brownlee has argued that we did not have time to scrutinise the budget. Does he agree that the Conservatives voted with the SNP to prevent five debates in the chamber to scrutinise the budget?

**Derek Brownlee:** We voted to ensure that the same budget process that applied to the previous Government applied to this one.

Let us look at what Labour is putting forward today. Having decried the budget, week in, week out, Labour has lodged a reasoned amendment, which, if accepted, will leave Labour members in the position of having to vote for the budget that they have been denouncing for the past few months and which has been described by Wendy Alexander as being one that "fails the most vulnerable", by Des McNulty as "a sham", by Iain Gray as "unsupportable" and by Andy Kerr as "one of the most outrageous sell-outs in Scottish political history". However, today, the Labour Party might have to vote for it to save its skin.

I do not know whether the architect of today's Labour humiliation is Iain Gray, Wendy Alexander, Jackie Baillie or Andy Kerr. All I know is that I want whoever dreamed up Labour's strategy for the budget to be in charge of Labour's election campaign.

**Iain Gray** rose—[*Laughter.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** Order.

**Iain Gray:** In order to return the compliment, I say that I hope that Mr Brownlee is in charge of the Conservatives' election campaign, given that there cannot be a Conservative voter in Scotland who believes that there is any longer any point in supporting the Conservative party—they might as well vote SNP.

**Derek Brownlee:** I am about to demonstrate the point of voting Conservative—Iain Gray need be in no doubt about that.

Having criticised the Conservatives for our amendments during the stage 1 debate, the Labour Party has lodged what must be the weakest reasoned amendment the Parliament has ever seen. Even if it is agreed to, it will change the budget not one jot.

For Iain Gray's benefit, I will contrast that with what the Conservatives have achieved. As a result of the pressure that was applied by my party, there will be 500 more police, tax cuts for around 150,000 small businesses across Scotland and a new approach to tackling drug abuse. We have been consistent throughout the budget process. We set out our aims and argued our case and have sought to improve the budget, where possible.

This is not a Conservative budget—it is not what we would have produced if we were in government. However, we have had to ask whether it is better than the alternative and, indeed, whether it is better than the budget that was put forward last year by Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The answer to those questions is yes, on a range of issues. There are parts of the Conservative manifesto that will be delivered by this budget, such as the abolition of the tolls on the Forth and Tay bridges, an end to ring fencing for local government and a stronger emphasis on efficient government. The Government has made concessions. There will be 500 more police, with 300 of them coming this year; the business rate cuts for 150,000 small businesses will take place over two years, not three; and there has been movement on drugs policy.

**Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I am genuinely interested in hearing what the member has to say about the movement on drugs policy. When Fergus Ewing met Mike Pringle and me last

week, we were at pains to say that we were keen on there being a cross-Parliament approach to a new drugs strategy. Nothing that I heard during that long discussion with the minister was any different from what I saw published yesterday and today. Therefore, I am curious about this new drugs strategy, which only the Conservatives appear to have and which the rest of the Parliament will not go along with.

**Derek Brownlee:** It was not just a long meeting with Fergus Ewing; it was a long intervention.

What we will see is a drugs strategy that the Parliament will vote on. I would have thought that Margaret Smith would be quite happy with that.

Because the Government has heeded Conservative concerns and because we will have more police, more help for small businesses and movement on drugs policy, the Conservatives will support the budget today. We have shown how a party with 16 parliamentary members can change the budget for the better. I am grateful to the Liberal Democrats for demonstrating that none of that is automatic.

I was surprised that the Liberal Democrats did not bother to put forward alternatives to the budget—and I cannot be the only one. Imagine how surprised Iain Smith must have been, because he had a lot to say on that subject when his party was in government. In January 2001, he complained that he had heard little about what Opposition parties would change in the budget. In December of that year, he said that, unless Opposition parties put forward alternatives, they would not be regarded as a serious Opposition. He returned to that point again in 2002.

Jeremy Purvis agreed with that point in 2004, demanding an alternative budget, along with Jamie Stone. In 2005, Jeremy Purvis again bemoaned the fact that the SNP, in opposition, had not produced an alternative budget, which is a point that he made again the following year.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Brownlee is in his final minute.

**Derek Brownlee:** Jeremy Purvis complained that, year after year, the SNP told the chamber that it could not bring forward an alternative budget.

Where is the Liberal Democrats' alternative? If they have put forward alternatives, they must be—in the words of Tavish Scott—the most “opaque ... since devolution”. The truth is that the Liberal Democrats have achieved with this budget what they put into it: absolutely nothing.

This is not a Conservative budget, but it is a better budget because of the pressure that was

applied by the Conservatives, which has resulted in a shift in the approach to drugs policy, 500 more police and help for 150,000 small businesses through lower business rates. None of those things would have happened if the Conservatives had adopted the knee-jerk opposition of Labour and the Liberal Democrats. It is because we have delivered key Conservative objectives that we will support the budget today.

15:30

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** Mr Brownlee will make a great nationalist one day, and that day is not far away. This is the Con-Nat budget, based not on principle, not on careful stewardship of the nation's finances and not on the extraordinary bluster of Alex Salmond, but on the Tories' determination to prop up the SNP. That is extraordinary.

We can only feel sorry for Annabel Goldie and Robin Harper, because as John Swinney ably sorted out the last pesky details of the Con-Nat budget, Alex Salmond threw an almighty strop. All was agreed. The Tories had been bought off last year. They voted against extra scrutiny and they even voted against policies that they support. The Greens were bought off by a committee convenership in May. However, at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, Mr Salmond had to get into the story. He was getting a bit worried that Mr Swinney would get all the credit—deserved credit—for sorting out the Con-Nat deal, so he decided last night at his Cabinet to threaten the Greens and the Tories.

Given how historic every Con-Nat deal is, Mr Salmond's intervention was a landmark strop, overflowing with historical significance. The press were duly spun—some of them even believed the tosh. "What on earth is going on?" the First Minister said to the Tories and the Greens. "There is a deal. You know there is a deal, because we agreed it before Christmas. The Con-Nat budget is a done deal, so don't get all uppity at the last moment," blustered Mr Salmond. Historic and landmark bluster, but bluster nevertheless.

**George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab):** Why is Tavish Scott surprised that the press swallowed Alex Salmond's latest line hook, line and sinker? They have swallowed every previous one.

**Tavish Scott:** Indeed.

Let me pay due credit to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. Although I have no doubt that the negotiations over the Con-Nat budget were protracted and historically painful, Mr Swinney has certainly bought the Tories on the cheap. He struck a deal on police numbers, but given that the move was supported by all parties in the Parliament that was not too difficult. There is also an uncosted drugs strategy.

Last night, I read the careful and considered words of the minister responsible. Mr Ewing said, in a Press Association report, that the drugs strategy would be funded "when resources become available." Those are wise words from Mr Ewing, but they are good enough for the Tories.

In his remarks on business rates, Mr Swinney could have been a little more graceful to those of us who were in government over the previous eight years, given that one of his central arguments about the business rates income was that, because of the buoyancy over the past eight years, he was able to do what he has just announced. I hope that Mr Swinney is prepared, in the eloquent style that he uses in the Parliament, to accept that, if nothing else.

Mr Swinney has done a wonderful job in buying off the Tories on the cheap. It is akin to Northern Rock—Mr Swinney has done a Darling and nationalised a private entity in all but name. That is masterful.

The Greens have sold out on everything that they claim to stand for. They are backing a budget that contains £1 billion of roads spending, including Mr Harvie's pride and joy—the M74. They are also backing real-terms cuts in rail services. It is a strange demonstration of power to vote for all the things that they once absolutely and totally rejected just to win something that everybody else already supports.

We said clearly that the SNP's budget gave no details on efficiency savings; public-private partnership alternatives; single outcome agreements; the council tax freeze; national priorities; level 3 spending plans; or, crucially, the impact that those things would have on the delivery of public services throughout Scotland. How can Parliament endorse a budget in the absence of such information?

The budget is reliant on £1.6 billion of efficiency savings, of which the Government has failed to provide any details. Perhaps the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth will deal with that issue in his winding-up speech. In the final stage of the budget debate, will he state here and now that his unspecified savings and diversions will not adversely affect the delivery of front-line services in the health and education sectors and across councils? That is not scaremongering; it is what people in the communities that we all represent want to know. Will he confirm that his plans will not lead to public sector cuts across Scotland? Parliament deserves an answer to that question.

The Liberal Democrats have argued throughout the budget process for long-term sustained investment in the higher education sector to build the intellectual capital of our economy. I



acknowledge what Mr Swinney said earlier; the points that he made about the Barnett consequential are right and helpful. However, surely even he must accept that we cannot base a strategy of long-term investment in a sector simply on what might happen in the Barnett consequential. We look to him to be much stronger in that area, with no real-terms cut next year and no use of end-year flexibility money just for pay in 2008-09. I note that Mr Swinney confirmed that that is to be spent this year.

It remains to be seen whether the money that will go to local government is adequate to meet the SNP's policies. It remains to be seen whether £1.6 billion of efficiency savings is achievable and what will happen if it is not. It remains to be seen whether the SNP's populist policies can be delivered without cuts to other services that are valued throughout the country. The budget is opaque and nebulous, but the Con-Nat budget is now also exclusive. With the Tories on board, it is a budget to prop up the Con-Nats. The Lib Dems want nothing to do with that, and nor will the country.

15:36

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate Tavish Scott on another successful Up-Helly-Aa celebration in Shetland. Last year, he was successful as a fighting Norseman, and this year, according to Sunday newspaper reports, he was equally successful in playing the back end of a camel. All that I can say after his speech is that the camel must still be stuck in the desert. His speech contained not one new idea and not one scintilla of congratulation on Mr Swinney's achievements or the announcements that he made today.

Following my speech two weeks ago at stage 1 of the budget bill, Ross Finnie accused me of hyperbole because I spelt out the consequences of voting down the budget. It is no exaggeration to say that the consequences would be very serious indeed. Mr Swinney mentioned that one of the consequences would be a 22 per cent increase in council tax. Another consequence is that there would not be an extra 300 police on the beat in Scotland next year.

**Iain Gray:** Does the member agree that, following last night's announcement, another consequence is that we would lose the First Minister? Of course, the Parliament would have 28 days to choose a new one. Will Mr Neil consider putting his hat in the ring?

**Alex Neil:** One thing we know is that Wendy Alexander will not be the successor First Minister. We also know that a big fight is already going on in the Labour Party about the succession. Indeed,

Mr Kerr was quoted last week as saying that he is prepared to take over tomorrow. My question to Mr Kerr is, why wait until tomorrow?

We hear from Mr Mike Rumbles that it will not be a serious proposition if the budget is defeated. If the budget is defeated, there will be no new dental school in Aberdeen. Does Mr Rumbles want to tell his constituents that? Does he want to tell them that prescription charges will not be abolished?

**Mike Rumbles:** It is interesting that the member mentions a so-called dental school. When is a dental school not a dental school? When it will have no undergraduate students whatsoever.

**Alex Neil:** It is a lot better than what was produced in eight years of a Lib-Lab pact—that is for sure.

If the budget was defeated, the abolition of bridge tolls would not be funded, not to mention all the other things that we would lose if the budget goes down.

Pauline McNeill was critical of our amendment on the police. The difference between our amendment and Labour's proposal is that Labour sought to fund the proposal by reducing the budget for drug enforcement and counter-terrorism. That would be not just irresponsible but highly dangerous. The difference between Labour and the SNP is that we are prudent in our amendments. Unlike the Labour Party, we have thought through how to fund the changes that we propose.

Labour members have criticised the council tax freeze. They have been scaremongering throughout Scotland—even George Foulkes has done so in the House of Lords—but yesterday the Glasgow City Council Labour group was happy to announce that it would freeze the council tax in Glasgow for the third year running. If it is okay for Labour to freeze the council tax in Glasgow, why is it not all right for us to freeze it in the rest of Scotland? Again, the Labour Party has double standards.

Labour members have accused us of being in a right-wing conspiracy with the Tories. All I will say about that is that Mrs Thatcher was not invited to tea at Bute house—she was invited to tea at 10 Downing Street by Gordon Brown.

Labour talks about social justice. Two weeks ago, I asked why, if that party's members were not shedding crocodile tears about social justice, they did not stop raiding Scottish charities to the tune of £184 million. We are talking about a direct attack on the poor and vulnerable in Scotland over the next few years. Now Labour even has a minister in London talking about social justice. That minister is saying, "If you can't find a job, you're going to

lose your council house." Even Margaret Thatcher would not have been so right-wing.

The budget has shown up the Labour Opposition for the sham that it is and the Liberal Democrats for the poor Opposition that they are, but much more important than that, it has shown what we are capable of in Scotland. It has shown that we can devise a budget that will cut taxes, boost spending, and prioritise the vulnerable, the weak, the unemployed and our small business people. It is a budget to be proud of.

15:42

**James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in this stage 3 budget debate.

The £30 billion budget proposals give the Parliament the opportunity to examine the SNP's approach and political priorities. I am sure that members throughout the chamber agree about some of the challenges that Scotland faces in 2008. It is crucial that we invest in education and grow the economy, and it is essential that we protect our communities, invest in health and combat social deprivation. We must also tackle climate change and support local transport. It is important to consider how the SNP has tackled those challenges in its budget.

Last week, the SNP announced that tackling poverty would be at the core of its approach to government. However, actions speak louder than words. Let us consider the council tax freeze and the effect of distributing £70 million throughout Scotland. More money will be given to the Brian Souters of this world, rather than to pensioners in Halfway in my constituency.

**Alex Neil:** Does it follow that Glasgow Labour's council tax freeze means that money will be given to the rich and taken from the poor?

**James Kelly:** Alex Neil misses the point. Some £70 million in the Scottish budget will be passed out throughout Scotland, and the main beneficiaries will be upper-band council tax payers. The rich will be the main beneficiaries. What will that approach do to encourage economic growth? Passing more money to lower-band council tax payers would help to grow the economy and tackle the SNP's objective of achieving economic growth that is on a par with United Kingdom levels by 2011.

As I mentioned Brian Souter, it is only fair to talk about transport. I am sure that we all agree that it is important that we have strong support for local transport routes. I note the cabinet secretary's announcement of a £4 million increase in the bus service operators grant. However, as was widely noted in the chamber during last Thursday

morning's debate, we are already at a disadvantage of £7.5 million to England and Wales. If funding continues at its current level, we will be £26.5 million down over three years. The £4 million that the cabinet secretary has announced will not bridge that gap. Bus operators will, potentially, put up bus fares and cut routes, which will have a damaging impact on pensioners, the less-well-off in society and the one third of people in Scotland who do not own a car.

There has been some comment, both in the chamber and in the media, about the Labour Party's approach to the budget. Some people have said that there is an intellectual vacuum in the Labour Party. I argue strongly against that. We lodged 20 amendments to the budget, and 12 amendments went forward to the Finance Committee. A Labour member spoke to each amendment; however, when the amendments were voted against, there was no discussion of the matter among the SNP and the Conservatives.

**Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**James Kelly:** I am sorry, but I am running out of time.

We sought to address the situation whereby communities throughout Scotland are crying out for investment in primary care in areas of social deprivation. We also sought to protect the violence against women fund and advanced the case for skills academies. Those are Labour priorities; they are not intellectually vacuous, and we are proud to stand by them.

It is no surprise to see a re-formation of the auld alliance of the Tories and the tartan Tories. The same group walked through the lobbies of the House of Commons in 1979 to herald the dawn of Thatcherism. I just hope that, before they vote, SNP members have clearance from their party council for this deal.

Yesterday was super Tuesday; today is wasted Wednesday. The SNP has missed an opportunity to help pensioners by cutting water charges; it has failed to add to the modern apprenticeship budgets to train up our young people; and it has abandoned vulnerable groups without protection. The budget falls short because it does not deliver for all Scotland's communities.

15:48

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** Today's stage 3 debate shows that the Scottish Conservatives have worked extremely hard to influence and shape the priorities that the SNP Government ought to be acting on. By having a consistent, clear and coherent strategy, we have secured some excellent results.

We have heard about this already, but there will be 1,000 new police officers on the beat. We also heard about Annabel Goldie's personal victory in getting the drugs strategy right. What we will see in the Government's drugs policy that we did not see in eight years of a Labour and Liberal Executive is a national strategy to deal comprehensively with drug abuse. We will see an end to the overreliance on substitute prescribing; an authoritative report on the scale and effectiveness of the expenditure by the end of 2008; and a clear policy on dealing with children with drug misuse problems by the summer. That is not a bad result for Annabel Goldie.

**George Foulkes:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Gavin Brown:** I am always happy to give way to one of the big beasts of Scottish politics.

**George Foulkes:** I am on a diet.

How solid is the promise that the Tories have got of 1,000 extra to the police complement in Scotland today? I seek an assurance from the member that would not harm his party, although it would harm him. If there are not 1,000 extra police on the beat in Scotland by the promised time, will the member resign his seat? Will he give that promise now?

**Gavin Brown:** That was a nice try from Mr Foulkes. We voted for the same budget line that Mr Foulkes has just voted for, and I suspect that he would not be too keen to resign his seat either.

In addition to the drugs policy and the number of police on the beat, we heard about the bus service operators grant, which Annabel Goldie raised months ago at First Minister's question time. Just today, we heard about the acceleration in the cutting of business rates, which will happen by April next year, and about which we are extremely pleased. More than 156,000 businesses will be affected, 120,000 of which will pay no business rates at all. That is progress and shows what can happen if parties put their minds to it.

What have we heard from the Labour Party today? It has taken a fairly negative approach to the budget all the way through the process. I was interested to hear that Alex Salmond might stand down as First Minister if the budget is not passed. Alex Neil said that we might or might not end up with Wendy Alexander as First Minister. That just makes me desperate to find out which way Andy Kerr will vote this evening.

As ever, we heard some negative stuff from Iain Gray, who seriously tries to pretend that he has nothing to fear from an election at the same time as saying that the Labour Party never wanted to block the budget process, even though it voted against it at stage 1. That just shows why Iain

Gray is known as the convener of the cross-party group on mince.

However, one of Mr Gray's serious points was about police officers, so let us look at the nitty-gritty of what has happened in that regard. We had a clear manifesto commitment, and we have lodged written and oral questions on the issue. Bill Aitken proposed an amendment to the Justice Committee's report, which was accepted; Derek Brownlee proposed an amendment to the Finance Committee's report, which was accepted; and we have the amendment that has just been passed.

**Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):**

Given that the member knows so much about the subject, can he say how many police officers are in place at this moment, and how many will be in place as of April 2011?

**Gavin Brown:** We will have the 1,000 extra police officers for which we have campaigned day in and day out. The amendment that Mr Martin's party lodged with the Justice Committee suggested that £10 million should be taken out of the police support services budget, which, of course, includes the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency. That amendment was so ludicrous that even Labour's Liberal Democrat partners abstained on the vote.

The Labour Party's manifesto contained no commitment to increase the number of police officers. Labour members voted against Bill Aitken's amendment, and abstained on a similar amendment at stage 1. They have not supported an increase at all, so they are quite wrong to suggest that changes have been made to the budget as a result of their lobbying efforts.

We are delighted with the abolition of business rates, which will go down by 80 per cent for the smallest businesses this April, and by 100 per cent a year later. That will help 156,000 businesses overall, more than 120,000 of which will pay no business rates whatsoever. Small to medium-sized enterprises are the cornerstone of our economy; they create local economies, they hire local staff, and they supply larger firms. That is good news for business and for Scotland.

**John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Gavin Brown:** I am in my final minute.

We fought hard to get results in key areas such as policing and drugs, business rates, and the bus service operators grant. We have shown that we can get results by being consistent and coherent, and we have improved the budget. As a result of our changes, the streets will be safer, businesses will be more competitive, and the scourge of drugs can be tackled far more effectively.

15:54

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** The First Minister made it plain yesterday that, if he does not win tonight's budget vote, he will throw his toys out of the pram and resign. Much though we might like him to go, we all know that he need not concern himself because the Conservatives will dutifully help him out. What has been called the worst-kept secret in Holyrood is that, on every important vote, the Conservatives vote with the SNP. On the radio this morning, political commentators dutifully reported that the Tories would "probably" support the SNP in tonight's vote but were waiting to see whether the Government would make further concessions on business rates. Aye, right. Tory support for the SNP Government has never been in doubt since back in November, when the two parties voted together to prevent detailed parliamentary scrutiny of the budget.

**Tricia Marwick:** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** In a moment.

The irony of that will not be lost on the voters, in particular those in the north east—I am looking at my colleague Alison McInnes. The Conservatives previously criticised what they called the grubby deals of coalition. However, the coalition had a full programme for government that was publicly agreed between the parties and published for all to see. Everything that was agreed was out in the open. What do we have now?

**John Swinney:** Unless my memory lets me down, I recall Mr Rumbles being a critic of the previous Administration's partnership agreement.

**Mike Rumbles:** I have never held back from criticising the Government whenever it was wrong. My voice is strong today because I know that the Government is so wrong on this budget.

Time and again, Annabel Goldie has claimed, "We will examine everything issue by issue." Oh, really? We do not know the content of the to-ings and fro-ings between the Conservatives and the SNP over the past few months. Those deals have been hidden from public view and conducted behind closed doors.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** In a moment.

I say to the Conservatives—those self-proclaimed defenders of the union—that they should be very careful about what they are doing. They are playing with fire and they will get burnt.

**Mary Scanlon:** Will the member confirm that all the Lib-Lab coalition's deals between 1999 and 2007 were done in an open, honest, transparent

and accountable format for all Scotland to see and hear?

**Mike Rumbles:** The member misses the point entirely. The deal between the Tories and the SNP is a party-political deal rather than a parliamentary deal. That has already been pointed out.

**Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** No, I must make progress.

The voters will know that the Conservatives have kept the SNP in power, and that the Conservatives feed the beast of nationalism and endanger the union.

While I have nothing but contempt for the behaviour of the Conservative party over its dealings with the SNP, I admit to feeling somewhat sorry for the Greens.

**Patrick Harvie:** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** No.

Almost wiped out by the SNP at last May's elections, their two lonely remaining MSPs must decide tonight whether to support the SNP's budget. They abstained from voting for the bill after the important stage 1 debate because they could not support a budget that contained so many anti-green measures. For instance, the Greens have said that the M74 is

"one of the worst environmental decisions ever made".

That is pretty strong stuff. After the vote on stage 1 of the budget bill, Patrick Harvie said—

**Patrick Harvie:** Will the member give way?

**Mike Rumbles:** Just a minute, Patrick.

He said:

"This is still not a green budget ... it still fails public transport users, and we can't accept that."

In the previous parliamentary session, one of Patrick Harvie's and Robin Harper's colleagues was Chris Ballance—remember him?—who said:

"To vote against one's conscience in pursuit of a measure of power ... is wrong. It is an insult to the people who voted for them."

I wonder what Chris Ballance and other Green party members will say now that we know how Patrick Harvie and Robin Harper will vote tonight.

**Patrick Harvie:** I can assure members that I am not feeling lonely and remain as sociable as ever, even with Mr Rumbles. I can understand why he is confused at our consistency, as it is not the Liberal way to say one thing and then to say the same thing weeks later. Can he tell us, after all the Liberal complaints about too much road building, which projects he would scrap? If we can agree on that, we can agree on much.

**Mike Rumbles:** My point about the Greens is important. They have secured an additional £4 million from the Government for green initiatives—out of a £30,000 million budget. That is quite a feat. I bet John Swinney was quaking in his boots, so desperately worried was he about exactly how he was going to meet those Green demands.

The Greens are now backing a budget that has £1,000 million of spending on roads. It also has cuts. I will barely mention the £26 million cut in the waste budget. Will the Greens, of all people, support that? I feel sorry for the beleaguered Greens, because they simply do not know what to do. They want to support their nationalist colleagues in the vote tonight, but it is a bad budget. We certainly will not support it.

16:01

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It is always delightful to listen to hypocrisy in the chamber, and the hypocrisy of the Liberal Democrats knows no ends. They kept the Labour Party in government for eight years. They pretended to be in government here and in opposition there. Unfortunately, they are now properly in opposition and do not know how to do anything. They lodged no substantive amendments to the budget—no amendments at all.

Putting the Liberal Democrats aside for the time being—where they deserve to be—I turn to the Labour Party, whose members are banging on about the vulnerable. As Alex Neil rightly said, the vulnerable have lost through the raid on charities and the lottery funds. The vulnerable are losing, in UK terms, £175 million in extra VAT to the Exchequer as a result of recent price rises. During the Labour Party's eight-year reign there was a 60 per cent increase in council tax. I hope that Labour members are not trying to justify that—consider that a Scottish pensioner gets less per week than Lord Foulkes gets for one day at the House of Lords.

The budget is set against one of the worst settlements. I quote Professor David Bell:

"The 2007 CSR is the tightest spending review of this decade."

He said that it is also clear that the increase in Scotland—

**George Foulkes:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Christine Grahame:** Certainly, Lord Foulkes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call George Foulkes.

**George Foulkes:** My name is pronounced "Fowks", as you said, Presiding Officer, but I am used to all sorts of names.

I get expenses only if I attend the House of Lords. Alex Salmond gets paid even though he does not attend the House of Commons.

**Christine Grahame:** I know how much you get, Lord Foulkes, because I am on your case, and I will soon be telling you how much it is from spring to December—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member will not be telling me anything. She should use the third person.

**Christine Grahame:** I will be telling Lord Foulkes.

In relation to the tight spending review, it is the first time that a Government has managed to recoup from Westminster the £900 million end-year finance that was left. Previous Governments have never tried to get that money.

That has brought good things for places such as the Borders, where Scottish Borders Council—which is not a Labour or an SNP council—has agreed to a freeze on the council tax. The reduction in ring fencing is much welcomed. The extra money for buses in rural areas is a positive step, as is the rates reduction for the small businesses that are the core of the small towns, villages and rural communities. That is excellent news, in addition to the extra police.

I want to focus on health matters, because of my role as convener of the Health and Sport Committee, although I am not speaking as convener. Some excellent initiatives have been introduced, such as extra money for the budgets to address drug, alcohol and smoking problems. The Health and Sport Committee had a successful session with the cabinet secretaries in charge of various portfolios, so I say to Margaret Smith that there is an endeavour in the Parliament—after eight years of learning curve for us all, including ex-ministers, back benchers and committee members—to try to make a real difference in those areas. Members across the chamber must welcome that.

**Margaret Smith:** I do not disagree with what Christine Grahame said—that meeting of the Health and Sport Committee was a valuable one. We can all agree that the drug and alcohol spend is far too opaque; I am happy to accept that it has been like that for many years. We must all, however, rise to that challenge, so that we ensure that whatever funding is in place is being used as effectively as possible. That is something that we can all sign up to.

**Christine Grahame:** That was a long intervention. I point out that the budget contains

£85 million over three years to reduce harm done by alcohol; £3 million a year on further action to reduce smoking; and an £11.5 million a year programme on diet and physical activity for health and to prevent obesity. Those figures are hardly opaque; indeed, they are as clear as crystal.

The Parliament must welcome moves, at last, to phase out prescription charges. After all, at the moment, people with multiple prescriptions have to pick and mix what they can afford.

Members must also welcome the reprieve of the accident and emergency departments at Monklands and Ayr hospitals. Of course, that raises the issue of direct elections to health boards, which Bill Butler has pursued and which I hope will soon come before the Parliament. As in Jedburgh and Coldstream—where the decision, made under the previous Administration, cannot be reversed—people in Monklands and Ayr felt that, when the closures were taking place, there was no accountability. They simply had no idea who was making those major decisions.

I very much welcome the budget and the fact that sportscotland—and, indeed, sport in general—is now part of the health portfolio. Instead of just firefighting, as we have done for eight years in the health budget, we can now attempt early intervention and prevention measures. Such an approach has been long delayed and is very welcome.

I would have thought that, by this stage in opposition, Labour and Liberal Democrat members would have learned to lodge positive and useful amendments to the budget. They did not do so in committee and no evidence was taken on any proposal. The fact is that they simply missed their opportunity.

**Mike Rumbles:** Where were your amendments?

**Christine Grahame:** Mr Rumbles, do not heckle from a sedentary position. You are wasting your breath.

16:06

**Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** In the stage 1 debate on the budget bill, I outlined why the Labour Party did not believe that the budget supported the Scottish Government's stated purpose of promoting sustainable growth in the Scottish economy. I will reiterate some of those concerns this afternoon.

Despite the apparent priority given to the economy, the Government's budget proposes a real terms decrease of 3 per cent in enterprise, energy and tourism funding in the coming year, and we know from the spending review that worse is to follow in 2009-10.

The Government's economic strategy sets out five strategic objectives, but my question to the chamber is whether those objectives have actually influenced the budget's direction. One objective, for example, is to make Scotland smarter by increasing "skills levels ... and better" channelling

"the outputs of our universities and colleges into sustainable wealth creation".

However, the budget contains no investment in skills or higher education equivalent to that proposed south of the border. We face the threat of other parts of the United Kingdom becoming smarter faster than we can. As Richard Baker has previously pointed out, the £10 million being taken out of this year's end-year flexibility will not address the issues faced by Scottish universities.

In its economic strategy, the Government maintains that it wishes to

"make Scotland a more attractive place to live, work and invest".

However, the budget proposes a real-terms decrease in investment in affordable housing this year. We see no real investment to regenerate Scotland's town centres. Welcome though the Government's intention might be to proceed with the former Executive's plans for business improvement districts, seedcorn funding of £15,000 is in no way comparable to Labour's manifesto commitment to establish a £50 million town centre turnaround or even my more modest suggestion of a £20 million fund, which I proposed to the Finance Committee as an amendment and which, oddly enough, was not supported by the Conservatives.

A more fundamental question raised by the budget relates to the very purpose of sustainable economic growth. Indeed, is this where the real dividing lines lie? For members on the Labour benches, the purpose of a successful Scottish economy is to benefit our people. Success should be shared and denied to none. If citizens are denied the opportunity to participate in that success through deprivation, ill health, ill fortune or lack of role models in employment and training, we believe that resource should be focused to remove barriers and allow potential to be fulfilled. We are prepared to target more at those who have less.

In contrast, the key promise delivered by this Con-Nat tax-cutting budget is that more will be targeted at those who already have more. After all, the more council tax that people pay, the more they will benefit from a council tax freeze. People on the lowest two income deciles will not benefit, as Professor Bell pointed out in his advice to the Finance Committee. I do not deny that Glasgow City Council or any other council has the right to make such a decision, but I object to the cabinet secretary using £70 million to force councils to

make that decision, regardless of whether it is appropriate.

Cuts in business rates will be welcomed by those businesses that benefit from them—the rates on my constituency office will be reduced—but small businesses that operate from domestic premises, of which there are many in rural Scotland, in tourism and other sectors, will not benefit from them.

The purpose of the budget is to ensure that the SNP Government delivers on one of its manifesto promises. I fear that the budget will deliver cuts in the services that are provided by councils across Scotland. Last night, the First Minister spat out his dummy and threatened to resign if we did not do as he wished. Of course, Mr Salmond has previous as a quitter. All that he has done is confirm his lack of ability to build consensus across the Parliament. Despite his fine words when he accepted the position of First Minister, he is not prepared to build consensus with the Liberals or the Labour Party. He is interested only in consensus with the Tories, the Greens and Mrs MacDonald.

The Government's economic strategy makes many references to what it describes as the "Arc of Prosperity" countries, which have very different approaches to taxation and public services. The budget clearly signals that this Administration aspires to the low taxation, poor public services Irish model.

Mr Salmond will not have to rush back to his bolthole in Westminster, but the real reason why the Tories will support the budget is the right-wing nature of parts of it. Mr Brownlee confirmed that they see it as a Conservative budget. They will take the credit for increasing police numbers—indeed, they are already doing so. The budget is a Conservative budget, in which Mr Swinney is delivering on the Conservative party's manifesto commitments, if not on many of his own party's.

I support the amendment in Iain Gray's name. The budget fails in many respects. We need to make progress on the real issues that our people face. We need to improve our skills—if we want a successful Scottish economy, we must continually upskill our population and provide opportunities for our young people. Our amendment asks the Government to look at how that can be done.

16:12

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I note that Mr Rumbles is back in the chamber; I thought for a minute that he had nipped out for his popcorn, so long has he been looking forward to my speech. My response to the coverage of the past few days and to members' comments is that the only thing that is worse than being talked about is not being

talked about. It is nice to be the subject of so much flattering attention, even from Mr Rumbles.

This is not a green budget. I would not expect any party other than the Green party to produce a green budget. The approach that we have taken throughout the budget process has been to seek improvements, wherever possible, to be constructive and to welcome improvements when they are made.

That being the case, I welcome—certainly in warmer terms than James Kelly did, whose voice is rather soporific—the additional money for bus services that has been announced today, but I remind the cabinet secretary of the second part of the amended motion on public transport that was agreed to last week, which identified the need to re-examine the structure of the bus service operators grant to ensure that we maximise the benefit for public transport users. I hope that the Government is willing to do that in the longer term.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's comments about the M74 and am pleased that the Government takes seriously the complaint about anti-competitive practices that has been lodged with the European Commission. In that regard, I remind Mike Rumbles that it is clear that we remain the only political party to take serious action on that issue. We will take no lectures from Mike Rumbles or any other Liberal Democrat about opposition to their road-building schemes.

Iain Gray spoke about the true romance between the SNP and the Conservative party and described their courtship behaviour in some detail. Watching the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats trying to work together over recent weeks and months has reminded me of a documentary that I once saw that speculated on the mating habits of dinosaurs—academically quite interesting, but ultimately now futile.

That brings me to Tavish Scott's six minutes of nonsense, during which he focused almost entirely on the brinksmanship that has apparently been played out in recent days. His speech contained one grain of truth: our budget process is designed for majority government and is not properly designed to achieve what is in the interests of the population and public services of Scotland during a period of minority government. I hope that, even if no other grain of consensus emerges from the debate, all parties will be willing to consider and improve the process for the period of minority government that lies ahead.

We are where we are and we have the budget that we have. We must decide what to do about it. The Greens have taken a constructive approach, as Greens in all European countries have done when we have had the opportunity to take part in parliamentary politics. As an early elected Swedish Green member of Parliament said:

"It is better to take a few steps forward than to stand in one place screaming."

Tempting as it is, given the urgent problem of climate change and the consensus among every other political party on a road-building programme and aviation expansion, to stand up and scream how wrong members are, it is far more rewarding to argue for improvements in the budget, as we have done.

There have been improvements to the budget. We persuaded the Government to accept our arguments on scrapping aviation subsidies, on greater support for sustainable travel and bus services, on the climate challenge fund, on carbon accounting and on increased support for microrenewables and community generation. That is a substantial list of improvements. If Labour and the Liberal Democrats had taken such a constructive approach to the budget process—imperfect as it is—they would have seen more of their priorities being worked on in future.

Despite the improvements, we still do not have a green budget. The small wins that I listed are not enough to enable us to support the budget in the vote. We will not support it; but we will not seek to block it. We welcome the improvements and encourage the Government to recognise that further, substantial moves in this and future budgets must be made if budgets are to be sustainable.

16:17

**Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP):** I agree with what Patrick Harvie said about time for reflection. As I understand it, time for reflection serves in part to inspire us and to remind us that there is a higher purpose in what we do. Today, the two important guiding principles of morality and generosity were outlined.

The proposed budget is generous, within the constraints of the mean-spirited grant from London. That is a sincerely held view; any checking of the evidence on grants that we have received from London during the past nine years bears out that the settlement was a vindictive slap to Scotland for voting for a real Government.

The budget is also profoundly moral, because it helps the people who are most in need throughout Scotland. In particular, it helps people who suffer from criminal and antisocial behaviour in our communities. It is easy for those of us who live in areas that are not blighted by antisocial behaviour to forget about such issues, but the cabinet secretary's announcement on police funding will reassure many communities. It will certainly reassure many communities in my constituency where lives are blighted by antisocial behaviour and criminal activity, including drug dealing.

I remember siren voices in the Parliament saying that the council tax freeze that had been promised would never happen. When the BBC surveyed councils recently, I do not think that it found any council that was not going to freeze council tax. We must wait and see what happens. There is an element of morality and social justice in the council tax freeze. The Labour Party's independent review found that people in the lower and middle income deciles pay up to twice as much council tax as a proportion of their income as do people in the higher deciles. The word that we use for a tax that is more punitive for people who are paid less is "unfair". The council tax freeze seeks to address that.

There are other important aspects of the budget, for example in relation to pension payments. When I was the vice-convenor of a police board for several years, we could not get the Government of the day to listen to the problems that were building up as a result of structural changes to police and fire service pensions. The present Government is making provision for those but, incredibly, it is being pilloried by the party that did nothing when the problems were at their worst. It is important that we deal with those issues, not least because we rely on the fire and police services to deliver many services to people who are most in need.

The measures on prescription charges, which Alex Neil mentioned, will have a beneficial effect, particularly on the more deprived communities. Also, a bigger slice of the cake will go to the education sector. Students—a group in society who were not looked after well in the previous Government's settlements—will benefit from that. Several aspects of the budget are generous and moral, in that they seek to improve people's lot.

Clackmannanshire Council is Labour run, but it has announced recently that it will do as much as it can—which is quite a lot, it seems—to help deal with the problems of the central heating project. Several councils have made similar announcements. They realise why problems have built up and they will work in partnership with the Government to address them, in addition to the action that the Scottish Cabinet has taken. It is a sign of the times that we have partnership working, even between Labour councils and the new Government.

It is important to reflect on the point that Suzanne Dance made about responsibility and self-acceptance during today's time for reflection. I commend that point to the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, because it would do them good to try to accept where they are in the current situation. It might improve their performance as Opposition parties. The coalition that those parties had previously is obviously continuing now that



they are in opposition, but at least it is no longer at the expense of the people of Scotland.

It was interesting that Tavish Scott mentioned the proper stewardship of public funds, which I thought was rich, given that the cost of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine railway project in my constituency went from £13 million to £84 million under his watch. The Government, if it takes advice from anybody, should not take advice on the proper stewardship of public funds from somebody who presided over that level of increase in the cost of a public project.

**Tavish Scott:** Will Keith Brown remind us which council is in charge of the project?

**Keith Brown:** As Tavish Scott should know, the bulk of the funding comes from the Scottish Executive—it holds all the power. It is true that Clackmannanshire Council promoted a private bill in the Parliament, but he who pays the piper calls the tune, and Tavish Scott failed to do that in the years when he was Minister for Transport.

It is important to reinforce Joe FitzPatrick's point that there is real public interest in the budget, which has not been the case in the past. Before I came to the Parliament today, I met, by chance, the minister of Alva parish church when I was getting petrol in Alloa—we still have to travel by car from Alloa because the new railway line has been delayed, as Tavish Scott will know. The minister expressed no party preference—I would not suggest that—but, when he saw me, he immediately asked about the prospects for the budget being passed today and what time the matter would be decided, because he intended to follow the process. That is just one example, but I do not remember that level of public interest previously. That interest is partly because there is a chance to influence the budget, as members of other parties have mentioned. When there is a chance to influence the Government of the day and change its proposals, that provokes real public interest and a genuine debate, whereas in the past the budget has been a fait accompli and there has been little point in proposing amendments.

There is real morality and generosity behind the budget. The people of Scotland will welcome it and I am happy to support it.

16:23

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** Members will know that, in relation to the Government's spending allocations, my first priority was to persuade the cabinet secretary of the good sense and fairness of introducing a new budget heading for a capital city supplement. When he first presented his budget, John Swinney, in promising to implement such an idea in 2009-10, after

consultation with the City of Edinburgh Council, made me an offer that could prove difficult to refuse. Members will note that he repeated that offer today. Yesterday evening, I mulled over my options, because I have tried to use the opportunities that are provided by the Parliament's composition to obtain other benefits for the people of Lothian. I take on board Patrick Harvie's comments about the need to fine tune our process for handling the budget.

I await with interest Mr Swinney's response to my letter requesting that the shortfall in the financial settlement received by NHS Lothian under the Arbuthnott formula—£11 million, in case he forgets—be made good immediately, given the pressures on health services in Lothian, particularly in maternity and accident and emergency units. That, of course, comes under the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, but the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth is the man who decides strategic spending priorities. I therefore presume that he works very closely with the big spenders, hence my wish that he spend a little time with my request.

Just as I was reaching a conclusion after mulling things over, there he was on television—the First Minister. He appeared to make me an offer that I definitely could not refuse: if I did not vote for him, he would go. However, the First Minister has form with that sort of decision, so I am inclined to stick with what I consider to be a good budget that will benefit most people.

I approve of returning decision making to local councils, I approve of ending prescription charges and I approve of the freeze in council tax until a fairer taxation method is found. However, I record my doubts that local income tax can be introduced properly while we are simply devolved and lack the cohesive and comprehensive range of powers that are available to sovereign Parliaments.

As is my custom when dealing with minority Governments, I will continue to peruse my options until I hear the final thoughts of all the parties in the wind-up speeches. Sometimes, last-gasp verbal commitments are offered and received.

Labour's amendment offends nobody. It would not bust Mr Swinney's spending plans and it appears no different in essence from the Government's ideas. In short, it is a textbook example of a motherhood-and-humble-pie amendment. In the interests of demonstrating that this Parliament has learned the art of minority government, might I urge the Government to accept it?

16:26

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased to take part in this budget

debate. It is clear that the settlement is broadly in line with all our expectations of 10 months ago. It is also now obvious that the SNP Government appears to be less concerned with the poorest and most vulnerable in our society and more concerned with populist tax-cutting measures that disproportionately benefit the better-off.

**Alex Neil:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dr Simpson:** No, I am just getting started—but thank you, Alex.

This Tory-SNP budget is highly regressive. It cuts by nearly £1 billion the income that the Government might otherwise have over the spending cycle. The cut in business rates is clearly an important part of that, but the council tax freeze, instead of being directed at the most vulnerable, as Labour would have proposed, is set to benefit those in the most expensive properties much more than those in the least expensive properties. It will give absolutely no benefit to those who pay no council tax by reason of low income. The better-off in Scotland will undoubtedly cheer this budget, but will they—or, indeed, any Scots—be cheering when services that we have come to expect are cut and cut again?

Christine Grahame has already spoken on the subject of health—not, I am glad to say, as the convener of the Health and Sport Committee but on her own behalf. Under Labour, Scotland used to spend considerably more per head on health than England. The SNP is narrowing the gap by more than the Barnett squeeze. It is diluting the advantage that we had, and we still have serious health problems. The first Wanless report made clear that the national health service required a doubling in health expenditure. Labour delivered on that in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

**Tricia Marwick:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Dr Simpson:** No, I am sorry.

In his second report, Wanless said that the amount needed to keep progress going would be in the region of 4 per cent in real terms, which was about 6.5 per cent in cash terms. Labour at Westminster is delivering on that, whereas in Scotland we are getting only a 4.2 per cent cash increase. In the budget—which is the least transparent since the Parliament was formed—the health boards receive only 3.2 per cent, which is a cut in proportional terms. The Scottish Parliament information centre has advised us that the reduction is in the region of £265 million over three years. How are the boards going to meet the six pressures identified by Audit Scotland, which are an ageing population, the European working time directive, equal pay, new drugs for cancer, out-of-hours costs, and restrictions on the use of capital

for income, which has already been introduced and which I presume will not be reversed?

Other issues have been identified. Given the uplift of only 0.5 per cent, there is no indication how, within the remainder of the budget, a saving of 2 per cent—the biggest efficiency gain that has been required of health boards since the Tory years when, in fact, there were cuts—will be made, given that 65 per cent of the costs are on staff, there are to be no compulsory redundancies and 10 per cent of the whole budget is spent on medicines. What have Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney combined to do to help the boards achieve those savings? They have cut the budget for change and innovation—a cut that cannot be masked by the change of name in the budget. Audit Scotland made it clear that the up-front costs of service redesign are significant, yet there is a cut in the budget.

Then there is the philosophical approach of the budget. The SNP has made huge play about the removal of ring fencing and the concordat outcome agreements with local authorities, which are part of its squeeze on local government. In health, however, where we already have health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment—HEAT—targets and multiple national outcome indicators, the SNP has increased ring fencing because it needs to deliver on a number of new initiatives. There is no new money for those initiatives; the money has been taken out of the health boards' spending. It is the opposite of the approach to local authorities. The health boards are being squeezed then given the money back ring fenced to address our common objectives of achieving lower waiting times, introducing human papilloma virus vaccination for young women, being prepared for pandemics and introducing new health improvement schemes. Those objectives should have been met by a significant increase in the overall health budget of 6 per cent, not 4 per cent. It is smoke and mirrors taken to a new level of obfuscation.

I will not dwell on the much-vaunted new ways national waiting times initiative, except to warn Nicola Sturgeon, as I have done repeatedly, that the hugely complex computerised system is heading for problems. More important than its enormous budget costs and its extra bureaucracy is the fact that it will be a burden on patients and their general practitioners. I will return to that issue.

The budget lacks clear detail—it is less detailed than previous budgets. However much it may mask it, the minority Government has not chosen to seek a true consensus in the Parliament; it has stitched up a right-wing alliance with the Tories. I am surprised that the Greens, with their undoubted sense of social equality, have

supported the SNP. Mrs MacDonald has also been slightly conned into supporting the Government. This is a regressive tax-budging budget; it is not a budget that meets the needs of Scotland.

16:33

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** The SNP thesauruses have taken a hell of a beating. Superlative inflation has ravaged SNP and some Tory contributions to the debate. At times, it was like catchphrase bingo. Joe FitzPatrick and Dave Thompson's contributions were particularly successful in that regard. In fairness, the minority SNP Government appears to have done enough to get its budget approved by Parliament. Ministers have worked hard—though not as hard as they might have expected—to secure the consent of the Tories. In that respect, Mr Neil, I do not doubt that the Government has earned its moment of triumphalism.

I add that Tavish Scott may, in a good cause, have spent one night as the back end of a camel, but that is more excusable than spending nine months as the back end of the First Minister.

Despite Mr Swinney's talk of consensus, this is not a budget of the Parliament. Concerns remain about the lack of detail in the budget and the lack of certainty that the budget will deliver. It remains to be seen whether the money going to local government is adequate to meet the SNP's promises. It remains to be seen whether the £1.6 billion of efficiency savings are achievable and what will happen if they are not. It remains to be seen whether the SNP's populist promises can be delivered without cuts to services.

There has been much talk of scaremongering. Observing the debate, it seemed to me that scaremongering depends not on what is said but on who says it.

**Derek Brownlee:** It also remains to be seen why the Liberal Democrats happily voted today for amendments to spend more money but did not feel able to vote for any of the amendments that would have saved money. What they have proposed today is surely the most opaque thing that has ever been proposed for the Parliament.

**Liam McArthur:** I will come to that, Mr Brownlee.

In an astonishing piece of media management and pompous showmanship, an emotional First Minister announced last night that he would call an election if his budget was not passed by Parliament. He went on to admit that he was confident that he had the support necessary to get the budget passed, so why the threat, the grandstanding and the offer to do something that

he has no power to do? Perhaps that is just the gambler in Mr Salmond coming out. Parliamentary procedure is such a grind for the First Minister. It would be more fun, he thinks, if it could be turned into a game of Russian roulette.

In keeping with that approach, perhaps the First Minister would like to up the ante a little. How about offering to tender his resignation should it emerge that the budget leads to cuts in jobs and key local services, fails to match up to the SNP's overblown promises and does not deliver the efficiencies required to keep the promises that were made? Perhaps Mr Swinney would be willing to take up the wager on his boss's behalf in his closing speech. I realise that that would be "a brave decision, Minister", but it would certainly be worthy of commanding the news headlines.

In truth, there is no nail biting over the budget. It is the worst kept secret in Holyrood that the deal—a grubby, cynical and secretive deal—was done back in September at the start of the budget process. Since then, we have witnessed a carefully choreographed tartan Tory tango, as Iain Gray called it, between the SNP Government and the Tory Opposition. The effect of that arrangement has been to stifle debate not only in the chamber but, more important, in committees, where the SNP and Tories joined forces to vote down any amendments that did not conform to their pre-arranged plan. In their desperation to be taken seriously, the Tories have sold out their seven red lines for one promise on police numbers that has always had majority support in the Parliament.

**Alex Neil:** In all the budget debates, the Liberal Democrats have not explained why they did not propose any amendment on additional funding for universities despite the promises of Tavish Scott's deputy leader, Nicol Stephen.

**Liam McArthur:** Alex Neil makes an interesting point. I recall the debate in the Finance Committee and, indeed, in the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, in which more funding for universities was voted down by the SNP and Tory coalition. The Tories did that in return for cuts in spending on motorways and prisons—two totems of Conservative principle, so we were told.

A closer reading of Mr Swinney's letter to the convener of the Finance Committee setting out the background to the amendments must make for even more uncomfortable reading for the Tories:

"We will also closely monitor the prisoner population during 2008-09."

Surely the Tories, in their haste to sign up to a deal, have not agreed to a reduction in prisoner numbers as well as the cuts to the motorways and trunk roads network? The Liberal Democrats support exploring ways to make better use of

alternatives to prison for those who serve shorter sentences, but the Tories' bang-'em-up brigade has repeatedly denounced that approach until now.

In a similar debate back in November, my colleague Tavish Scott suggested that Annabel Goldie and Alex Salmond were engaged in a matrimonial tryst. Although this may have had something to do with personal circumstances praying on Mr Scott's mind at the time, it was a useful analogy. However, I suggest that it is looking ever more like a shotgun wedding.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** One minute.

**Liam McArthur:** I do not mean that in the traditional sense, of course—heaven help the First Minister were he to try to lay an amorous hand upon the good lady Goldie—but shotguns have been in evidence. In this case, the gun-toting Mr Brownlee appears to have shot his leader in the foot, while managing to strafe Bill Aitken and his justice colleagues at the same time. It is hard to imagine Miss Goldie having the nerve to stand up in the chamber in the months ahead to attack the Government over crime, prisons and prisoner numbers, given the deal to which the Tories have signed up.

We do not know what the effect of reducing the prisons budget will be. We do not know what the impact of reducing the motorways and trunk roads network budget will be. We do not know what the result of reducing the e-health budget will be. More important—and despite what Mr Swinney said earlier—neither does the Government.

In truth, the Government's golden rule about making amendments to the budget has proved as robust as the Tory red lines. It has been demonstrated this afternoon that the Greens will abstain for £8 million and the Tories will vote for £10 million.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member must conclude.

**Liam McArthur:** Together they have helped to deliver the most opaque budget since devolution. They have stultified—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that the member's time is up.

16:39

**David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** This budget debate is, as many have noted, the most significant in the Parliament's history and the culmination of a three-month process that has tested the mettle of all parties in the Parliament. We all come to the budget from different perspectives. The Government proposes

and the Parliament disposes. We know that, if any one of the Opposition parties had a free hand in the matter, this is not the budget that it would propose.

However, responsible politicians and responsible parties enter into these debates knowing two things. First, the room for manoeuvre in any Government budget from year to year, even one exceeding £33 billion, is remarkably limited, because, whatever our different ideas for changing the direction of our public services or our priorities for Government expenditure, the process of change is incremental, rather than dramatic or apocalyptic. Secondly, the consequence of rejecting a budget bill would not be that all public services in Scotland ground to a halt, but that we would have to maintain those services at the previous year's level of expenditure with no allowance for an increase in costs or demand, which inevitably would mean real cuts in services.

We Conservatives make no apology for saying that our job in this Parliament is to bring about the implementation of the policies on which we fought the election and which we firmly believe to be in the best interests of Scotland. We will do so not by worshipping the false god of consensus or following the path of shabby compromise, which was the abiding characteristic of the ancien régime, but by working with other parties where there is genuine agreement between us while, at the same time, being unafraid to point out robustly where we strongly disagree.

We said that the level of policing proposed by the SNP Government was totally inadequate for the purpose. We argued that we needed at least an extra 500 police officers over and above the number proposed. The Government has now agreed with us. That outcome is the indisputable consequence of the amendments approved by Parliament earlier this afternoon. That is a victory for common sense.

We have long argued that Scotland needs a new strategy to tackle the menace of drugs in our society. We believe that the previous policy was misdirected and wrongly focused. That will now be changed. That is another victory for common sense.

We said that Scotland's small businesses should benefit immediately from a sharp reduction in their rates bills and that that needed to be introduced far more quickly than at the leisurely pace first proposed by the SNP Government. That has now been agreed, for the benefit of more than 150,000 businesses in Scotland: many small shopkeepers in Scotland's towns and villages; newsagents; butchers; bakers; grocers; delis; cafes; and, yes, even the several hundred post offices that the Labour Government is determined to kill off but for which the measure will offer a new spark of life.

One of the long-running debates surrounding this Parliament has been about its tax-raising powers and whether they should be extended. Given the record and the propensities of Labour and the Liberal Democrats—of which we have seen evidence in their contributions today—it is small wonder that the extension of such powers is a cause for alarm and concern in many quarters in Scotland. Today, however, we can witness the exercise of the Parliament's existing tax-cutting powers—nine years after the ill-fated penny for Scotland tax rise, which Alex Salmond and John Swinney were, at the time, only too eager to inflict on our people. We are pleased that the SNP has finally come round to the Conservative point of view. We welcome that conversion. The SNP has a long way to go on a whole lot of other issues, but progress is progress when it is in the right direction. If its conversion signals a permanent change of attitude, this will prove to be a day of great significance.

**Liam McArthur:** Does the member acknowledge at least that the tax-cutting agenda that he is so willing to support has been able to progress more quickly as a result of the previous Executive's stewardship of the economy?

**David McLetchie:** The record of the previous Executive was more about putting up taxes, tolls and rates. That is not a record of which to be proud. Mr McArthur should have been here to witness it.

When I survey the Labour members, I am reminded of the words of Robert Burns in his great poem "Tam O'Shanter": where sit our sulky sullen dames, gathering their brows like gathering storm, nursing their wrath to keep it warm. In that wrath, we heard many bitter words in the chamber just two weeks ago. One of the dames had much to say about 30 pieces of silver and two pieces of fudge. All that I can say in response is, come with us to the passing-out parades at Tulliallan and see the hundreds of young men and women who have been trained to police and safeguard our communities. Go into any small shop in Dumfries from next April, lose your sulk, put on your brightest smile and share the delight of the owners whose rates bills will be hundreds of pounds lower. That is not fudge; that is real siller—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member's time is up.

16:45

**Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab):** I congratulate Mr Swinney on bringing this budget to us. As he basks in the self-righteous glory of the headlines that he appears to be already writing—and, of course, the First Minister basks in his own mega-self-righteous glory—we should not forget that it was the Tories what done it: that is the party that delivered this budget. Members have spoken of the Con-Nat budget, the right-wing alliance and the tartan Tories. As Iain Gray said, Mr Swinney had an opportunity to raise himself above the normal way in which the SNP has been operating by involving the whole Parliament in the budget. However, we did not get that effort or that chance. Instead, we got the tartan Tory tango.

There are several reasons why Labour cannot support the budget. First, as we reminded people throughout the stages of the budget, a range of SNP manifesto commitments have been dumped: commitments to students, to first-time home buyers, to parents, to schoolchildren and to communities throughout Scotland. Secondly, although the SNP claims that economic growth is its top priority, it has cut spending on education, transport, enterprise and key programmes that support economic development. Thirdly, it claims that poverty is at the core of its strategy, but it has cut spending on housing, regeneration, concessionary fares, deprivation work, educational maintenance allowances and other measures that are directly targeted at supporting the least well-off people in our communities.

Of course, the council tax freeze has been mentioned by many people, too. We all know from the independent reports to the committees of the Parliament that the freeze will benefit higher-income households and disadvantage families who are on benefits. Further, as Pauline McNeill mentioned earlier, the budget for police pensions has been underfunded by £100 million, which will result in forces being unable to increase police numbers as they would wish. Finally, there is the black hole in the local government settlement, which we might discuss tomorrow. The Government expects councils to fill that black hole, which it created with the councils' efficiency savings—an approach that is already resulting in cutbacks.

Labour has engaged in the budget process. We have tried to drive changes in the budget to benefit those who are less well-off and to grow the skills base of our nation. Under Labour, our pensioners would soon be benefiting from the removal of water charges. Instead, we have a council tax freeze that will save the average band D house 71p a week, or £34 a year. Our approach would be to look after our pensioners in a much more significant manner.

However, the deal was done. Amendments were moved by us but not supported by the Tories, who did the deal that everyone has referred to. As one member said, it is the “best-known secret” in the Scottish Parliament. Let us not forget that although the SNP might talk the language of the left, in its budget, its actions are clearly the actions of the right.

The delivery of the budget is in tatters. Many members have talked about the effects of the budget as it rolls out. We have heard a lot about Labour members’ scaremongering in respect of attacks on the poor and the vulnerable. Mr Swinney mentioned the social-democratic contract. In Dave Thompson’s speech—which was well written by the special advisors—we heard about scaremongering and threatening communities. Christine Grahame said that we were worrying vulnerable people in our communities. However, I saw on the front page of today’s *Edinburgh Evening News* a story about city charities that are facing an £870,000 grab as a direct result of the SNP’s budget. Given that that is the approach of the Government, we are not engaging in scaremongering. We are trying to ensure that the Government is held to account for the decisions that it has taken during the budget process, and that people understand where responsibility for those cuts lies, which is directly at the door of the First Minister and his Cabinet.

Keith Brown talked about the “vindictive slap” that the Treasury’s settlement represented to Scotland. However, we all knew the size of the settlement before the election but the SNP decided to knowingly mislead the people of Scotland. John Swinney knew that 99 per cent of the budget was available to him, but he overpromised and underdelivered. Mr Swinney and Mr Brown cannot claim that the SNP did not know what the settlement would be.

Keith Brown raised some interesting issues in relation to the myth that the budget was at risk. We have all known that a deal exists between the SNP and the Tories, and the First Minister’s strop clearly showed that. The challenge was made to the Tories.

Given that Mr Salmond seems to be keen on threats of resignation, let us see if his resignation occurs if the promise on police numbers is not met, if the class-size pledge is not met or if any of the many other manifesto promises that he made on behalf of his party are not met. I will take an intervention from Mr Salmond if it is to offer his resignation if the targets that the Government has set are not met.

The powerplay that the First Minister tried to engage in was, in respect of what he was trying to say to the people of Scotland, a fix. We all knew that the budget was going to go through—that has

been evident since the deal was done in September. Some of us tried properly to engage with the budget process and to lodge meaningful amendments, which tried to change the budget, redirect it and tackle issues of social justice. Of course, he did not manage that. The truth of the matter is that while the First Minister played his wee games and got the headlines today, under the Labour amendments 15,000 more young Scots could have looked forward to apprenticeships; 300,000 secondary school students could have had an extra chance to learn a trade; 10,000 two-year-olds whose life chances are already in danger could have had those transformed; 40,000 homeless people could have been given a chance to get a sustained tenancy and would have had a real chance to change their lives; 20,000 more women and their children could have got a break from their abuser to rebuild their lives in peace; and 10,000 Scots who are limited by mental health problems could have benefited.

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I wonder whether, if I were to resign, it would be Mr Kerr who took my place.

**Andy Kerr:** That comment was entirely predictable. It was almost as predictable as the First Minister’s line last night about resigning if the budget is not passed. We will hold the First Minister to account. I note that, in his intervention, he did not say, “I will resign if my manifesto commitments on police numbers are not met.” I would have been happy to take that intervention.

Let us make no bones about it, Mr Swinney: Labour engaged in the budget process. We sought to drive social justice and we sought to correct the SNP’s decision on economic growth. The Government has not taken those options, so we cannot support its budget.

16:52

**John Swinney:** It is my pleasure to close the debate on behalf of the Government, in advance of the decision to approve, or otherwise, its first budget.

Some of the comments that have been made require detailed responses, so I aim to do that in the time that is available to me.

I disagree with Patrick Harvie’s comments that the budget process is unsuitable for minority government. Assuming that we are able to get the budget through at 5 o’clock, the Government will have successfully used the budget process to engage with other political parties and to secure for the people of Scotland a sustainable budget.

**Patrick Harvie:** I seek to make a helpful and non-party-political point. My criticisms of the budget process were not intended as a criticism of

the Government or its approach. Does the cabinet secretary agree that there are useful observations in the Howat review which, if applied in the context of minority government, would lead us to apply very different rules to the way that we do business in relation to budgets?

**John Swinney:** There may well be such observations. The role that Patrick Harvie has assumed in the budget process, in aiming to influence the Government's thinking, has been a great deal more constructive than the approaches of some other members.

We got an illuminating insight into why the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine railway was so over budget when this Government came into office. Tavish Scott said, in effect, to Keith Brown that the cost of the rail link is none of his business, despite the fact that he put up the money: it is all the fault of Clackmannanshire Council. What does it say about the financial management of the previous Administration, when the public put that money in and the Government was not watching what was going on?

**Tavish Scott:** I am happy to take responsibility for anything that happened on my watch. The point that I made to Mr Brown is that the council was the body that was progressing the project. That is a statement of fact—I was not having a go at the council in that sense.

**John Swinney:** That is fine, but I would have stopped the money going to that project until it was under control—Mr Scott failed to do that when he was in office—and that type of financial management is now at the heart of what the Government is doing.

**Tavish Scott:** Go and cancel it, then.

**John Swinney:** We have applied financial control, as we have applied financial control to the Edinburgh tram project. Thank goodness we did that into the bargain.

Richard Simpson's points about the relative performance of health spending deserve two responses. First, if there has been any smoke and mirrors and obfuscation about health expenditure, it has been in the manipulation of the English health budget by the Treasury. The budget was reduced by several billion pounds just to make the increase in England look better than it was. That is smoke and mirrors.

Secondly, if the Labour Party had been returned to office in the Scottish Parliament in May 2007, the health service would not have got the 4 per cent increase that it has under the SNP Government. Jack McConnell said that it would have got 2.7 per cent. Thank goodness the SNP came to the rescue of health spending in Scotland.

Tavish Scott said that my budget today is dependent on £1.6 billion of efficiency savings. That is true over a three-year period, but not in year 1, and the Government will publish, as we said we would, the efficiency savings programme that will deliver that. When so much is made of the fact that the Government requires public bodies, including local authorities, to make efficiency savings, I have to pose the following question: what was Tavish Scott thinking about as a member of a Government that top-sliced efficiency savings from the local government settlement and redistributed them to other areas of policy? We have allowed local authorities to get on with the business of managing their resources to the benefit of the people whom they represent.

The points that Margo MacDonald made on supporting local decision making are warmly appreciated on the Government front bench. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing will in due course announce the allocations of financial support to the health boards. I assure Margo MacDonald that our joined-up Government is fully aware of the issues and pressures that apply in different health boards, such as Lothian NHS Board, throughout the country.

At this point, I put on the record some significant points about the reasoned amendment in Mr Gray's name. A reasoned amendment is lodged as an opportunity for political parties to set out issues that they want to be borne in mind when a central proposition is accepted by Parliament. I put forward a central proposition that the bill should be accepted at stage 3, and Mr Gray put forward what I consider to be an entirely reasonable proposition about encouraging the Government

"to seek ways to expand programmes of skills and training generally and modern apprenticeships specifically".

The reasoned amendment from the Labour Party poses the Government no difficulties whatever, so I am happy to encourage my colleagues to vote for it at decision time.

In the spirit of consensus—and in the spirit of Mr Kerr's remark of a moment ago that this is my opportunity to raise myself above party advantage—I dutifully raise myself up to my full 6ft and graciously invite Labour members to reciprocate my kind desire and wish to support their amendment by supporting my budget at stage 3, as they should. It is an absurd proposition for the Labour Party to suggest amendments to the budget in the Finance Committee that affect 1 per cent of spending and then, in a hissy fit, to determine that they will vote against the other 99 per cent because they have not got their way on the single per cent.

What matters is that, on 1 April, we will have in place the financial controls and arrangements that

are needed to support our public services. The Government has listened to Parliament. We have put forward other propositions, we have listened to people's views and, even at this last hour, I have been gracious enough to accept the Labour amendment to the Government's motion. This is the moment for Parliament to get behind the Government, put the resources in place for our public services, and support the Government's first budget—the first of many that we will bring to Parliament.

## Business Motions

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1312, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a suspension of standing orders rule 10.6.5.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing up to 20 minutes to debate motion S3M-1306 on Thursday 21 February 2008, the second and third sentences of Rule 10.6.5 of Standing Orders be suspended.—[Bruce Crawford.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1308, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 20 February 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Ministerial Statement: Snaring

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Malawi

*followed by* Legislative Consent Motion: Education and Skills Bill – UK Legislation

*followed by* Business Motion

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 21 February 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time  
Health and Wellbeing

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate:  
Democracy in Local Health Care

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 27 February 2008

2.15 pm Time for Reflection



*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Glasgow  
 Commonwealth Games Bill 17:01  
*followed by* Financial Resolution: Glasgow  
 Commonwealth Games Bill  
*followed by* Business Motion  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 Thursday 28 February 2008  
 9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Labour Party Business  
 11.40 am General Question Time  
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time  
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time  
 Rural Affairs and the Environment;  
 Justice and Law Officers  
 2.55 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Stage 3 Debate: Graduate Endowment  
 Abolition (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business.—[Bruce Crawford.]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-1296.1, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1296, in the name of John Swinney, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**AGAINST**

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 110, Against 1, Abstentions 13.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The second question is, that motion S3M-1296, in the name of John Swinney, on the Budget (Scotland) Bill, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)

Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**AGAINST**

Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)

**ABSTENTIONS**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 1, Abstentions 60.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Bill be passed but, in so doing, calls on the Scottish Government to continue throughout 2008-09 to seek ways to expand programmes of skills and training generally and modern apprenticeships specifically; to secure national minimum standards of service for vulnerable groups and to make a statement to the Parliament outlining how it will achieve this.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time. I ask members who are leaving the chamber to do so quietly, although I think it unlikely that they will do so.

## Scots Trad Music Awards

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S3M-956, in the name of Rob Gibson, on congratulations to the fifth annual Scots trad music awards. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament congratulates Hands Up For Trad for organising the fifth annual Scots Trad Music Awards, Comharrachadh Duaisean Dual-cheòl na h-Alba 2007, held in the Nevis Centre, Fort William from 29 November to 1 December 2007; notes the attendance of 900 celebrants and 130 musicians who produced such a spectacular and enjoyable programme drawn from all aspects of our traditional music; congratulates the award winners whose performances have raised the excellence, rude health and growing recognition of Scotland's contemporary indigenous music bringing it to wider public notice each year, which acts as a barometer of a confident and innovative musical culture in today's Scotland but regrets that broadcasters have yet to televise this enjoyable event to take the live performance and celebration of our rich musical traditions onto our television screens, and considers that future awards ceremonies should be televised, starting with the sixth awards due to be held in Glasgow in 2008.

17:05

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I am delighted to be debating the fifth annual celebration of Scotland's rich musical traditions, the Scots trad music awards, or—in my somewhat hesitant Gaelic—Comharrachadh Duaisean Dual-cheòl na h-Alba 2007. The event took place in Fort William from 29 November to 1 December last year. It was an exciting event in the year of Highland culture, and it took place at the start of the winter festival that highlighted Scotland's wonderful traditional music in all its forms. It created a high-profile opportunity to bring the music and the music industry into the spotlight of media and public attention.

The event's organiser, Simon Thoumire, and his team deserve the highest praise for their year-round efforts to support Scotland's thriving musical culture, which encompasses Gaelic song, folk music, Scottish dance music, pipe bands, and a host of other forms. The awards give recognition to excellence in all those forms. Hands Up for Trad also encourages musical celebrations for St Andrew's day and is a co-supporter of the BBC Radio Scotland young traditional musician of the year award, which is held at the Celtic Connections festival each January.

There has been debate about what is most important—the awards themselves, sponsored by industry supporters, or the gathering of like-minded folkies to celebrate the development of the genre each year. Whether or not one votes for the winners in the Scots trad music awards, the event

provides a much-needed chance to celebrate our indigenous music, its players and its promoters. That is confirmed by the camaraderie at such events. People of all ages in the traditional music field support each other's work. That is a tribute to the communitarian nature of Scotland as a nation. It has underpinned our national sense of self, has bolstered the development of our Parliament and has rightly been dubbed the democratic muse.

After five years of the awards, I would like to know how that thriving scene can be developed with the help of the Scottish Government, public agencies and the market that should open up here and in other lands. I say that in the full knowledge that, for years, Scottish musicians have been invited to and have toured in many countries. There is an urgent need for our television broadcasters to showcase this truly Scottish product at home and overseas, which is even more important in the European year of intercultural dialogue 2008. To date, there are no official events planned to explore that in Scotland. One of the year's aims is

“to highlight the contribution of different cultures to the member states' heritage and way of life”.

That is important.

Why have the broadcasters not televised this enjoyable, professionally presented event, the Hands Up for Trad Scots trad music awards? BBC Radio Scotland provides excellent coverage, but it is the TV audience that should be targeted to share the stunning live performances at the trad awards. One act that performed at last year's awards poses a key question—how can a wider audience hear about our unofficial 17-piece national folk orchestra, the Unusual Suspects, led by Corrina Hewat? They are truly international stars and played a major part in the success of the Scottish showcase at the huge Lorient festival in Brittany last August. Where was the TV coverage?

In Fort William, Julie Fowles won Gaelic singer of the year and album of the year awards for her recent CD, “Cuilidh”. She has subsequently added to those awards the BBC Radio 2 folk singer of the year award for 2008. With her multi-instrumental talents and contemporary take on the songs of North Uist, she is self-effacing but surely the coolest of today's Gaelic singers. She gained widespread TV time in May, on “Later with Jools Holland”, due to the call-off of another artist, and in the BBC 2 documentary “Bliadhna Julie”—“Julie's Year”. However, regular viewers may have missed those programmes.

Another trad music award winner in December was Phil Cunningham, who won the award for composer of the year. Meanwhile, he has been stopped in the streets and at airports, and received e-mailed congratulations for his six-part

BBC series “Scotland’s Music”, which was produced in Aberdeen on a low budget and which gave the huge range of our music major exposure on BBC 2 Scotland. Why was it not broadcast across the United Kingdom?

The cases of Julie Fowles and Phil Cunningham go to show how much more regular TV coverage would engage an audience that is ready for more live contemporary music. We know from the BBC that the Saturday night edition of Phil Cunningham’s show in November and December was attracting 250,000 viewers against “X Factor” and “Strictly Come Dancing”, but no plans were made to publish a book of the series or to produce a DVD, which would have sold around the world for Christmas presents. The hot topic of conversation at the festival club after the Scots trad awards was the demand that future awards ceremonies should be televised, starting with the sixth awards, which are due to be held in the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow in 2008. Surely this is a matter of urgency for the BBC, and a burning question for the Scottish Broadcasting Commission about how the BBC serves Scottish audiences and sells Scottish broadcasting products around the world.

Looking to our European neighbours, I have met cultural attachés and representatives of European Union member states and Regleg Governments to discuss how they promote their traditional music. There is a huge welcome for Scottish culture there. Other countries, such as Norway, Denmark, Flanders and Catalonia, produce annual CDs to showcase their top artists in potential markets. Surely the Scottish Arts Council should be doing that for Scotland. The promotion of Scottish music in England and in many other lands could be a rich source of income for our sparkling musicians. Can the minister suggest how the Scottish Government could aid that process? If we make more bilateral contacts, we could also ensure that more musicians from other countries come to Scotland.

The motion is a kind of review of traditional music in the past year. We should have an annual debate to celebrate it; if we can have one about fish, why can we not have one on traditional music? After such an outstanding year as 2007, I can only agree with the singer, Karine Polwart, who wrote in the *Sunday Herald* on 16 December:

“This is a good time to be a folk musician. There’s a lot of cross-fertilisation across genres, and a different approach to music. Lots of people making their names just now have very specific local identities, like Arctic Monkeys and Lily Allen.

There’s that whole sense of being from somewhere and speaking in your own voice.”

The success of the Scots trad music awards highlights why support and encouragement for the democratic muse deserves to be stepped up.

17:12

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I will be brief, but I thank Rob Gibson for lodging the motion. I agree that we need to have an annual debate about our traditional arts. As I am a vegetarian, I also think that they are more important than fish.

I congratulate the organisers and Hands Up for Trad on all the work that they have done during the past five years. I also congratulate the participants and all the folk who are involved in performing or taking part in the traditional arts, those who go along to clubs or run festivals, and all those who provide an important opportunity for people to participate in our arts—and the winners of this year’s awards.

I also thank all those who work with young people. I am thinking of the work that is being done in Plockton to encourage young people to sing and play traditional music, to enjoy and value it, and to learn how to perform and produce their art; that is vital. Also vital is the work that is being done through the fèis movement in encouraging young people to participate.

We all have a role to promote Scotland’s traditional arts. If we do not do it, who will? Folk will know that I am a Burns freak. I have spent a lot of time doing Burns suppers recently. I was really upset to find that, on 25 January, there was only half an hour on BBC television on Burns; that is ridiculous. I have done about 10 Burns suppers this year and never before have I seen so many young people, young pipers and speakers participate. That is the result of the work that is being done in schools to encourage young people to participate.

It is a real pity that traditional music does not get the kind of coverage that is needed. I actually think that BBC radio covers traditional music very well—I probably listen to more radio than I watch television—but it is vital that we have coverage of Hands Up for Trad, Celtic Connections and the other work that is being done.

We need to celebrate the wonderful wealth of talent that we have. We need to celebrate our traditions, pass them on to young people and others and tell the rest of the world, “Scotland is alive and kicking. Come and listen to our music and enjoy it.”

17:15

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** I congratulate Rob Gibson on securing the debate. I know that the issue is close to his heart but it also speaks clearly of the importance that we attach to culture in this country.

The motion rightly highlights the success of the fifth Scots trad music awards in Fort William. Like Rob Gibson and Cathy Peattie, I offer my congratulations to the organisers of the awards and to all those who were involved in making the 2007 event such a success.

In the past, the awards have provided a platform for showcasing some of the exceptional talent from my constituency. In recent years, both Hahirgaan and the Kirkwall City pipe band have made successful appearances. Last year, Johnny Mowat received a services-to-industry award for his efforts in developing the Orkney folk festival.

The motion's point about the failure to attract broadcast coverage of the event is highly pertinent. There is no doubt that traditional music and music festivals in general are currently enjoying a real renaissance in Scotland. The number of people who are attracted to the increasing number of events and festivals bear testimony to that fact.

The economic benefits of the upsurge in interest are already considerable. I know from conversations with the chief executive of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Sandy Cumming, that the importance of the wide variety of music festivals throughout the Highlands and Islands is recognised as a focus for HIE's future activity.

As well as quality, the festivals provide a real variety of styles, from the big-tent style of the Heb fest in Lewis to the multiple-small-gigs style of the Orkney folk festival. The latter started from humble roots in Stromness back in 1983. Thanks to the efforts of Johnny Mowat and others, our festival has now established itself as a hugely popular event that draws on the extensive local talent but also attracts performers from all over the country and beyond. By the way, this year's event starts at the end of May and the tickets are soon to be made available.

As the motion suggests, broadcasters in Scotland have been slow to respond to the upsurge of interest in traditional music. I take Cathy Peattie's point about radio coverage, but BBC Scotland's decision not to film and broadcast this year's Celtic Connections event—after having done so for the past couple of years—is an unwelcome and retrograde step.

It is arguable that Celtic Connections has established itself as a premier event in the traditional music calendar. It goes from strength to strength. I should declare an interest in that my brother, Fionn, plays fiddle in The Chair, which has performed at Celtic Connections for the past two years. The band picked up a Danny Kyle award in 2007 and has just released its first album.

There is a strong case for saying that our vibrant music and festival scene would benefit from the wider exposure that only the broadcast media can provide. That has certainly been the case with the BBC's coverage of festivals such as T in the Park and rock Lomond. Of course, the quality of the broadcast is essential. Some people suggest that coverage of, for example, the Cambridge folk festival did not do justice to the atmosphere and feel of that event. It takes resources to achieve the necessary quality but, given the economic, social and cultural importance of the trad music awards and other events in the now busy music calendar, there is a strong case for committing those resources.

I congratulate Rob Gibson on securing a useful debate and look forward to other members' speeches. I hope that tonight's debate will help to make the case for providing more support and—it is an important point—more exposure for the traditional music industry in Scotland.

17:18

**Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, thank Rob Gibson for lodging the motion, which allows us the opportunity to discuss the traditional music scene in Scotland at a time when, as Cathy Peattie noted, Burns suppers are still taking place.

I had the privilege of opening the semi-finals of the young traditional musician of the year award in a village hall in Coulter, near Biggar, in the South of Scotland. It was a real treat to be able to hear not only the eventual six finalists—including Ewan Robertson—but the other young performers who were unlucky enough not to make it to the finals this time. I would not have relished the job of the judges, who had to pick a winner, as the standard was truly outstanding. Simon Thoumire and others who were involved in organising the event—and Meg Beresford, who allowed the semi-finalists to stay in Wiston Lodge and jam there—should be recognised for playing their part in keeping Scotland's music tradition alive.

And what a tradition we have in Scotland. From the Shetland fiddle tunes and the waulking songs of the Western Isles to the muckle sangs, the border ballads and—my favourite—the bothy ballads, our rich tapestry of traditional music is hard to beat. We should never be ashamed to celebrate it. What luck that Scotland has dedicated and talented young people who are passionate about keeping the tradition going. Their dedication, coupled with the time and effort they have to put into learning their instruments, should be congratulated; it shows that not all young people are simply hoodies.

Rob Gibson's motion acknowledges the contribution that institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama can make in the development of musicians, and I support that sentiment, but we must be aware of the vast amount of work that is done over and above those national bodies by local folk groups such as the Clydesdale folk club in the South of Scotland, who had a big hand in supporting the young trad musician of the year award event, and who do their best to nurture talent. I witnessed an example of that when Douglas resident Tom Gold was presented at the semi-final in Coulter with the David Roberts prize. David was a former member of the Clydesdale folk club who unfortunately passed away fairly recently. That young guy, Tom, who is only about 15, blew me away with his fiddle playing—I know that he will go on to be a great success.

The tradition is also kept alive by the work of the school of Scottish studies, Glasgow Caledonian University's collection of political songs and the Elphinstone institute in Aberdeen—they all work hard to ensure that we do not lose the oral traditions of our travelling people. Why is it important to keep those traditions alive? Why does it matter so much? Because our folk songs and music form a crucial part of our history and provide a useful glimpse into our past.

At university, I studied bothy ballads and agricultural folk songs from the north-east. Members do not need to worry; I will not perform any songs or renditions, because I am pretty rubbish—Cathy Peattie can do it. Those ballads told the stories of farm labourers: their working conditions and love lives, the feeing fairs and the efforts that were made by the army to recruit them. Those songs were their words, and they should be of equal value to any academic texts or condescending contemporary newspaper reports. The songs add a different dimension to the usual methods of finding out about our past, and are more important than we probably realise.

Last week, the Parliament debated the importance of teaching Scottish history in our schools. Members largely agreed that we need to be aware of our heritage and history to understand ourselves better and to be able to move forward with confidence. I firmly believe that teaching our songs and traditional music should be included in the effort to encourage our children to learn about their past and to be confident in that learning. I hope that by recognising the achievements of young traditional musicians we can work together to raise awareness of our varied and valuable traditions.

17:22

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**

**(Con):** I congratulate Rob Gibson on securing the debate. I am very pleased to speak about the Scottish traditional music sector, having long been a strong supporter of it. The 2007 awards, which took place in Fort William, in the Highlands and Islands, and which contributed to the year of Highland culture, were a fantastic celebration of the very best in Scottish traditional music. All the organisers and participants are to be commended for that. The awards also represented a significant boost to the local economy.

I will highlight some of the award winners who come from the Highlands and Islands. I wish to praise Julie Fowlis from North Uist for winning both the album of the year award and the award for Gaelic singer of the year; the fantastic Fochabers Fiddlers, who were awarded the Strathspey and reel society of the year award; and the outstanding Mid Argyll pipe band from my native Argyll, which, with its latest title of Scottish pipe band of the year, continues to put Argyll on the map. Obviously, the Highlands and Islands are very well represented in terms of award winners, which speaks volumes about the region's key role in sustaining the traditional music sector. God bless the Old Blind Dogs on a great win—what a name for a band, and what a sound they make.

The motion refers to the lack of TV coverage. I share Rob Gibson's concerns. I am sure that the awards would attract a significant TV audience, and I will be interested to hear what the minister has to say on the matter in her response. The fact that the Inveraray junior pipe band won a £17,000 lottery award that was voted on by TV viewers all over the country shows how popular this kind of music can be.

The motion also mentions the

"rude health ... of Scotland's contemporary indigenous music",

and on that I agree with Rob Gibson again. I am sure that he and other members taking part in the debate will wish to put on record our delight at the success of this year's Celtic Connections event, which finished last weekend. This year was the most successful in the event's 15-year history: more than 120,000 people attended and ticket sales broke all records. The whole Celtic Connections team, led very ably by Capercaillie member Donald Shaw, who has helped to turn the whole event around after a dodgy period in 2006, should be congratulated on that success. It is good that the festival included so many new international acts, because I believe that that gives more scope to composers and musicians. Indeed, it also included the work "Ben Dorain" by Scotland's great composer Ronald Stevenson, which is based on a poem by Duncan Ban

McIntyre and will, I hope, become a classic of Gaelic culture that will be seen again and again.

I have previously spoken of my respect for accordion and fiddle clubs, and I make no apology for doing so again. In that regard, I consider Robbie Shepherd's excellent Radio Scotland shows—"Take the Floor" on Saturday evening and "The Reel Blend" on Sundays—to be great showcases for exponents of this grass-roots sector of Scottish traditional music. I also pay tribute to Scotland's bagpiping sector and the great enthusiasm of the individuals who run and play in Scotland's many pipe bands. In particular, I want to compliment the recently formed Inveraray junior pipe band, which has just won a world championship. These bands are a great outlet for the enthusiasm, exuberance and energy of young boys and girls and give them something to look forward to. Indeed, the shared team experience of being a piper or drummer in a pipe band can prove highly valuable for the future.

17:26

**Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD):** At one stage, young Shetlanders would get ready for a night out listening not to Radio 1 but to Robbie Shepherd's "Take the Floor". My advancing years have got the better of me, and I am not quite sure—nor do I want to know—what my children's generation choose to listen to before they go out for the evening. That said, I take Jamie McGrigor's point about those programmes seriously.

I absolutely agree with Rob Gibson that we must take the traditional music sector seriously, and I acknowledge not only the commitment that the minister and Cathy Peattie have shown, but Aileen Campbell's knowledge of the subject. Having danced an eightsome reel with Liam McArthur, I warn any of the fairer sex who might take part in a set with him that they should be very worried. On that occasion, Orcadians and Shetlanders came together, which is something we do from time to time.

Rob Gibson is right to highlight the lack of TV coverage, even though there are many more festivals now than there have ever been. Indeed, as Jamie McGrigor said, the sector is strong and growing. The minister would have considerable support from Parliament in her efforts to convince the broadcasting authorities and other broadcasters that these are areas of great Scottish strength that have enormous export potential.

Rob Gibson is also right to mention the significance of the traditional music industry. Some people find words such as "industry" inappropriate in this context. I know graduates from that very fine and important Scottish institution, the RSAMD, who have careers in the area. I acknowledge,

welcome and respect their talents, but I also want to ensure that they are able to have those careers. I appreciate that there are some funding issues to deal with—like all members, I have received representations on the matter—but I hope that the minister will find some time to deal with the issue. Surely, as Phil Cunningham becomes the RSAMD's director of traditional music, this is a particularly fine moment to take the institution forward.

As for Celtic Connections, Rob Gibson and I went along to the Shetland night and met Aileen Campbell—I was going to say that we met in the bar afterwards, but that would be most unfair to her. Mr Gibson was good enough to bring along some overseas friends.

The great thing about the night—apart from the fact that it made me, as a Shetlander, very proud of the sheer depth of talent on stage and across the islands that I am proud to represent in Parliament—was the number of people who turned up not only because they are expatriate Shetlanders who live and work on the Scottish mainland, but because they care passionately about traditional music and its future. I hope that the minister can work with the industry to develop every aspect of those initiatives. A review in *The Big Issue* of that night said:

"We came for Aly Bain, but hosts Fiddlers' Bid are worth it alone."

That says enough about the diversity and strength of the music that comes out of my islands. That said, I am pleased to be here, to be better informed by colleagues who are part of strong musical traditions in their parts of Scotland.

I wish the minister well in her work on traditional music. I hope that she will be able to drive forward Government initiatives that strengthen and support the sector. If she does that, I am sure that she will have our full support.

17:30

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Rob Gibson on securing an important debate and join him and other members in congratulating Hands Up for Trad—for organising the awards—and the winners, who have showcased Scottish traditional music to brilliant effect.

It is sad that so many people in Scotland are disconnected from such a rich tradition. That is why the part of the motion about television is particularly important. I share Rob Gibson's view that the Scottish Broadcasting Commission could consider the issue, now that it has entered the cultural phase of its work.



As members know, the six programmes by Phil Cunningham that were shown recently—I think that they have already been mentioned—were an outstanding example of television showcasing Scottish traditional music, and they made riveting viewing. Given that they dramatically highlighted the emotional richness of much traditional music, it is sad that they were not shown throughout the UK. Another interesting feature of those programmes was that they demonstrated the effect of Scottish traditional music on the music of many other countries in the world.

I must apologise to Linda Fabiani because I will have to leave the debate early—I am co-convenor of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on climate change, an interesting meeting of which began two minutes ago. It will look at the lyrics of Bob Dylan's song, "A Hard Rain". On that subject, it is worth saying that a significant amount of American music, including some of Bob Dylan's work, has been influenced by Scottish traditional music. The Phil Cunningham programmes highlighted bluegrass music, in particular, as having been influenced by such music.

Mention of Phil Cunningham leads us to think of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and I am sure that everyone is delighted that he will take up a position there. However, it is clear that there have been concerns that the job problems at the RSAMD might affect the traditional music department. We hope that those problems will not have a negative impact on the brilliant teaching that the academy has done and the important role that it performs.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Will the member join me in welcoming the fact that Bob Dylan now has a property in the Highlands and Islands?

**Malcolm Chisholm:** I join Jamie McGrigor in welcoming that development.

Many members have spoken about the importance of increasing participation in music. All parties are at one in supporting the youth music initiative that was started by the previous Administration and which is being continued by the new Government. That has been and will continue to be important in growing the number of young people who have opportunities to participate in music.

We hope that as much support as possible will be given to traditional music and to enabling more people to experience it. Specific action through the Scottish Arts Council to develop that thriving scene would also be welcome. Finally, I again apologise to the minister for not staying for her speech.

17:33

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** I came to the chamber without any notes because I knew that I would have been writing all day if I had tried to express how I feel about traditional music. What I had intended to say has all gone out of my head, now that I am wondering how to wangle a visit to Bob's bothy in the Highlands—that would be great.

**Jamie McGrigor:** The minister should speak to his MSP.

**Linda Fabiani:** I congratulate Rob Gibson on his motion, which is great. The wording of the motion shows much of the spirit that is shared by those of us who feel passionate about our traditional music.

Like other members, I congratulate Simon Thoumire on the huge amount of work that he has done in spearheading Hands Up for Trad. I also thank him hugely for a wonderful night in Fort William at the Scots trad music awards. I was privileged to attend in my role as minister—when I have gone along in the past, it has been off my own bat. I had missed the event for a couple of years and I was amazed at how big it has become. It is massive. Some 900 people had come to watch 130 musicians of world-class calibre.

We should not forget that world-class musicians play traditional music. Far too often, people try to pigeonhole traditional music as being not quite up there with other genres. Rob Gibson referred to our indigenous contemporary culture, part of the charm of which is that it is a living tradition—to borrow the title of Pete Heywood's magazine—which moves on and is contemporary. There is world-class, fabulous musicianship and we should celebrate traditional music more. Over the years, I have lost track of the number of people who said, after being taken to hear traditional music, "I did not know it could be like that. How exciting! How wonderful! How great!"

Rob Gibson talked about Celtic Connections. It is astounding how that festival has grown over the years—this was its 15<sup>th</sup> year. He also talked about Phil Cunningham's series about Scotland's music, which was seen by 250,000 viewers, as did Malcolm Chisholm and others. It was wonderful, riveting television and it is a shame that it was not networked throughout the UK, as Jamie McGrigor said. We are potentially missing out on economic benefits—members talked about that, too. People all over the country, the continent and the world are fascinated by Scotland's indigenous music.

Cathy Peattie, who is an aficionado, used great language, as she always does, to talk about the celebration of our unique culture. As she rightly said, if we do not celebrate our culture, who will? Rob Gibson talked about the promotion of

Scotland overseas; we must also promote Scotland internally. Let us learn how to celebrate what we do that is truly unique and wonderful.

Cathy Peattie and Aileen Campbell mentioned Burns. Having announced a fairly small audit into the Scots language, I am raging at commentators who have accused me of trying to promote slang among our children. How dare they say that the language that has been used by many of our artists and poets over the years, including the great Robert Burns, is slang? They ought to get real—there, I have said it.

**Cathy Peattie:** Does the minister agree that Burns did a great service to Scotland, because he encourages us to celebrate our language, and that we have a responsibility to hold on to that, to ensure that our bairns do the same thing?

**Linda Fabiani:** I absolutely agree. It is about not just Burns's wonderful writing, but the service that he did to our great nation by collecting and preserving our songs. What an exponent of Scottish culture he was. We should always celebrate him along with our culture.

Liam McArthur, from Orkney, and Tavish Scott, from Shetland, spoke in the debate. I am ashamed that, in all my years of going to folk festivals throughout mainland Scotland and in some of the islands, I have never yet made it to the Orkney or Shetland folk festivals. At some point, I would like to go along and dance an eightsome reel in the company of both members.

**Liam McArthur:** The minister might not have the insurance to cover that, but I formally invite her to the Orkney folk festival, if not this year then next year. The event is going from strength to strength.

**Linda Fabiani:** I would be delighted to attend. I am sure that it is going from strength to strength, as is Celtic Connections, which has had the biggest ticket sales ever.

I was privileged to take part in the judging of one of Danny Kyle's open stage events at Celtic Connections last Friday. I was then hugely privileged to attend the showcase event on Sunday night and to present prizes to the six acts that had come through from a group of 80. There is a wee lass from Shetland, called Maggie Adamson, who fiddles wonderfully—Aly Bain should look out.

There is so much that I still want to say. I had better get to the meat of my speech.

On broadcasting and television, it is absolutely beyond me why our broadcasters do not see the potential and wonder of our events in the traditional music sphere and why they do not broadcast them. The event in Fort William on which the motion is based was an awards ceremony with wonderful live music. I have no

doubt that anybody who watched that, in Scotland or throughout the rest of the UK, would have been in awe. It was mentioned that Julie Fowlis won the BBC Radio 2 folk awards, just on Monday. Lau, a band that was nominated up at Fort William, also won the best group award in the BBC Radio 2 folk awards, which are UK wide. I believe that broadcasters are missing a trick. Our musicians are being celebrated, but we should celebrate them more.

As the Scottish Broadcasting Commission goes into the phase of considering cultural issues, I encourage all members to make their views known. I will ensure that the *Official Report* of the debate is sent to the commission. I encourage everyone to let the Scottish Broadcasting Commission and our broadcasters know how strongly we feel about the issue.

*Meeting closed at 17:41.*

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